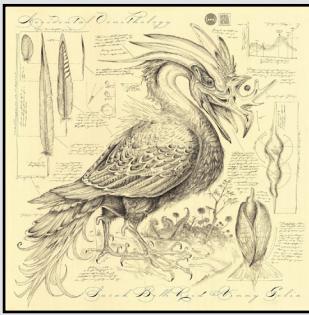


ORIGINAL ALBUM ARTWORK



3 COHEN'S/WDR BIG BAND
Interaction
(Anzic)



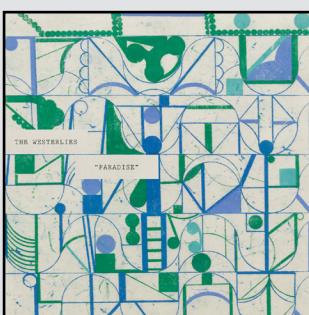
SARAH BELLE REID/VINNY GOLIA
Accidental Ornithology
(Infrequent Seams)



MICHAEL RAGONESE
Chasing Calm
(s/r)



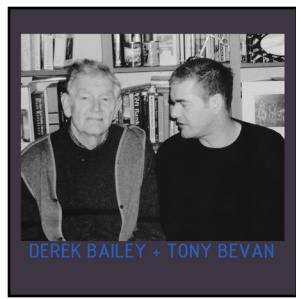
CHES SMITH
Clone Row
(Otherly Love)



THE WESTERLIES
Paradise
(Westerlies)

THE NEW YORK CITY
JAZZ RECORD
BEST OF 2025

(ALBUM REVIEWS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25)



DEREK BAILEY + TONY BEVAN

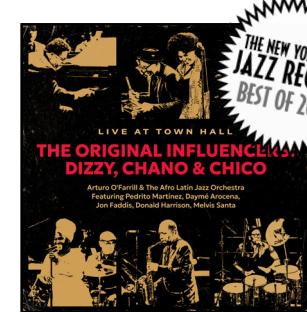
River Monsters
Derek Bailey/Tony Bevan (scatterArchive)
by John Pietaro

The historic reverence of Derek Bailey rages on, particularly this past Christmas 2025, which marked the 20th anniversary of the great guitarist and music theorist's passing (at age 75) and the release of *River Monsters*. Much has been documented on Bailey's revolutionary vision within the British avant garde, lesser so his initial influence: Count Basie's rhythm guitarist Freddie Green. In the '50s to early '60s, as Bailey forged a professional career, he played London studio and stage sessions with the likes of Shirley Bassey, and as legend incorrectly has it, on Petula Clark's "Downtown" (actually, that was a young Jimmy Page). But even then, Bailey sought something wholly new. His first free-jazz performance was a one-off in 1953, but a decade later, the guitarist was a major proponent of "letting the instrument have its say..." as reported by Peter Riley in a 1974 issue of *Guitar*. His concepts, encapsulated in the 1980 book *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice*, remain gospel for many, and groups together the Spontaneous Music Ensemble (Trevor Watts, Evan Parker, Kenny Wheeler, Dave Holland, John Stevens, Paul Rutherford), Music Improvisation Company (Jamie Muir, Hugh Davies, Parker) and Company (the shapeshifting, international assemblage founded in 1976, uniting for annual "Company Week" events), firmly establishing the genre of European free improvisation.

Since Bailey's death, recordings have surfaced and during this notable anniversary, digital download-only label scatterArchive has gone to great lengths to release invaluable moments drawn from cassettes, CDRs and mini-discs, collected by British bass saxophonist Tony Bevan. The woefully under-recorded career of Bevan includes decades with Company and noted work with Sunny Murray, among others. During 1998-99, for archival purposes, he documented numerous duet sessions with Bailey; selected items are now available to the public. The recordings vary in temperament as much as sound quality, but even within the first lengthy improvisation "01" (all are numerically named), one can delineate where Bailey and Bevan use their instruments first as sound sources; and by the "second movement," identifiable guitar and saxophone establish a deeply-threaded network of free music clamoring with history.

This set also includes a priceless live Company recording (from 1988's Outside In Festival), which, through its sonic clarity, offers the listener imaginary box seats during a particularly emphatic session, and one that is not otherwise available on record. Unfortunately, the personnel that year isn't currently available, but Bailey completists should not allow this circumstance to get in the way, as we celebrate this month what would have been the guitarist's 96th birthday.

For more info visit scatterarchive.bandcamp.com. "Improv Nights 2026: A Tribute to Derek Bailey" is at Roulette Jan. 22-24 (featuring Wendy Eisenberg, Rafiq Bhatia, Chris Cochrane, Chris Williams, Zeena Parkins, Nate Wooley, Sam Newsome and others). See Calendar.



The Original Influencers:
Dizzy, Chano & Chico (Live at Town Hall)
Arturo O'Farrill & The Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra
(Tiger Turn)
by Pierre Giroux

Recorded live at The Town Hall in New York exactly three years ago, *The Original Influencers: Dizzy, Chano & Chico* is a compelling tribute to the vital partnership of Dizzy Gillespie, Chano Pozo and Chico O'Farrill. In this album, the 18-piece ensemble of (Chico son) Arturo O'Farrill & The Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra captures the energy, style and cultural unity that gave rise to Afro-Cuban jazz some 75 years ago. The music preserves the innovative spirit of its pioneers while reaffirming the lasting strength of tradition.

The orchestra opens with "La Rumba Me Llamo Yo", a piece that features call-and-response, a key element of rumba. The percussion drives the music with layered polyrhythms, while vocalist Daym  Arocena adds earthy intensity matching the ensemble's lively energy. "On the Corner of Melanc n and Bourbon" (written by Arturo O'Farrill) adopts a more narrative style, blending New Orleans street swagger with Cuban rhythmic inflections. After a lush piano introduction, alto saxophonist Donald Harrison is highlighted throughout the arrangement, with other instruments communicating over what is a harmonically-rich foundation, the mood undeniably rooted in swing. "Lengue de Obbara" highlights the spiritual roots of Afro-Cuban music. The rhythmic pattern, crafted by Pedrito Martinez' percussion, is rich, with drums and bat  weaving together to create a ceremonial pulse. Melvis Santa's vocals feel almost like invocations, while the ensemble's harmonies blend so seamlessly that they elevate the piece beyond mere respect. The energetic "Mambo N  M " rekindles the festive spirit of mid-century mambo, while giving the orchestra plenty of space to improvise. With vocals by Arocena and Santa, supported by Martinez' percussion, they infuse the music with an irresistible groove. The tune's rhythmic accuracy and melodic appeal make it one of the album's most immediate delights.

O'Farrill's four-movement rendition of "Manteca Suite", which is a re-arrangement by Chico O'Farrill of the 1947 piece "Manteca" by Dizzy Gillespie, Chano Pozo and Gil Fuller, stands out as the highlight of this release. Jon Faddis' trumpet playing is gleaming, virtuosic and unwavering, serving as the unifying element as the suite evolves with both reverence and artistic energy. Each movement explores a different aspect of the original's groundbreaking fusion: bold brass statements, driving rhythms and harmonies that oscillate between Afro-Cuban cadences and big-band sophistication. This recording captures not only performance excellence but also the music's deep historical significance.

For more info visit tigerturn.com. O'Farrill is at Birdland Sundays, Bar Lun tico Jan. 5 (with Roy Nathanson), El Museo del Barrio Jan. 9-10, and Le Poisson Rouge Jan. 12 (part of Winter Jazzfest). See Calendar.