

UNEARTHED GEM



Live in Helsinki 1963-1965
Ella Fitzgerald (The Lost Recordings)
by Ken Dryden

By the time Ella Fitzgerald reached her mid-40s, the masterful jazz vocalist was a superstar. Fitzgerald took no time to captivate her audiences as she explored the Great American Songbook, jazz favorites and even current chart-topping pop songs. This three-LP collection, *Live in Helsinki 1963-1965*, of previously unissued concerts in the Finnish capital, sourced from the Finnish Broadcasting Company, documents two evenings from her European tours. The mono sound on these 180gr vinyl pressings is crystal clear, with Fitzgerald in top form, backed by two sympathetic bands. The earlier tour, heard on the first two discs, features Tommy Flanagan (piano), Les Spann (guitar), Jim Hughart (bass) and Gus Johnson (drums). The setlist for this concert is fairly typical, including standards from the '30s and '40s, earlier hits for the singer including the inevitable "Mack the Knife" (with her hilarious Louis Armstrong impression) and also a scat-filled rendition of "How High the Moon" that detours into numerous other oldies along the way. Fitzgerald also delivers a rousing, upbeat interpretation of Ray Charles' "Hallelujah, I Love Her So" and a swaying treatment of Antônio Carlos Jobim's "Desafinado" that benefits from the accents of Spann's guitar playing.

The 1965 group is similar, though omitting guitar and replacing bassist Hughart with Keter Betts. It seems like Fitzgerald had a fairly-fixed set in mind, as her Hamburg concert, recorded just a few days later, is almost identical to this release. The chemistry is still at a high level, though the surprising opener is "Walk Right In", a '30s song that also has been covered in folk and rock. The singer gives it her own twist with a boisterous interpretation fueled by Flanagan's strong support. Fitzgerald's hip setting of "That Old Black Magic" had been a fan favorite since her first recording of the tune and this passionate version meets her high standards. This was followed by heartfelt settings of ballads "Body and Soul" and "Here's That Rainy Day". Ella Fitzgerald was always attuned to what was happening on rock radio and she wasn't afraid to tackle some of the hits. While some were occasionally misfires and none of them remained in the repertoire for the long run, her swinging setting of The Beatles' "A Hard Day's Night" pleases her audience and stands the test of time. It was "Mack the Knife", though, that sent the crowd home on a high note.

For more info visit thelostrecordings.store. Ella Fitzgerald tributes this month include "Savoy Ballroom Centennial Tribute #1: Ella Fitzgerald" (featuring Charenée Wade) at Interchurch Center Mar. 11 (presented by Jazzmobile) and "Ella & The Duke" (featuring Sandra St. Victor) at The Appel Room Mar. 18. See Calendar.

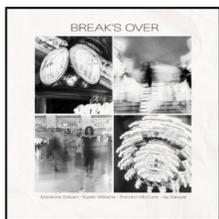


Interaction
3 Cohens/WDR Big Band (Anzic)
by Scott Yanow

Clarinetist Anat Cohen (also a superior tenor-saxophonist) and her two brothers, Yuval (soprano) and Avishai (trumpet), have all had significant careers as leaders. However, it is particularly special when they join together as the 3 Cohens. Needless to say, though there is no connection between them and the original Four Cohens, which 130 years ago launched the career of George M. Cohan, it is a pity that the current group has never added the "other" Avishai (no relation), a notable bassist, to form the new Four Cohens!

Joking aside, *Interaction* is the eighth recording by the 3 Cohens since 2003 and this is their second with a large orchestra—in this case the Cologne, Germany-based 16-piece WDR Big Band. The siblings are featured performing the arrangements of Oded Lev-Ari (also co-founder and director of the Anzic label) at a wide-ranging 2022 concert that is filled with variety, contrasting complex ballads ("Trills & Thrills", "Naked Truth Pt. 2") with exuberant jams. One of the album's highlights is their rendition of the Dixieland standard "Tiger Rag", which the 3 Cohens had recorded before with a small group, and utilizing Middle Eastern scales with hot jazz. While this new version takes a bit of time to get going, it has its charm and does finally swing hard. Other album and performance highlights include the infectious "Footsteps & Smiles" with its clarinet-soprano tradeoff, "Shufra de Shula" and Yuval Cohen's tricky melody line on "Catch of The Day". The WDR Big Band plays with enthusiasm and typical brilliance throughout, though some of their soloists go uncredited. Most noteworthy is a performance sans orchestra or even rhythm section: on Gerry Mulligan's "Festive Minor", which the 3 Cohens had recorded previously (*Tightrope*, 2013). The three again perform this as a horn trio, weaving lines around each other in joyful fashion. Someday they should record a full album this way, just for the fun of it. Their *Interaction* is a worthy addition to the 3 Cohens legacy.

For more info visit anzicrecords.com. Anat Cohen is at Birdland Mar. 10-14. She is also at Jazz Forum (Tarrytown, NY) Mar. 6-7. See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.



Break's Over
Marianne Solivan (Imani)
by Marilyn Lester

With the release of her sixth album, vocalist Marianne Solivan presents a novel approach to her hard swing style, choosing phrasing that's vocalese-adjacent and centering on her own creative abilities as a composer and lyricist. Backed by a simpatico trio—Brandon McCune (piano), Buster Williams (bass) and Jay

Sawyer (drums)—who firmly have her back, she, in turn, allows the players plenty of space. Probably the most interesting example of Solivan's phrasing choices is a tune that's been in her repertoire and to which she's applied varying attitudes: Richard Rodgers' "Look No Further", written for a 1962 Broadway outing, *No Strings*, the first musical he composed after the death of his long-time collaborator, Oscar Hammerstein II. It's a message number, and with its a *capella* start, and lovely piano feature midway in, she soundly delivers the heartfelt goods in her strong alto to midrange soprano.

Always a thoughtful singer, *Break's Over* reveals Solivan as a poet of ability. Her lyrics, set to several tunes on the album, reflect particular insights. The balladic "Drifting Through this Maze (Zingaro)", written by Antônio Carlos Jobim in 1965, has had a strange history of versions, in titling and lyrics both Portuguese and English. The tune is one Solivan has been singing over most of her career and her lyrics, which focus on the meaning of the title, unspool with depth, assuring her a place as a strong storyteller. For "We Must Love" (based on Randy Weston's "Little Niles"), a pensive and free piano intro gives way to the singer's slow vocal, picking up with the trio gathering steam, Sawyer creating a drum sequence of rolling thunder until Solivan turns down the boil and the piece resolves and bookends where it began. Flipping the scenario, she wrote the evocative music of "First Desire" to a poem ruminating on the nature of love by Spanish great, Federico Garcia Lorca. The album's eight tracks are bookended by tunes in which Solivan had no creative writing hand: "Open the Door" by a deep Solivan inspiration, Betty Carter, and "The Other Half Of Me" (Jack Lawrence, Stan Freeman).

Break's Over follows pandemic time and the vocalist's 2024 album *Re-Entry*, reflecting Solivan's fierce intent to fully get back to music and her career. Like Dolly Levi, of *Hello!* fame, it's so good to have her back where she belongs.

For more info visit imanirecords.bandcamp.com/artists. Solivan is at Tavern on George (New Brunswick, NJ) Mar. 12. See 100 Miles Out.



head shot shy
Teresa Riemann (Fort Evil Fruit)
Ratsnake
Chloe Kim (Kou)
by Kurt Gottschalk

The percussion family tree is a big one, including any manner of struck and smacked metallophones and membranophones, chordophones and idiophones—many quite melodic. But there's something uniquely fascinating about a player who finds musicality in the old kit drums. The Berlin-based Teresa Riemann and Australian Chloe Kim both compose for the traps, albeit in very different styles.

Riemann writes songs for drums and voice (and for piano and voice under the moniker "A tender kiss into the void") that fire on multiple cylinders. *head shot shy* is a powerful, nine-song set landing between angst and despair. Her voice is effective, convincing to the character of her songs, sung in English, French and German; her playing is intriguing, confident, thoughtful and complex. The songs seem to be single, in-studio takes, exhibiting focus and control. (The mix is the biggest clue here. The vocals are slightly off-mic, presumably keeping the drums from pushing into the red.) They almost seem as if they could go

in any direction, depending on what instrumental tracks were dropped in. It could be updated British folk, Weimar post punk, or avant garde art song (cf. drummer Roger Turner's duo with Phil Minton, a singer Riemann has worked with in the past). Almost any direction, because there isn't much room for anything to be added. There's the occasional piano and some electronic augmentation, but the accompaniment is the drumming: not overdone, never overbearing, but present, filling the audio space. Riemann is an imaginative drummer, varying parts but keeping the pulse like a good rock bassist; there's generally an urgency, a dirge and drive.

Chloe Kim's *Ratsnake* is a different animal. Kim clearly thinks big and gives serious consideration to orchestrating on the kit. While the relative rawness of Riemann's record provides the needed immediacy, *Ratsnake* has a rich and wide audio picture, accentuating treatment of the drum set in different sections. Other treatments are few. The opening title track seems to be overlaid with bowed cymbals and gongs, although it could be just the sounds of demons andimps let loose in the studio (if it is played live, I would like to see her do it). The rest of the seven tracks are more straightforward. The restorative complexities suggest more layering, but Kim's technique shouldn't be underestimated. At the 2023 MONA FOMA festival in Tasmania, she played ten hours a day for ten days, alone. She's clearly got chops. While her music is hardly traditional, Kim's drums do often evoke the music of her native Korea, with deep bass resonances and taut treble beats that sound somehow hollow. She grew up surrounded by the tradition but never practiced it until she moved to Sydney to study jazz drumming. She also never studied composition formally, but in recent years has been composing for chamber ensembles, including a piece for a string bass sextet. As a soloist, she plays like an orchestrator; it's only so big a step.

For more info visit fortevilfruit.bandcamp.com and kourecords.com



Square One
The Empress (Cellar Music)
by Jim Motavalli

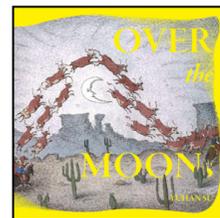
The fact that all four horn players here on *Square One* are women—Pureum Jin (soprano, alto), Erena Terakubo (alto), Chelsea Baratz (tenor), Lauren Sevia (baritone)—is incidental to enjoying this crackling hard bop album by these first call players. That said, South Korea-born, NYC-based Jin did form this co-op band (and produced the record) with the intent to give female players a chance to show off.

It's a sparkling showcase that blasts out of the gate with German saxophonist Michael Lutzeier's "Instant Composure". The horns sound like a big band embracing the warm theme, then break out for some fast and concise alto, tenor and baritone solos, egged on with some lovely call-and-response. This is not a head-solos-reprise-out album, but rather cleverly arranged (mostly by Lutzeier) to fully utilize the front-line saxophone quartet, aided by Steve Ash (piano), Joey Ranieri (bass) and Pete Van Nostrand (drums). George Gershwin's "But Not for Me" could have been taken from a multi-horn, mid '50s Blue Note release, with straight-ahead solos at midtempo giving way to

Ash in fine Bobby Timmons fashion. But then a very tight unison horn section (spiced by Ash) enlivens the melody to the outro. Juan Tizol's "Caravan" features some fine desert stickwork from drummer Van Nostrand, as well as a dazzling horn arrangement, including a memorable saxophone battle. Sevia's baritone, right out of the Pepper Adams tradition, is particularly blistering. Matt Dennis' "Everything Happens to Me" (arranged by Jin) is a beautiful balladic change of pace. The group takes on the master with "Mr. Syms" (from John Coltrane's *Coltrane Plays the Blues*), which is taken at a loping pace. Jin's soprano playing especially makes it resonate, a true tip of the hat to Coltrane, who also played the straight horn on the original. The group's "Milestones" isn't the Miles tune, but rather the earlier, unrelated, John Lewis composition. Sevia noticeably digs into this one, before her horn teammates have a go at it, as well as bassist Ranieri.

The solos throughout the album are masterful, and an additional note must be made regarding the stellar arrangements, which really add extra depth within each selection. Next up...*Square Two!*

For more info visit theempressmusic.bandcamp.com. Erena Terakubo is at Dizzy's Club Mar. 25-29 (with DIVA Jazz Orchestra). She is also at Beanrunner Cafe (Peekskill, NY) Mar. 7. See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.



OVER the MOONS
Yuhan Su (Endectomorph Music)
by Ken Waxman

After 16 years in the US and despite ICE and the Trump administration's immigrant-focused fear-mongering, Taiwanese vibraphonist Yuhan Su's musical ideas are as much part of the local jazz gestalt as they are international. On *OVER the MOONS*, her fifth album, Su leads a crew of top New York players through eight tunes no more foreign than the films of her US-based countryman Ang Lee. That doesn't mean she has rejected her heritage though. Some of the titles reflect the duality of her two-fold language and culture identities. Still, the only overt Chinese reference is on "Genius and Dumb", in which she rhythmically recites Mandarin syllables in sync with James Paul Naden's drum pops and Yingda Chen's guitar strokes. The narrative then evolves to feature pianist Matt Mitchell, as well as alto saxophonist Alex LoRe's expressive note-bending, further overlaid with Shinya Lin's electronic splatters.

Like most dedicated, creative musicians, rather than being nativist, Su's compositions succinctly include textures related to her extensive playing experience, which encompasses work with such diverse stylists as Greg Osby, Amir ElSaffar and the Webber/Morris Big Band. Tenor saxophonist Anna Webber herself is also featured here and joins LoRe to contribute high-pitched reed riffs on the title tune, which contrapuntally confront the leader's perfectly-focused resonating vibraphone shapes and stops, plus some solidly-cadenced guitar licks. Both saxophonists contribute ethereal flute to the ballad "Too Much Time Matching Clouds", which widens distinctively as Su's subtle metal bar reverberations and Chen's carefully-rounded guitar notes echo reflectively above Marty Kenney's bass stops and Mitchell's expansive piano accents. Other tracks are tougher and more accelerated

and include, at points, almost as many contrapuntal reed honks, drum rumbles, keyboard clipping, projected guitar flanges, bass pumps and ringing vibraphone clanks that skirt ebullient Jazz Messengers territory. At the same time, the clarity of clean, contemporary interpretations is never abandoned.

Clearly in a non-confrontational and swing-affiliated manner, *OVER the MOONS* metaphorically demonstrates the comprehensive achievements of immigrants to the US that was usually celebrated in the pre-MAGA era.

For more info visit endectomorph.com. Su is at Nublu Classic Mar. 27. See Calendar.

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