

BOXED SET



XL-LX
Danish Radio Big Band (Storyville)
by Ken Dryden

The Danish Radio Big Band is one of the oldest European large jazz ensembles, known for its musicianship, its exploration of a wide range of repertoire and invitations to visiting composers, arrangers and conductors. To celebrate its 60th anniversary, Storyville has released a special limited-edition 5-LP boxed set, with one-sided 180gr discs, featuring five different composers.

Percussionist Marilyn Mazur (1955-2025) contributed the suite *Sparkles* and joins the big band, conducted by Miho Hazama. Mazur's five-movement suite is driven but not dominated by percussion. This wide-ranging work showcases a number of influences. Soloist Hans Ulrik plays recorder in the Asian-flavored "Sprinkles", while

Mazur's percussion comes to the forefront in the exotic "Magic 7", which also incorporates a bit of rockish guitar by Per Gade. There's a hint of Frank Zappa influence in the humorous "Intrusion", with playful bursts of cacophony and abrupt twists.

One of pianist Carla Bley's final works was *Roller Coaster*, which was inspired by her love of amusement parks. It was commissioned for a short Scandinavian tour in 2017 with electric bassist Steve Swallow and recorded during an off day at that time. This eight-part suite conveys the overall imagery of approaching a roller coaster, with its slow climbs and sudden turns, though even the climactic final movement is subtle in nature, rather than focused on the terror from rapid descents as the ride gets nearer to its end point. The band's musicians navigate their guest's demanding scores with finesse.

Flugelhornist and trumpeter Palle Mikkelborg was commissioned to compose the six-part suite *The Mind Behind* to celebrate his 75th birthday. Mikkelborg serves in a dual role as soloist and conductor. Each of its six movements has a unique character, ranging from the haunting introduction to the increasingly dramatic middle sections that segue from one to the next, with the conclusion offering a ray of hope. Additional guests include Mazur, harpist Helen Davies and electronics wizard

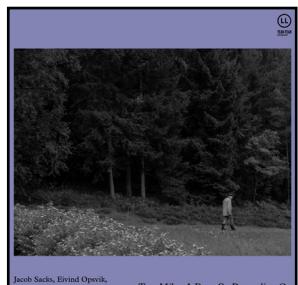
Mike Sheridan.

Peter Jensen's "Reflections for Clarinet & Jazz Orchestra" is his reimagining of Danish classical composer Carl Nielsen's "Concerto For Clarinet and Orchestra, Opus 57". Jensen uses the original work as a starting point, re-composing portions of it along with arranging it for jazz instrumentation. Andreas Veto conducts the big band with virtuoso clarinetist Peter Fuglsang as the only soloist. The work successfully straddles classical music and jazz by intermingling the old and the new in a manner that pays tribute to one of Denmark's most important composers.

Hazama's three-part *Suite Electus*, which she also conducts, is the grand finale of the set. "Nereus" is filled with tension and bright colors, showcasing Ulrik's melancholy soprano spotlight, backed by an ominous backbeat. Flugelhornist Mads la Cour's expressive solo is the centerpiece to the bright, galloping "Leda", along with the rich harmony of reeds and brass.

The audio of this LP set is outstanding—a very quiet pressing with a perfect balance of the instruments, giving the listener the feeling of being inside the actual studio.

For more info visit storyvillerecords.com. Danish Radio Big Band (featuring Miho Hazama) is at Dizzy's Club Feb. 23. See Calendar.



Two Miles A Day, So Depending On
Jacob Sacks, Eivind Opsvik, Mat Maneri,
Billy Mintz (Loyal Label)
by Tom Greenland

As I was saying...Jacob Sacks and Eivind Opsvik's *Two Miles a Day, So Depending On* seems to begin, as its subtitle implies, *in medias res*, as if the listener has been plunged into an ongoing musical conversation. The conversation began two decades ago, when the pianist and bassist invited their dream drummer,

Paul Motian (1931-2011), to record *Two Miles a Day*, also enlisting violist Mat Maneri. *Two Miles a Day, So Depending On* documents the continuing conversation, with Billy Mintz filling the drum chair for the late Motian, Sacks and Opsvik again splitting the writing credits, each contributing a half dozen compositions.

Like its predecessor, this sophomore date is a delight for many reasons. The themes are well wrought: lithe, hummable, but with just enough quirks and twerks to keep things interesting—Opsvik's "Cake, Cross, and Flowers" and "The Piano Sings" being standout examples. Maneri and Sacks deliver these themes with relaxed, yet precise synchronicity, the former's snarky, serpentine phrases goaded and ghosted by the latter's equally supple interjections, best epitomized by "Dribbs and Drabs", "Cake, Cross, and Flowers" and "The Mechanic". The compositions emphasize process over product, written with just enough roadmapping for musicians to reach their presumed

destination, also allowing plenty of options for how to arrive there.

Tracks verge along a continuum from fixed to free-form, lyrical to abstract, delicately understated to deliberately abrupt. "Awaits Melody" exemplifies the concept of *in medias res*, Opsvik plying a relentlessly iterative vamp that suggests several time frames simultaneously. "Stilling" suggests the ambiance of a free improv, and "Thoughts", the collective movement of a contemporary classical string quartet interpreting a serial composition. There's a touching duet by Opsvik and Maneri opening "Kerb's Mood", both strings bowing in close counterpoint. Some of the strongest soloing occurs on "Irreverent Mayhems", where Maneri's ideas curl and coil with remarkable flexibility and invention, followed by Sacks' equally remarkable rhythmic counterpoint, his left hand trailing behind the right, an inversion of Erroll Garner's signature style, followed by extended three-way trading between viola, piano and drums. As Motian did on the original

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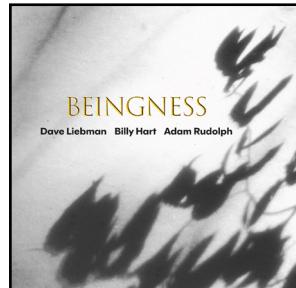
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date, Mintz eschews straight timekeeping in favor of colorizing and sound-sculpting, his presence almost subliminal until the end of the last track, "Bugaboo", when he finally looms to the fore. Chief among the project's many delights is the collective interplay, the ongoing interchanges that immerse listeners in *media res* into a series of flashbacks and flashforwards. *To be continued...*

For more info visit loyallabel.com. Jacob Sacks is at Close Up Feb. 4 (with Vinnie Sperrazza), 14 and 21, Bar Bayeux Feb. 14 (with Carmen Quill) and Feb. 26. Eivind Opsvik is at P.I.T. Feb. 8. Billy Mintz is at Close Up Feb. 6 (with Tony Malaby) and Dada Bar Feb. 22 (with Rob Duguay). See Calendar.



Beingness
Dave Liebman, Billy Hart, Adam Rudolph
(Meta/Defkaz)
by Ken Waxman

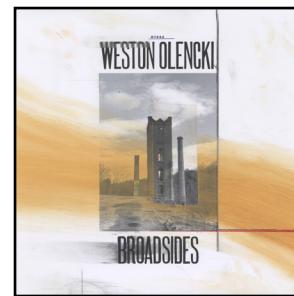
Making a virtue out of novelty rather than noise, this live set finds a trio of veteran improvisers adroitly melding percussion variables with a saxophone's strong melodic undercurrent. Two of the three players are percussionists: Billy Hart sticks to the standard kit, while Adam Rudolph's idiophone arsenal encompasses hand drums, congas, djembe, tarija, dakha de bello, thumb piano and gongs as well as piano and keyboards, plus electronics and processing. Linear development comes from Dave Liebman's soprano and wood flute mastery. Novelty is present because while Hart and Rudolph have individually played with Liebman, *Beingness* is the first time both have worked together in any configuration. Rudolph is known for leading the Go: Organic Orchestra, while Liebman and Hart have since the '70s led their own bands, as well as having collaborated with jazz avatars such as Miles Davis and Herbie Hancock. The album highlights further creativity since, on the saxophonist's urging, Rudolph added more electronic processing in post-production.

Midpoint-connected "Intent" and "Pathways" demonstrate how comprehensively the organic oscillations blend. Blunt hand drumming, which emphasizes skin and plastic-like surfaces, intersects with measured bass drum smacks and gentling reed flutters throughout. As the processing doubles saxophone output, its timbres connect to idiophone punches and then hard cymbal crashes. A penultimate shift to percussion splashes and ruffs is eventually cut off by a banshee-like reed cry, an interlude that marks how the rhythmic architecture eventually can give way to quieter continuous palm pressure. These aren't isolated instances either, for throughout the recording, acoustic interaction expressed by such simple motions as single triangle pings or steel drum-like echoes are strengthened, not only by full-kit cadences and rolls, but are also given added impetus when slides and pumps are inflated with electronic oscillations. Liebman's reed smears, squeaks and slurs are given a wider sonic canvas for subtle storytelling, confirmed on "Transparence to Transcendence" as Rudolph's piano chords accompany an instance of Liebman's balladic interpretation.

Never undermining with voltage, the inspiration

and mastery that go into uniting these practiced acoustic timbres for the first time enters another dimension with subtle post-production additions. Distinctively, this process makes *Beingness* stand out from many of the other projects that have featured the three players in different combinations.

For more info visit metarecords.com. Billy Hart is at Bar Bayeux Feb. 14 (with Carmen Quill) and Birdland Feb. 20-22 (with Ethan Iverson). See Calendar.



Broadsides
Weston Olencki (Outside Time)
by Kurt Gottschalk

The trajectory of South Carolina to Berlin outlines fairly well the rurally grounded, avowedly experimental explorations of Weston Olencki. While exploring acoustic noise and elongated tonality, they've often called back to the aesthetics and instruments of their South Atlantic childhood home. They're not the first—Eugene Chadbourne is an evident forebear—but Olencki's inventiveness is all their own. Those impulses and influences haven't come together in Olencki's discography as satisfactorily as they do on *Broadsides*.

Primarily a trombonist, Olencki has put the banjo to use in their Appalachian experimentation in the past, but here it takes the lead role, although detuned autoharp and pedal steel guitar (played by Henry Birdsey), as well as rivers and clocks, are also in the mix. There may well be other implements involved, it's sometimes hard to tell. A recurring deep resonance suggests trombone or bass, but deft recording and microphone placement, construction and architecture, make it difficult to place the sound sources at times. The production and mix also render such sound sourcing irrelevant, however. These are auditory illusions and projected hallucinations better temporal-lobe relished than dissected and cataloged. And it's the mix that sells the package. Instruments, field recordings and found- and sampled-sounds don't seem superimposed; they coexist in an imaginary, sonic space.

This album is distinctly American music, by design. Olencki recorded the six tracks along a twisting path traveling through the Southeast. The first half (side one on the limited edition LP with covet-ready cover design, although it's also available as a download) is the more enthralling to these ears, opening with a train station montage, moving through dense atmospheres and culminating in banjo-by-the-water swelling into the swirling, psychedelic cyclone of "Foggy Mountain Breakdown // Ground Speed", layered and dizzying. The second half boasts a collage of Olencki's father's clock collection dueting with low drones, a slightly more subdued banjo musing and a dreamy gospel epilogue in "Omie Wise // coda (How Great Thou Art)". The album ends in an abrupt cut, as if it were all an unlabeled cassette picked up at a resale shop during a stop to stretch the legs.

Broadsides is real American music. The person primarily responsible may have ex-patriated but the settings are still down home.

For more info visit outsidetime.bandcamp.com. Olencki is at Roulette Feb. 6. See Calendar.



UPCOMING ARTISTS

Father Son Nathan & Noah East



Saturday,
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Eliane ELIAS

March
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