

movement between many sonic vocabularies uniquely mapping her world. The trumpeter's becoming is bolstered by talented collaborators, contributions by essentially two full bands, a community that champions her with this leader debut. It is not just the detail that invites repeat listens, but the strength and care that pulses throughout.

For more info visit candidrecords.shop.musictoday.com. Casado is at Close Up Dec. 5 (as leader) and Threes Brewing Dec. 7 (with Jonathan Reisin). See Calendar.



Live At The Village Vanguard
Bill Stewart (Criss Cross)
by Jeff Cebulski

After his stint as John Scofield's drummer in the '90s, Bill Stewart gained a following for his energetic, cymbal-driven style and for being a unique composer among drummers. Following two highly-regarded Blue Note albums (his sophomore and junior sessions as leader) in the mid '90s, Stewart has often recorded as part of a trio, notably with organist Larry Goldings and pianist Kevin Hays or guitarist Peter Bernstein. In 2018, the drummer formed a new group and self-released *Band Menu*, with bassist Larry Grenadier (a longtime associate who has additionally served as a stalwart trio rhythm partner for the likes of Chris Potter, Mark Turner, Pat Metheny and Paul Motian) and saxophonist Walter Smith III (who has been closely aligned with trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire as well as his own ensembles since his leader debut 20 years ago). Now this trio has reappeared in Stewart's latest, *Live At The Village Vanguard*, taken from a 2023 appearance at the historic venue and featuring re-vamped music from Stewart's catalog, plus a few new compositions and one offering from Smith.

The group's synchronicity, evident on their earlier album, continues here, as the leader lives out a personal dream, having spent time sitting near other famous drummers during concerts at the Vanguard. His partners shine in response. Smith likes to operate in the upper register of his tenor, serving well on modal ballads such as "Purple Veil", where his flowing and halting cadences and Grenadier's walking lines—sometimes in tandem with Smith, sometimes with Stewart—are undergirded by the drummer's restless counterpoint. The iterated compositions shine. The drum and bass intro to "Mynah" is almost the same as on *Telepathy* (Stewart's second album for Blue Note, a quintet which also included Grenadier), while Smith entails the main melodic line with understated poise that becomes more animated as time goes. The drummer's cymbal sheen leads the modal "Space Acres" (originally from Stewart's Blue Note debut album *Suide Remarks*). Here he embarks on a drum solo with splashes, as Smith provides a spacy commentary before Grenadier enters to turn it into an interstellar blues. The more conventional blues "How Long Is Jazz?" (from Stewart's 2005 *Keynote Speakers* trio album with Goldings and Hays) gets a reconstruction that features a strong Grenadier solo over Stewart's masterfully subtle swing underneath. The driving "7.5" (which appears on Chris Potter's *Wish* album, also recorded at the Vanguard) is matched by Smith's nimble delivery, and much to the delight of the crowd.

The *esprit de corps* and positive audience reception captured throughout this recording hopefully bodes well for a return of this harmonious trio.

For more info visit crisscrossjazz.com. Stewart and Walter Smith III are at Smoke Dec. 10-14 (part of "Countdown 2026 Coltrane Festival"). See Calendar.



Sounds the Color of Grounds
Three-Layer Cake (Otherly Love)
by John Pietaro

Three-Layer Cake might be lauded a supergroup but for the DIY core of the trio constantly refuting industry hoopla. In 2021, this writer referred to the band as "downtown prophecy come to fruition, fulfilling the promise of that moment in time when punk aesthetics painted raw experimentalism and free jazz liberation." Presently, Mike Watt (bass), Mike Pride (drums, percussion) and Brandon Seabrook (guitar, banjo) are in full power mode. Where Three-Layer Cake's debut was simply visionary, *Sounds the Color of Grounds* moves the trio well beyond its members' singular influences to cast a band in every sense of the word.

Kicking off the album, "Deliverdance" is a racing hayride into heretofore unknown regions, a blurring feature for Seabrook's B&D Silver Bell tenor banjo, flat-picked. (Please note: this is a no-frailing zone, criss-crossing concepts of tradition, possibly tonality itself, over a two-step.) With Watt's throbbing, sliding bass and Pride's tireless backbeat, the opener braves the ground of the more stressful moments of the 1972 film *Deliverance*, set to both an imagined square dance and Seabrook's work with Anthony Braxton, Bill Laswell, Gerald Cleaver, Marco Cappelli and Jessica Lurie, among other avant royalty. But just as soon as the ear becomes comforted within one pseudo-genre comes the free "From Couplets to Corpuscles" with Seabrook on reverb-sweeping electric guitar, fueled by a rhythm section attack conjuring Ornette Coleman's Prince Street days. Pride's perpetual-motion wire brushes scream at Watt, whose bassline amounts to a series of snarky fills reminiscent of his best work with post-Minutemen band FIREHOSE.

"The Hasta Cloth" takes us into the nastiest of jazz fusions, with fuzz guitar over multi-layered drum and bass tracks (Pride's dumbek wonderfully crowds his drumset), and "What Was Cut from the Negative Space" conjures anything composed by Angelo Badalamenti for David Lynch, juxtaposed with painfully distorted guitar (in the best imaginable way), shifts of meter and tonality, and seemingly digitally-treated marimba. Sonically speaking, the electro acoustic "Occluded Ostracized and Onanistic" will capture the listener, its nighttime crazy-house ride through old downtown pastiche with Pat Metheny's "Bright Size Life". Yep. And in addition to the considerable instrumental prowess of each musician, the delightfully grinding spoken word by Watt keeps attention on the moment; listen to the beckoning "The Lonely Sail".

Jazzbos, let Three-Layer Cake in. And welcome the vampiric wounds you'll learn to love.

For more info visit otherlylove.net. Brandon Seabrook is at Close Up Dec. 1 (with Ingrid Laubrock) and Bar LunÀtico Dec. 13. See Calendar.

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