

DROP THE NEEDLE



The Free Slave
Roy Brooks (Muse-Time Traveler)
Cosmos Nucleus
Carlos Garnett (Muse-Time Traveler)
by Fred Bouchard

The reissued *The Free Slave* captures drummer Roy Brooks' quintet of star-bound hard boppers in a raw but elegant 1970 jam at Baltimore's Left Bank Jazz Society. Fiery youngblood Woody Shaw (trumpet) and sturdy veteran George Coleman (tenor) pitch and yaw on a "live reckoning" front line. Ballast comes from Hugh Lawson (piano) and Cecil McBee (bass), who lift off the funk grooves with Captain Brooks (who would be 88 this month); the three arrived from two years' spurs-earning with reed guru Yusef Lateef. The frizzly tape belies the sassy set's smooth vamps, technical derring-do and cozy camaraderie as fans egg them on. The title track hypnotizes with 20-bar loops, snappy outbursts and down-dirty tags. Silver-mellow "Understanding" goes snakey-Latin as Coleman pleads, Shaw spits and polishes. On his "Will Pan's Walk", McBee fiddles strings dexterously, with sly wit. On "5/4 Max" (for mentor Max Roach), Brooks lashes, slashes—even gongs and breath-a-tones (!) with joyous power. Months later, Brooks had Panamanian saxophonist Carlos Garnett (both born in 1938) replace Coleman on *Understanding* (Reel to Reel).

In 1976, the headstrong Garnett (whose three-year death anniversary—he passed at age 84—is this month) corralled a herd of 25 bully-boys for an ebullient long-lost studio session, *Cosmos Nucleus*, to launch jazz-funk beyond the stratosphere, as a core octet tased by "Junior" McCleary's stinging wah-wah geetah and three drummers spark ten brazen brass and eight reeds. A son of Panamerica's Sea Silk Road, Garnett plays fast and loose with big band compositional traditions (as did Andrew Hill) as if to foster FDR's four freedoms (of speech and worship and from fear and want). An extended family affair features bassist McBee—Junior wailing fleet 'n fancy (electric bass), Wayne (bro of drummer Billy) Cobham (trumpet), Zack (son of composer Cal) Massey (tenor), Clifton Anderson (trombone, nephew of Sonny Rollins), Roy Campbell (trumpet), Neil Clarke (longtime Randy Weston percussionist) and a bevy of obscure cats: Akum Ra Amen-Ra and Yah Ya (tenor), Abdul Malik (trumpet), et al. Title track standouts are the leader's searing soprano and budding (just 20) Kenny Kirkland, pensive on electric piano. Philosophical vocals and chorals by Garnett and Cheryl Alexander are spiced up by gyrating salsa and merengue. Fifty years on, inquisitive yet carefree youths prevail.

These refreshing, 180gr vinyl reissues spearhead Zev Feldman's imaginative Time Traveler relaunch of select classics from Joe Fields' 500-strong Muse Records catalogue, packaged with twin liner notes: original back covers (Gary Giddins, Alan Goodman), colorful essays, plus historical perspective by Barney (son of Joe) Fields, and photos. More roads to travel, as Muse regulars McBee and Coleman hit life's 91 milestone.

For more info visit [instagram.com/timetravelerrecordings](https://www.instagram.com/timetravelerrecordings)



Through the Looking Glass
John Zorn (Tzadik)
by David Cristol

After seven albums between 2015 and 2019 by the Simulacrum trio—John Medeski (organ) with avant-metal heads Matt Hollenberg (guitar) and Kenny Grohowski (drums)—John Zorn added keyboard prodigy Brian Marsella (Fender Rhodes, piano) to that lineup to form Chaos Magick in 2020. Borrowing its title from British author Lewis Carroll's novel, *Through the Looking Glass* is the quartet's sixth release, and also their best, which should come as no surprise.

With each new album Zorn ups the ante, giving the players challenging material to grapple with and the opportunity to surpass themselves. Simultaneously, with each consecutive gig and session they grow more familiar with their leader's compositional strategies. Album opener "Nine Secret Crossings" displays a variety of moods, from gently worrisome introductory music box-like arpeggios, to deep-groove morsels and further rhythm and harmonic shifts. The track accommodates roaring solos, thematic jolts, angelic forays and abstract interludes, and feels shorter than its 18-minute duration. Composer Zorn won't stay on a good groove when he taps into one, delighting in jump cuts and quick juxtapositions instead. "The Pentacle of Albuscius" appears more unified by comparison, Medeski working textural wonders. "A Tear in Time" starts with a fast and curious funk meter, before veering into rock territory, again an ideal vehicle for Medeski to exert his inexhaustible chops; his first appearance in the Zorniverse goes back thirty years, to 1996's *Bar Kokhba*, although he only became an integral part of Zorn's close circle from 2010's *Interzone*, playing organ and piano in many projects, live and on record.

For all the switches in tempi and temper in *Through the Looking Glass*, the listening experience is made seamless by the performers. Chaos Magick sometimes evokes a compact version of Electric Masada, while the u-turns and clashes revert to the tradition of '90s *Naked City*. Unmitigated enjoyment.

For more info visit [tzadik.com](https://www.tzadik.com). John Medeski is at Brooklyn Bowl Mar. 12-14. See Calendar.



Handmade
Emilio Solla & La Inestable de Brooklyn
(Club del Disco)
by Marilyn Lester

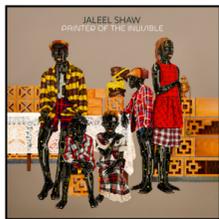
Latin GRAMMY winner and six-time GRAMMY nominee, Argentina-born, NYC-based pianist, composer and bandleader Emilio Solla is disturbed by an increasingly techno world. His 15th album, *Handmade*, with a nine-piece ensemble, La Inestable de Brooklyn, is staunchly about the power of human connection, the enduring value of music made by hand

and the value of craftsmanship in the arts and beyond, blending Latin American traditions, jazz and classical influences and, of course, tango. Among the nine tracks (all composed and arranged by Solla), there is one unabashed and delightfully quirky tango, "Miles Tango". Imagine a collaboration between Miles Davis and the legendary tangomeister, Astor Piazzolla and there you have it, with Rodolfo Zanetti's bandoneon providing the Argentine flavor among the trumpet-forward playing of David Smith.

Album opener, "Suite de los Abrazos (A Hugging Suite)", is a reflection on the pandemic, when, ironically, giving hugs could be life-threatening. It is presented as a three-movement suite: "Milonga Mutante" (evoking the chaos of emergency rooms and featuring Mike Fahie's trombone and Rogério Boccato's relentless drumming), the haunting "The Loss" (with a moving Edward Perez bass solo) and the light-hearted rejoicing of "Bodegón Caníbal" (featuring a notable tenor solo by Tim Armacost). The violin artistry of Sara Caswell emulates the subject of "Bird Song" in sound and joyous flight, with lilting pianism by Solla and the group offering a chacarera (Argentine folk dance) in praise of avian friends. Caswell is also featured on "Para el Agua", originally recorded for solo piano, featuring a skillful, extended improvisation by the leader, the sum effect of the song capturing the fluidity of water as it dances and flows. The slow milonga, "De Viento y de Sal (Of Wind and Salt)" also carries the spirit of Piazzolla; with lyrics by Solla and Roxana Amed, vocals by Sofia Tosello and Zanetti's bandoneon, the classic story-song form of Latin America is rendered with the bluesy evocation of a torch song. Piano and bandoneon begin a fanciful dance of a tune, "Joni Mitchell", an homage to one of Solla's favorite songwriters. The central theme is augmented by violin and brass interludes, woven together in a bright, saucy musical ode. Throughout, the opening piano "montuno" is present, and two Mitchell tunes are cleverly quoted in the mix.

Handmade is lively, joyous and warm, a real antidote to doomscrolling and a shot of happy for whatever ails you.

For more info visit [clubdeldisco.net/en](https://www.clubdeldisco.net/en). The album release concert is at Dizzy's Club Mar. 12. See Calendar.



Painter of the Invisible
Jaleel Shaw (Changu)
by Rachel Smith

Painter of the Invisible is a testament to alto saxophonist Jaleel Shaw's sensitivity to stories—those he has heard and those he tells. Shaw brought into the studio a cast of similarly evocative musicians: Lawrence Fields (piano, Fender Rhodes), Ben Street (bass) and Joe Dyson (drums), as well as Lage Lund (guitar) and Sasha Berliner (vibraphone), the latter two joining on two tunes apiece. While each make their mark, the album's true focus is on the leader—as composer, instrumentalist, and as an individual. His melodies are easy to follow without being cliché, and though most of the compositions are inspired by loss, the album offers a varied, engaging listening experience.

Having been on the scene for more than 25 years, Shaw's musical maturity is well-served: each selection features an economy of notes, with no part outstaying its welcome and thus allowing for the significance of

every note played. In keeping with the recording's largely stripped-down aesthetic, almost all of the tunes open with a solo (a potentially monotonous trend), with melodies frequently framed by the leader. A pleasurable addition occurs at the end of the penultimate track, "The Invisible Man", wherein echoes of the melody bleed from Shaw's saxophone into the accompanying piano and guitar lines, respectively, from Fields and Lund. There is an airy, ethereal quality established on tunes such as "Gina's Ascent (Intro)" and album closer "Until We Meet Again", particularly the former which features sensitive support from vibraphonist Berliner. Transcending musicianship is perhaps Shaw's ultimate skill and superpower as a storyteller who can channel a level of sensitivity to listening to the world around him. You can certainly hear in "Tamir (for Tamir Rice)"—through song title, sound and length (almost 11 minutes)—that the saxophonist has been moved by the story of the 12-year-old boy who was shot and killed by a policeman in Cleveland. That darkness is expressed in the saxophonist's "Summertime"-like, melodic, yearning approach, which is well-complemented by the additional tension and interaction Dyson brings on drums.

Painter of the Invisible is deeply personal: these are the stories, which Shaw has inherited, contemplated, lived and written about, in his own voice.

For more info visit [jaleelshaw.bandcamp.com](https://www.jaleelshaw.bandcamp.com). Shaw is at Dizzy's Club Mar. 11 (with Alexander Claffy) and Ken's Jazz Attic (Larchmont, NY) Mar. 12 (with Jamie Baum). See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.

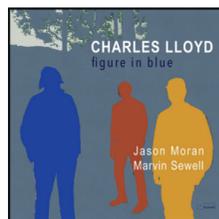


Figure in Blue
Charles Lloyd (Blue Note)
by Scott Yanow

The best jazz musicians make every note count. While one might assume from the mostly slow tempos on Charles Lloyd's latest release, the double-album *Figure in Blue*, that he is taking it easy because of his age (he turns 88 this month) and possibly because of any understandable lack of energy—that is as far from the truth as can be. Lloyd has been emphasizing laidback-oriented music for decades, caressing melodies and creating solos that are thoughtful and spiritual. However, he also tosses in rapid double-time runs here and there, when it fits the spirit and fits the music, and his improvisations always contain surprising, in-the-moment improvisations. The tenor saxophonist-flute player also maintains a fairly busy working schedule, as he has been quite prolific, touring and recording with regularity.

On tenor saxophone, Lloyd has retained his sound from the '60s and plays without any hesitation (or signs of his age, for that matter). While he generally plays with a full rhythm section, here he is showcased in a bassless and drumless trio, with Jason Moran (piano) and Marvin Sewell (guitar). Of the 14 songs, nine are his originals. In addition, the trio performs the spiritual "Abide with Me", two Duke Ellington tunes ("Heaven" and "Black Beauty", the latter which is given a particularly lovely, melodic reading), plus a very slow, sensitive rendition of Leonard Bernstein's "Somewhere". Of the other numbers, "Hina Hanta, the way of peace", "Desolation Sound" and "The Ghost of Lady Day" each have a dreamlike quality that form a soundtrack for meditation.

Sewell adds an electronic atmosphere to numbers, and is particularly quite bluesy on "Chulahoma". The versatile Moran clearly continues to inspire Lloyd in his accompaniment, with close interplay and tasteful solos. Some fire is displayed during the fairly free, episodic "Ruminations" and the rollicking and playful "Blues For Langston", which has Lloyd sounding quite effective and inspired on flute. Throughout, he takes some time to get his message across and displays inner peace along with a youthful spirit: there is no doubt he is clearly still very much in his musical prime.

For more info visit [store.bluenote.com](https://www.store.bluenote.com). Lloyd is at Carnegie Hall Mar. 6 (part of "Zakir Hussain Eternal: Celebrating 75 Years of Genius"). See Calendar.



Solo Brooklyn
Leo Genovese (577 Records)
Fourth Generation
Juan Chivassá (Whirlwind)
by Brian Charette

Leo Genovese, the incredible Argentinian pianist, is featured on two new albums: one a solo piano concert (*Solo Brooklyn*), the other as sideman (Juan Chivassá's *Fourth Generation*). Called a musical "polyglot" by *The New York Times*, Genovese has earned critical acclaim and prestigious awards including a 2021 GRAMMY for Best Improvised Jazz Solo (on Wayne Shorter's "Endangered Species") and 2023 *DownBeat* Critics Poll Award for Rising Star—Piano. A gifted pianist, he has additionally toured and recorded with esperanza spalding, Joe Lovano, Jack DeJohnette and Herbie Hancock, among others.

On *Solo Brooklyn*, which was recorded live at NYC's 577 Records-produced Forward Festival early last year, we get to hear Genovese in an intimate solo context. The shallow pedaling of "Brooklyn de Noche" creates haunting overtones while the sharper lines chime in the harmonic din. The minimal nature of the piece and the occasional, incidental audience and piano pedal noise make this quite an engaging listen. Under perfect control, angular melodies turn and evaporate into magical washes of harmony. In contrast, "Trotamundos" has short staccato stabs in the piano's lower register. Suddenly some chords sneak in on top as the bass figures continue to thrash underneath. In the middle some counter melody emerges, making it sound like there is more than two hands at work. "Walking Sombre" could be a Debussy prelude, though this is more insistent. The wash of sustained dissonant intervals creates a living sonic haze for the musical footsteps to walk on. Genovese, a master of the piano's sonic possibilities and peculiarities, conjures compelling visual imagery during this brilliant performance. He proves to be an interesting and dynamic pianist capable of creating great programmatic soundscapes on traditional, as well as electronic instruments.

Fellow Argentine, Juan Chivassá proves to be a soulful drummer as well as a seasoned producer and composer on his *Fourth Generation*. The album opens with an altered blues featuring guitar great, Mike Stern, whose lyrical solo is supported beautifully by Genovese's intuitive comping, which seems to have a sixth sense for the guitarist's altered harmony. The pianist's solo follows with funky post bop Fender Rhodes replete with slippery side-stepping pianistic tricks. The rhythm section swings hard with ace bassist, John Patitucci, who has some hot trading with Chivassá towards the tune's conclusion. "The Other Mingus" is a twisty medium swing with an infectious

melody. This selection sizzles with Genovese's rock-solid accompaniment as saxophone guru, George Garzone, rips over the changes. Check out Chivassá's groovy solo before the tricky head comes back in. Genovese's sharp, chromatic crescendos and intervallic flights prove to be an album highlight.

Musicians from Argentina have a great sense of jazz tradition and a groundbreaking compositional approach. These two albums epitomize these rare qualities.

For more info visit [577records.bandcamp.com](https://www.577records.bandcamp.com). Genovese is at Ornithology Jazz Club Mar. 2 (as leader) and Mar. 20 (with Juan Chivassá). See Calendar.

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