

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.

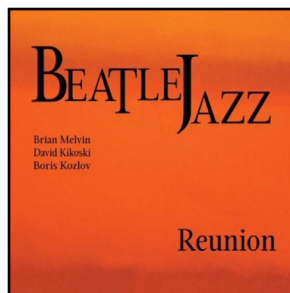
Eddie Harris’ “Freedom Jazz Dance”, a straight-ahead jazz tune associated with Miles Davis from the trumpeter’s *Miles Smiles* (1966), leads off the album: Matt Wong alternates between piano and a snarling organ; Bendji Allonce provides a funky backbeat on congas, bass drum and clap stack cymbals; Rashaan 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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