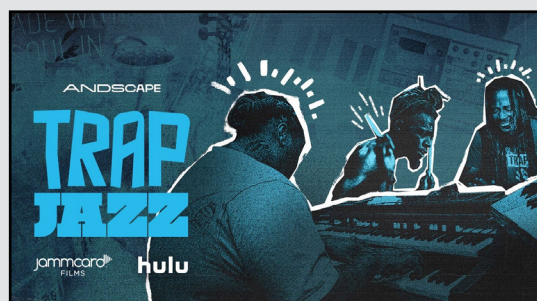


ON SCREEN



Trap Jazz

Sadé Clacken Joseph (Jammcard Films)

by Paul Gaita

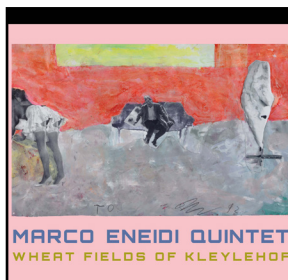
Director Sadé Clacken Joseph's documentary *Trap Jazz* serves as both an introduction to and an exploration of a new fusion of genres: jazz and trap music. Trap jazz is a decade-old style of hip-hop that hails from the American South and borrows its moniker from "trap house," a slang term for a location where illicit drugs are sold. On paper, the two forms might seem worlds apart, but as Joseph and her subjects illustrate, jazz and trap are built on similar foundations—shifting time signatures, complex rhythms and atmospheric sonic structures. Their union in trap jazz provides not only new directions for both genres to explore, but also a sense of purpose and support for its proponents.

Divided into three sections, *Trap Jazz* (with guests including Quincy Jones, Chief Xian aTunde Adjuah, Lalah Hathaway and Big Boi) is rooted in the perspective of the form's founders, including Atlanta-based musicians Chris Moten, Joshua "Cassius Jay" Cross and Devon "Stixx" Taylor. As with all inventions, trap jazz is born out of a number of inspirations: their own musical backgrounds, which began in church and expanded to intensive training in jazz, and a creative drive, which needs an outlet beyond the limits of their professional lives as performers, arrangers and producers. Their environment is also a factor: trap music, as we come to learn, is more than an offshoot of the drug trade, and has evolved over time to provide a metaphor-by-way-of-soundtrack for the struggle faced by Black neighborhoods saddled with poverty, discrimination and neglect.

As Joseph rightly points out, that sounds more than a bit like the crucible in which jazz was forged—blues and gospel, both shaped by the suffering wrought by slavery. Those shared origins prove crucial in the trio linking jazz and trap in 2015, and the results are more than just instrumentation over beats (that's been done before, with varying results). The fusion here is a natural fit, as Moten illustrates by mixing "Take the 'A' Train" with trap production. Purists may argue otherwise, but the pairing sounds fresh and innovative while honoring the respective sources.

Much of *Trap Jazz* is devoted to the development of the sound, though it also delves into the personal lives of the main proponents. This twin focus coalesces around Moten, whose deep connection with his father (also a musician) is burdened with issues of separation due to his incarceration. Here, Joseph shows, with considerable emotion, how music can rebuild and inspire, as father and son find connection through playing together. The reunion is affecting and heartening, much like the film itself.

For more info visit site.jammcard.com. *Trap Jazz* is streaming on Hulu. *Trap Music Orchestra* is at The Jazz Gallery May 13. See Calendar.



Wheat Fields of Kleylehof Marco Eneidi Quintet (Balance Point Acoustics/Botticelli) by Bill Meyer

Nothing was ever easy for Marco Eneidi. The alto saxophonist worked with the best (Cecil Taylor, Jimmy Lyons, William Parker, Peter Kowald), but he always scuffled, moving from Oakland, CA, to NYC, to Vienna, Austria to Cuernavaca, Mexico, where he died ten years ago this month at the too-young age of 59. But to know him was to deeply appreciate both his music and spirit. This recording, *Wheat Fields of Kleylehof*—made in 2004 but not released until last year—is evidence of that. The album's cover painting is by Franz West, an Austrian art dealer who helped him out for a spell. William Parker contributed a poem of remembrance, and the album was recorded, mixed, mastered and released by musicians Scott R. Looney, Weasel Walter and (Balance Point Acoustics founder) Damon Smith, who spent time on the Bay area scene that Eneidi nurtured, sometimes in his company.

The album's title is a tip of the hat to Nickelsdorf, an Austrian town that was an oasis in Eneidi's personal desert. The quintet—Darren Johnston (trumpet), John Finkbeiner (guitar), Damon Smith (bass) and Vijay Anderson (drums)—features people who worked with him individually quite a bit, but seem to have played in this particular configuration only once. Here, they convened to play a set-long suite of contrasting themes and moods. The leader's playing is quick and fluent, with a harsh edge to his tone that easily cuts through the action. You can spot glimpses of his inspirations—from Charlie Parker to Ornette Coleman, Marshall Allen, and, of course, Lyons—though he never emulates their methods.

Eneidi's themes are structured but open, giving his musicians plenty of room to express themselves in singular ways while fueling the intensity that was his calling card. Anderson is as persuasive sustaining a battering barrage in his opening duet with Eneidi as he is sculpting barely-there contours with cymbals during the album's quieter moments. Johnston uses more extended technique than he does now, growling and puckering, but also laying out the music's melodic contours with bold, punchy lines. Finkbeiner likewise shifts between vinegary stutters and smudged colors, and Smith is a vortex of looming, boiling sound. Everyone rises to the challenge laid down by Eneidi's sizzling presence.

For more info visit balancepointacoustics.bandcamp.com



Looking for Consonance GEORGE (Out Of Your Head) by Brad Cohan

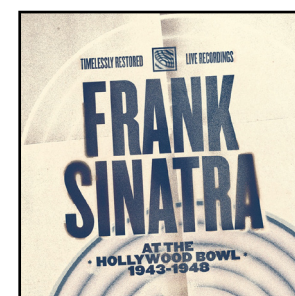
The wall-to-wall percussive wizardry John Hollenbeck has demonstrated over two-plus decades on recordings—

leading The Claudia Quintet, his Large Ensemble and NDR Big Band, among other projects—stirs with dizzying intricacies, mutating forms and structures, melodic expression and rapid-fire energy. Very few jazz drummer-composers have the momentum-pushing presence he does: listening to his gripping and seemingly effortless dominance behind the kit is truly a joy to take in—and he executes it without an overbearing touch or stepping on the toes of his bandmates. That's why *Looking for Consonance*, the sophomore effort by GEORGE, Hollenbeck's adventurous newish group, is so apropos: 'Consonance' is defined as "the harmony or agreement of sounds produced simultaneously, resulting in a pleasing and stable auditory experience." Hollenbeck might beg to differ with some aspects of that definition (as per the album's liner notes and his dissection of the word), but considering the exceptional interplay and rapport he shares with his GEORGE bandmates—Anna Webber (tenor, flutes) and Sarah Rossy and Chiquita Magic (voices, synthesizers)—he needn't look any further for consonance; it's all there in copious amounts.

As the band's second recording, their new album may feature a slightly altered lineup that debuted on 2023's superb *Letters to George* (saxophonist and vocalist Aurora Nealand is no longer with the group), but it's just as electrifying, if not more so, with Rossy now in the mix. The two-pronged synthesizer punch of Rossy and Magic sends Hollenbeck's compositions to cosmic heights that bring a futuristic and celebratory Sun Ra vibe to them. On the riveting "bounce", their sun-kissed and kaleidoscopic synth spatterings—coupled with angelic oohs and ahhs, growls and cries—sets an upbeat and catchy tone (Hollenbeck is on fire with hard-charging ferocity) that carries throughout the entire, ebullient piece. On the next tune, "Lewis (dedicated to George Lewis)", the leader switches gears with ease as he lays out angular funk grooves while Webber's flute playing goes toe-to-toe with his hectic beats. The sci-fi funk attack continues on the blazing hot "George and Dee (dedicated to George and Dee Gamble)", while on the intense "Norma (in support of reproductive autonomy)", Hollenbeck unleashes face-melting flurries of heroic drum salvos amid exquisite wordless vocals and Webber's melodic saxophone lines.

On *Looking for Consonance*, Hollenbeck's GEORGE is on a whole other level of harmony, sonics and monster beats.

For more info visit outofyourheadrecords.com. The album release concert is at Public Records May 3 (part of Long Play Festival). See Calendar.



At the Hollywood Bowl (1943-1948) Frank Sinatra (SING Inc.) by Marilyn Lester

Can there be such a thing as too much Frank Sinatra? The singer-actor had a massive career; at his passing in 1998 his discography included 59 studio albums and 297 singles, plus compilation albums, soundtrack recordings and boxed sets. *At the Hollywood Bowl (1943-1948)* adds to that tally, featuring live performances from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences Academy Night (August 4, 1945), the Music for the Wounded Benefit Concert (August 8, 1948) and the Hollywood Bowl concert of August 14, 1943. The release, with liner notes by Sinatra historian Chuck Granata,