

plus three covers. The album opener is a fresh, captivating take on “Summertime” (George Gershwin), infusing the classic with funky, blues-based energy. Throughout the recording, the band uses stripped-down, unplugged acoustic arrangements that keep the singer’s voice front and center. And what a voice it is: raw, fierce, capable of expressing a wide range of moods, from mournful to playful, introspective to soulful, all of which feel both timeless and personal. “Baby Face” and “Memory” stand out as the album’s emotional core. The former selection pulses with an upbeat jazz-pop rhythm that gently nods to nostalgia, while the latter delves deeply into bittersweet reflections of a farewell. The leader’s voice reaches its most anguished and haunting heights in “Sober Now”, a raw expression of addiction to a person and eventual self-acceptance. Other highlights include powerful renditions of “House of the Rising Sun” and “Corcovado” (Antônio Carlos Jobim), where her singing in Portuguese is particularly sensual and beautiful.

Memory is a richly-textured album that firmly establishes Paloma as a fearless artist with a truly unique voice. The nine tracks skillfully balance technical finesse with heartfelt emotional immediacy, emphasizing authentic expression over studio polish. Her genre-blending, evocative and intimate approach breathes fresh life into jazz, offering a sound that could captivate and inspire a new, younger generation to fall in love with the music for the first time.

For more info visit theaudiophilesociety.com. The album release concert is at Birdland Nov. 9. See Calendar.



Gravity Unplugged
Hayes Greenfield (Sunnyside)
by Ken Dryden

Hayes Greenfield has worn many hats during his long jazz career: alto saxophonist, composer, arranger, educator, filmmaker and more. But this digital-only release, *Gravity Unplugged*, is a departure from his past recordings, with Greenfield using EFX pedals with his saxophone in a free-spirited session with Ariel De La Portilla (bass) and either Todd Turkisher or Chuck Palmer (drums). The musicians create improvised music that sometimes leads into a familiar melody, while there are also stand-alone free improvisations. With the deft use of pedals, the electronic accents take the music into new territory, as the leader mimics a variety of different instruments.

“En Route To Nardis” takes an extended, twisted path into the timeless Miles Davis modal masterpiece, incorporating exotic rhythms and voice-like effects. Greenfield’s treatment of Thelonious Monk’s “Monk’s Dream” brings out the composer’s humorous side in a different way: the EFX pedal adds a loopy electronic echoing unison line to his alto sound. “Shorty, Gravity and Beyond” is a trio improvisation, a slowly evolving piece with an ominous air. It’s impossible to avoid smiling when hearing the blues “Blooz Snooze”, which stretches well beyond the traditional sounds of the genre. The wildest track is the madcap mashup of “While Bud and Chi Chi’s Honeysuckle Rose Scrapped with the Apple”, launched with Monk’s “In Walked Bud” at a fast tempo, retaining its chord structure while taking a few liberties with it using a hilarious selection of electronic effects. De La Portilla provides a spacious rhythmic line and Palmer’s light brushwork keeps the

energy level high. The tempo slows for a long, zany segue that finally evolves into a light-hearted rendition of Fats Waller’s “Honeysuckle Rose”, then almost an immediate switch to a bop favorite, Charlie Parker’s “Scrapple from the Apple”, which utilizes the chord progression of Waller’s masterpiece, before reverting back to the former tune.

Concluding the album is a musically fascinating journey that finally reaches its destination with a suitably offbeat interpretation of Monk’s long-time theme song, “Epistrophy” (co-written with drummer Kenny Clarke in the ’40s). The trio darts in and out of the bop anthem, stretching far beyond listener expectations with its variety of rhythm and electronic seasoning.

For more info visit sunnysiderecords.com. Greenfield is at Milton Resnick and Pat Passlof Foundation Nov. 7 and Smalls Nov. 30. See Calendar.



Uzmic Ro' Samg
Ben Stapp (577 Records)
by Fred Bouchard

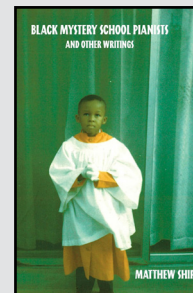
I’d just slid off an epic case of acid reflux-induced hiccups, when I put on Ben Stapp’s live album, *Uzmic Ro’ Samg*, for solo tuba and sousaphone with pedals and extensions.

“Klonopod” greets my ears: a discreet exchange between foggy alphorns, grating rubber and grumbling stegosauri, with reedy teases of contrabass sax. I modulate the volume and keep on. “Sciastica Neon” launches a solid bassline and conjures more animated images: musing manatees argue with regurgitating sea lions. I try the next day, and aural zootropic challenges increase. On “Keeper”, the growl and bleat of mastodons are overruled by a shrill “Wall-e” rant, then eerie rhythmic chiming. The stumbling, if limber, gait of “Oss” suggests a gigantic face-off, say between Bigfoot and Paul Bunyan. “Freya”, culminating in altissimo sousaphone shrieks, is surely no paean to the Norse goddess of love and war, though perhaps to her pet boar Hildisvini, if sacrificed. Audio throughout is echoey, sharp-edged; urgent pacing tends to cinematic, borderline cataclysmic. Titles derive from characters/entities in Stapp’s sci-fi writings. Two space-age hipsters in the cast might be “Errathemuel” and “Egdon”, who jauntily limn, respectively, a boppish quick-step in straight eights and a suave, sad, legato soliloquy. “Eono” dives deep-toned into the discourse of duality.

In this publication’s *Tuba Issue* (May 2023), as reviewers dug deep to capture weird tubist musical expressions, Stapp held forth in his feature’s interview about his exceedingly ambitious meta-world, combining literature (Luis Borges), philosophy (Carl Jung) and his own music theory (Eono-Theta Harmony, with a web of 156 scales). Stapp is surely a maestro of brass technique. Yet his scraps of themes and ideas—even as personifications and expanded with extension toys, pedal points and electronica—arguably don’t sustain narrative interest over a mere hour of album audio. One might do better matching faces with voices in his opera, *Myrrha’s Red Book*. Stay plugged, if you dare.

For more info visit 577records.com. Stapp is at Roulette Nov. 7 (with Ghost Train Orchestra), Recirculation Nov. 13 (with Uptown Out) and The Stone at The New School Nov. 21 (with Frank London). See Calendar.

IN PRINT



Black Mystery School Pianists and Other Writings
Matthew Shipp (Autonomedia)
by John Pietaro

Pianist-composer Matthew Shipp is an icon of NYC’s Downtown scene, relocating in time to observe the transformation of the East Village from a dangerous ghetto of the underserved and avant garde to a gentrified and desirable modern neighborhood. Shipp recalls in his *Black Mystery School Pianists and Other Writings* that as a “club kid” he haunted now long-gone venues such as the Knitting Factory, The Kitchen, Danceteria and the Pyramid Club. The Lower East Side, he writes, was “a vibrant vortex of myriad and profound implications in dance and art/social and cultural experiment/creating identity/mixing of races/mixing of highbrow with the lowbrow/gender bender fluidity...”

Akin to the wider philosophy about free jazz, Shipp embraces a certain metaphysical, almost theosophist spirituality in describing the breadth of the music. The core essay “Black Mystery School Pianists” cites this “alternative touch” and “subgroup of jazz pianism.” Shipp wonders how to explain the unexplainable and writes of Black heritage and “a secret code, passed through an underground way of passage, a language outside...the mainstream of jazz.” The Mystery School is a counter strike, existing within, whose spiritual father is Thelonious Monk. Other essays include moving profiles of visionary saxophonist David S. Ware, with whom Shipp worked closely. It’s easy to see the visceral connection between them as well as that with late poet-journalist Steve Dalachinsky, who championed Ware to the point of writing an entire book about the saxophonist’s residency at the old Knitting Factory.

Poet Yuko Otomo (Dalachinsky’s widow) has a lengthy intro, writing that Shipp’s book is “a spiritual manual” in its offering of a recount of their history and its myriad philosophic gems about the creative experience. It is exactly that depth of vision and dedication to cause which fuels Shipp’s foray into the written word. Amid the statements on music and musicians is the lengthiest piece, “Zero Lecture”. Shipp poses the question, “what do you think about when you are playing?” He wonders if the act of playing is a meditation to the void, or revolt against an entire upbringing and enculturation. “Yeah, man,” he declares, “Free jazz is a way to get back at all these bourgeois motherfuckers.”

Black Mystery School Pianists and Other Writings is a journey into Shipp’s imagery as much as a bold stare into the void; it stands as a document of a vital NYC artist and ultimately fits into axioms by creative artists on the revolutionary edge.

For more info visit autonomedia.org. Shipp is at Close Up Nov. 28. See Calendar.