



In the Beginning
Something Blue (Posi-Tone)
Unbound Inner
Willie Morris (Posi-Tone)
Pivot Point
Behn Gillece (Posi-Tone)
 by Scott Yanow

The Posi-Tone label was founded in 1995 by producer Marc Free. 30 years and hundreds of releases later, the company is still run by Free and engineer Nick O'Toole, with the emphasis being on forward-looking modern hard bop.

While the members of Something Blue are mostly not household names, talent-wise this can be considered an all-star group. On *In the Beginning*, the third release since 2018 by a group with the Something Blue name (the personnel has changed a bit with each album), the nine songs are all superior obscurities that were recorded previously by others on earlier Posi-Tone releases. This group consists of Diego Rivera (tenor), Langston Hughes II (alto), Altin Sencalar (trombone), Art Hirahara (piano), Boris Kozlov (bass) and Rudy Royston (drums). Willie Morris (tenor) is added on two songs: the melancholy ballad "Undercurrent" and the driving "Sun Sound". This is a noteworthy set of high-quality modern mainstream jazz played by top-notch improvisers who are not short on energy, inspiration or creative ideas. Such tunes as the uptempo swinger "Lookout", "Dream for Donte" and "This One's for You" (a feature for Sencalar) are deserving of a revival.

CLAUDE DIALLO *Alone Finally*

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Recorded live at the Weserburg Museum during the 2024 Jazzahead Clubnight Festival in Bremen, Germany, "Alone Finally!!!" follows much of the same pattern of Claude's previous releases, drawing on his 'Traveling' experiences in New York (Take 5, Night and Day), Japan (Sayo, Nam & An), South America (Foz do Iguaçu) and more. He even offers an impromptu free improvisation to a sound exhibit at the museum.

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Tenor-saxophonist Willie Morris' quintet on *Unbound Inner* perform seven of the leader's originals, including the infectious and affectionately-titled "The Folks Who Live Down the Hill", two by pianist Jon Davis and a rather brief tenor-vibes (Behn Gillece) duet version of Herbie Hancock's "Tell Me a Bedroom Story". There are times when the set inevitably sounds a bit like a '60s Blue Note album that teams together Wayne Shorter and Bobby Hutcherson, but the musical personalities of Morris (who switches to soprano on "Dialect") and Gillece generally shine through. Among the highlights are a thoughtful tenor-piano duet ("Flyover Country"), the exciting interplay between Morris and Gillece on the free boppish "Patterned", a hyper "How to Get Away with Murder", the gloomy ballad "Charade" and the unpredictable swinging blues "What's Expected", Kozlov and Royston again holding down the fort, respectively on bass and drums.

Behn Gillece's *Pivot Piece* consists of four of the vibraphonist's originals, two by Davis (whose concise solos consistently uplift this session), one from Morris (a welcome second version of "What's Expected") and a spirited rendition of Herbie Hancock's "Toys". The session shares the exact same personnel as the above *Unbound Inner*, with the exception of drummer Jason Tiemann sitting in for Royston on half of the album's selections. Despite the change in leadership, the music does not differ that much from Morris' album, although this one gets the edge due to slightly stronger originals. Of the more memorable performances: "Haymaker" is a no-changes swinger that sounds like something Ornette Coleman might have enjoyed playing, "Beyond the Veil" (one of two numbers with Morris on soprano) is a thoughtful ballad, Davis' "Just for Fun" (based on "Bernie's Tune") succeeds at living up to its title, while the pianist's "Changes Over Time" gives the group an opportunity to stretch out on a blues in 5/4 time.

Throughout each album the stimulating bass playing of Kozlov is not to be overlooked nor underestimated; he clearly inspires lead voices. Posi-Tone's rich catalog contains many gems, these three worthy releases included.

For more info visit posi-tone.com. Altin Sencalar and the Posi-Tone Allstars with Willie Morris, Behn Gillece, Boris Kozlov, et al. are at Our Lady of Consolation Church (Wayne, NJ) Oct. 26. Kozlov is at Marriott Vacation Club Oct. 6, 13 (with Russ Nolan), Michiko Studios Oct. 12 (with Lew Tabackin), Smalls Oct. 14 (with Arcoiris Sandoval), Ornithology Jazz Club Oct. 21 (with Dave Kikoski) and Klavierhaus Oct. 24 (with Jill McCarron). Gillece is at Smalls Oct. 29. See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.



BloodLines
Rico Jones (Giant Step Arts)
 by Jim Motavalli

The 30-minute, five-movement title track of this spiritual jazz album, "BloodLines: Suite of the Eternal and Omnipotent Spirit", is, quite clearly, chasing John Coltrane circa *A Love Supreme*. Jones, a Harlem-based tenor player who wrote all the music for *BloodLines*, his leader debut, has Coltrane's huge saxophone sound down but eschews the massed choirs of a Kamasi Washington for a tight quartet: Jones (tenor), Max Light (guitar), Joe Martin (bass) and Nasheet Waits (drums). In the studio the suite would probably have been

pared down a bit, but this album was recorded live and loose at Brooklyn's Ornithology Jazz Club. The opening suite lives up to its name, with distinct segments, including an opening "Invocation", but it also gets off the Trane, so to speak, for more of a personal musical statement from Jones. The saxophonist takes intense flurries and inventive, gnarly flights of his own, while Light's agile guitar playing reveals itself to be a tight partner throughout, chording behind the saxophonist and serving as a McCoy Tyner-like foil. Additionally, each Martin and Waits have solid solos around the tranquil sections. A highlight is the bassist's swinging lead lines, as the quartet builds towards the suite's spirited conclusion.

Following the fifth and final movement are four more tracks, starting with "Judgement and Absolution", which opens with the guitar trio before Jones' big tenor statement announces the tune's compelling theme. The group performance then builds into an impressive ascending arc before coming gently back down to earth. "Across Time" brings a little funk element to the session, via Waits' initial backbeat, encouraging an entertaining workout for the saxophonist's more straight-ahead playing chops. "The Voice of God Shines Bright" has a gorgeous opening, straight out of Coltrane disciple and bandmate, tenor saxophonist Pharoah Sanders. The piece builds, recedes, then builds again, in typical Sanders form. Jones is in full cry here, and the music is lovely, meditative and reminiscent of the best in spiritual jazz. The same is true of this album as a whole.

For more info visit giantsteparts.org. Jones is at Smalls Oct. 7. See Calendar.



It's Magic
Stella Cole (Decca)
 by Ken Dryden

Stella Cole sounds like a seasoned, accomplished vocalist who has long been performing, yet she is just 26. Cole grew up watching a wide array of classic Hollywood musicals that were filled with magical melodies and creative lyrics, singing along with them from an early age, while also enjoying her family's collection of soundtrack recordings. But while studying at Northwestern University, she double-majored in theater and international relations, not music. The rich-voiced alto first gained attention through her pandemic videos, attracting a surprising following for an as-yet-unsigned artist. Her move to NYC and meeting with veteran producer Matt Pierson would then launch her career.

It's Magic is Cole's third collaboration with the in-demand pianist, arranger and orchestrator Alan Broadbent, known for his work with Natalie Cole, Diana Krall, Shirley Horn, Sheila Jordan and Linda Ronstadt, to name a few. Her expressive voice is buoyed by Broadbent's lush, inventive string arrangements, which embellish and interact with the singer, while the pianist is subtle in his accompaniment. Cole has appeared at various jazz clubs but does not consider herself to be "jazz" singer, even though she uses some of the devices of the greats through her inflections on certain words and a natural sense of timing that makes it seem as if each composer and lyricist was looking over her shoulder.

Aside from "Alfie", the songs heard on this album