



THELONIOUS MONK BREMEN 1965

THELONIOUS MONK **piano**
CHARLIE ROUSE **tenor saxophone**
LARRY GALES **bass**
BEN RILEY **drums**

SSC 1635 LP / AVAILABLE 12/12/25
(180 gram vinyl 2LP)

SSC 1634 2CD / AVAILABLE 12/12/25

The release of Bremen 1965 finds the legend on his second tour to feature stops in Germany with his seasoned quartet featuring his longtime saxophone foil, Charlie Rouse, along with bassist Larry Gales and drummer Ben Riley. Bremen, Germany was the second stop on the quartet's world tour, which would include much of Europe, Australia, and Japan. The original master tape of the concert at the Sendesaal / Studio F was transferred to high resolution (24/96) files by Radio Bremen technical staff.



Sunnyside

radio**bremen**

www.sunnysiderecords.com

"I should've practiced today," admitted **Sullivan Fortner**, drawing a laugh from the audience as he introduced his solo piano set at Baruch College's Performing Arts Center (Dec. 12), "but I was just too tired." He'd flown in from Amsterdam the day before, would fly to Paris the next day, and so was in a state of derealization. "I made a list of stuff [to play]," he explained, "but, as usual, it probably won't happen." Despite such caveats, what ensued was a deeply immersive, wonderfully wandering, spontaneous musical journey. A 12-minute unpacking of his "It's a Game", then a thorough exploration of "I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm", put listeners in the same head space as the pianist: not knowing exactly where they were or where they were going, yet comfortable with the discomfort because they realized something special was already happening along the way. Rendered in what might be described as a post-stride stream of consciousness style, Fortner covered holiday-themed tunes such as "It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas", "Christmas Star", "Somewhere in My Memory", "Star of Bethlehem" (the latter three comprising his *Home Alone* medley), "Once Upon a Wintertime" (a neglected gem from Disney's 1948 *Melody Time*), and Thad Jones' "A Child Is Born". He also performed a few classically-tinged numbers such as Lionel Belasco's "Juliana" and, for an encore, a reinvention of "He Shall Feed His Flock" (from Handel's *Messiah*) that somehow managed to sound both timeless and timely.

— Tom Greenland

Twenty-five years ago, pianist Dave Kikoski, drummer/tabla player Brian Melvin and bassist Charles Fambrough (1950-2011), realized the value of The Beatles' music and formed **Beatlejazz** to play it, releasing albums in 1998, 2001, 2005 and 2007, sometimes with special guests. Fast forward to their album *Reunion* (2025), now with Boris Kozlov at the upright, this fab three continued to prove at Zinc Bar (Dec. 9) that John Lennon and Paul McCartney, with a little help from George Harrison, composed songs that stack up to the catalogs of many sophisticated American composers. And why not, the songbook is an ever-expanding wellspring of musical creativity. As is the case with jazz trios such as Bill Evans, Ahmad Jamal, Keith Jarrett and many others, the piano is prime. Opener, a fairly melodic "Here Comes the Sun" (Harrison), accurately created the optimistic, bouncy mood intended by its composer. Then it was "knives out" as Kikoski went into crazed genius mode: he's a veritable storm of improvisational creativity at the keys—and the ensuing set, mining Lennon-McCartney's mature harmonies and rhythmic explorations, was a rocket ride into a time continuum of its own, wherein the compositions could easily have been guessed to be the work of Chick Corea, Kenny Dorham, Wayne Shorter or...(pick a name). While most tunes were played as uptempo burners, "I'm Only Sleeping" and "Something" retained the slower, haunting melodic quality of these works. Closer, "Blue Jay Way" (Harrison) was an all-stops-out mind-blower.

— Marilyn Lester



Sullivan Fortner @Baruch Performing Arts Center



Dave Kikoski @Zinc Bar

There was a surfeit of "umgawa" (used in the Tarzanian sense to indicate "Let's do this!") onstage at Dizzy's Club (Dec. 9) for the early set, when Boston hometown hero **George Garzone** (tenor) led a quartet comprised of Leo Genovese (piano), Peter Slavov (bass) and Jeff "Tain" Watts (drums). Mindful of John Coltrane's upcoming centennial (Sep. 25, 2026), Garzone opened with a free improv that segued into Coltrane's "Crescent", weaving pentatonic lines over Genovese's droning McCoy Tyner-esque chords and Watt's throbbing Elvin Jones-like pulses. As Coltrane did, Garzone gave his "sidemen" ample space to express themselves, space that Genovese exploited to the nth degree with a seemingly endless well of ideas performed with over-the-top chops. The leader's solos were relatively succinct by comparison, playing at a lower volume, even off-mic, but his impact was immense. The tender and vulnerable take on "Soul Eyes" (Mal Waldron) was a set highlight, Garzone's horn toggling between wispy and warm, his solo a paradigm of artful tone shading that seamlessly returned to the theme, capped by a soulfully satisfying coda. The saxophonist's duets with Watts, recalling similar upwardly escalating exchanges between Coltrane and Jones, were another highlight. His "Tutti Italiani" and "Hey, Open Up", the closer, featured intense blowing, particularly from Genovese, whose dazzling sequences seesawed around Watts' bedrock beats, Slavov providing a fulcrum. After such an energetic set, audience members could be forgiven the urge to rise up and yodel (in the Tarzanian sense of "Wow, they hit that!"). (TG)

Let's not forget that from the earliest days of 1920s jazz through the '30s-'40s Swing era, jazz bands were dance bands: Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Chick Webb, Benny Goodman, all of 'em. Brit **Alex Mendham**, an occasional visitor to NYC, brought his orchestra to the since-shuttered Swing 46 (Dec. 7) to remind us how vital, vigorous and swinging these bands were. Mendham specializes in music of the '20s and '30s, true to style and arranging. Opener, Ellington's Cotton Club burner, "Diga Diga Doo", got the joint jumping and the dancers to their feet before the ultra-suave leader moved into a mambo-like "I've Got You Under My Skin". Originally a saxophonist, Mendham saw his future as a vocalist leading a vintage-style big band. A good decision: he's superb at curating a set list, featuring A-list musicians and integrating just enough in the way of vocals to let the orchestra shine. Tempos, though varied, largely fit into the "fox trot" dance rhythm of the day. Mendham is also a historian, delivering just enough information about a number to give it context, plus he natively pays homage to the excellent British dance bands of the day. His rendition of Al Bowlly's version of "Nobody's Sweetheart" was especially jazz-driven, as was the sole band number, Ellington's "The Mooche" (1928), a deceptively complex composition ranked as one of his finest. Another burner was "Let's Misbehave" with Mendham briefly scatting. Closer was the singing trombonist Jack Teagarden's happy-making arrangement of "Ain't Misbehavin'" (for Paul Whiteman's orchestra). (ML)

On the edge and upper reaches of Manhattan's Riverside Drive lurks Recirculation, an old-school, rad book and record shop. Associated with another leftie bookstore, Word Up, a few avenues east, Recirculation sports a monthly experimental music showcase that's been lighting up the Washington Heights neighborhood. That series, Uptown Out, struck a zenith with a duo feature (Dec. 11) of **Thomas Heberer** (trumpet) and **Joe Fonda** (bass). Even on one of the coldest nights of the year, as river gusts blew to bruise, the shop filled with spectators and musicians in anticipation of both the sounds and the scene. Set against a bare white wall, Heberer began the opening passage of his original work, "Coming from the Far East, But Being Very Close", as Fonda responded powerfully. The two engaged in *klangfarbenmelodie* call-and-response, with unexpected leaps over harsh rhythms. The veteran bassist, driving the pairing even while emitting melodic streams, tore into arco lines as Heberer soared, his ever-shifting embouchures shading the atmosphere as the trumpeter squatted near Fonda's soundboard, pouring out Bird and Monk musical tributes. At another point, the bassist held the lead, digging into a tireless, classic R&B line of perfectly uncertain form. The duet was nothing if not majestic. And then a wondrous variety of improvisers—Hilliard Greene, Mary Cherney, Claire de Brunner, Stephanie Griffin—warmed even the wind. Uptown Out organizer Matt Lambiase jokingly stated: "To me this series is something between church service and a 12-step meeting". He's not far wrong.

— *John Pietaro*



Thomas Heberer, Joe Fonda @Recirculation

WILL GLASS



Zeena Parkins @Paula Cooper Gallery

ANNA YATSKOVICH

Brooklyn has defined itself as the new epicenter of indie spaces featuring experimental arts. Back in the day, when Downtown wasn't just a term but a designation, no one could have anticipated P.I.T. (Property Is Theft). It may be Brooklyn's ABC No Rio or a reanimated Brecht Forum, but here's the left-wing bookstore/performance space/activist headquarters we've long awaited. A monthly highlight is the Michael Foster/Brandon Lopez Outlier curation, which recently featured (Dec. 7) a trio led by New Mexico trumpeter **Jacob Wick**, who has been presenting sound art pieces around the nation "dedicated to and informed by queer feelings and queer politics." On this night, Wick performed with two violinists: More Eaze (aka Mari Maurice Rubio) and C. Spencer Yeh, a multi-disciplinary artist. Both musicians have earned lengthy lists of credits, much in what was termed in Downtown as "performance art." The trio made great use of both sound and vision, from the (inferred) downbeat, with Wick at center, bellowing long tones reminiscent of Don Cherry's moving intro to the *New York Eye and Ear Control* 1964 soundtrack. Behind and through, the violinists' extended techniques were ablaze, Yeh working two bows over his violin and Eaze's rapid-fire runs at *presto*. Drones and/or screeches accompanied trumpet melodies of phasing repetitive figures, dancing over any semblance of pulse (apparently, Wick's "queer time, a nonlinear and sentimental approach"). The evening opened with a solo meditative set by percussionist Sean Meehan, who played the very friction off a snare drum topped with various cymbals.

(JP)

Ingrid Laubrock brought her new quintet to Close Up (Dec. 1), previewing music the group is preparing to record. Featuring DoYeon Kim (gayageum), Brandon Seabrook (guitar), Shawn Lovato (bass) and Tom Rainey (drums), each player brought a distinct vocabulary into the leader's rigorous, playful compositional world. In the clubhouse intimacy of the year-old Lower East Side room, the music carried the charged urgency of ideas meeting the public for the first time. The group opened with a low, mournful drone led by Laubrock's tenor, followed by a suspenseful guitar figure as Rainey shuffled with brushes. The band then snapped into motion, activating swirling melodies and taut, rhythmic cells. Seabrook often worked in close duet with both Laubrock and Kim, doubling lines before peeling away, their phrases locking briefly, then slipping out of sync. He moved between chiming, echoic drones and bursts of wrecked distortion—an outsized sound issuing from a tiny amp perched on the bar—while Kim's gayageum shape-shifted constantly, at times resembling a violin, a harp, a voice, even a percussion instrument. The contrast between its ancient timbre as a kind of zither, and Seabrook's no-wave-inflected guitar, created a productive tension, sharpened by Rainey's painterly cymbal work and Lovato's grounding presence. Time seemed to stretch and contract without warning, the mood cinematic. Laubrock's writing is cerebral but never dry: complex, kinetic and personal. Swaying as she played, she found hidden rivulets within each section, shaping distinctive phrases without ceremony as the band bent and refracted them around her.

(AS)

WHAT'S NEWS

This month the annual **Jazz Congress** returns to NYC, hosted by Jazz at Lincoln Center (Jan. 7-8), in conjunction with its Unity Jazz Festival, with panels and performances scheduled through the course of each day. Some highlight events will include: a Miles Davis centennial conversation, moderated by Ashley Kahn and featuring Terence Blanchard and Marcus Miller; Lee Mergner (former *JazzTimes* editor and publisher) receiving the "Bruce Lundvall Visionary Award," which will be presented by bassist Christian McBride (the 2017 recipient of the award); "In Conversation" with Ron Carter and Todd Barkan; "Jazz Legacies Fellowship Roundtable" with Amina Claudine Myers, Reggie Workman, Bertha Hope, Carmen Lundy and Herlin Riley, followed by a concert for the ages, including the aforementioned Jazz Legacy Fellows plus other Fellows, such as Julian Priester, George Coleman, Valerie Capers, Roscoe Mitchell, Akua Dixon, Tom Harrell, Roger Humphries and others. For more info visit jazzcongress.org.

Founded in 2005, the annual tradition of **Winter Jazzfest** (WJF) is once again coming to take over NYC! Be sure to get your sleep the week prior, because there will be no time for jazz and music fans to rest on their laurels between Jan. 8-13, particularly for the night-long music marathons in Manhattan (Jan. 9) and Brooklyn (Jan. 10). WJF has also announced its expansion to Tokyo this year with the inaugural "Winter Jazzfest Tokyo 2026." Next month (Feb. 7) events will take place at the decade-old WWWX venue in Shibuya, Japan, and will include "Freedom Riders" with Luke Stewart, Joe Dyson, Carmen Staaf and Alfredo Colon, "Tenors in Chaos" with Tomoaki Baba, YuKuga and Akihiro Nishiguchi and others. For more info visit winterjazzfest.com.

The **Jazz Gallery** recently announced the 2026 recipients of its emerging artist Residency Commissions (bassist Hannah Marks, vibraphonist Simon Moullier, pianist Jonathan Paik) and TJG George Wein Fellowship Commissions (vocalist Becca Stevens and trumpeter Michael Rodriguez). Each receives a monetary award, access to the venue's space to write and rehearse, plus several nights at the venue to premiere their commissioned works. For more info visit jazzgallery.org.

The 18th Annual **Charles Mingus Festival and High School Competition** (Feb. 13-15) will take place at The New School's Arnhold Hall and Tishman Auditorium, as well as a performance by the Mingus Big Band at Joe's Pub, featuring selected outstanding soloists from the competition. Christian McBride and Melissa Walker's JAZZ HOUSE KiDS should be proud that four of its organization's bands were announced as finalists: Dynasty Big Band (led by Darrell Smith), JAZZ HOUSE Big Band (led by Nathan Eklund), JAZZ HOUSE Ambassadors (led by Mike Lee) and Blake Ambassadors (led by Ron Blake). As longtime Mingus Big Band music director Boris Kozlov says, "The world definitely has a better chance to be a better place with young musicians playing Mingus!" For more info visit charlesmingus.com/jazz-education.

On Jan. 24, To Save and Project and MoMA will premiere newly restored jazz films from the late '60s (in association with the new Mellon Foundation-funded Jazz Generations Initiative/JGI), featuring the music of three legendary figures: Sun Ra (*The Magic Sun*), Cecil Taylor (*Les grandes répétitions: Cecil Taylor à Paris*) and Archie Shepp (*We Came Back – Archie Shepp Chez Tuaregs*). Scheduled guest speakers include Robert O'Meally (professor, author, To Save and Project co-director and curator who founded Columbia's Center for Jazz Studies in 1999), Manthia Diawara (acclaimed historian and filmmaker) and Henry Threadgill (octogenarian alto saxophonist, flute player, composer and bandleader). For more info visit moma.org/calendar/events/11129.

Stony Brook, NY's The Jazz Loft announced it has purchased the historic and long-dormant **Vail-Leavitt Theater** in Riverhead, NY. The 104-year-old theater, which opened in 1881, is Long Island's oldest (since 1983 it has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places). In 1914, Thomas Edison used the music hall as a demonstration site for his "kinetophone," one of the earliest attempts of sound and film synchronization. From the early '80s to late '90s, as an old movie house, it was dubbed "Mini-Cine." The Jazz Loft will soon be giving the theater a major renovation with plans of bringing the venue back to life as a community arts and education hub. For more info visit thejazzloft.org.

To submit news email ldgreen@nycjazzrecord.com