



DENNY ZEITLIN
ODYSSEY
GEORGE MARSH & MEL GRAVES
SSC 1816 / AVAILABLE 7/31/26

Denny Zeitlin has long compared music making to setting out on a journey. His new collection, *Odyssey*, highlights three long-standing projects, namely piano led trio with recently departed bassist Mel Graves and percussionist George Marsh, solo piano, and electro-acoustic duo with Marsh.



RAN BLAKE / DOMINIQUE EADE
ROOTS & BYWAYS
SSC 1813 / AVAILABLE 7/3/26

Ran Blake and Dominique Eade have enthusiastically combed the diverse paths of the “American songbook” for decades and their new recording, *Roots & Byways*, showcases just how fruitful their journey has been. Ran Blake and Dominique Eade’s *Roots & Byways* is a captivating recording that celebrates the legacy of a long running partnership that continues to find new ways to challenge and delight listeners and the practitioners.



www.sunnysiderecords.com

Rio de Janeiro-born *Carioca* drummer **Duduka Da Fonseca** has been in NYC 50 years, adding his native *suingue* (swing) to many worthy Brazilian jazz projects, most recently his working Brazilian Quartet of Vinícius Gomes (guitar), Manuel Valera (piano) and Gili Lopes (bass), which appeared at Jazz Genius (Jun. 4). Da Fonseca and Lopes enjoy a close, cohesive, rhythmic lock-up, a product of their longtime collaboration. Strong and supple, both play to serve the music, their presence powerful but never obtrusive, as heard in the drummer’s sympathetic support of Lopes’ solo during a cover of Dom Salvador’s “Transition”. Gomes and Valera, in contrast, were firebrands. Gomes handled most melodies, Valera answering with almost nonstop repartee, fingers flying over the piano with precipitous but tasteful virtuosity that would’ve made jaws drop if it hadn’t seemed so effortless. The guitarist, equally quick, linked his ideas into rolling melodic arcs of rhyming phrases. He sparked bright moments on Milton Nascimento’s “Novena”, Tom Jobim’s “Águas de Março” and Marcos Silva’s “Dry Land”, when his guitar seemed to catch fire, shredding melodies that pushed outward against the harmonic frontiers. Wayne Shorter’s “E.S.P.” must’ve been lodged in his subconscious (a song rehearsed at sound check but not performed) because he quoted it in two different solos. Maucha Adnet graced four tunes with her husky, *tranquilo* vocal style, including Jobim’s “Águas” and “Desafinado”, both high points. — *Tom Greenland*



Duduka Da Fonseca @Jazz Genius

Pianist-composer **Yvonne Rogers** has been a regular at Lower East Side’s Close Up for much of its two-year existence, one of a number of emerging artists responsible for the growing buzz around the venue. On Jun. 4 she played a late set of original compositions with Simón Willson (bass) and Kayvon Gordon (drums), staying to host an even later jam session. Her originals—“Holdfast”, “Polyodon”, “Bass Melody”, “Techno”, “Puzzle Building” (from her new solo piano album, *The Button Jar* on Pyroclastic), “Something Sentimental” and “Gray Paint”—all sounded complex, with serpentine, rhythmic schemes and unusual, melodic phrases. Someone might be playing in beat groups of five, while another plays in three, each in an (occasionally overlapping) world of their own; or else a melody might spin out of control, beyond its expected bar line, so that the song form gets forced to adapt to the inspiration of the emergent theme. Amazingly, all this complexity didn’t feel complex. It felt just fine. And Rogers was clearly having a lot of fun with it, her long slender fingers momentarily sagging below the keyboard, only to hoist high and then swoop and swat downwards, flat-handed. Along with her playfulness came moments of subdued ecstasy—on “Techno”, “Puzzle Building” and “Something Sentimental”—when an intuitive spirit took charge. Those hanging for the jam session witnessed Rogers’ equally-inspired approach to the standard “I Hear a Rhapsody” (Fragos, Baker, Gasparre), assisted by trumpeter Skylar Tang and vibraphonist Joel Ross—but on drums! (TG)

When William James “Count” Basie shed his mortal coil in 1984, the unit he founded in 1935, the **Count Basie Orchestra**, kept going, and for the last dozen years it’s been under the leadership of trumpeter Scotty Barnhart. For a week at Birdland last month, the Count’s repertoire remained sacred, with Basie’s reputation for hard swing undiluted. A wall of brass in a powerful opener (Jun. 10) might have blown socks off, and burners prevailed. Too much? Heck, no—it’s why the club was jammed to the rafters. Plus, Basie-style swing lies in the fact that no arrangements feature reeds other than saxophones. The blues-style “Who, Me?” (Frank Foster) largely featured the entire trombone section, muted. A “break” from swing came with a superb rendition of temporal control in “Li’l Darlin’” (Neil Hefti). Barnhart, a polished and effective leader, modestly takes only a few solos, with each member offering a rollout of features throughout the repertoire—this is a high-tech jazz machine with well-oiled gears. Barnhart was out front with “I Can’t Give You Anything but Love, Baby” (Jimmy McHugh, Dorothy Fields), his bright tone in homage to Louis Armstrong. The Basie band also features a “girl singer” in the person of Carmen Bradford, whose easy style simultaneously contains plenty of natural swing. As for vocal tone, she’s clarion—akin to another horn in the band. She offered several tunes, including some blues, and was especially noteworthy with the delightfully mercurial “Sometimes I’m Happy”. — *Marilyn Lester*



Count Basie Orchestra @Birdland

Between the mania of a NY Knicks championship NBA win, World Cup soccer and the UFC cage fight on the White House lawn, an energizing yet calming energy was to be found at Chelsea Table + Stage (Jun. 14) via vocalist **Stephanie Nakasian** and the Matt Baker Trio, who opened with their feature of “Have You Met Miss Jones?” (Richard Rodgers, Lorenz Hart). Baker is a player who combines technical prowess, creative ideas and plenty of soul, and with Karl Kimmel (bass) and Aaron Seeber (drums), the trio superbly supported Nakasian through a set of welcome, refreshing tunes off the beaten track. Entering, chanting “We love basketball,” the vocalist launched into a swinging “Sweet and Low Down” (George and Ira Gershwin), followed by “Don’t Look Back” (Johnny Mandel, Kaye Lawrence Dunham), with a propulsive beat provided by Kimmel. Married to the late pianist Hod O’Brien, his tune with lyricist Fran Landesman, the quirky “Mystery Man”, was on the bill, as was “House of Gold” (Hank Williams), a hat tip to her first career on Wall Street. Nakasian can also scat up a storm, as in a vocalese with her lyrics to Miles Davis’ “So What?”. A duet with Kimmel on Carly Simon’s “Mockingbird” involved role-playing levity. A warm, relaxed and chatty stage presence, Nakasian is a vessel of fun and joy. In a set full of riches, by the closer, “Hallelujah I Love (Him) So” (Ray Charles) with guest artists, singer Meri Ziev and mouth trumpeter, Robert Gurland, all was right with the world. (ML)

The Midtown Theater District, the heat’s rising and there’s a brand-new club in town and it’s one we’ve been waiting for. The Pocket lured listeners down to its below street-level space like a siren song, to hear alto saxophonist **Lakecia Benjamin** (Jun. 6) who leapt onstage as her exquisitely funky yet continuously swinging ensemble lit the real fire. Benjamin, who commands a special popularity in jazz, one expected of a pop act, took immediate command on a riff-heavy fusion piece, blowing high into the horn’s range, soprano-like. The overall effect marked the shape of this unique homage to John and Alice Coltrane, sporting Trane’s unique Mid-Eastern tone alongside the empowering drones of Elias Bailey’s bass, Jonathan Barber’s Elvin-indebted drumming and pianist Oscar Perez in his vital place between McCoy Tyner and Alice. As the steam rose, Benjamin’s energy level followed suit and, wide-eyed, she wore a near smile within her embouchure as the crowd erupted. Perez’ solo flight was biting, aerial, catapulting off the energy, a tireless exhibition of the pianist’s breadth. Benjamin cast a vision of universal jazz fusion, including leading the house in uproarious chants. But the highlights eclipsed even the furor: “I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free” (composed by Dr. Billy Taylor, made famous by Nina Simone) spoke loudly against oppression, with a blue rubato intro by the leader—and a resounding “My Favorite Things”, reflecting the Coltranes’ later, free adaptations, particularly when Benjamin and Barber released a lengthy, boiling duet. — *John Pietaro*



Lakecia Benjamin @The Pocket

Anyone wandering into the E. 11th Street 11BC Serenity Garden last month (Jun. 7) would have found flautists **Cheryl Pyle** and **Robert Dick** deep in improvised conversation; it was the kind of special encounter that keeps NYC a place worth living in. Pyle began her Beyond Flute project in 2013 with guitarist Bern Nix (1947-2017), then turned toward fellow flautists, as well as woodwinds, playing the gardens of her East Village neighborhood with a rotating cast, including duos, ever since. She has followed the now 76-year-old veteran, Robert Dick, from when she first arrived in NYC in 1980. Almost immediately, the garden itself seemed to enter the improvisation. A dog howled, birds called back, and two flutes of various types and sizes fluttered and whooped in reply, sounding eerily alive. Over 45 minutes of short improvisations, the duo moved through the family—C flute, bass flute, piccolo—dismantling any fixed idea of what sounds come forth from a flute. Dick, a specialist in extended techniques, whose innovations have expanded the flute’s vocabulary, played the glissando headjoint he invented, bending pitch like a guitar’s whammy bar, in quick swoops and long sighs. Using circular breathing (he wrote the authoritative text on the subject), he sustained tone without pause and sang into the flute to spill out multiphonics that braided into Pyle’s lines, his voice seeming to emerge from some unknown source. The performance unfolded patiently, without urgency or destination, an extraordinary invitation into an unexpectedly vast sound world. — *Ariella Stok*



Robert Dick, Cheryl Pyle @11BC Serenity Garden

The majestic art deco trappings, reaching back a century, start at the entryway of Zinc Bar, NYC’s oldest continuously running jazz room (once the Cinderella Club). Here, the brilliant alto saxophonist **Rudresh Mahanthappa** (Jun. 1), on this perfect pre-summer evening, artfully united swirling decades of new music and culture, from his family roots of southern India to NYC’s downtown haunts. The performance (sponsored by reed company Vandoren) served as a Charlie Parker homage. “On the DL” (based on the Parker/Miles Davis collaboration “Donna Lee”, a contrafact itself of “[Back Home Again in] Indiana”) began as a rubato arabesque with the leader’s meaty alto out front, conjuring more Pharoah Sanders than Bird. A thicket of accented bass (Matthew Parrish) and piano repetitions (Oscar Perez) carried the piece into a new realm, with phenom Rudy Royston near assailing his drumkit as Mahanthappa released rivers of improv, cycling over several Eastern modes, equal parts hypnotic dance and mourning lament. Perez’ explosive solos painted the stage with Afro-Cuban history: Machito is apparently alive and well within his pianisms! Other Mahanthappa originals (based on Parker) included “Chillin’” (“Relaxin’ at Camarillo”) and the moody “Sure, Why Not?” (grown from “Confirmation”). The latter was jazz balladry perfection—dark, breathtakingly slow with band interactions uncannily layered. The former pummeled the presto tempo with the leader’s upper register crafting instrumental South Asian vocal stylings, while Royston and Parrish forged a ceaseless, rhythmic locomotive. (JP)

Night one of the two-night Pi Recordings’ 25th anniversary at Roulette (Jun. 4) was a study in contrasts that traced the label’s range: the introspective experimentalism of **Marc Ribot**’s solo guitar, then the in-the-pocket charge of alto saxophonist **Steve Coleman**’s Five Elements. Both sets offered unfettered improvisation, the label’s animating concern. Ribot spent much of his set bent over his acoustic guitar, face pressed close to its body, as if communing with the wood’s vibrations as much as the notes. He shook the instrument until loose string-ends clattered against it, detuned a string and let the pitch sigh and licked his fingers to coax squeaks and friction from the surface. He moved through the many languages he commands—pure abstraction, blues, and a lovely, slightly fractured lullaby—with a restraint that turned technique into sorcery. His jagged reading of John Coltrane’s “Dearly Beloved” seemed to summon Coltrane’s full quartet out of one instrument. After that sobriety, Coleman’s group felt like a party. A searching alto solo gave way to the band crashing in like a freight train; the momentum never flagged across 70 minutes. As Sean Rickman’s drumming bounced, the band would lock into a loop, throb at its edge, then diverge into new layers and dense polyrhythms. Trumpeter Jonathan Finlayson traded cowbell and solos with Coleman over Anthony Tidd’s kneading electric bass, building intricate, rhythmic designs. Throughout, they balanced precision with propulsion, making complexity feel communally alive. (AS)

WHAT’S NEWS

In Albany, NY, the New York State Assembly and the New York State Senate passed legislation commemorating “**COLTRANE 100**.” John Coltrane’s centennial, the resolution reading: “celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the birth of John Coltrane, renowned artistic trailblazer and innovative New York jazz musician.” Impulse! Records representatives, the label in midst of its year-long celebration in collaboration with the Coltrane Estate, joined members of the legislature for this historic event, which was sponsored by Senators Cordell Cleare and Jamaal Bailey, plus Assembly member Jordan J.G. Wright (whose grandfather spent years as a lawyer representing John Coltrane, as well as Miles Davis, Max Roach and Art Blakey). The resolution was unanimously passed by both chambers. In a statement from the Coltrane Estate: “This resolution will be a permanent fixture of the collection at the John and Alice Coltrane home in Dix Hills, NY...we encourage all to visit that cultural and educational landmark.” Of forthcoming COLTRANE 100 events: this month tenor-soprano saxophonist Ravi Coltrane will be featured in his first-ever performance of his father’s music adapted for orchestra, at Philadelphia, PA’s TD Pavilion (Jul. 22); next saxophonist Kamasai Washington plays at Newport Jazz Festival (Aug. 1) in tribute to Coltrane (and Miles); and alto saxophonist Lakecia Benjamin is the featured artist as part of “COLTRANE 100: Legacy” at the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles, CA (Sep. 23). For more info visit shorefire.com/roster/john-coltrane.

The Sun Ra Arkestra and its 102-year-old fearless leader **Marshall Allen** has been busy with performances and ceremonies of late. The Arkestra was honored with a plaque on the Philadelphia Music Alliance Walk of Fame on Broad Street in May. Last month in the East Germantown section of Philadelphia, near the Arkestra house (where Ra lived from 1969-93), a newly-revealed, large-scale mural—*In The Orbit of Ra* by artists Emel Martinez and Keir Johnston—was dedicated to Sun Ra, at which Allen and the Arkestra performed as part of the ceremony. And featured as part of this year’s Vision Festival: Allen & The Cosmic Future (with Dave Burrell, William Parker, Dave Hotep, Darius Jones and Andrew Cyrille) at Roulette (Jun. 26). For more info visit sunraarkestra.com.

The Kennedy Center lost its case against jazz drummer-vibraphonist **Chuck Redd**, who canceled his annual Christmas Eve engagement there on the heels of President Trump illegally adding his name to the institution (Trump’s name has also since been taken down from the building’s exterior). The judge on the case dismissed the \$1 million retaliatory suit filed against Redd by The Kennedy Center, which alleged the last-minute cancellation cost the center \$1 million in damages. Note: the event was free. The Chuck Redd Quartet performs this month at Jazzcultural (Jul. 3-5) For more info visit chuckredd.com.

The two 2026 grant recipients of the 501(c)(3) **John Abercrombie Jazz Scholarship Fund** (JAJSF) were recently announced: Toronto native and current Berklee College of Music student, guitarist Darcy Wigston, and guitarist Dylan Lizza, who is enrolled in SUNY-Purchase’s Jazz Studies program and currently studies with Pasquale Grasso. Named after the pioneering jazz-rock style guitarist John Abercrombie (1944-2017)—whose extensive discography included a lengthy affiliation with ECM Records (including his 1974 debut album, *Timeless*)—the JAJSF was founded to pay tribute to its namesake’s legacy “by providing tuition assistance to students based on need and merit.” For more info visit johnabercrombiejazzfund.org.

In other 501(c)(3) not-for-profit news...After 40+ years, Mark Morganelli and Ellen Prior—founders of Jazz Forum Arts (JFA)—have officially stepped down from the arts presenting jazz organization they built from the ground up. Retiring as of this month, they are handing over the reins of JFA, which includes its centerpiece—the **Jazz Forum** jazz club in Tarrytown, NY (20 miles north of Manhattan)—to new, incoming Executive Director (and drummer) Damian Douglas (Jazz Forum’s Director of Programs for the last year) and Chief Operating Officer Clara Ward (who has been with JFA for the last decade). Both will help carry on the tradition by continuing to bring jazz to Westchester County—and we look forward to what they have in store. Coming to the venue this month, highlights include the groups of pianist William Hill, bassist Corcoran Holt, trumpeter Bruce Harris, alto saxophonist Sarah Hanahan, organist Ana Petrova and others. For more info visit jazzforumarts.org.

To submit news email ldgreene@nyjazzrecord.com