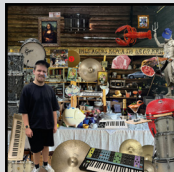


GLOBE UNITY



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

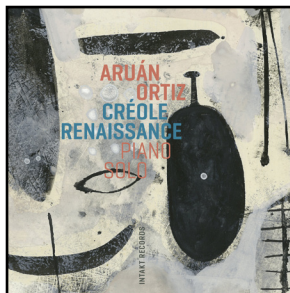
Chirping birds and hollering toddlers hide in the corners of the restless *New York Love Letter (Bitter Sweet)*, recorded live at two pandemic-era performances, including one at the historic African American Seneca Village site in Central Park, where microphones captured input from nearby treetops and 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