

"I Wanna Be Loved", morphing the tune into a carefree and strolling travelogue through the possibilities of new affections. On the other end of the songbook spectrum, 1939's "Stairway to the Stars" maintains its status as a masterpiece of dreamy balladry, the song held together by the collective players' restrained delivery. For the album closer, the group takes the title song, the pensive Cole Porter tune written for the 1938 musical comedy *Leave It to Me!*, through a farewell send-off that kicks into high gear after its plaintive opening vocal-and-piano introduction.

Fans of old-school jazz vocals with piano would do well to take a trip through *Get Out of Town*.

For more info visit nettwerk.com. *Anglade* is at White Plains Public Library (White Plains, NY) Sep. 12 (part of White Plains Jazz Festival). See 100 Miles Out.



SCRATCH Band
Ron Blake (7tèn33 Productions)
by Jason Gross

Born in Puerto Rico, growing up in St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands, saxophonist Ron Blake settled in NYC by the early '90s, working with Roy Hargrove, Art Farmer and the Christian McBride Big Band (in which he won a few GRAMMYs). He is a 20-year veteran of the *Saturday Night Live* (SNL) band and has taught at Juilliard among other credits, giving Blake only so much time to record as a leader in the new millennium. His new *SCRATCH Band* trio (wherein he plays tenor, soprano and baritone), with Reuben Rogers (bass) and John Hadfield (drums), creates his sparest record yet. As on *Mistaken Identity* (2023), recorded in 2021 during pandemic-time, he does mostly covers here, though with more audacious choices.

Starting with "Bassman" by calypsonian Winston McGarland Bailey (aka The Mighty Shadow), Blake sports a lively bouncy sound, reveling in his Caribbean roots. The oft-played standard "Body and Soul" follows in a mood that's somehow despondent, but lovely, picking up the pace later and done mostly as a duet with Rogers, who plays along sympathetically. Hargrove's "Another Level" salutes Blake's old leader but where the original was more lively, Blake is downbeat and sparse, with Rogers bolstering him all the way. Recorded in response to Black Lives Matter, "Lift Every Voice and Sing" (often referred to as the "Black National Anthem") is another familiar choice, but Blake makes the James Weldon Johnson composition his own, coming in alone and mournfully, later finding strength and sounding defiant by the end. There are a trio of originals, starting with "Grace Ann", first heard on Blake's previous album but brighter here, with its bluesy, noirish vibe. "Appointment" is the most upbeat tune, with a breezy funk groove, as the leader starts out sensually, then adds expressive staccato honks and flurries of notes. "Song for Maya" has a tender, loving tone, as befits a song written for his daughter. "La Conga de Juana" retains the infectious theme (from Cuban singer Kelvis Ochoa's original) with a sensual, bouncy vibe that rides on the melody. "April's Fool" has Blake playing sweetly yet sadly, sounding like a dejected lover drowning his sorrows in a late-night bar.

SCRATCH Band makes you wish that Blake was more prolific on his nights off from SNL.

For more info visit ronblakemusic.com. Blake is at Dizzy's Club Sep. 9-10 (with Patrick Zimmerli's Messages). See Calendar.



Strange Heavens
Linda May Han Oh (Biophilia)
by George Kanzler

There's a suave, smooth cohesion to the music produced by the unique trio bassist Linda May Han Oh has assembled for her new album, *Strange Heavens*. She, trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire, and drummer Tyshawn Sorey mesh together like the works of a fine timepiece. The easy rapport of Oh and Sorey developed with their time in pianist Vijay Iyer's trio, and Akinmusire was the trumpeter on Oh's first release as a leader, *Entry* (s/r, 2008), also a trio but with Obed Calvaire behind the drum kit.

For her new release, Oh has crafted ten original pieces, rounding out the album with works by the late Geri Allen and Melba Liston. And only one of the tracks, her "Noise Machinery", propelled by a rocking stutter-step groove, breaches the five-minute mark (and only by 27 seconds). The rest fall within what would have been single-side time territory before LPs; most of Oh's tunes have short melodic hooks or repeated phrases that the musicians all reference in their solos.

The leader is a bassist with a resonant, reverberant tone, each note booming out with a sustained legato. She favors the lower and mid-range of her instrument, eschewing the upper register, guitar-like imitations of some contemporary bassists. Her playing is forthright and assured enough to fully assert her presence as a full aural member of any group, regardless of size. She and Sorey interact seamlessly, and he is a marvel of ingenuity, cohesion and precision. No bashing or banging—he wields his kit like a well-oiled machine. Trumpeter Akinmusire is also a revelation, responding to the tune cues as well as those of his fellow trio members with a wide variety of tonal and timbral approaches. While he is capable of bending and squeezing notes as well as playing with grainy, altered tones, his mid-range, midtempo solos here reveal a penchant for warmth and lyricism. That trait makes the "yearning, cautious optimism" (in the words of liner notes writer Shaun Brady) of the title track, along with his big, confident tone and romantic approach in Liston's "Just Waiting", among the highlights of this constantly intriguing, eminently listenable album.

For more info visit biophilarecords.com. Oh is at Birdland Theater Sep. 12-14 (with Geoffrey Keezer). See Calendar.



Gettin' Together!
Art Pepper (Contemporary-Craft Recordings)
by Duck Baker

As Martin Williams wrote in his original liner notes 65 years ago, *Gettin' Together!* was a sort of follow-up to the much acclaimed *Art Pepper Meets the Rhythm Section*, which the alto saxophonist (whose centennial falls on the first of this month) had recorded for Contemporary in 1957. Both albums featured the Miles Davis backing band of their respective times, with bassist Paul Chambers being

the only holdover; pianist Wynton Kelly had replaced Red Garland, and drummer Jimmy Cobb had assumed Philly Joe Jones' place. Trumpeter Conte Candoli is added on three numbers, and Pepper even plays tenor on one track, something he did occasionally throughout his career (indeed, he gave a taste of his tenor on his previous Contemporary release, *Art Pepper + Eleven: Modern Jazz Classics*).

Gettin' Together! kicks off with the bassist's boppish blues "Whims of Chambers" (the title track to Chambers' second record in 1957)—and better openers are hard to come by. Everyone solos, with Pepper, Kelly and Chambers demonstrating that they were among the most convincing melodic improvisers around. It's no slight on Candoli to say that he wasn't quite in this league. How many people were? He certainly had great facility and a fine trumpet sound, but his lines were somewhat more predictable. Every track on this album is outstanding. There may never have been a better rendition of "Softly, as in a Morning Sunrise", which is saying a lot. André Previn's pearl of a ballad "Why Are We Afraid" has been strangely overlooked. Pepper's quirky "Bijou the Poodle" and Thelonious Monk's "Rhythm-A-Ning" were in the repertoire of Howard Rumsey's band, which featured both Pepper and Candoli, and accordingly the heads are a little more arranged. The title track is the ad-lib blues on which the leader plays tenor. This, of course, was home territory for the rhythm section, as they would prove countless times in the following years as the Wynton Kelly Trio, as well as with Wes Montgomery, Joe Henderson and others.

All of Pepper's '50s-'60s Contemporary titles are superb, and they were all beautifully recorded. What's more, these remastered 180g LP reissues, as part of Craft's "Acoustic Sounds Series," sound fantastic.

For more info visit craftrecordings.com

LESLIE PINTCHIK TRIO

WEDNESDAY SEPT 24th
7:00 AND 8:30 PM

AT ZINC BAR
82 WEST 3RD ST.
NEW YORK CITY

"...a composer of emotional depth and effortless lyricism..."

— DOWNBEAT

PRAYER FOR WHAT REMAINS
is available now at Amazon, Spotify & Apple Music

LESLIEPINTCHIK.COM