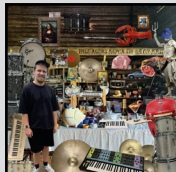


GLOBE UNITY



Al Alba
Matthieu Saglio/Camille Saglio (ACT Music)
Köper Sig Ur En Kris
Nils Agnas (Moserobie)
The Alpine Session
Florian Arbenz, Michael Arbenz, Ron Carter
(Hammer-Recordings)
 by Daniel A. Brown

If the idiom that “the family that plays together, stays together,” is to be believed, jazz music has benefited greatly from the influence of siblings working in the field. In fact, the influence of sibling jazz musicians is a familial phenomenon that has affected the entire growth and prism of jazz, from classic swing and bebop to fusion and free jazz, a family tree that includes The Adderley Brothers (Cannonball and Nat); Albert and Donald Ayler; The Boswell Sisters; Brecker Brothers (Michael and Randy); Nels and Alex Cline; Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey; Jimmy, Percy, and “Tootie” Heath; the Jones brothers (Hank, Thad and Elvin); Ellis Marsalis and his sons; Wes, Buddy and Monk Montgomery; Wayne and Alan Shorter, et al. This month we

highlight three recent international releases by siblings Matthieu and Camille Saglio; Nils, Max and Mauritz Agnas; and Florian and Michael Arbenz—albums that assure us that jazz can truly be a family affair.

On *Al Alba* (“At Dawn” in Spanish), brothers Matthieu (cello) and Camille Saglio (voice) offer a 14-track praise to the liminal, the impermanent locales of “transitions and boundaries.” Recorded on a French island in the River Loire, the intimacy of family and the remote setting is immediately evident in the contained pieces. The haunting waltz of “Con Toda Palabra (With Every Word)” features a pizzicato folk motif from Matthieu and Camille’s pleading vocal delivery. “Strange Fruit” is delivered via a minimal, ethereal arrangement, offering an impressive arco cello solo intersecting with a sorrowful vocal performance. The duo are joined by brother Gabriel (bass clarinet) on the hymn-like “Iberian Ballad”, an unabashed four-minute celebration of Romanticism in all forms.

The five-track session *Köper Sig Ur En Kris* finds Stockholm-based drummer Nils Agnas and brothers Max (double grand piano) and Mauritz (bass), with tenor saxophonist (and Moserobie label honcho) Jonas Kullhammar—all players emblematic of the current Swedish scene. The angular, modernist-leaning “Isotope” (Joe Henderson) features Max and Kullhammar volleying curling counterpoint ideas over the bubbling rhythm section; the stop-

start blues-tinged “Ictus” (Carla Bley) evokes early ’60s Ornette Coleman, while the standard “Over the Rainbow” (Harold Arlen) is crystallized into a spatial pool, with Max’ piano filigrees nudging the band into a dreamy, pointillistic ballad, capped by a tasteful Mauritz bass solo.

A worthy trio session, featuring the twin Swiss Arbenz brothers of Florian (drums) and Michael (piano) with legendary double bass magus Ron Carter, *The Alpine Session* is a captivating audio document of two younger players performing with the very musician whom they acknowledge as deeply significant to their (and many others’) musical development. The group comes out of the gate with opener “It Don’t Mean a Thing (If It Ain’t Got That Swing)”, ostensibly a highly interpretive retelling of the Ellington masterpiece; regardless, it’s a masterclass of rollicking virtuoso playing from the group, with piano jabs met in turn by percussive accents. The contemplative “Alive” features Florian’s tom-heavy rhythm anchoring a singular minimal lushness from Carter and Michael. “Old Shaman” harkens back to the wellspring of ’60s Blue Note sessions, a scene co-created by Carter. In total, *The Alpine Session* is a winning blend of an astute reverence for the tradition combined with forward-looking explorations.

For more info visit actmusic.com, moserobie.bandcamp.com and florianarbenz.bandcamp.com



New York Love Letter (Bitter Sweet)
Nasheet Waits (Giant Step Arts)
 by Matty Bannond

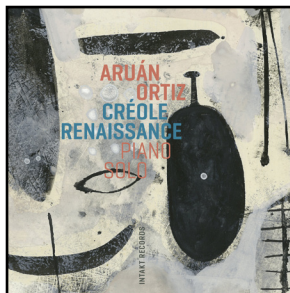
Chirping birds and hollering toddlers hide in the corners of the restless *New York Love Letter (Bitter Sweet)*, recorded live at two pandemic-era performances, including one at the historic African American Seneca Village site in Central Park, where microphones captured input from nearby treetops and playgrounds, as well as the music, characterized by its variety of moods, energies and messages. Two factors explain this many-sided material. First, the record is a memoir of drummer Nasheet Waits’ life to date in the always-mutating city of New York. Second, the quartet has intrinsically deep and broad expertise. Waits has spent three decades absorbing a multitude of experience for his third release as a leader, and is joined on this occasion by long-time collaborators: Mark Turner (tenor), Steve Nelson (vibraphone) and Rashaan Carter (bass).

Several tunes were composed by the leader, including the longest and freest track, “The Hard Way AW”. This tense twelve-minute piece addresses the Central Park Five, a group of teens wrongfully accused and convicted of a park rape in 1989, and who served long prison terms before being cleared and exonerated in 2002 (they have since been better known as the Exonerated Five). The composition is marked by fitful percussion and squirming saxophone runs, before it wilts to a serene but exhausted close. Serpents inspired two other tracks: Jason Moran’s “Snake Stance” is a fidgety and swinging number

that features a bright, bubbly improvisation from Nelson’s vibes, while Andrew Hill’s “Snake Hip Waltz” (which Waits recorded previously on his 2016 album, *Between Nothingness and Infinity*) has a soft, swaying momentum, within which Turner delivers a congenial and noodly, melodic line. Both tunes communicate the slippery movements and wiles often necessary for navigating life in the Big Apple. John Coltrane’s “Central Park West” ends the record with an unequivocal declaration of affection for NYC. Drummers rarely get the spotlight on love songs, but Waits plays a balladeering solo here that underscores the remarkable range of his expressive gift that is in his DNA (his father was the late, great Freddie Waits).

New York Love Letter (Bitter Sweet) marches across sonic neighborhoods marked by rich and striking diversity. Nasheet Waits has a unique capacity to attract attention while slipping beneath the radar at the same time. Like its beloved metropolitan muse, this album never sleeps.

For more info visit giantsteparts.org. Waits is at Mezzrow Sep. 6-7 (with Jonny King) and Nublu Sep. 8 (with Steven Bernstein’s Resonance Trio, as part of FONT Music). See *Calendar*.



Créole Renaissance - Piano Solo
Aruán Ortiz (Intakt)
 by Stuart Broomer

Créole Renaissance is pianist Aruán Ortiz’ seventh release from Intakt as leader or co-leader, and his

second solo album for the label, coming some eight years after the brilliant *Cub(an)ism*. That earlier invocation of both Caribbean culture and the compound perspectives of modernism is similarly at work in this collection of pieces. It specifically celebrates the 1930s “Négritude movement” in Paris, its literary periodicals and Martinique-born poets (Aimé and Suzanne Césaire and René Ménil) supplying the titles for such Ortiz compositions as “L’Étudiant noir” and “Légitime Défense” (as discussed in Brent Hayes Edwards’ illuminating liner notes).

If Cuban jazz piano frequently emphasizes the island’s historical and cultural links to the decorative flourishes of European Romanticism, Ortiz is very different: his playing can be spare or dense, but either way, it is intense, percussive and mercurially alert to rhythmic possibility. Its roots reach to Ellington, directly referenced in the title of “Seven Aprils in Paris and A Sophisticated Lady”, but there are also affinities with pianists Don Pullen and Andrew Hill. The nine tracks range from taut miniatures to more expansive visions. The two-minute “Première Miniature” consists of rapid ascending phrases growing ever more exuberant and complex. “Deuxieme Miniature (Dancing)”, only slightly longer, moves more characteristically up and down, while the still brief “Légitime Défense” is a joyous explosion, close-voiced clusters running riot across the keyboard. Moving to more sustained pieces, there are strangely surreal dreamscapes. “We Belong to Those Who Say No to Darkness” is taut drama, isolated bass tones matched to a shimmering banjo-like prepared middle register and occasional chords. “The Great Camouflage” is a somber elegy haunted by beauty, slow brooding chords and isolated tones gradually ascending the keyboard, with sometimes palpable silences or ringing harmonics that gradually fade. The longest track, “From the Distance of My Freedom”, is a remarkable event in the history of jazz and spoken word: Ortiz speaking as well as playing the piano—part dialogue, part obligato, part solo. The text includes a few sentences, but it’s shaped by singular words and cellular phrases, many of which

end in “-ism” (“primitivism versus modernism,” “surrealism,” “post-colonialism,” “neologism.”) Also repeated: “Black Renaissance.”) Somehow simultaneously serious and playful, the spoken component ends at the five-minute mark, giving way to the free dance of Ortiz’ piano playing.

This is music of intense creativity and emotion, a commemorative dance between lament and liberation.

For more info visit intaktrec.ch. Ortiz is at Roulette Sep. 23. See Calendar.



Cream
Kassa Overall (Warp)
by Terrell K. Holmes

There are those who believe that hip-hop doesn’t belong in the same conversation with jazz. Drummer, composer, producer, rapper Kassa Overall has thrived in both worlds, and his album *Cream* marks the next episode in the jazz canon. Overall takes some of the most iconic songs in hip-hop and successfully translates them into the jazz idiom, muting the lyrics and exploring their harmonic, melodic and rhythmic treasures, transforming each one into something striking and inventive.

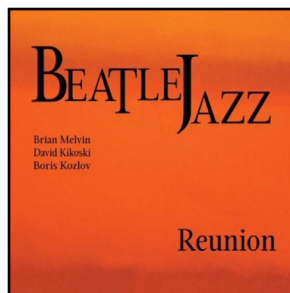
Eddie Harris’ “Freedom Jazz Dance”, a straight-ahead jazz tune associated with Miles Davis from the trumpeter’s *Miles Smiles* (1966), leads off the album: Matt Wong alternates between piano and a snarling organ; Bendji Allonce provides a funky backbeat on congas, bass drum and clap stack cymbals; Rashaan Carter holds the bottom on double bass, and there’s solid tenor sax work by Emilio Modeste. Anne Drummond’s lovely flute is at the center of The Notorious B.I.G.’s “Big Poppa”, which has a breezy bossa nova feeling that one wouldn’t ordinarily associate with Bed-Stuy, but that’s how Overall is rolling here. Modeste’s soprano is the confessing voice on the title cut, Wu-Tang Clan’s gritty classic “C.R.E.A.M. (Cash Rules Everything Around Me)”, an arresting, sobering slice of hard life: his feature cries with an urgency and intensity that mirrors the pain and confusion of Wu-Tang’s narrators.

The leader takes Digable Planets’ laid-back groove on “Rebirth of Slick (Cool Like Dat)” and turns it into a burner. An incendiary dialogue between Anthony Ware on baritone and Modeste on tenor carries the song until it abruptly hits the brakes. Drummond and Modeste are stellar on flute and bass clarinet, respectively, for the skulking and mysterious version of Dr. Dre’s “Nuthin But a ‘G’ Thang”. “Check the Rhime”, by A Tribe Called Quest, is the definitive sound of classic jazz. Wong, Carter and Overall, with furious tenor from Tomoki Sanders, moves Outkast’s “SpottieOttieDopaliscious” from an opulent acoustic sound to a robust fusion riff. The band’s version of Juvenile’s “Back That Azz Up”, with Modeste’s flawless soprano performance, might become a jazz standard in the future.

None of these songs sound contrived or forced. The arrangements by Overall are dynamic and challenging; his drumming is outstanding throughout. Listeners who come to this album with limited knowledge of hip-hop will want to check out the source material; Overall soon might hear someone laying down lines over a sample of one of his tunes. No matter one’s

musical preference, *Cream* is an excellent album that many can and will dig.

For more info visit warp.net/artists/kassa-overall. The album release concert is at Solar Myth (Philadelphia, PA) Sep. 3, The Falcon (Marlboro, NY) Sep. 8 and The Jazz Gallery Sep. 12-13. See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.



Reunion
Beatlejazz (Yama)
by Marilyn Lester

One of the most influential bands of modern popular music, The Beatles left a legacy of 188 original songs, mostly written by John Lennon and Paul McCartney, with some by George Harrison and a few by Ringo Starr. Their music was considered revolutionary in the popular/rock genre, and consequently, Beatles tunes have entered the modern American songbook. As their songwriting matured, so did the lyrical depositions of the music; The Beatles traveled far from “yeah, yeah, yeah” to become sophisticated storytellers. Beatlejazz has explored the canon instrumentally since 1999 (*A Bite of the Apple*), but the aptly named *Reunion* follows a long gap since 2007’s *All You Need*.

Reunion features 11 tracks, played by David Kikoski (piano), Boris Kozlov (bass) and nominal leader Brian Melvin (drums), and whether a listener knows the lyric or not, what the group successfully creates is mood. Three Harrison tunes are given their due. Harrison was probably the Beatle with the most innate sense of jazz and blues. The piano trio’s rendition of “Here Comes the Sun” is a Kikoski triumph, mining the original’s chordal complexity. Weaving improv with melody, the story arc of the rising sun remains a happy journey into the light. A bass intro to “My Sweet Lord”, with drum accenting throughout, moves the pianist’s driving statements, transforming the mantra-like prayer of the original into a soul-groove declaration of belief. A bass interlude adds a measure of contemplative frisson. Among the Lennon-McCartney selections, the original seriousness of “Hey Jude” is given an upbeat treatment, turning basic good advice into a pep talk: “listen, man, you can beat those blues.” An early Beatles cover, the Isley Brothers’ “Twist and Shout” receives an all-hands calypso treatment; it’s plenty of fun, with Kikoski unabashedly exploiting the joyful, syncopated time signature—limbo, anyone? Other tracks cover the serious side of The Beatles, including two from the group’s *Revolver*: “Tomorrow Never Knows” and “For No One”. The album’s closer is the existential “A Day in the Life” (*Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*), mirroring the original, beginning sweetly and progressing into chaotic piano percussiveness and ominous, angular statements leading to an abrupt finality, aided by Melvin’s persistent drumbeats.

Reunion belongs to Kikoski, but the smart support from Kozlov and Melvin add a great deal to the creative interpretations. The album is a keeper, even for those skeptical of another potentially mediocre at best jazz rendition of The Beatles. It’s musically sound and very enjoyable.

For more info visit facebook.com/profile.php?id=100012164770807. The album release concert is at Smalls Sep. 22. See Calendar.



LUCIAN BAN / MAT MANERI
JOHN SURMAN
THE ATHENAEUM CONCERT
THE BELA BARTOK FIELD RECORDINGS

SSC 1767 LP / AVAILABLE 9/5/2025
(180 grams vinyl LP)



LUCIAN BAN / MAT MANERI
JOHN SURMAN
CANTICA PROFANA
THE BELA BARTOK FIELD RECORDINGS

SSC 1766 CD / AVAILABLE 9/5/2025

For this double release, long time collaborators pianist Lucian Ban and violist Mat Maneri alongside legendary woodwind master John Surman further explore the folk music of Transylvania collected by Béla Bartók more than a hundred years ago. For the past five years the trio has deepened the spirit of their music while touring, as can be heard on their new recordings, *Cantica Profana* (CD) and *The Athenaeum Concert* (vinyl LP only).



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