



### Sam Rivers 100

**Mark Masters Ensemble (featuring Billy Harper) (Capri)**  
by Ken Waxman

Mark Masters' masterful arrangements of Sam Rivers music for a 13-piece band are both expansive and reductive. They're expansive since California-based Masters has created big band charts for pieces that were originally recorded by quartets. Yet the sounds are reductive because all the material dates from 1965-67, a tiny slice of the career of Rivers, who was born this month in 1923 (a hundred years before this date was recorded) and whose professional career lasted from the mid '40s until his death in 2011, working with notables from T-Bone Walker to Miles Davis and Cecil Taylor.

Having helmed similar projects based on the compositions of Clifford Brown, Duke Ellington and others, Masters here is helped by collecting a group of topnotch section players and soloists. You can best appreciate his skill expressing varied moods by focusing on a trio of tunes slotted midway through the disc. "Point of Many Returns" is a bright march whose aleatory set up prevents it from slipping into stage band innocuousness, with Nicole McCabe's alto saxophone's harsh vibrations in constant counterpoint to Dave Woodley's pressurized trombone plunger tones. The piece is completed by Billy Harper's tenor tongue-slapping expression as the arrangement speeds up at the end, driven by heraldic trumpeting. "Beatrice" is a love ballad with guts (written for Rivers' wife)—with Chris Colangelo's double bass thumps steadying the pace and the choir of three trumpeters and three trombonists inserting radiant grace notes among the matched exposition from Harper's storytelling flattement and baritone saxophonist Tom Luer's thickening burbling breaths. Built around piercing unison extensions from the other horns, "Downstairs Blues Upstairs" is a romping shuffle, with brassy smears, bright squeaks and rippling triplets consistently responding to the tenor saxophonist's note-bending honks and snorts.

Masters deserves kudos for how his polished arrangements create a new variation of tunes composed for a smaller ensemble and how by celebrating Rivers' compositions he extends the jazz canon, which too often has bands stuck recreating real book standards by more famous players. But with the wealth of talent available, extending the playing past mainstream affiliations would have honored Rivers' musical inventions even more.

For more info visit [caprirecords.com](http://caprirecords.com)



### Without Further Ado, Vol. 1

**Christian McBride Big Band (Mack Avenue)**  
by Pierre Giroux

Christian McBride, the ever-versatile bassist, continues to redefine the big band idiom with *Without Further Ado, Vol. 1*, a triumph of ensemble power, jazz lineage and crossover daring. The 17-piece orchestra, a juggernaut of swing and soulful precision, roars across this album with

the controlled ferocity of a band that knows its mission: groove with purpose, swing like tomorrow is cancelled and bring every note to life.

From the opening salvo of "Murder by Numbers", the album states its bold ambitions. Sting and Andy Summers reunite with palpable chemistry, revisiting The Police's shadowy classic now layered with rich jazz orchestration. It's a blend of past and present—rock minimalism now elevated by big band maximalism. "Back In Love Again [sic]" is a funk celebration with Jeffrey Osborne strutting through the track as if he never left the charts. McBride's band is in fifth gear—tight, sassy and full of bounce. There is a dramatic vocal shift as multiple GRAMMY-winner Samara Joy delivers a hauntingly elegant "Old Folks", her vocal poise and interpretive depth surpassing her years. The band's support is lush yet restrained, complementing her interpretation. José James dives into Bobby Timmons' "Moanin'" with smoky grit and gospel inflections, guiding the band into a simmering call-and-response groove. Cécile McLorin Salvant races through "All Through the Night" with breathtaking agility, twisting the song into a vibrant tapestry of rhythm and invention. Dianne Reeves' rendition of "Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow" transforms The Shirelles' pop classic into a jazz torch song filled with heartbreaking vulnerability. Reeves' phrasing is both relaxed and urgent, with soprano saxophonist Steve Wilson delivering a solo that is tasteful and heartfelt. Antoinette Henry's performance on "Come Rain or Come Shine" is another standout, her gospel-inspired delivery bringing life to the Arlen-Mercer standard. Album closer is the McBride original, "Op.49 - Cold Chicken Suite, 3rd Movement" and highlights his dedication to advancing the big band tradition. Tenor saxophonist Ron Blake energizes the track, piercing through dense ensemble sections with a powerful tone and bebop edge. This movement, full of rhythmic complexity and clever humor, demonstrates that the bandleader's mastery of the form is both respectful and rebellious.

Christian McBride once again proves that the big band is not only alive but a vital forum of musical conversation. This release soars, swings, and seduces—often in the same breath.

For more info visit [mackavenue.com](http://mackavenue.com). McBride is at Blue Note Sep. 2-7 (in duo with Brad Mehldau). See Calendar.



### Many Rivers

**Lauren Scales, Mike Flanagan, Chris Grasso**  
(Truth Revolution Recording Collective)  
by Wif Stenger

Lester Young and Billie Holiday set the standard for saxophone-vocal symbiosis, something that seems all too rare these days. Detroit/New York singer Lauren Scales and Provincetown saxophonist Mike Flanagan reach that goal in this trio rounded out by pianist Chris Grasso, who never comes off as a third wheel. The three have additional solid support from Luques Curtis (bass) and Charles Haynes and Richie Barshay (drums) on *Many Rivers*, which marks the vocalist's debut outing.

While Pres and Lady Day supported each other with alternating moments in the spotlight, Flanagan and Scales often entwine their instruments in close duets. And while Scales doesn't sound anything like Holiday—think somewhere between Erykah Badu and Nancy Wilson—she delivers a warm, unpretentious version of a tune from Holiday's songbook, "But Beautiful", with Grasso building on Bill Evans' approach to the song. Scales' playful take on "You Know Who (I Mean You)" has hints of Annie Ross and Ernestine Anderson. An augmented band featuring

guest trombonist Steve Davis negotiates the convoluted bop hooks and solos effortlessly without raising a sweat.

There's more bebop with a mostly instrumental take on the Charlie Parker warhorse "Star Eyes". Flanagan's saxophone playing sounds a bit slick and smooth-jazzy on the theme but builds up some real heat towards the end, while Scales adds brief vocalese bits between strong, melodic turns from the rhythm section. These musicians sound comfortable and relaxed together, without taking it *too* easy. There are a couple of uncommon covers: the agile opening "Spanish Joint" by D'Angelo and the Jimmy Cliff title track—making the case for each to enter the jazz songbook (as did keyboardist Larry Goldings' 1997 vision of the latter). This version is stirring and

## John Yao & His 17-piece Instrument "Points in Time"



Now available



Listen here ▶

**DownBeat Editors Pick**

★★★★

"a hard-swinging recording from an ace large ensemble led by a forward-thinking composer-arranger and distinguished trombone voice."

Ed Enright

**SEE TAO**  
RECORDINGS

for more info visit [www.johnyao.com](http://www.johnyao.com)

## SAINT PETER'S CHURCH



## JAZZ VESPERS 5PM

September 7  
**Gerard Carelli**

September 14  
**Libby York**

September 21  
**Maria Kaushansky**

September 28  
**Richard Cortez**

### JAZZ MEMORIAL

Sept 23 - 5:30 PM  
**Al Foster**

### JAZZ ON THE PLAZA

Thursdays - 12:30PM

September 4  
**The Juilliard School**

September 11  
**The New School**

September 18  
**William Paterson Univ.**

September 25  
**Manhattan School of Music**



618 LEXINGTON AVE AT 54TH STREET • COMMUNITY & JAZZ SINCE 1965 • SAINTPETERS.ORG



anthemic, starting with leisurely piano and saxophone before Scales joins in halfway. Almost immediately, she begins adapting the sturdy melody, bringing it back to its R&B roots that's inspired so much reggae. The album ends with two strong originals by Scales, including the affecting "Find a Way" and "Saving Grace", the former on which her voice is a deep-soul marvel, pairing exquisitely with Curtis' bass commentary and Flanagan's slow, mellow playing.

For more info visit [truthrevolutionrecords.com](http://truthrevolutionrecords.com). The album release concert is at 54Below Sep. 11. See Calendar.



**Ghazi & Boom.Diwan X Arturo O'Farrill Live in the Khaleej!**  
Ghazi Al-Mulaifi and Arturo O'Farrill (s/r)  
by Franz Matzner

*Ghazi & Boom.Diwan X Arturo O'Farrill Live in the Khaleej!* is a marriage between ethnomusicology and sonic exploration, which piques curiosity and pleases the ear. Whereas context is at times a welcome additive to any artistic endeavor, it is an essential ingredient to fully appreciate this album. One pillar of the album is pearl diving music, the Kuwaiti traditional folk music that accompanied that activity, a tradition practiced for centuries until it was banned after the discovery of oil. Guitarist, bandleader and researcher Ghazi Al-Mulaifi's grandfather was one of the last pearl diving masters, and this provided the musician motivation to bring the distinct polyrhythms of this traditional sea music, along with its cultural syncretism and call-response structures, to life. The album's second pillar is GRAMMY-winning pianist, bandleader and innovator Arturo O'Farrill's exploration of the bonds between Afro-Cuban and Arab music. This exploration reverberates with its own rich, rhythmic and distinctive complexity that blends throughout the release. The final product is not a literal representation of either tradition. It is a true fusion of elements that bridge time, culture and musical contexts to form a distinct modern jazz union shaped by two master musicians and their adept colleagues.

"Muneera" plunges immediately into overlapping rhythms and intense exchanges between Al-Mulaifi's electric guitar and O'Farrill's piano, while the accompanying musicians provide alluring density, particularly the bass clarinet's distinct richness. Then the airy "Ana Mashoof" departs in the other direction. Slow-paced and brimming with nostalgia, Al-Mulaifi accompanies his vocals on the tune with blues-tinged guitar notes. Here we also witness Mateo's deft bass playing and Jasper Shogo Dutz' clarinet mastery as the musicians shape a musical narrative. The remainder of the tunes project a similarly broad range of textures, exposing listeners to complex and unusual rhythms, such as the Khaleeji rhumba. Another notable feature of the album is its variety of percussive instruments, each drawn from Afro-Cuban, Latin and Arabic heritages.

In sum, *Ghazi & Boom.Diwan X Arturo O'Farrill Live in the Khaleej!* is a life-affirming, mesmerizing example of pan-culturism that revels in music's intertwined histories and pliable capacity for ceaseless evolution.

For more info visit [boomdiwan.com](http://boomdiwan.com). Arturo O'Farrill is at *Birdland Sundays* (with Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra) and *The Cutting Room* Sep. 5 (with MFM Unity Ensemble). See Calendar.



**Hyperglyph**  
Chicago Underground Duo (International Anthem)  
Milan  
Rob Mazurek (Clean Feed)  
Color Systems  
Rob Mazurek Quartet (RogueArt)  
by Patrick Romanowski

Composer, trumpeter, synthesist, painter and poet Rob Mazurek is one of the most distinct and indefatigable artists working in contemporary music. His prolific and far-reaching creative output as both a soloist and collaborator in myriad groups spans the course of the past 30 years from Chicago to Brazil to his current home base in Marfa, TX. Mazurek has had a hand in numerous ensembles, including his long-running collaboration with Chad Taylor in the Chicago Underground Duo, as well as the more outwardly expansive Exploding Star Orchestra. These groups are just a few of the vehicles in which he continues to operate, distilling his multidisciplinary "abstractivist" approach. While maintaining deep ties to the underground network of inveterate players in Chicago's avant garde, Mazurek consistently incorporates a new generation of younger musicians into the mix. Taken together, these three recent releases are exemplary of this multifaceted and collaborative quality in his work.

Marking the Chicago Underground Duo's first release in 11 years, *Hyperglyph* is an absolute killer. Mazurek handles trumpet, piccolo trumpet, RMI electric piano, synths, voice, flute and bells, along with a few spoken word passages, to an igniting, vivid effect. The compositions have an ultra-radiant sound, as transcendent moments of hard, bright rhythm strike out the path, and zone in and out of a panoply of electro-acoustic soundscapes. The opening single, "Click Song" rallies the vibe—a cavorting, ecstatic horn chant embedded in a swarm of polyrhythms, heralding a kind of electrified Les Baxter port of call for the future. Taylor's work on drums, mbira and kalimba is phenomenal. The title track is outstanding, with its ferocious rhythmic core pulsing throughout the foreground of the album. On every track a series of hypnotic and infectious grooves blend seamlessly into the lively holographic dimensions of the production and make for totally absorbing listening. "Contents of Your Heavenly Body" is tagged with a few spoken word passages by Mazurek through the sieve of a compressed mic. His voice has a kind of Captain Beefheart-flavored vamp of atomic punctuation delivered with a cool undercurrent reminiscent of a telegraphic William S. Burroughs dispatch from Tangiers. "Towards oblivion, unremitting, screaming, furious," it works amazingly well. Coupled with the supportive engineering genius of the International Anthem label's Dave Vitrano, the album is profoundly fresh from start to finish.

*Milan* is an excellent solo date from a live 2023 radio broadcast recorded at Radio Popolare (in Milan, Italy) for the Italian radio program, *Jazz Anthology*. The album consists of eight original compositions on which Mazurek dexterously toggles between trumpet, piccolo trumpet, prepared piano, sampler, bells, shakers, flute, vocals and an arsenal of other percussion instruments. A powerful and haunting live solo performance, he exerts a singular improvisational prowess upon the materials at hand, firing on all textural cylinders. Tracks such as "Magic Yellow Bucket", "Bar Basso" and "Moss Covered Hips" flow between a few prevailing dramatic modes and descend into lower registers with a series of suspenseful piano and trumpet explorations. A basin of spontaneous and shambolic passages pepper the decisive moments with rustic fits of jangling spiritual elements.

The Rob Mazurek Quartet's *Color Systems* features Mazurek (trumpet, piccolo trumpet, bells, electronics) with Angelica Sanchez (piano), Tomeka Reid (cello) and Chad Taylor (drums). The album is a series of expansive compositions and improvisational ensemble suites based on Mazurek's own watercolors, which he dedicated to

other visual artists, and which in turn were issued to the quartet to serve as a springboard for the creation of the music. "For Page Color System for Louise Nevelson" opens with a steely, desolate vibe. Sanchez enters with a stark dash of chords, while the leader beckons the group in with a series of muted, textured trumpet trills. Lucid forms begin to emerge as the ensemble journeys from darkness to light. Reid's playing is remarkable throughout, establishing a grounding and intense undercurrent. Taylor trades intuitively between mallets, brushes and sticks, building the aesthetic momentum and rising to the surface to lock in with Mazurek at decisive rhythmic pivots. "Nineteen Colors on a Three-Sided Box for Nuno Ramos" is a harrowing exploration of tone shifts, navigated with a spry spiritual essence. The group steers into some sharp, stunning, animated moments. Overall, the album concept is fascinating and the music wonderfully articulated within the intimate framework of each piece; melded together with a warm and rich production, the acoustic interplay between the musicians is delicately attuned and absolutely superb.

For more info visit [intlanthem.com](http://intlanthem.com), [cleanfeed-records.com](http://cleanfeed-records.com) and [roguart.com](http://roguart.com). The Chicago Underground album release concert is at Public Records Sep. 13 and Solar Myth (Philadelphia, PA) Sep. 14. See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.



**A Little Taste: A Tribute to Dave Frishberg**  
Rebecca Kilgore (Cherry Pie Music)  
by Scott Yanow

West Coast-based Rebecca Kilgore (who turns 76 this month) has been a top swing singer ever since she made her 1981 recording debut. Her appealing voice (slightly reminiscent of Doris Day), perfect placement of notes for maximum swinging, impeccable articulation and full knowledge of the lyrics that she interprets, have always made her a major attraction at classic jazz festivals. Unfortunately, serious health problems now have forced her into permanent retirement. Yet, her collaborations with trombonist Dan Barrett and guitarist-singer Eddie Erickson (as the group BED) are well remembered. *A Little Taste*, a tribute to her long-time friend and occasional duet partner, pianist-composer Dave Frishberg (who passed away in 2021), is officially her final release in a long string of rewarding recordings.

For this special project, Kilgore is accompanied by Randy Porter (piano), Tom Wakeling (bass) and Todd Strait (drums), with Barrett (trombone) guesting on three selections. Tim Jensen (flute, piccolo) and John Moak (trombone) help out on two songs apiece, along with a string quartet added on five selections, plus Kilgore's husband, Dick Titterington (trumpet), who contributed the arrangements and appears on six tunes. The singer, still then in prime form, is heard throughout. She performs three songs on which Frishberg wrote both the music and the lyrics, six pieces on which he supplied the words to instrumentals by Johnny Hodges, Johnny Mandel, Alan Broadbent and Barrett, and two numbers ("Telephone Song" and "Ah, So Pure", better known as "Martha") that he enjoyed performing. Frishberg's lyrics, which were often witty and insightful, tended to be nostalgic for '50s New York, and the swing style heard throughout this set perfectly fits the atmosphere that his words created. Among the highlights are "A Little Taste", "Little Did I Dream", "Heart's Desire", "Brenda Starr" and "Ah, So Pure".

Rebecca Kilgore never made an unworthy recording and her final statement, *A Little Taste*, is up to her usual level of swinging artistry.

For more info visit [cherrypiemusic.com](http://cherrypiemusic.com)