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JAZZ

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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.

Karen Borca's name might be atop the marquee for the first time with these two recent releases, but her genius was cemented long ago.

For more info visit nobusinessrecords.com and relativepitchrecords.com



Open Space
Lori Goldston (Relative Pitch)
by Bill Meyer

You might say that cellist Lori Goldston keeps interesting company. A brief list of her associations includes Nirvana, David Byrne, Sleep, Judith Hamann, Laura Cannell and Greg Kelley. In addition to spanning the genres from folk to metal to free improvisation, she's performed with puppet theaters and, if you happen to live near her in the Pacific Northwest, she might be the cellist accompanying your dance class. You might also say she does not like to be pinned down. But she definitely has preferences, and one of them is to dig into the timbres obtained by amplification. That has not always been evident on record.

While her work with rock bands is long-standing, she did not release her first album, *Film Scores*, until 2013, and for nearly a decade after that her recordings emphasized acoustic settings. *Open Space* extends a row of raw distortion that Goldston first hoed on *Feral Angel*, a duo with Sleep's Dylan Carlson, which she released in 2021. But on no previous recording has she dug this deep or for this long. It's as though Neil Young picked one spot on his soundtrack to *Dead Man* and said "yup, this is the hill I'll die on," and then set about digging his fortifications with a feedback-fueled steam shovel.

This focus on duration reflects the album's recording process. While it is divided into ten tracks, Goldston recorded it all in one long take, during which she watched a film of light slowly changing in an otherwise static shot of a canyon. The music opens with a high peal of feedback, which modulates down to a lower, grittier pitch, and then sustains a coarse, continuous roar for an hour and a quarter. On other solo recordings, Goldston has forged melodies and explored dynamics; here she shifts at irregular intervals between grinding textures and elongated howls, never moving very fast or far. This music eschews Sleep's stolid cadences in favor of something more organic and episodic, but is similarly unhurried. Paradoxically, while this is a long album, it feels like it could last a lot longer.

For more info visit relativepitchrecords.com. Goldston is at *Reforesters* Sep. 21. See Calendar.



Chapter One
Caelan Cardello (Jazzbird)
by Marilyn Lester

There's an unofficial "club" of young rising piano players on the NYC jazz scene these days: twenty-somethings

whose chops form a dizzying collective of talent: Esteban Castro, Isiah J. Thompson, Paul Cornish, Quintin Harris — and Caelan Cardello. His album, *Chapter One*, marks a stepping forward as a leader, a debut he's been preparing for, honing his composing and arranging abilities (eight of the 11 tracks on the album are his) as he continues to work on his style, which he describes as "...swing; well, trying to preserve swing, with newer melodies — modern melodies — and thinking of different ways to present swing with my own touch." He's supported by Jonathon Muir-Cotton (bass) and Domo Branch (drums), who possess intuitive skill in backing the pianist, with Chris Lewis (tenor) guesting on three selections.

Album opener is "Gone Fishin'" (not to be confused with the Nick and Charles Kenney standard popularized by Louis Armstrong), a tribute to his father and the late Harold Mabern's advice that he find compositional inspiration in people and moments close to his heart. The tune is exuberant, with a feel of spontaneity conjuring images of rolling waters, jumping fish and the simple joy of casting a line and reeling in the catch. Two other originals are also highly evocative, painting sonic images. "A Night in New York", a slow contemplative, balladic work, features single note progressions and a clean spare chord structure, yet speaks volumes. What might be going on? Not night-clubbing; more like curled up with a good book on a rainy night. Cardello wears his heart on his sleeve with "Where Do We Go Now", written during an emotional time. It's almost dirge-like, yet contains a strange beauty in its phrasing and melodic simplicity. Bass and drums occasionally enter with short statements, à la a Greek chorus. Lewis is featured on "John Neely — Beautiful People" (a Mabern original from his 1969 *Wailin'* album), playing straight-ahead bop, with comping by Cardello that politely urges forward momentum. Cole Porter's "All of You", the one standard, is swung with whimsy and fun pianistic commentary, including glissandi, "woodpecker" jabs and an emphatic pounding chord or two. Muir-Cotton also has his moment in the spotlight.

Cardello is a smart, economical player with a light touch. He offers sturdy melodies, creative harmonies and rhythms that bring his pieces to life via expert storytelling. *Chapter One* should bring many new fans into the Cardello camp as we wait for *Chapter Two*.

For more info visit jazzbird.org. The album release concert is at *Dizzy's Club* Sep. 16. Cardello is also at *Birdland* Sep. 6, *The Side Door* (Old Lyme, CT) Sep. 12-13, *Calvary Baptist Church* (Newburgh, NY) Sep. 14 and *Dizzy's Club* Sep. 21 (with Tyreek McDole). See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.



Thereupon
Fieldwork (Pi Recordings)
by Tom Greenland

The collective trio Fieldwork has had a home at Pi Recordings since its 2002 debut *Your Life Flashes* (which was the fifth release in the label's now vast catalog). Vijay Iyer has sat in the piano chair since the beginning, joined by alto saxophonist Steve Lehman since 2005's *Simulated Progress* and by drummer Tyshawn Sorey since 2008's *Door*. The trio's fourth album, *Thereupon*, arrives after a significant hiatus, reprising this same lineup, Iyer and Lehman splitting composer chores. Although Sorey, who wrote over half the pieces for *Door*, didn't write for this project, his contributions are heard and felt in the final product. This is because each "tune" is subject to intensive workshopping,

with input from each musician, when the raw ore of a composition is forged and fabricated into its final form. The absence of a bassist in the trio creates a notable lacuna, Iyer partially filling it with pounding left patterns, primarily played on acoustic piano, though he switches to an electric Fender Rhodes on two tracks.

Most of the song forms utilize asymmetrical rhythmic schemes reminiscent of M-Base's through-composed drum chants. The pulsing is there, the forward motion undeniable — Sorey makes sure of that — but it's difficult to tap your foot to this music. All three musicians work at full caliber, especially on more aggressive numbers such as "Propaganda", "Embracing Differences", "Fire City" and "Domain". Lehman handles much of the melodic improvisation, frequently simmering at the edge of ecstasy, his lines dense without overcrowding, his tone varying from whispers and whinnies to false-fingered multiphonics and trailing echoes. On "Domain" he shrieks like a nervous seagull protecting its nest. Iyer has both hands full holding down harmony and bass parts but he's able to cut loose a little on tracks including "Evening Rite", "Fire City" and "Fantôme". His layered figurations add much to impressionistic pieces such as "Astral", the title track and "The Night Before".

Some of the album's most memorable moments include the organic exchanges between the pianist and alto saxophonist on "Evening Rite", the gradual emergence of the principal theme during the latter half of "Fire City", the bouncing-ball phrases that permeate "Fantôme", the downward spiraling tempo-shifts of the title track and the ethereal soundscapes of "The Night Before", heightened here and elsewhere by tasteful panning, reverb and other audio effects processing.

For more info visit pirecordings.com. The album release concert is at *Roulette* Sep. 19. See Calendar.

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