

**Meets Jerry Weldon**  
**Cory Weeds (Cellar Music)**

**Horns Locked**

**Nick Hempton & Cory Weeds (Cellar Music)**  
by Ken Dryden

fresh approaches to standards, as in their laid back, funky treatment of the Gershwin's "Oh, Lady Be Good" (arranged by Bill Coon) and the loping setting of the Harry Warren ballad "I Had the Craziest Dream". Weeds' fiery original "323 Shuter" fits right in with the time-tested songs played on the date.

Another American tenor saxophonist, Nick Hempton joined Weeds for a pair of two-tenor sessions, one in 2023 at Frankie's Jazz Club in Vancouver, the other a 2024 in-studio recording. The two musicians are old friends who are on familiar ground playing together and enjoy their tenor battles, with both men coming out winners. Joined by organist Nick Peck and Cahill again on drums, these performances have a soulful flavor, starting with an invigorating workout of James Moody's "Last Train From Overbrook". Hempton's brisk blues "Change for a Dollar" features the gritty, hard-blowing guest first, then Weeds' spacious but no less powerful solo, with Peck and Cahill pushing the horn frontline to its limits. Dexter Gordon's Latin-tinted "Soy Califa" is one of his less frequently played works, but their soulful approach should rekindle interest in it. Weeds' "Conn Men" has the air of a set-closing blues, conjured up on the spot, with a playful, tongue-in-cheekiness to their solos. Cahill switches to brushes for the subdued Jimmy Van Heusen ballad "Polkadots and Moonbeams", with the soloists taking their time as if singing the lyric through their horns. Gene Ammons was famous for his tenor battles with Sonny Stitt and his "The One Before This" turns more soulful by replacing piano with organ. The oldest song of the session is easily 1928's "When You're Smiling", a tune more familiar on swing-oriented recordings. Weeds' loping arrangement gives it a country flavor, as if the band is conveying the image of an easy-going horseback ride.

For more info visit [cellarlive.com](http://cellarlive.com). Nick Hempton is at *Jazzcultural Wednesdays* and *Cellar Dog* Apr. 7. He is also at *Smalls* Apr. 5 (with Hendrik Meurkens). Jerry Weldon is at *Jazzcultural* Apr. 8 and 22 (part of "Akiko Organ Nights"). See *Calendar*.



**Stars**  
**Martin Wind (Newvelle)**  
by Thomas Conrad

*Stars* presents an atypical all-star band. The leader, bassist Martin Wind, surrounds himself with no less than Anat Cohen (clarinet), Kenny Barron (piano) and Matt Wilson (drums). The album is notable because of its lack of pretension: its understatement, naturalness and integrity creates a unified whole. These are not qualities that all-star bands are generally known for. Another distinguishing feature is repertoire. The jazz art form today prioritizes original composition. Wind does something more musicians should do. He chooses from only his best tunes, in this case three. The rest of the program reflects creative decision-making. There are two attractive Duke Ellington compositions and a Bud Powell tune, all lesser known. There is also a Brazilian number for contrast, and an old, deserving standard.

Cohen is a virtuoso. In her hands, a clarinet can unleash enough wild, wailing, keening music to shatter the air of a large auditorium. The commodity in which she specializes is ecstasy. It is therefore illuminating to hear her function as a measured, gently probing, freshly lyrical improviser. On Wind's "Standing at the Window Waving Goodbye" (written for his late grandmother), Cohen sounds like she is uncovering tender memories of her own. Her affinity for Brazilian music is well-established. On Edu Lobo's "Pra Dizer Adeus", her solo contains elements that, in another musical language, might feel incompatible, like spirituality and voluptuousness. As for Barron, his renown gives you faith that jazz truly is a meritocracy. He does not play a note on this record that sounds out of place or unnecessary or self-serving. On "Stars Fell on Alabama", which Cohen sings from the heart on clarinet, Barron prompts her with subtle, perfectly-timed pianistic enhancements. He too sounds at home in Brazilian music. He embraces, then reimagines, Lobo's seductive melody. On the Ellington songs, "Black Butterfly" and "The Feeling of Jazz", he proves that refinement and swing can improve one another. One of the magical things about Barron is his touch. Every clean, precise note is round and glowing, like a pearl. The leader threads poetic bass lines throughout these two selections, and Wilson, on brushes, sweeps the music ever forward. They also star on *Stars*.

For more info visit [newvelle-records.com](http://newvelle-records.com). The album release concerts are at *Smalls* Apr. 9, *Puffin Cultural Forum* (Teaneck, NJ) Apr. 10 and *Deer Head Inn* (Delaware Water Gap, PA) Apr. 11. Wind is also at *Mezzrow* Apr. 3-4 (with Bill Cunliffe), *Provincetown Playhouse* Apr. 20 and *Emelin Theater* (Mamaroneck, NY) Apr. 24 (with Ann Hampton Callaway). See *Calendar* and *100 Miles Out*.

Ask' has all the poise and grace of a ballad by the late MJQ pianist John Lewis. "S.O.S. (Mayday! Mayday!)" keeps nicely off-kilter with Morse code patterns quickly hammered out and "The Centrifugal Force That Keeps Us Intact" crafts knotty problems and quick resolutions. On the other hand, "The Dangers of Curbs and What Could Be" and "Unseen Color Wheel" build from lovely, simple melodies in appealingly intuitive ways.

The pairing of piano and vibraphone remains magical, among the most elusive ethereal percussion music to be heard. Besides Burton and Corea, Futari—pianist Satoko Fujii and vibraphonist Taiko Saito—have made several fine records in the form. And composers John Luther Adams, Alvin Singleton, Charles Wuorinen have all explored that territory, but it's still something of a rarity. Marsella and Hashimoto chart a bit more of the ground on *Tunnel Vision*, to deeply satisfying results.

For more info visit [redpalacerecords.bandcamp.com](http://redpalacerecords.bandcamp.com). Marsella is at *The Stone at The New School* Apr. 22-25. See *Calendar*.



**Sketching for Les Liaisons Dangereuses**  
**Duke Jordan (SteepleChase)**  
by Andrew Schinder

It's always fascinating to dive into an artist's process. Getting a glimpse into artistic genesis can help form an even stronger relationship with the creator than with the finished product alone. While drafts and outlines are not always as easily consumable as the final outcome, when they come from an artist as brilliant as pianist Duke Jordan (born 104 years ago this month), they are certainly valuable. In 1959, filmmaker-provocateur Roger Vadim adapted the notorious 1781 epistolary novel *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, by modernizing its setting to then-contemporary Paris. In keeping with the French fascination with jazz, Vadim enlisted Jordan, along with Thelonious Monk and Art Blakey, to provide musical motifs and themes that are used throughout the film (including a brilliantly tense climactic party scene). *Sketching for Les Liaisons Dangereuses* is a document of Jordan's audition for the film.

The story behind Jordan's contributions and this album's unfinished versions is somewhat convoluted. In the film itself, Monk is credited as the main musical composer, but Monk only provided half of the film's music. Credit for the remainder goes to Blakey and his Jazz Messengers, but the drummer's music was written by Jordan, who is initially credited under the pseudonym "Jack Marray" due to a contractual dispute. Jordan is only credited under his real name as having provided "special sequences" with drummer Kenny Clarke. Blakey released an "official" film soundtrack (playing Jordan's compositions), while Jordan formed his own quintet and released his *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* album in 1962. Both records feature Jordan's classic standard "No Problem", which is used throughout the film.

SteepleChase received the recordings that comprise this album in 1979, but they sat unreleased until only recently. Consisting of twenty-one demos for seven titled pieces, the titles for these pieces can differ: "No Problem"'s origins, for example, can be traced to the title "Flip-Top". The multiple versions of each track

might seem at times repetitive, but it is nonetheless fascinating to witness a musician of Jordan's stature experiment and tweak since each demo consists of the pianist playing solo, but with variances in key, tempo and tone. This is music not necessarily to consume, but to study—and whether or not the music is "good" is irrelevant. It was certainly good enough; Jordan got the job.

Paired with a viewing of the film, and Jordan's amazing, finished soundtrack, *Sketching for Les Liaisons Dangereuses* is a wonderful look into a brilliant jazz mind.

For more info visit [arkivmusic.com](http://arkivmusic.com)

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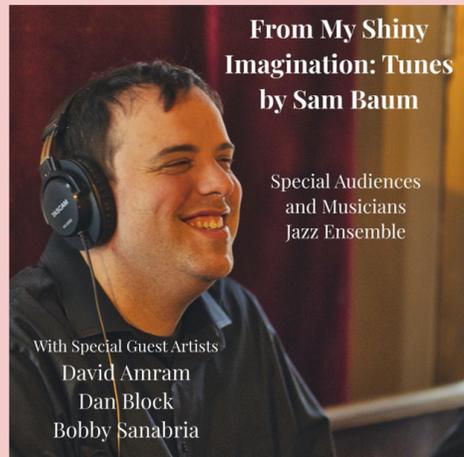
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**Tunnel Vision**  
**Brian Marsella & Sae Hashimoto (Red Palace)**  
by Kurt Gottschalk

It's not surprising that pianist Brian Marsella and percussionist Sae Hashimoto would make such an exacting album of duets, but even still, and again and again, *Tunnel Vision* is an album of surprises. Marsella leads the large ensemble Gatos do Sul, plays with a couple of piano trios, is a frequent interpreter of John Zorn's music and is the proprietor of Red Palace Records. Hashimoto is generally found in contemporary composition circles, as a member of both the Talea Ensemble and the piano-percussion quartet Yarn/Wire. The duo with Marsella is hardly Y/W halved. They liken themselves to Gary Burton and Chick Corea, which rings true at times, but there are also slow-drift, eerie explorations and fast-paced minimalist rigor in their music. The two also play together in Archipelago X (a trio with electronicist Ikue Mori), which is the most apt (aesthetically and factually) sonic marker to cite.

The opening, title track, composed by Hashimoto, steps off like rush-hour choreography, busy but orderly, with muted piano strings pulling the tension. Her "Sheep Water" is quite the opposite, gentle but ambiguous, with bowed vibraphone keys and stroked piano strings. In the final third, a piano ostinato offers a bit of reassurance, but lovely vibraphone counterpoint assures we're still adrift somewhere. The remaining six pieces are all Marsella's and lean a bit more into jazz vernacular. "The Brilliant Questions That Children

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