

ON SCREEN



Lani B. Supreme: Legacy
Sabaah Folayan (The Omni Collective)
by Paul Gaita

The word "legacy" carries a lot of freight, and in the case of this documentary short by producer-director Sabaah Folayan, it asks a very short film (a mere 15 minutes) to bear its load. Legacy, by definition, concerns the full measure of a person, a deed, or an idea and its impact on the people and culture that follow it—a tall order, and one that might require a subject with considerable gravitas and equal heft. Fortunately, Folayan has Lani B. Supreme at the center of the film, which aired on PBS' American Masters series "In the Making."

Supreme, born Jelani Akil Bauman, is a gifted trumpeter, composer and educator who carries a notable legacy, suggesting and underscoring the film's title. As Supreme details eloquently in the film (which he also scored), he is the product of a long line of influential jazz figures dating back to

pre-emancipation. His great-great-grandfather, J.B. Humphrey, was a pioneering music teacher who trained many early musicians (including famed New Orleans trombonist Kid Ory) in what would become the fundaments of jazz in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Supreme's grandfather, trumpeter Umar Sharif (born Emery Humphrey Thompson), played with Lionel Hampton, Jimmie Lunceford and many others. The Humphrey family tree also includes Eureka Brass Band leader Percy Humphrey, Preservation Hall Jazz Band clarinetist Willie Humphrey and trumpeter Jamil Sharif. Supreme draws upon that wealth of experience and history for his own work, sketched in brief but bold detail by the film. We are treated to snippets of impressive projects: "I Shook Up the World", a suite inspired by Muhammad Ali's legendary 1965 defeat of Sonny Liston, and later, footage of the 2023 Brooklyn Museum show where his debut album, *The Future Is Bright*, was recorded.

Legacy shows Supreme's understanding of the word through thought and action. He has delved deep into his family's rich history and talent, drawn from it and infused it through his own artistic endeavors, which carry forward that skill and blossom into new visions. Brief in running time but rich in information and emotion, it is an impressive examination of how history remains a living thing.

For more info visit lanibsupreme.com

Dream Archives
Craig Taborn, Tomeka Reid, Ches Smith (ECM)
by JR Simon

Recorded in New Haven, CT, in 2024, *Dream Archives* brings together Craig Taborn (piano), Tomeka Reid (cello) and Ches Smith (drums, vibraphone, percussion)—and although this is the trio's first album as a unit, it sounds anything but tentative. Across four Taborn originals and two inspired covers (Geri Allen's "When Kabuya Dances" and Paul Motian's "Mumbo Jumbo"), the trio moves with the ease and trust of a group that has been playing together for years. The pianist has a well-deserved reputation for drawing the full expressive range out of his instrument, and that relentless curiosity drives this album.

On album opener "Coordinates for the Absent", Taborn works the piano's upper and lower registers in an impressionistic dialogue that recalls the most radiant moments of Debussy, while also pushing toward new tonal and rhythmic possibilities. Throughout, the trio shifts between different musical landscapes and inspirations yet without ever breaking the thread of continuity. "Feeding Maps to the Fire" begins with spare, minimalist patterns before steadily gaining momentum and dissolving into free improvisation. Its

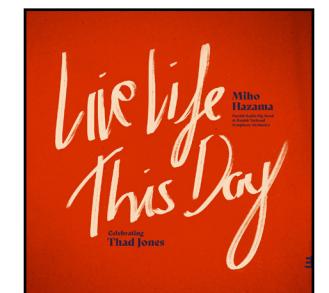
final stretch locks into a mesmerizing trance, driven by repeating, alternating time signatures that keep the listener fixated. That rhythmic playfulness explodes into joy on "When Kabuya Dances", which opens with an elegant piano statement before transforming into a raucous, tantalizing dance party. Reid's plucked bass line and Smith's buzzing cymbals make the groove impossible to resist. "Dream Archive" offers one of the album's most revealing journeys: it opens with a mosaic of quick, darting fragments, percussive and slightly disjointed, like thoughts flickering through a half-remembered dream. An ethereal, electronic atmosphere slowly emerges, and the two worlds circle each other before yielding to a gorgeous piano interlude and a wild, free-form ending. Reid's versatility is on full display throughout, from muscular pizzicato to luminous bowed lines, especially on the closing "Enchant", where her cello lines really sing. Smith matches her range, equally convincing in shimmering, dreamlike textures or in grounded, dance-ready grooves.

Together with Taborn's ever-searching imagination, this trio creates a debut that feels expansive and exploratory, but also intimate and luscious.

For more info visit ecmrecords.com. Craig Taborn is at The Stone at The New School Feb. 12 (with Tomas Fujiwara) and Close Up Feb. 16-17 (with Steve Lehman). Ches Smith is at The Stone at The New School Feb. 6 (with Sally Gates) and Nublu Feb. 11 (with Celine Kang). See Calendar.

statements. But the complexity also extends into the written word, particularly that of the revolutionary poet Kuwasi Balagoon who tragically died in 1986 of AIDS complications at age 39. In lieu of detailed liner notes, Johnson offers Balagoon's "With No Questions": *the leaves are changing/to sheaves of fire/rust 'n indigo/in waves/And all at once/And one by one/different in their deaths/like all times/and loved ones/and memories of places/faded from lack of presence/and fallen from the attention of today/to lie like a quilt on the earth/and winter/and change to the rich pungent ground/that feeds realities to come/with no questions.*

For more info visit ssaj.bandcamp.com. Johnson is at Nublu Feb. 11, 18 and 25 (as leader) and Close Up Feb. 5 (with Samantha Kochis). See Calendar.



Live Life This Day: Celebrating Thad Jones
Miho Hazama (Edition)
by Andrew Schinder

For music fans who believe that big band jazz largely died as the 1940s became the 1950s, giving way to bebop and pop crooners, trumpeter Thad Jones most certainly would have disagreed. Jones was considered one of the best soloists of his day, serving as right-hand man for Count Basie for several years before joining drummer Mel Lewis in 1966 to found the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra (then known as the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra). He held court there every Monday until leaving suddenly to join the Copenhagen-based Danish Radio Big Band (DR Big Band), serving as its leader from 1977-78.

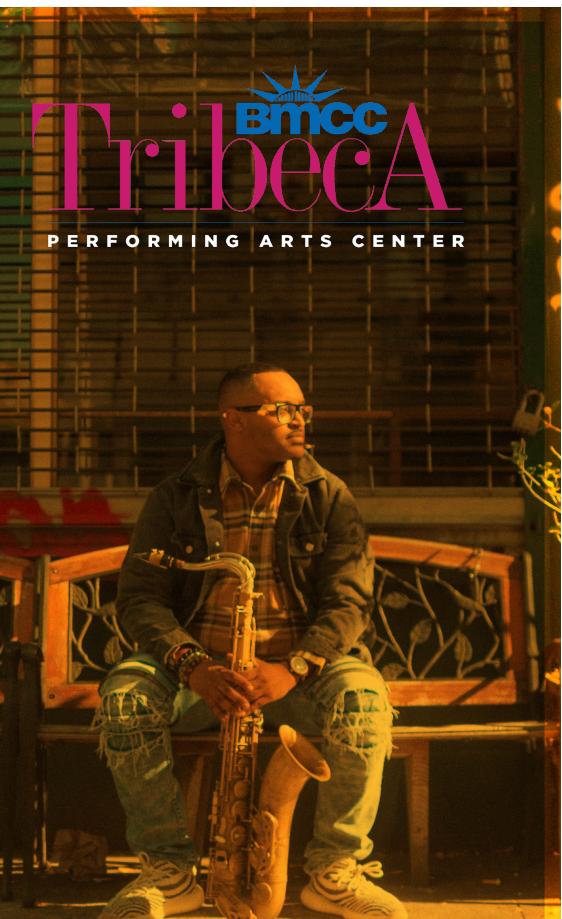
Since 2019, Tokyo-born composer-arranger Miho

Hazama, who plays piano and electric keyboard, has led the DR Big Band. With *Live Life This Day: Celebrating Thad Jones*, she reinterprets and rearranges several of Jones' big-band compositions. It is a joyous, blissful celebration, exactly what you might expect from the leader of one of the world's foremost big bands exploring the work of one of the world's most legendary big band masters of the past. Here, Hazama enlists both the DR Big Band and the Danish National Symphony Orchestra, combining the jazz vibes with the Orchestra's classical symphonics. Recorded at the DR Koncerthuset (the Danish Radio Concert Hall) in Copenhagen, the result is a beautifully colossal amalgam of the two genres.

"Side 1" is Johnson's *tour de force*, often jarring and making rather extreme use of the instrument's volume pedal. For horror aficionados, if *Carnival of Souls* remains memorable, listen for the creeping remnants of Gene Moore's artful brooding, grasping organ score, here under the weight of Johnson's spiraling intensity: thickets of sound, smears, howls, glissandi and church-heavy chords against darkly rumbling bass. Towards the end of "Side 1", new emulsions of tone are heard and use of the volume pedal produces pulsating, pivoting reconstructions of melodic phrases and unexpected quotes (Monk is in there). Shades of Sun Ra, Johnson's stabbing, long-held major and minor seconds shatter the skies.

"Side 2" begins tonally, possibly modally, before adding a length of blue thirds and flattened fifths into the sonic web. With a right hand playing rapid runs over keyboards, smashing blue notes with vigor, Johnson brings to mind the late organist Larry Young. If "Side 1" demonstrated raw emotive expression, the apparent *yang* in this two-sided personage, this work serves as the *yin*, albeit with presto runs alternating with pensive, melodic

For more info visit editionrecords.com. Hazama is at Dizzy's Club Feb. 23. See Calendar.



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