

the vocalist's take on the traditional "See-Line Woman" (aka "Sea Lion Woman"), a song closely associated with Nina Simone. Her solution: to take it very uptempo as more an outsider observation than an inside view.

On the whole, *Live at Vic's* is an energized program, its 17 songs showing the many facets of Zuraitis, one of jazz' better singers today.

For more info visit lareserverecords.com. The album release concert is at Drom Sep. 25. See Calendar.



Alloy
Dave Douglas (Greenleaf Music)
by Jeff Cebulski

For Dave Douglas, the ever-inventive trumpeter and director of the Festival of New Trumpet (FONT) Music, his love of "trumpets blending" led to a first three-trumpet ensemble in 2003. A new version, with Douglas, David Adewumi and Alexandra Ridout, has recorded the just-released *Alloy*, a scintillating survey of jazz styles, harmonically augmented by vibraphonist Patricia Brennan, where the three trumpets manage to signify themselves without overwhelming the other members, like fine New Orleans interplay. As Douglas has said, "It doesn't have to be a high note competition."

The unified result sometimes calls to mind the music of The Westerlies in its chamber-like arrangements. But Douglas' penchant for box-of-chocolate jazz compositions distances *Alloy* from mere comparisons; the music travels from quasi-classical to bop to modal abstraction to spiritual blues, sometimes in the same tune. The ensemble passes the test on "The Illusion of Control", a great title for a collective improvisation by musicians who bathe in synchronicity; the group's keen rapport creates implied structure as Douglas leads and the others follow like mind-readers. The trumpet-leader's affinity for spiritual and other folk tropes shows up here. "Announcement: Vigilance" (the album opener) is led by reverberating horns and vibe sheen, out of which a hymn-like melody emerges before a snare rap from drummer Rudy Royston pronounces a blues statement, with appropriate slurring from Douglas and steady support from bassist Kate Pass. On "Fields", the horns trade single-note expressions that slide into more elongated phrases, almost like Appalachian *a capella* spirituals. Brennan's church-chime addition heralds a gospel-swing interlude that evolves into

a tongue-speaking cacophony. "Standing Watch" bookends the album with another choral pronouncement, this time similar to a funeral stroll where each player has a final word.

On the modal title cut, Douglas' cup-muted pronouncement opens a spirited trade-off with Ridout, followed by a solo passage from each that swings over lovely vibraphone comping. Adewumi then carries on as a lead-in to Royston's solo display. In "The Antidote", chamber themes are eschewed and replaced by solid bop. Douglas, accompanied by a walking line, sets the tone and pace with a fanciful swinging intro that is answered in kind by Ridout as the arrangement settles into a solo/chorus/solo pattern. Adewumi breaks the rhythmic cycle with a deep blues passage bolstered by Pass and Brennan's tandem support, leading to the latter's solo.

On *Alloy*, the chromatic harmony proves that Dave Douglas' instincts are keen, as he and his friends celebrate "trumpets blending" in a show of unification over competition and division.

For more info visit greenleafmusic.com. The album release concert is at The Jazz Gallery Sep. 5-6 (part of FONT Music). See Calendar.



Technically Acceptable
Ethan Iverson (Blue Note)
by Andrew Schinder

Pianist Ethan Iverson is also one of modern music's foremost authors, curators and intellectuals. His long-running blog, *Do the Math*, now morphed into Iverson's Substack, *Transitional Technology*, is one of the finest out there and offers valuable jazz insights and information. In addition to having collaborated with frequent bandmate Billy Hart on the drumming legend's just-published autobiography, *Oceans of Time*, Iverson recently released his new album, *Technically Acceptable*. Borrowing from jazz and classical idioms, and utilizing two different sets of accompanying musicians—Thomas Morgan (bass) and Kush Abadey (drums) or Simón Willson (bass) and Vinnie Sperrazza (drums)—the results of the two piano trios taken together are, probably, inevitably, somewhat inconsistent. The highs nevertheless outweigh any lows, resulting in an ultimately successful collection that is certainly much more than its winking title suggests.

Album opener "Conundrum", which Iverson suggests could be the theme song to a game show, is a bright, cheerful ditty, showcasing his virtuosity, but like a flash it ends, clocking in at a mere minute and a half. The bluesy title track with the Morgan/Abadey tandem is a highlight, with a delightfully head-bobbing walking bass line and the pianist having a blast filling in the gaps. With the Willson/Sperrazza trio, the leader plays with time signatures on the more serious (but still interesting) "It's Fine to Decline", which leans into Iverson's avant garde tendencies, even though it ultimately remains grounded in the blues tradition. Two familiar covers provide a climax to this trio portion of the album, starting with the Latin-tinged "Killing Me Softly With His Song", which is perfectly pleasant, but on a program that often leans into intellectualism and complexity, feels out of place (ultimately, this interpretation can't compare to the iconic Roberta Flack or Fugees versions). Conversely, the cover of Thelonious Monk's "'Round Midnight" is stunning. Multi-instrumentalist Rob Schwimmer joins the trio and owns the track on theremin, mimicking an operatic human voice that imbues new emotional depth to a well-wrung standard.



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A three-movement solo piano sonata concludes the collection, and here Iverson particularly shines. Recalling modern masters such as Philip Glass and Steve Reich, but overlaying the chamber music with a hint of swing and blues, the sonata is rich and exciting. It's Iverson at his most successful, melding an encyclopedic knowledge of modern music history with blissful, forward-thinking listenability.

For more info visit bluenote.com. Iverson is at Village Vanguard Sep. 30 to Oct. 5. See Calendar.



Entwined

Karen Borca/Paul Murphy (Relative Pitch)
Good News Blues

Karen Borca (NoBusiness)
by Brad Cohan

The website of Karen Borca reads: "Bassoonist/Composer Karen Borca is a pioneer of the bassoon in Avant-garde Jazz and Free Jazz." On her instrument, she is indeed the pioneer. Celebrating her 77th birthday this month (Sep. 5), Borca has studied and played with Cecil Taylor, Jimmy Lyons (to who she was also married until he passed away in 1986), Bill Dixon and many other jazz giants.

A powerful presence with a singular tone and a profoundly expressionistic language, she has owned the tools and chops to command as a leader, and after nearly 50 years, her leader debut has finally arrived in *Entwined*. The set sees Borca paired with musical soul mate, drummer Paul Murphy. Their kinship dates back to the '70s as members in Lyons' groups and as loft jazz scene linchpins. With that kind of history, it's a given the duo's rapport would be in a league of its own. The album's seven pieces cover the spectrum, with five Borca originals, plus one credited to Murphy and an improvised jaunt. The pure synergy is hair-raising from start to finish. The heights these two reach in the technical and free-spirited senses is done with such an effortless touch it's akin to magic — few modern-day duos can pull that from their sleeves. The album kicks off with "Good News Blues", twelve glorious minutes that find Borca alight from the outset, unleashing a groundswell of bluesy and boppish passages, spiritually and mechanically dialed in with Murphy as he sprays a wide array of dizzily colorful beats. "Snapping Turtle", is just as electrifying as it shifts from Borca's majestically melodic lines and refrains, which open the track, before quickly morphing into a gonzo blues. "New Piece" is as thrilling, hurdling from Borca's mid-tempo, infectious phrases to rapid-fire intensity in a split second.

Good News Blues, a live-in-concert, archival document recorded at two Vision Festivals (1998 and 2005), also stands as a testament to Borca's brilliance. Listening to both back-to-back is a revelation. All four of the tunes here also appear on *Entwined* and it's fascinating to hear how Borca's compositional and improvisatory aesthetics have evolved over the years, ever-mutating and rife with a constant stream of fresh ideas and techniques. It's also remarkable for its diverse band presentations as heard on the title track, as well as "Something" and "Cambiar". Borca was joined at each of the two festival editions by a rolling cast, including alto saxophonist Rob Brown, plus bassists William Parker, Reggie Workman and Todd Nicholson, as well as drummers Susie Ibarra, Newman Taylor Baker and Murphy. On the title track it's a joy to hear Parker's meaty, hard-driving propulsions that help guide the rhythmic charge. The set concludes with the big-band epic "45 Hours/New Piece" (from 2005), featuring Borca, Brown, the twin-bass attack of Workman and Nicholson (it's a quintessential Vision Festival moment of uplift) and Taylor-Baker.