



THELONIOUS MONK BREMEN 1965

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

SSC 1635 LP / AVAILABLE NOW
(180 gram vinyl 2LP)
SSC 1634 2CD / AVAILABLE NOW

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

radiobremen

www.sunnysiderecords.com

There's something very, well, "neighborhoody" about Bar Lunático, a dimly lit, crowded but cozy venue in Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn. Camaraderie was even more voluble than usual on a Thursday (Jan. 8), as the clientele anticipated Milena Casado's second set. Dressed in dark leather, her copious shaggy Afro casting her face in constant shadow, the Spanish trumpeter's bright, brilliant tone nevertheless cut through the crowd with the bravado of Freddie Hubbard and ethereal elegance of electric-era Miles Davis. Prepping for two Winter Jazzfest concerts, followed by a European tour, Casado was supported by Lex Korten (piano), Kanoa Mendenhall (bass) and Morgan Guerin (drums), a trio well attuned to her artistic *modus operandi*, particularly Korten, whose delicate but deliberate touch served as sympathetic partner to the leader's shapeshifting trumpet. Almost all the music came from Casado's 2025 debut release, *Reflection Of Another Self*, with many numbers beginning with live-mixed voiceovers chanting messages of self-identification and self-empowerment; trumpet solos were commonly augmented by digital delay, harmonizer or other effects processing; and collective jams generally sped up or slowed down at beginnings and ends of sections, heightening the dramatic impact. For the finale, she unveiled a brand-new song titled "I Don't Care What You Think"—the ultimate affirmation of self. The audience, now primed to a state of collective exhilaration, fell for it immediately, singing along, filling the room with joyous resistance. — **Tom Greenland**



Milena Casado @Bar Lunático

The Lower East Side venue, Jazz Genius, has only been in operation since last November; 85-year-old drummer Billy Hart considerably longer than that. In its spare, white-walled basement space, with grey concrete floor and curtains, opening set (Jan. 3) of Ethan Iverson's piano trio featured bassist Joe Martin and Hart. Arching forward, peering quizzically through owl glasses at the keys like a chemist over a microscope, Iverson launched into Oscar Pettiford's "Blues in the Closet", his gaze often traveling over to Hart, who never missed a glance or beat. The repertoire covered jazz and songbook standards, as well as "Killing Me Softly with His Song" (Charles Fox), a crowd-pleaser. The pianist's reworking of "All the Things You Are" and his opening monologue on "You Must Believe in Spring" gave both a classical, Chopin-esque tinge. "Stella by Starlight" was unrecognizable until the very end, when the familiar melody finally materialized from the less familiar (unless you're a musician) chord changes, the band rising to a climactic crescendo just as the song's lyrics state: "A great, symphonic theme." It was a moment of pure prosody for those of us silently singing along. Two bebop numbers, "Confirmation" and the closer, drummer Denzil Best's "Wee", featured Hart in fine form, choreographing melodic phrases across his drum kit and stretching (without breaking) rhythmic pulses like an elastic band. As Jazz Genius establishes a new niche in the local scene, and Hart continues his 86th orbital around the globe, let's wish them well on their continued musical travels. (TG)

Showcasing their recent release *Elemental* (DDB/Mack Avenue), Dee Dee Bridgewater and Bill Charlap were scheduled for a residency at Birdland for two sets over five nights. The first set of the run (Jan. 6) portended fine things to come. But Bridgewater was suffering from a cold (although you wouldn't know it), which forced her to leave Charlap to hold the fort toward the end. The opener, an energetic "On a Clear Day (You Can See Forever)" (Burton Lane, Alan Jay Lerner) revealed their *modus operandi* immediately. Both are steeped in jazz tradition, dynamism and impeccable technique, overflowing with creative ideas, storytelling ability and yards of heart. Neither do they take themselves so seriously, injecting the repertoire with humor and playfulness; both have been liberated from expectation, entering the realm of child-like abandon. Most enlightening is that this duo is not only a collaboration but a pairing of musical soul mates capable of any style in any genre. Through Billy Strayhorn's "Lush Life", Juan Tizol's "Caravan", several Ellington tunes and Fats Waller and Andy Razaf's "Honeysuckle Rose", the pair demonstrated an egalitarian partnership, be they performing simultaneously or giving space to each other to shine. Charlap had fun quoting and injecting riffs of Oscar Peterson, Earl Hines and others into his playing, and as for Bridgewater's unique vocalizations, imagine a saxophone come to life, and imagine it being played by John Coltrane; what glorious sounds emerge in scats, melodic intervals, sound effects, and more. What magic this duo created! — **Marilyn Lester**



Dee Dee Bridgewater @Birdland

There's long been fiction and drama surrounding Fats Waller's musical, *Early to Bed* (A Fairy Tale for Grown-ups), that it's lost—a partial truth somewhat furthered by John McWhorter at the Triad Theatre (Jan. 9). *Au contraire*: well-documented is *Early to Bed* (the Playbill is extant). The musical was a hit, with music by Waller and book and lyrics by George Marion Jr. running at the Broadhurst Theater from June 1943 to May 1944 before going on tour. It was *not* eclipsed by *Oklahoma!*. What's been somewhat "lost" are the original 13 orchestrations by Don Walker—owing to Waller's December 1943 death and a musicians strike, which prevented a cast recording. Yet, some of the show's songs were published as sheet music. Waller recorded several, and two were fully orchestrated for the 1978 Broadway revue *Ain't Misbehavin'* and Mel Miller orchestrated a version for a 2009 Musicals Tonight! presentation. McWhorter, a linguist, has taken this personal project on to find a producer willing to finance further development—but the arrangements are his own conception. At the piano, he was full of drama about his process, including searching through strangers' basements for clues about the original production, a farce about mistaken identity. His cast of five female vocalists of middling talent, including his 14-year-old daughter, were mixed and matched through his versions of "The Ladies Who Sing with the Band" (the evening's finale), "Hi-De-Ho High", "When the Nylons Bloom Again", "Long Time No Song" and several others. (ML)

New Year's Day night (Jan. 1)—and despite the coldest in memory, the crowd lining Grove Street, outside Arthur's Tavern, grew incessantly, possibly due to the allure of classic Village vibes within this 1930s club, but probably all because of Organ Monk. As the space filled into an SRO crowd, Gregory "Organ Monk" Lewis leapt into his seat at the B-3, its Leslie revolving in its own groove. Wearing a sinister smile, Lewis kicked into Thelonious Monk's "Humph", sinewy, swinging, tossing his entire upper half into the instrument and pushing tenor saxophonist Alek Razdan, who carried the resounding torch for Johnny Griffin and bar-walkers of old, to new heights. Lewis and the under-fêted master drummer Taru Alexander commanded a thickened sort of rhythm, one as liberated as Monk mapped out, but always taunting that old organ trio style within noisy, steaming bars, beer the only means to keep heads cool from the organ smears, crushes and searing intervals in dubious battle with a post-bop cavalcade. After "Little Rootie Tootie", an arrangement perhaps influenced by Hal Willner's '80s Monk tribute, and "Four in One", with its unpredictable, shattered triplets, Lewis stepped beyond, adding vocals where none are expected. Raina Welch, whose classical-trained voice encompasses the range from a '50s Annie Ross to Sarah Vaughan, joined in for "Well, You Needn't", "Let's Cool One" and, of course, "Round Midnight", which she refaced into a lasting masterwork as a preview to her and the organist's new album, *Organ Monk Sings*. — **John Pietaro**



Gregory "Organ Monk" Lewis @Arthur's Tavern

On a temperate winter night (Jan. 9), the inviting hue on E. 19th Street matched the cool darkness within the swanky jazz bar, Midnight Blue. Drawn by the music amid shadowy mahogany and walnut, we found the Quintin Harris Trio on the blue-lit stage, their classic sounds immediately recalling Oscar Peterson's lauded threesome, with conjured Bud Powell and Nat "King" Cole in the mix. The compliment falls not only on the leader's considerable pianistic (and vocal) talents, but the ensemble's unspoken, breathy kinesis, a compelling aspect of the genre. Both bassist Griffin Fink, a regular Harris collaborator, and drummer Agustín Grasso, originally from Buenos Aires, are frequent faces on the youthful NYC scene, yet so well represent piano trio jazz rhythm. And Harris, throughout lounges, jazz bars and theatres of our fair city, enlivens the tradition he seems born into. For the lush, thick opening strains of Hoagy Carmichael's "Stardust", the pianist's solo introduction was an invention of flourishes speaking loudly of the era. By the full trio's entry, elements of stride, double-time and shining major sevenths danced over blue chords. Confession: this writer is an avowed sucker for any "Stardust" (yes, I've called it the greatest of songs), and this was a very special version. Other set highlights included a rollicking "I'll Remember April" samba, and an unexpected "Blues in the Closet" by Oscar Pettiford. Bassist Fink reminded us why Pettiford was a vital founding bebop artist, and drummer Grasso's crackling rim-shot-driven four-bar breaks sparked into the band's next, sizzling set. (JP)

The Jazz Foundation of America's Jazz Legacies Fellowship All-Stars concert, a centerpiece of Jazz at Lincoln Center's Unity Jazz Festival (Jan. 8), gathered 17 (of 20 total) recipients whose contributions have outpaced their commercial rewards. With an average age of 80, the logistics alone carried weight: most arrived onstage by wheelchair, cane or steadying arm. The honorees rotated through small, fluid ensembles, opening with pianist Valerie Capers and drummer Herlin Riley easing into "Take the 'A' Train". Next, Tom Harrell sat folded inward with a quartet led by pianist-vocalist Johnny O'Neal; when he finally raised his trumpet, the sound emerged lucid, unmistakably his. Carmen Lundy delivered her silky ballad "Happy New Year", backed by Billy Hart-brushed understatement and pianist Dom Salvador's harmonic sway. The tenderness of the moment collided with the current grim headlines, a reminder of how permeable music can be. The night's most bracing stretch: Roscoe Mitchell (bass saxophone) and Amina Claudine Myers (piano) setting standards aside for a searching, ten-minute improvised duet. Their closing embrace spoke to six decades of shared AACM history. Another lineage surfaced when trombonist Julian Priester joined bassist Reggie Workman (the two played on Coltrane's *Africa/Brass* sessions) and saxophonist George Coleman, with whom he'd shared bandstands led by Slide Hampton and Max Roach. Concert closer was vocalist Shannon Powell, tambourine in hand, drawing musicians and audience into a shared New Orleans rhythm. — **Ariella Stok**



George Coleman and Julian Priester @Rose Theater

In a packed house at The Jazz Gallery (Jan. 10), despite the Winter Jazzfest gravitational pull across the river, pianist-composer Kris Davis opened the third and final night of the Pyroclastic Festival, the annual showcase for the label she founded and has guided for a decade as one of the most reliable homes for creative music. With Ingrid Laubrock (tenor), Larry Grenadier (bass) and Nasheet Waits (drums), Davis presented a single, set-length, quartet improvisation that unfolded with the intentionality of a written score. Though a first meeting for this exact configuration, Davis and Laubrock share an 18-year history across projects; Davis and Waits trace their rapport back to the Dave Holland New Quartet. That accumulated trust became the engine of the performance. Patterns emerged softly, repeated with slight pressure changes, then accumulated mass. They built sound structures that felt both minimalist and ritualistic—language poetry assembled by accretion, allowed to dissipate into near-silence, then summoned back with a confluence of emphasis. Grenadier's lines mirrored Davis' figures with melodic patience, while Waits controlled time itself, stretching and compressing the pulse with painterly restraint. At moments the group fractured into duos: Davis and Laubrock locking into a reverie while the rhythm section, eyes closed, listened for the right moment to reenter. Davis expanded her palette by preparing the piano strings—magnets lending glassy shimmer, clothespins producing a woody thud. (AS)

WHAT'S NEWS

In celebration of Black History Month, Brooklyn Museum's "First Saturdays" series this month (Feb. 7) is subtitled "Imitate No One." Titled after the late poet, Jayne Cortez' rallying cry, the event (5-10 pm) will pay homage to the many fearless artists and innovators who reenvisioned tradition while building community, including a tribute to Cortez featuring her (and Ornette Coleman's) son, drummer Denardo Coleman, as well as former Ornette bassist Jamaaladeen Tacuma. For more info visit brooklynmuseum.org.

After President Trump named himself chairman of the Kennedy Center board a year ago this month, and with the subsequent purge of professional staff and performing arts events originally produced by the Kennedy Center, plus the Center's renaming by the Trump-appointed board, the backlash persists. The fallout continues with several major cancellations. Jazz supergroup The Cookers bowed out of their "Jazz New Year's Eve" concert and drummer Chuck Redd removed his annual Christmas Jazz Jam (for which he was longtime host) from the Kennedy Center schedule. Other recently cancelled concerts include composer Philip Glass, trumpeter Wayne Tucker and banjoist Belá Fleck. The latter mentioned on social media: "Performing there has become charged and political, at an institution where the focus should be on the music." He also said in a CNN interview, "I'm getting more attention for canceling a show than I ever have gotten for playing one!" Note: the Center's website is still kennedycenter.org; comedian and South Park TV show writer Toby Morton locked up TrumpKennedyCenter.org early enough as a parody site.

Inspired by the life of Dorothy Dandridge (1922-1965), *That's Love! The Dorothy Dandridge Musical* premieres this month on Feb. 18 (through Mar. 8) at Axelrod Performing Arts Center (Deal, NJ), featuring Tony, Emmy and GRAMMY-nominated, five-octave, powerhouse vocalist N'Kenge. Dandridge was a legendary actress, singer and dancer who performed at The Apollo, Waldorf Astoria's Empire Room and The Cotton Club, in addition to singing and recording with the bands of Jimmie Lunceford, Glenn Miller and Louis Armstrong. Her Norman Granz-produced *Smooth Operator* (recorded in 1958 and 1961 for Verve) features Oscar Peterson, Herb Ellis and Ray Brown. Significantly she was also the first Black woman nominated for an Academy Award, for "Best Actress" in Otto Preminger's 1954 film *Carmen Jones*—an updated version of the classic Bizet opera, *Carmen*. Five years later she appeared as "Bess" in Preminger's *Porgy and Bess* (1959), alongside Sidney Poitier ("Porgy") and Pearl Bailey ("Maria"), with music conducted and supervised by André Previn. For more info and tickets visit axelrodartscenter.com/thats-love-dorothy-dandridge.

After almost 30 years in business, the Midtown, Hell's Kitchen, swinging jazz spot **Swing 46** (349 W. 46th St.)—a home for Lindy Hop, Swing and tap dancing—officially closed its doors on New Year's Eve. The good news is that NYC has not actually lost another jazz location; it's been announced that the closing is only temporary, with the reins being passed on from founder and now former owner, John Akhtar, to club proprietor Spike Wilner (of Smalls and Mezzrow fame). The as-yet-named club is expected to reopen under Wilner's guidance this Spring, with renovations happening as of this writing.

London, England's famed Soho jazz club, **Ronnie Scott's** (which first opened in 1959) is set to open its new venue space this month: Upstairs at Ronnie's, a 140-person capacity room directly above Ronnie Scott's. Scheduled performers include vocalists Jo Harrop, Emma Smith and Vanisha Gould, pianist-vocalist Kelly Green and pianists Bill Laurance, Philippe Lemm and Danny Grissett. For more info visit ronniescotts.co.uk.

The renowned **Verve Records**, founded in 1956 by promoter-producer Norman Granz, will be marking its historic 70th birthday with a year-long celebration of the anniversary, which will include live and new music releases, plus special events throughout 2026. Slated are reissues, as well as previously unheard archival music from Dizzy Gillespie, Sarah Vaughan, Joe Gordon, Jimmy Smith, Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, Nina Simone and Oscar Peterson—including 180gr vinyl, limited edition runs. For more info visit ververecords.com.

To submit news email ldgreene@nycjazzrecord.com