

before meshing with Guiliana, who provides a formal, Anthony Braxton-like march. From there, “Fifths” has spacy ’70s-era prog-rock synths, light drum rolls and sweet, warm and smoothly processed, echoing tenor saxophone lines. “Terra Firma” starts with eerie percussion and noir-like layers of bass clarinet à la Tom Waits, providing a background for Rigby’s tenor to float above with flurries of notes, climaxing in a scream and an overdubbed horn chorus. “Chimera” shifts gears again with stately piano and a peaceful flute performance, giving the feel of traditional Japanese music, as Guiliana provides a pump organ for celestial background. “YEAH BOiii” commences as a low-key saxophone/drums duet but becomes an aggressive, intricate and immersed-in-bop swing as it progresses. Yet another vibe comes into play on “Museum Piece” with Guiliana’s hazy miniature piano, while his partner joins on bass clarinet, creating a dreamy feel. “Mark”, with its rowdy drum intro and fluttering reed lines, leads to back-and-forth solo spaces. The musicians’ instinctive reactions to each other culminates in a buoyant ride cymbal-heavy drum solo with calypso-style Rigby tenor fills, before “Finality Transcends” ends the program as a mournful solo piano piece dedicated to the leader’s late brother.

With a spring tour and new quartet on tap, it will be fascinating to see where Rigby (with or without Guiliana) goes from here.

For more info visit [endectomorph.com](http://endectomorph.com). Rigby is at *Close Up* Oct. 3 (as leader), *Brooklyn Artery* Oct. 9 and *Mezzrow* Oct. 15 (both with David Cook), and *National Sawdust* Oct. 29 (with Miho Hazama). See Calendar.



**That's What's Up!  
Heavy Hitters (Cellar Music)**  
by Jim Motavalli

The Heavy Hitters share a straight-ahead landing space with The Cookers. It's safe ground for hard-bop players who've achieved jazz veteran status, with some up-and-comers thrown in for seasoning. The rooted model is the shifting personnel—and sound—of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers.

*That's What's Up!* was recorded, live and smoking, at Frankie's Jazz Club in Vancouver, BC. Pianist Mike LeDonne is the principal architect, as composer of the bulk of the material. Ten minutes of the classic-sounding “Continuum” starts things off with the swagger of Eric Alexander's big-toned tenor sound and aggressive cries, serving as part of an extended workout, leading into Jeremy Pelt's brash trumpet playing and LeDonne's lightly swinging piano touch. The group is rounded out by a younger member of the fraternity, Alexander Claffy (bass), plus sexagenarians Vincent Herring (alto) and Kenny Washington (drums). Yes, it's a head-plus-solos outing, but an exciting one that the Canadian crowd is clearly digging. “JB” has some of Miles Davis' “Milestones” in it, though it veers off and progresses from there. Alexander leaps in for a short solo, then a concise workout by Pelt and some fleet, exciting playing by Herring and LeDonne rounds it out, with finger-blurring intensity. So far, so uptempo!

The title tune, an eight-bar blues, is a boulevardier's stroll down Bop Street. The horns, especially Herring, audibly have some fun with it. “Shadows” has low-key mystery, though Pelt blows away some of the smoke.

It probably takes some effort not to sound like Lee Morgan in this context, but he convincingly pulls it off. “Groundation” is a midtempo delight, with Pelt again leading off the solos with firm support from the pianist and rhythm section. LeDonne is in particularly fine form here, with shades of early McCoy Tyner. The two standards, both lyrical ballads, are the Guy Wood, Robert Mellin “My One and Only Love” and Jule Styne, Sammy Cahn's “It's Magic”. Both serve as welcome palate cleansers, with the pianist turning the former composition into a rhapsodic solo excursion. The latter showcases the horn players, matching the pianist in the tenderness department. “Blues for All” is Alexander's sole composition contribution to the session and it's a framework for 1959 Blue Note Records. One can almost hear that blue-and-white disc spinning. There are two additional short, bonus tracks, including “Bleeker Street” (clocking in at just under three minutes), which features LeDonne's bluesy piano playing.

For more info visit [cellarlive.com](http://cellarlive.com). The Heavy Hitters are at *Dizzy's Club Oct. 24*. See Calendar.



**Slow Crawl (Performing the Music of Tim Berne)**  
**Gregg Belisle-Chi (Intakt)**  
by Ken Waxman

Transforming avant gardist alto saxophonist Tim Berne's sometimes spiky compositions into controlled chamber-style music may seem like an impossible task—or at least a brave one. But Brooklyn-based Gregg Belisle-Chi has done so on this brief (less than 37-minute) session in transcribing Berne's lines for solo acoustic guitar. While the idea may appear precipitous, if not completely foolish, the youthful, Brooklyn-based Belisle-Chi would seem to be the perfect interpreter. Not only does he now frequently play with Berne as a duo, or in a trio with drummer Tom Rainey, but this is his second album of Berne interpretations, having performed the same musical alchemy on *KOI* in 2021.

Since Berne has usually worked with rugged electric guitarists such as Marc Ducret and the more textural David Torn in the past, Belisle-Chi's acoustic recasting of eight Berne compositions offers unique variations. With the tracks encompassing lively or languid performances, expressive string slides and stops, measured strokes and a few embellishments are worked into the interpretations. Still, even when a track such as “No White Out” evolves with a few ringing chords, swift, strained slides up and down the frets and a tempo that moves from andante to allegro and back again, a certain sameness can be felt throughout. Other tunes, which are in the main played at midrange tempos, often with similar patterns, skirt ennui more often than produce excitement.

With its give-away title, *Slow Crawl* doesn't promise any more than it delivers. Belisle-Chi can certainly be commended for offering an idiosyncratic translation of Berne's music for solo guitar. Six-string fanciers will be particularly drawn to the session, yet those who have long followed the alto saxophonist may be either intrigued or repelled.

For more info visit [intaktrec.ch](http://intaktrec.ch). Belisle-Chi is at *Pete's Candy Store* Oct. 7 and *Owl Music Parlor* Oct. 26. Tim Berne is at *Greenwich House Music School* Oct. 11 (part of *Progressive Chamber Music Festival*). See Calendar.

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