

offers 18 tracks on CD and 11 on vinyl—all recorded during Sinatra’s tenure with Columbia Records. Per the style of the day, the music is muscularly orchestral and over-the-top schmaltzy—difficult for even Sinatra to penetrate with emotional depth. But the extensive audio restoration is unquestionably magnificent.

Five ballads from the Academy Award show include “Ol’ Man River” (Jerome Kern, Oscar Hammerstein II) from 1927’s *Showboat*. The audience of the day most likely would have been aware of the original singers: operatic baritone Jules Bledsoe (Broadway) and Paul Robeson (West End) who delivered deeply evocative readings of this profound song. Yet, the Caucasian guy from Jersey wondrously managed to dig into the lyric and pull out its aching essence. But on 1945’s ironic tune from *Carousel*, “If I Loved You” (Richard Rodgers, Hammerstein), Sinatra’s rendering is likeably smooth, but *sans* emotional heft. Three tunes are drawn from Music for the Wounded Benefit Concert and among them is another from *Carousel*, a gut-wrencher, “Soliloquy”. Sinatra’s vocal prowess shines, but again, the interpretive master that he would become is in the wings. He does let the treacle work for him on a shortened version of the romantic “Time After Time” (Jule Styne, Sammy Cahn), which the budding actor introduced in the 1947 film *It Happened in Brooklyn*. The 1943 concert also features “Ol’ Man River” plus six other crowd-pleasers from the usual suspects, such as the Gershwins and Cole Porter. “All or Nothing at All” (Arthur Altman, Jack Lawrence) opens a window to the intensity Sinatra later demonstrated on 1955’s *In the Wee Small Hours*. “She’s Funny That Way” honors the under-served lyricist Richard Whiting in a sweet reading of a love letter to his wife set to music by Neil Moret.

At the Hollywood Bowl is a worthy project for historians and fans alike. Bits of Sinatra speaking are fun, but most of all, the release documents the essence of the singer and legendary performer he was to become.

For more info visit shopsingmarket.com. Tributes this month include “Strictly Sinatra!” (with Jazz Loft Big Band, Tom Manuel, Pete Caldera) May 1-2 at The Jazz Loft (Stony Brook, NY), “Sinatra with Style” (with Richard Cortez) at Birdland May 17, “Tribute to Frank Sinatra” (with Misha Piatigorsky) at Adélaïde’s Salon May 29 and “Not Just Sinatra” at The Cutting Room (with Steven Maglio Big Band Orchestra) May 31. See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.



Jason Moran Plays Duke Ellington
Jason Moran (Yes)
by Fred Bouchard

While many of us praise and may try to emulate our idols, Jason Moran does so in word and deed for Thelonious Monk, Fats Waller (the unabashedly glitzy *All Rise*), James Reese Europe—and notably, recently, Duke Ellington.

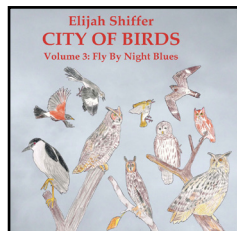
Going solo, he crafts a masterclass, starting jauntily, and then disruptively crashes the abyss of singularity, closing with deeply respectful, hallowed, ruminative ballads. With this release of *Jason Moran Plays Duke Ellington*, Moran himself explains his thinking and his process: “Ellington has long been the most important pianist because he mapped the world with his hands. Not simply the geographic, but the emotional landscapes... We [artists] never tire of painting the mountains. And

for years, I stared at this mountain, knowing that this mountain inspired Monk, and many others, to attack the piano to create a dream. And like any trail on the mountain, [it’s] nice to take the same trail because there is always something new to discover. This batch of songs remains my essential trail mix.”

“I Got It Bad (And That Ain’t Good)” starts our uphill trek in a jaunty, mixed-meter, stutter-stepping *habañera*. “Sophisticated Lady” finds our girl seductively tricked-out, mascara hidden behind a two-note bass ostinato, until waves of electronica finally reveal her bridge. “Melancholia” calmly lays out key phrases in gentle sustained swirls and calls on Duke’s skittering downward glissandi. An early composition, “Black and Tan Fantasy” (1927), turns from ominous march to bluesy strut, and into an agonizing (13-minute) galactic cataclysm: avalanche with chimes or an Ives-ian black hole? For “Reflections in D”, Moran points out that Duke’s warmly nostalgic memorial to his late mother also serves as his own tribute. We enjoy sprightly, if unsettling, overlooks along our climb: Moran’s own “Means” and Ellington’s “Jeep’s Blues” tribute for his altoist Johnny Hodges. When a lone medley of a ditty shuffle ditty, “Wig Wise”, explodes in a pixillated *altissimo* starburst, we’re relieved by the pianist’s own laid-back James P. Johnson-like barrelhouse blues. Coming down, we peacefully, gratefully, observe breathtaking alpine flora: “Fleurette Africaine”, “Single Petal of a Rose” and Billy Strayhorn’s “Lotus Blossom”, notably played by Duke as a eulogy on *And His Mother Called Him Bill* (1967). As we return to base camp, we contemplate a ray of hope: “I Like The Sunrise”, originally written for and sung by Al Hibbler on the 1946 *Liberian Suite* album.

Moran’s truthy, toothsome, chili-spiked handfuls energize and cheer us along Duke’s (and life’s) long, winding trails.

For more info visit yesrecords.bigcartel.com. Moran is at Roulette May 1 with BlankFor.ms (part of Long Play Festival) and is being honored with a “Trailblazer Award” at The Jazz Gallery Gala at Cosmopolitan Club May 18. See Calendar.



City of Birds Volume 3: Fly By Night Blues
Elijah Shiffer (Star Jelly)



Callithumpian
Elijah Shiffer and the Robber Crabs (Star Jelly)
by Mike Shanley

While most alto saxophonists have a devotion to Bird (Charlie Parker), Elijah Shiffer is fascinated by *birds*, our feathered friends that lay claim to an equally unique musical vocabulary. In 2023 and 2025, Shiffer released two volumes of original compositions based on the melodic songs and behaviors of the creatures he has witnessed as a bird watcher.

City of Birds Volume 3: Fly By Night Blues continues with the same chordless quartet—Shiffer (alto), Kevin Sun (tenor), Dmitry Ishenko (bass), Colin Hinton (drums)—along with three duets with Bruce Acosta (guitar), with Shiffer switching from alto to clarinet on two of them. The leader’s writing, coupled with the quartet’s expressive performance, is less like an esoteric idea than an articulate dive into his subject matter. In his liner notes, Shiffer cites the bird that inspires each track, along with some context. So it’s no coincidence that “Who Hoots for Toot?” evokes Thelonious Monk, since the barred owl’s clipped call resembles the pianist’s “Brake’s Sake” (the title also tips a hat to drummer-son T.S. Monk). “I Know I’ll

Find Her Soon” divides male and female great horned owls between Shiffer and Sun, each in different keys, creating an exchange of ideas that feels harmonically rich. “Mock Nocturne” begins almost as a ballad, but Shiffer shatters the mood by continually jumping on the end of Sun’s phrases. Here, Ishenko and Hinton yearn to move into free territory; throughout the set, their energy keeps these unique melodies in the pocket. A nuanced set of beats ignites the title track, which deftly puts an ovenbird’s tune to a boppish groove.

Shiffer has also released a digital-only live album, *Callithumpian*, with the Robber Crabs, a band that combines 1910-20s jazz styles with the aggression of no wave. While both of those divergent touchstones might be felt during the 11 tracks, anyone yearning for the more lucid compositions of John Zorn’s Naked City will enjoy the way “Mustang Mascot” jumps from jagged theme to lopsided noisy funk, or the way “Tentacle Mind” begins pensively only to get manic, led in both situations by Shiffer’s brawny alto and Christian Cail’s spastic mash of skronk and technique on guitar. Hinton is a carryover from the prior album and also plays drums in this project, with Max Kutner handling electric bass. A reading of Conlon Nancarrow’s “Player Piano Study 3A” maintains the same wild spirit as the band’s originals. The one misfire comes with vocalist Maya Luz’ “Manicures and Mood Swings”, a collection of vapid, unfunny, overheard comments read over a shuffle beat. Her original “My Thrill”, on the other hand, is a dramatic ballad that builds dynamically as the band floats out of tempo around her.

For more info visit elijahshiffer.bandcamp.com. Shiffer’s *City of Birds* album release concert is at Brothers Wash & Dry May 9. Shiffer and the Robber Crabs album release concert is at Bar Jade May 21. See Calendar.



Bruce Gertz Quintet live
at Shapeshifter Lab
(837 Union St., Brooklyn)
MONDAY, MAY 4 (7 PM)

with Sheryl Bailey (guitar), Rick DiMuzio (tenor),
Gilson Schachnik (piano), Gary Fieldman (drums)

Professor of Bass at Berklee College of Music since 1976, Gertz (who has written six books and is a contributing editor to *Bass World* magazine) has performed and worked with Count Basie, Cab Calloway, Dave Brubeck, Gary Burton, John Abercrombie, Bill Frisell, Gil Evans, Jon Hendricks, Jerry Bergonzi, Joe Lovano, George Garzone, Mike Stern, Larry Coryell and Danilo Pérez, in addition to leading his own groups.



BRUCEGERTZ.COM