

MUSE

MUSE ON A BRIGHT FUTURE

BY MARC MEDWIN

“Why not?!” There’s no bridling the enthusiasm in Zev Feldman’s voice on the unseasonably warm day of our zoom conversation. I’ve asked him why the Muse Master Edition series, and why now. “I’m just so passionate about this label. I’ve been collecting Muse LPs for years, and they just capture so much of what was special about the 1970s.” Feldman’s voice counterpoints the ambiance as he walks outside, constantly on the move, just as in his career as an archivist and label curator. Each word is imbued with the excitement mirrored by the multivalent sounds of the first three releases of this Muse reissue campaign, licensed from Craft Recordings and inaugurating Feldman’s Time Traveler imprint. “It was time to make a move. Some of these reissues, like Roy Brooks’ *The Free Slave*, are going for exorbitant prices, and now, we’re providing upgrades.”

Feldman, fondly known as the “Jazz Detective,” is co-president with George Klabin of Resonance Records

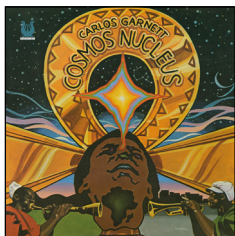
and co-founder of the Elemental Music label with Jordi Soley. First employed at Polygram in the early ’90s, Feldman is celebrated for scouring the planet for recorded treasures, often overseeing archival projects on Verve and Blue Note. He is indignant about Muse’s vast catalogue being underserved thus far. “Listen, for anybody collecting any of the classic jazz reissue series coming out, Muse needs to be at the top of the list,” he says emphatically. “Muse Records founder Joe Fields (1929-2017) was a visionary! These are 180gr vinyl reissues, analog remastering at every stage, from the master tapes—and they include new liner notes and photos. Just the treatment these albums deserve.”

The music bears abundant witness. The massive titular track of saxophonist Carlos Garnett’s *Cosmos Nucleus* (1976) surges with exploratory vigor, and, as reissue annotator Sid Schwartz’ nail-on-head commentary has it, “is the record’s center of gravity and spiritual thesis.” Plunging exuberantly in and out of swing, the changes bolster the alternately rapt and fiery musings of a 25-piece ensemble—including Roy Campbell (trumpet), Zane Massey (tenor), Cecil McBee (electric bass), Neil Clarke (percussion)—with scorching solos a-plenty. A particularly potent swinging interlude allows a young Kenny Kirkland

one of his first opportunities on record to stretch out on electric piano. This revelatory moment leads into a stunning percussion interlude peppered with full-band exhortations, the track indicative of the genre diversity in juxtaposition harnessed so poignantly on Garnett’s sixth date for the label.

Similar inclusion informs Kenny Barron’s leader debut, *Sunset to Dawn* (1973), with Bob Cranshaw (Fender bass), Freddie Waits (drums), and Richard Landrum and Warren Smith (percussion), all of whom blaze and introspect in fluid aggregates. One of the album’s most intriguing aspects seasons the opening moments, where Barron plays an exquisitely tremoloed electric piano. Feldman is ecstatic about it. “Are you kidding me? Hearing him on a Fender Rhodes!” In the new notes, Ted Panken describes the instrument’s “timbral potentials (Barron) addresses with nuance and a distinctive phrasing that marks his inspired plugged-in declamations throughout the album.” It should go without saying that Barron’s acoustic work amazes similarly, as on his wistfully virtuosic solo version of “A Flower”, a staple of the Yusef Lateef summer 1972 tour, heard in other Feldman projects (e.g. *Atlantis Lullaby* and

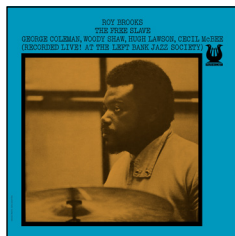
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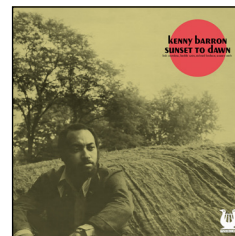
Cosmos Nucleus
Carlos Garnett



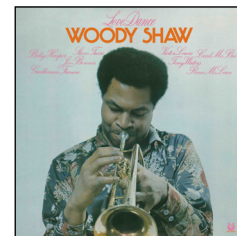
Double Exposure
Joe Chambers/Larry Young



Free Slave
Roy Brooks



Sunset to Dawn
Kenny Barron



Love Dance
Woody Shaw

VOXNEWS

BLACK GOLD

BY TESSA SOUTER

This year marks the 100th anniversary of what is now Black History Month. It began as Negro History Week in February 1926, established by Dr. Carter G. Woodson—the second African American to gain a PhD from Harvard. Excluded from white academia despite his credentials, Woodson made it his mission to integrate Black history into school curricula, public libraries, churches and communities—so that the study and celebration of Black contributions to American life would become part of the fabric of society. He must be rolling in his grave right now.

In the past year, among other indignities, DEI initiatives have been dismantled, prominent Black officials replaced by white individuals, grants for Black history projects terminated, and the National Museum of African American History and Culture criticized for focusing “too much” on slavery. This year, national parks will offer free admission on Jun. 14—Flag Day and President Trump’s birthday—but not on Martin Luther King Jr. Day or Juneteenth, both of which were removed from the list this year. Yet jazz remains a political music—from Charles Mingus’ *Fables of Faubus* (a direct response to Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus’ resistance to school integration), to the jazz artists making headlines for refusing to perform at the John F. Kennedy Center after President Trump added his name to the façade. Jazz has always spoken truth to power, and at no time in the past 50 years has it been needed more.

In his introduction to the 1964 Berlin Jazz Festival, Martin Luther King Jr. wrote: “Jazz speaks for life. The

Blues tell the story of life’s difficulties...only to come out with some new hope or sense of triumph. And now, jazz is exported to the world. For in the particular struggle of the Negro in America there is something akin to the universal struggle of modern man. Everybody has the Blues. Everybody longs for meaning. Everybody needs to love and be loved. Everybody needs to clap hands and be happy. Everybody longs for faith. In music, especially this broad category called jazz, there is a stepping stone towards all of these.”

GRAMMY-winning saxophonist and NEA Jazz Master **Gary Bartz** aptly-named *Damage Control* (on which he also sings, along with Barney McAll, Daniel Merriweather, Shelley FKA DRAM and Rita Satch) is a call to “relax and chill,” says Bartz—who, as a young man, considered joining the Black Panthers before choosing music as his path of resistance. For more soul-soothing, don’t miss five-time GRAMMY winner, Doris Duke Artist and genre-crossing jazz and chamber music innovator **esperanza spalding** at the Weill Recital Hall (Feb. 7) in “a well-being concert,” exploring the power, pleasure and purpose inherent in sustaining community and collective wellness. Vocalist, educator and longtime Steely Dan touring member **LaTanya Hall** assembled an extraordinary line up of jazz elders for her skip-proof album, *If Not Now, When...* Born from a period of COVID-induced vocal silence and artistic reflection, the album presents lesser-known songs (including two by Abbey Lincoln) that quietly encapsulate Black history. Hall gives the band plenty of space to stretch out, creating the perfect backdrop for her smoky, emotionally resonant voice, now better than ever. A century after Carter G. Woodson began his work, the music—and the message—endure. As Harry Belafonte said, “You can cage the singer, but not the song.”

SEE YOU THERE...Vocalist **Samara Joy** and Christian McBride headline the annual Ralph Pucci Jazz

Set at NJPAC (Feb. 25), benefitting Jazz House Kids, the nonprofit founded and led by jazz singer **Melissa Walker**. Joy, a former mentee, will be interviewed by—and perform with—McBride, JHK’s Artistic Director, in a full circle moment in jazz mentorship. At Christ & St. Stephens Church (Feb. 1) Dave Chamberlain’s Band of Bones presents a birthday tribute to trombonist JJ Johnson featuring vocalist **Antoinette Montague**, a formidable presence both musically and politically, from founding the Jazz Woman to the Rescue Foundation, to teaching incarcerated individuals through Music on the Inside (MOTI). American Voices celebrates the father of jazz, Louis Armstrong, with vocalists **Champion Fulton** and **Catherine Russell** at Hunter College (Feb. 24). At Birdland: NYC-based French chanson singer and harpist **Margot Sergent** and a too rare appearance by Danish vocalist **Sinne Eeg** (Feb. 1); **Catherine Russell** (Feb. 10-14); **Gabrielle Stravelli** (Feb. 14); **Nicole Henry** (Feb. 23). At the Aman: **Kim Kalesti** (Feb. 11); **Emily Braden** (Feb. 17); **Briana Swann** (Feb. 17); **Marianne Solivan** (Feb. 21); **Jane Irving** (Feb. 25). And for Valentine’s Day: **Dianne Reeves** performs her annual JALC Rose Theater concerts (Feb. 13-14); **Nicole Zuraitis** is at Hudson Hall (Feb. 14).

At the Landmark on Main, **Billy Stritch** celebrates the Judy Garland show, with Gabrielle Stravelli, Nicolas King, Alysha Umphress and Aisha DeHaas (Feb. 7). **Deanna Kirk** fêtes Irving Berlin in stories and songs with **Lisa Faith Phillips** at Pangea (Feb. 13). At Jazz Forum: pianist Julius Rodriguez features **Ekep Nkwelle** (Feb. 6-7); Brazilian pianist and vocalist **Eliane Elias** in a rare intimate setting (Feb. 13-14); **Stella Cole** (Feb. 20-21).

At Mezzrow: **Vanisha Gould** (Feb. 1), **Janice Friedman** (Feb. 4), **Naama** (Feb. 15), **Marianne Solivan** (Feb. 19), **Lucy Wijnands** (Feb. 22).