



Fire
Stephen Grew (Discus Music)
by Ken Waxman

Little known in North America, Stephen Grew (who turns 56 this month) is a veteran UK pianist who often works with fellow improvisers such as saxophonists Evan Parker and Trevor Watts, and as part of the electronic quartet Grutronic. On his own he turns out highly-inventive and crystalline solo piano sessions, like *Fire*, the third album he's made for Discus Music during the past couple of years.

Recorded in the airy interior of Lancaster University's Great Hall, the three tracks are completely improvised, with no electronic attachments. But Grew is no minimalist aesthete nor heedless pounder. He may ease into the expositions with carefully-chosen single notes or intermittent pauses, but once up to speed he blends extended sequences of lively and energetic keyboard expansions with subtle pivots into briefer counterpoint that often focus on strumming internal piano strings for acrid or rumbling pedal point patterns or melodic transformation. While at points his playing may sound as if he's nimbly exposing sounds from all 88 keys at once, he manages to maintain precise narratives. Plus, Grew almost never prolongs the expected. During the penultimate elaborations of "Fire 2" he exposes a beautiful lyric passage of caressed keyboard notes, only to follow this almost immediately with chiming and scrapping inner string projections. He also seesaws between formal patterning from higher notes that sound almost notated, with syncopated swing emanating from the pressurized lower notes. During the expositions of all three extended improvisations, he occasionally suggests that his repeated note consolidation will soon turn into a standard melody only to abandon that suggestion and scoot into free-floating extemporizations. And while preferred tempos throughout are galloping prestissimo, waves of vibrating soundboard pressure evolve at a slower pace. On the final "Fire 3" he confirms his multi-faceted approach by assembling a delicate, suspended single note melody and inserting it in between speedier and speedier syncopated keyboard pressure on one side and stopped key and string cadences on the other.

Solo work has always measured the skill and talent of a pianist. The ever-burning but carefully-arranged *Fire* shows Grew's mastery of each.

For more info visit discus-music-org



Ye Olde 2: At the End of Time
Jacob Garchik (Yestereve)
by Brad Cohan

To follow the wildly inventive career of trombonist, composer and pillar of the Brooklyn avant garde jazz scene, Jacob Garchik, is to know his mind is constantly

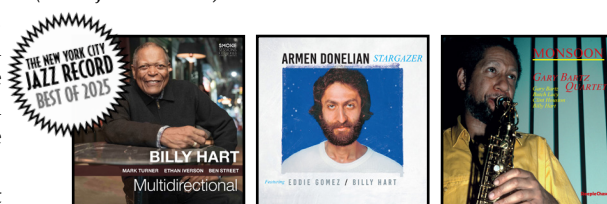
churning, dissecting, conceptualizing and obsessing then ultimately putting that gushing fire hydrant of ideas and themes into singularly eclectic musical forms. As a leader and co-leader, Garchik has delved into gospel music, big band reimaginings, Mexican brass bacchanals, Balkan brass music and contemporary classical. *Ye Olde*'s 2015 debut was centered around the wacky concept of mythical superheroes on a mission in medieval Brooklyn with a doomy prog-rock wallop. In the sequel, *Ye Olde 2: At the End of Time*, a metal-meets-jazz-meets-prog-meets-rock troupe, it's not the music that will raise eyebrows, but the concept behind it. Garchik is working in overdrive.

In this iteration, the *Ye Olde* characters have returned but fast-forwarded billions of years into the future, time traveling through space to stare down and battle resurrected versions of themselves. As the album credits note, "All music composed by Jacob Garchik in the year 100,000,002,023." The original "characters" in this sequel are the triple guitar threat of Brandon Seabrook, Mary Halvorson and Jonathan Goldberger with drummer Vinnie Sperrazza (dubbed Ye Olde), while new members Ava Mendoza, Sean Moran and Miles Okazaki and drummer Josh Dion (called Simulacrus) have joined the fray as "battle adversaries."

Over tracks one through six, eight and nine, "Ye Olde"—rhythmically led by Garchik's trombone—dominates the field with slaying abandon. The time signature-laden precision of album opener "One Can Only Go Up" is next level, but this is clearly Halvorson's time to shine. Her blistering soloing throughout is arguably the heaviest, loudest and most gonzo guitar work she's ever let loose with. On the following Melvins-like dirge "Transcending Time", Seabrook, ever the fret-hopping maniac, does his best to match Halvorson's fury. The music gets downright trippy on the space-rock of "Dyson Spheres". Simulacrus, in a lone starring turn, lands a big blow to Ye Olde with the rollicking jazz funk of "Omega Point". Finally, the two groups go head-to-head on the fittingly titled "Ye Olde vs Simulacrus", a cosmic ripper which invokes the trebly punk-funk of the Minutemen.

Despite the confounding conceptual hijinks, *Ye Olde 2: At the End of Time* is a low-end rumbling, guitar shredding adventure that's loads of fun.

For more info visit jacobgarchik.com. Garchik is at Barbès Jan. 3 (with Banda de los Muertos) and Jan. 5 at Close Up (with Jacob Sacks). See Calendar.



Multidirectional
Billy Hart (Smoke Sessions)
Stargazer
Armen Donelian (with Eddie Gomez, Billy Hart)
(Atlas-Sunnyside)
Monsoon
Gary Bartz Quartet (SteepleChase)
by Fred Bouchard

Drummer, teacher and DC native Billy "Jabali" Hart has garnered an unusually self-effacing recording career: with barely a dozen albums as leader, he's racked up easily 600 as sideman. After R&B stints with Otis Redding, reunion dates mounted with DC giants such as saxophonist Buck Hill and pianist-vocalist Shirley Horn. Once in New York, Hart notably played with a plethora of major A-listers, including Wes Montgomery, Pharoah Sanders, Herbie Hancock, Stan Getz, Wayne Shorter, Marian McPartland and Miles Davis—all by 1977. His long-awaited leader debut that year (*Enchance*, Horizon) proved a gem.

Almost a half-century after that first album as leader, Hart's latest release, *Multidirectional*, finds

the drummer, unbowed at 85, imparting wisdom, empathy, craft, humor and modesty that suffuse his seven-decade career. Twenty-two years of subtle, intensely lyrical quartet work—with Ethan Iverson (piano), Mark Turner (tenor) and Ben Street (bass)—culminates in a typically understated, lucid live Smoke session (recorded at the Upper West Side club on the venue's in-house label). The title signals motion and 360° awareness; saxophonist Dewey Redman (who appeared on *Enchance*) enlightens: "Corner culture enjoys the vantage of seeing in all directions—nice thing is the sound is never the same." Iverson (who also co-authored Hart's newly-released autobiography, *Oceans of Time*) commands his sustained wry melodicism on a reimagined "Giant Steps", a jaunty "Sonnet for Stevie" and pointillistic, agitated "Amethyst" (composed by Hart, it's also the title track to the drummer's 1993 album). Turner bends lines like a glassblower, Hart gives tit-for-tat and Street balances all on his fingertips. Throughout this relaxed, elegant set, the leader inverts Thelonious Monk's old dictum to "make the drummer sound good" and shines light everywhere he touches his kit.

While in his early 40s, Hart accompanied Armen Donelian on the pianist's 1981 debut, a trio recording recently (and finally) reissued by his career-long label Sunnyside (originally released on Atlas). *Stargazer* is much enlivened by the drummer, as to be expected, as well as by veteran bassist Eddie Gomez. The mysteriously seductive music leisurely explores mysteries of behavioral synchronization with fraternal elan. From exuberant samba "Love's Endless Spin" to cozy set-wrap improv "Free at Last", vivid originals unite the pianist's noble style with Gomez' buzzy bee-lines and Hart's pat-on-the-back brush strokes into a singularly poised, companionable experience.

- RECOMMENDED NEW RELEASES**
- Joe Alterman/Mocean Worker — *Keep The Line Open* (MOWO!)
 - Rafiq Bhatia — *Environments* (ANTI-Records)
 - Isaiah Collier/Tim Regis — *Live in the Listening Room* (The Vinyl Factory)
 - Erez Dessel — *All Fake No Reject* (Corbett vs. Dempsey)
 - Hamid Drake/Pat Thomas — *A Mountain Sees a Mountain* (Old Heaven Books)
 - Liz Draper — *Meno* (Liatriis)
 - Ensemble Ensemble — *Live at Atelier du Plateau* (BMC Records)
 - Bill Evans — *Haunted Heart: The Legendary Riverside Studio Recordings* (Craft Recordings)
 - Al Foster — *Live at Smoke* (Smoke Sessions)
 - Andrew Hadro — *ArchMusic* (PARMA/Ravello)
 - Haeun Joo — *Just Gravity* (577 Records)
 - Peter Knight — *For a Moment the Sky Knew My Name* (ROOM40)
 - Ledisi — *for Dinah* (Candid)
 - Mark Pringle — *New Customers* (Boomslang)
 - Tomeka Reid — *dance! skip! hop!* (Out Of Your Head)
 - Craig Taborn, Tomeka Reid, Ches Smith — *Dream Archives* (ECM)
 - Carolyn Trowbridge — *Found Memories* (s/r)
 - Various Artists — *The Bottle Tapes* (Corbett vs. Dempsey)
 - Jordan Williams — *playing by ear* (Red)
 - Lester Young — *Lester Leaps In: Live at Birdland 1951-1952* (Liberation Hall)