



Patternmaster (ECM)

We Raise Them To Lift Their Heads (Loveland Music)

Mark Turner

by Jeff Cebulski

A look at the broadening ubiquity of saxophonist Mark Turner's career evinces the establishment of continued performing relationships. In the case of his work with ECM (including the trio Fly and the Billy Hart Quartet), one characteristic has been Turner's pairing with a key bassist. In Fly it was Larry Grenadier; with Hart it has been Ben Street. In 2002, he began to play with bassist Joe Martin (outside of ECM), and Turner's quartet since has included the wide-ranging rhythmist who has become, for Turner, as important a foil as Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen was for Dexter Gordon or Charlie Haden for Ornette Coleman.

The piano-less quartet—Turner, Martin, Jason Palmer (trumpet) and Jonathan Pinson (drums)—represents the saxophonist's foray into postmodern bop and, with Martin as a fulcrum, *Patternmaster* reveals a band that is spreading its wings with the bassist a significant, nominal co-leader, at least as Manfred Eicher's production seems to indicate. Unlike 2022's *Return from the Stars*, where the horns herald the compositions, here the bass is either the first instrument heard or is in tandem with Turner or Pinson on five of the six selections, indicating that the group is more interested in swing this time around, rather than the chamber music vibe that dominated this album's predecessor. Though the title cut does reflect that vibe, subsequent tunes offer a broader palette. "Trece Ocho" begins with Martin's boléro-deep solo that leads to a rhythmic, swinging horn tandem and a serpentine journey of neo-Latin investigation. "It Very Well May Be" is hard(er) bop, in which the bassist provides Haden-esque grounding to the horns' aggressive attack, while the drummer responds, Billy Higgins-like. "Lehman's Lair" (a nod to Turner's saxophone collaborator Steve Lehman, from last year's well-received *The Music of Anthony Braxton*) is again heralded by Martin, with the saxophonist returning to the fluidity heard in Fly. "The Happiest Man on Earth", a jauntily lazy affair, is pushed forward by the bassist's deep-wooded prancing. "Supersister" (first heard on Fly's *Sky and Country*, 2012) receives a similar treatment, with bass and drums setting an insistent, rhythmic pace for the horns to decorate harmonically.

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"...a moving, exploratory jazz recording that blends improvisation, poetic lyricism and emotional depth."
- Neon Jazz

Another significant 21st century musical relationship for Turner has been with Danish guitarist-composer Jakob Bro. The saxophonist's solo album from last year, *We Raise Them to Lift Their Heads* (released on Bro's Loveland Music) is a head-turn[er]ing experience. Unlike his first, more rhythmic solo recording, *Solos: The Jazz Sessions* (Original Spin Music, 2013), here the tenor saxophonist seems to be searching for mood and tone, perhaps as potential background music for the Bro documentary *Music for Black Pigeons*. Indicative of the difference is album opener, "Slow", where an ever-inquisitive approach seems to investigate all possible keys and tones for nearly ten minutes. Other songs—the pensive, Bro-biographical "Red Hook", a laconic, high-pitched version of Thelonious Monk's "Misterioso" and the dreamy "Bella Vista"—offer similar pace. Alternately, "Fast", is taken at a predictably quicker pace, true to its title.

Mark Turner's journey through the land of jazz has been wondrous and revelatory, as his developing relationships curate evolving sonic creations, with others and alone.

For more info visit ecmrecords.com and lovelandcph.bandcamp.com. Turner is at Village Vanguard thru Apr. 5 (with Jakob Bro). See Calendar.



Meets Brian Charette

Vancouver Jazz Orchestra (Cellar Music)

by George Kanzler

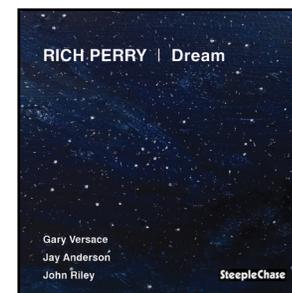
Recordings featuring an organ (usually a Hammond B3 or its progeny) with a big band are relatively rare. *Meets Brian Charette* is equally rare and a triumph of the genre. The Vancouver Jazz Orchestra (VJO) itself is a revelation—a non-profit 17-piece big band with a constellation of support in composers and arrangers, almost a dozen of whom have contributed to the ten tracks on this album, integrating Brian Charette's organ seamlessly into the big band sound. Even on tracks where Charette doesn't solo, the blend of brass, reeds and organ is paramount.

On trumpeter Fred Stride's "Lado a Lado", for instance, an apt title meaning "side by side," the band sections and organ churn up the theme together, with Charette acting as if another horn or reed section. Other tracks feature the organ more prominently. Charette opens "Don't Call Before 10", kicking it off like an organ trio, then answered by the band, brass picking up his lines, all over a catchy boogaloo shuffle feel. The organist is the only soloist, but he's well-supported by brass and reed riffs and backgrounds. The only track not coming from the VJO's stable of composers is Herbie Hancock's "The Sorcerer", which is arranged with an Afro-Latin beat by trumpeter Brad Turner, who also shares the solo spotlight with Charette. The organist also contributes an original, "Honeymoon Phase", kicked off with a brassy, rhythmless prelude introducing the melody from guitar with organ and then rhythm, Charette soloing over the orchestra, the backbeat taking it out. Some tracks meld the organ with the big band sections, while others contrast them, but with each they always come across as an integrated unit, never as a grafting of organ onto the band or vice versa. The originals from the VJO's group of composers and arrangers is uniformly excellent, but one composer's work is especially impressive: pianist Sharon Minemoto, who contributes "As Luck Would

Have It" and "Colour Contrast". The former builds from slow, incremental lines from different band sections and organ, as well as whistling. The latter is an uptempo big band theme, Charette's organ swelling underneath and interacting with band sections, then soloing after an alto saxophone turn, over driving riffs from the brass.

With *Meets Brian Charette*, the Vancouver Jazz Orchestra claims a prominent place in today's constellation of big band jazz ensembles.

For more info visit cellarlive.com. Charette is at Zinc Bar Apr. 13 (with Yotam Silberstein), Apr. 16 and 30 at The Bitter End (with Oz Noy), Knickerbocker Bar & Grill Apr. 18 and Jazzcultural Apr. 29. See Calendar.



Dream

Rich Perry (SteepleChase)

by Ken Dryden

Tenor saxophonist Rich Perry is well known to jazz fans for his long tenure in the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, but he has also recorded extensively as a leader, co-leader and sideman, particularly for SteepleChase. This 2024 quartet session is a meeting with old friends, including Gary Versace (piano), Jay Anderson (bass) and John Riley (drums), who have played with him on at least four of his earlier dates for the label, in addition to their many years working together in the Maria Schneider Orchestra.

The familiarity of the musicians playing together frequently comes through in this recording, which feels like every song was a first take and made without fuss. Charlie Parker's infrequently performed "Mohawk" serves as a solid opener, as Perry turns the song inside out with witty variations, while his leisurely "Oneirology" is a contrafact of Jimmy Van Heusen's timeless ballad "Darn That Dream" (Perry's title refers to the study of dreams). The rhythm section shines in their backing of the leader: both Versace and Anderson leave plenty of space and Riley's nimble brushwork adds a light, sensitive touch. The pulsating arrangement of Wayne Shorter's "Juju" is introduced by the rhythm section, with Versace's mysterious, meandering piano adding to the tension prior to Perry's majestic entrance featuring his robust tone. The saxophonist's passion is on display in the quartet's expansive setting of Horace Silver's "Peace", with Versace's soft, gorgeous piano adding to its magic, along with an introspective Anderson bass solo. Parker's "Donna Lee", based on the chord changes to "(Back Home Again in) Indiana", has long been a favorite for blowing, and Perry's explorative solo is matched by the pianist's adventurous and spirited playing. The leader's joyful original "Feelings Aren't Facts" is a brisk mid-tempo bop vehicle, which seems like the perfect song for a lyricist, as its playfulness and twists would likely inspire a singer specializing in vocalese. Duke Ellington's "Sophisticated Lady" was long a feature for Harry Carney's lush baritone, and the quartet here conveys a similar dreamy mood in their interpretation, bringing out the inner beauty of this standard ballad in their own way, Perry's heartfelt solo matched by the elegance of Versace's spacious piano spotlight.

For more info visit arkivmusic.com/collections/steeplechase. Perry is at Village Vanguard Mondays (with Vanguard Jazz Orchestra). See Calendar.