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## FESTIVAL REPORT

# LONG PLAY FESTIVAL

BY TOM GREENLAND



DANIEL DITTUS

Billy Hart @Roulette

Bang on a Can's annual Long Play festival, held for five years in downtown Brooklyn, has established itself as a don't-miss event for curious listeners. This year's program (Apr. 29 - May 3) continued its mission to embrace both composition and improvisation, a mingling and mangling that often yielded surprising results. Below is a sizzle reel of festival highlights.

Opening night's double-feature at Roulette juxtaposed YPY's (aka Koshiro Hino) sinuously syncopated computerized dance-beats with goat (jp)'s human-hand-made grooves. The latter, an Osaka-based quintet spurred by the ultra-precise drumming of Rai Tateishi and Akio Jeimus, played so tightly it sounded quantized. Judging by the crowd's kinetic responses to the second set, humankind beat the machine. A second preview show at the same venue the next night presented weaver Catherine DeGennaro seated at a large, close-mic'd loom, pressing treadles with her feet to create a triangle-shaped "shed" to pass the shuttle through, then pulling the beater bar to push a new weft against the growing rows, finally releasing the pedals to switch harnesses. She repeated this four-step cycle for almost an hour, establishing an utterly hypnotic auditory and visual momentum as an accordion droned tones and 53 "virgin violinists" stared vacantly out into the audience, waiting for the conductor's cues. They (the violinists) knew that we (the audience) knew that they weren't trained, didn't really know what to do, and were waiting curiously—just as listeners were—to see what would happen next. DeGennaro, meanwhile, was locked into her loom and knew exactly what to do, all of which created a strange tension, transforming something potentially monotonous into something momentous.

Two "jazzier" shows appeared at Roulette the following evening. Over the course of drummer Billy Hart's quartet set, Nicole Glover (tenor) proved an engaging storyteller and Ethan Iverson (piano) an intelligent contrapuntalist along with Ben Street (bass), while the 85-year-old bandleader showed himself (once he was safely seated atop his throne) to be an adroit and kingly practitioner of all-things-drums. Just after, BlankFor.ms' (aka Tyler Gilmore) trio with Jason Moran (piano) and Marcus Gilmore (drums) negotiated the human/machine matrix when Gilmore mixed in live samples of the pianist with his own EFX processing. For their closer, a cover of Thelonious Monk's "Evidence", the drummer's grapevining feet played

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# MILES 100

BY DAVID CRISTOL



PETER SERLING

Bobby Previte @Elbphilharmonie

Since opening its doors in 2017, Hamburg, Germany's Elbphilharmonie has become an architectural landmark of the city, its wavy, crested roof and reflective glass façades visible from afar. Two peerless auditoriums are located at its core, which one reaches by way of winding flights of stairs leading into the upper floors. Cradled by the Elbe river, the building evokes a gigantic ship ready to sail, and visitors are free to roam its wide indoor plazas and outdoor passageways, which offer unobstructed views over the docks, extending as far as the eye can see. It's hard to think of a worthier temple to celebrate a towering figure such as Miles Davis (1926-1991), whose centennial concerts there (May 1-6) addressed different periods of his career.

Trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire is on a Miles streak. He's scheduled to perform Davis and Gil Evans' joint repertoire at London's Royal Albert Hall in August, and can be heard on drummer Gregory Hutchinson's newly released album *Kind of Now - The Pulse of Miles Davis* (Warner Music). In Hamburg, on the last evening of an eight-date tour, the Brussels Jazz Orchestra (BJO) and Akinmusire presented "... What's Not There: A New Perspective on Miles," delving into the mid '60s Miles Davis Quintet repertoire. The Grosser Saal was packed to the rafters. The pieces were arranged for a 17-strong ensemble—13 winds and brass plus rhythm section, and including saxophonist Lennert Baerts and Argentine pianist Guillermo Klein. In this setting, Akinmusire's command of the sonic possibilities afforded by his instrument, from warm, velvety flurries to arrow-like high-pitches and impeccably articulate phrases, dazzled. He was highlighted by the orchestra, backing him and the other soloists, including BJO's founder, saxophonist Frank Vaganée. The instrumentation differed wildly from the originals, with some tunes initially unrecognizable. Opener was a goosebump-inducing medley of Herbie Hancock's "Riot" and "Sorcerer", followed by Wayne Shorter's "Water Babies", in lush sound colors. Acoustic bliss continued with Shorter's "Fall", a vehicle for Akinmusire, who favors long, breathy tones, the stage lit in sunset-red hues for the dusky theme. To project the accented notes, the trumpeter sometimes reverted to the trademark Davis position, head leaning forward, bell directed towards the floor. His playing style, however, is his own. He offered the fascinating "Mademoiselle Mabry

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Trio was recorded live at L.A.'s legendary jazz venue, The Haig, a well-known epicenter showcasing such pioneering jazz ensembles as the Gerry Mulligan/Baker pianoless quartet and the Red Norvo Trio (with a young Charles Mingus and guitarist Tal Farlow).

Through the '50s, Marable memorably recorded with pianists Carl Perkins and Kenny Drew, vibraphonists Teddy Charles and Milt Jackson, trumpeter Conte Candoli, alto saxophonist Sonny Criss, saxophonist-clarinetist Jimmy Giuffre and others. In 1956, the drummer recorded his sole album as leader, *Tenorman* (Jazz West). Released as the "Lawrence Marable Quartet featuring James Clay" – with Sonny Clark (piano) and Jimmy Bond (bass) – it was recently given the Blue Note Tone Poet 180g vinyl-only reissue treatment. The original record label may have only briefly been in existence (1954-56), but in that short window of time Jazz West put out a handful of significant releases, *Tenorman* included. Label founder and record producer, Herbert Kimmel describes Clay in the album's liner notes as "Marable's discovery...a voice that could speak right out, unschooled, unrefined, free and clear of...restraints." Six years younger than Marable, and not yet even 21 at the time, Dallas-born Clay had just arrived in L.A., two weeks before the drummer took him into the studio to record this now-classic, which marks the recording debut of the tenor saxophonist (who would also become known as an equally-estimable flute player) and the sole album under Marable's name.

In the late '50s to early '60s, Marable played and recorded with saxophonists Johnny Griffin and Curtis Amy, pianist George Shearing, organist Richard "Groove" Holmes, The Montgomery Brothers – with guitarist Wes, pianist (and vibraphonist) Buddy and bassist Monk – as well as continuing connections with the likes of Dexter Gordon and Teddy Edwards. But between his 1962 recording on pianist-vibraphonist Victor Feldman's *Stop the World I Want to Get Off* (World Pacific) and saxophonist Joe Farrell's 1979 album *Skate Board Park* (Xanadu), Marable was for all intents and purposes basically off the scene due to an extended period of drug addiction issues and time served in prison. It was that very Farrell session, with pianist Chick Corea and bassist Bob Magnusson, which marks the drummer's official return. In a recent conversation, Magnusson recalls the session like it was yesterday: "It was really a thrill for me to play with Larence on that Don Schlitten-produced Farrell record with Chick. It was the only time I got to play with Larence, but it was a total joy. He was in prison for drugs, then got himself together to display his talent and again earn a living. The album was basically a blowing session and Larence just played beautifully on everything. He had an intense, fiery energy. 'Speak Low' was so wonderful. And Chick's 'High Wire-The Aerialist', how beautifully Larence played in that style. Intuitively and musically he could move from a straight-ahead bebop thing to a two feel. For me, just a real treat. He's unheralded, how great he was."

By the '80s, Marable was looking to get back in full swing. He had joined vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson for two years and reunited with past employers such as Milt Jackson and Johnny Griffin, as well as joining saxophonist Med Flory's Supersax (which included a prior West Coast associate in trumpeter Candoli). Native New Yorker Jon Mayer first started playing with Marable (a decade Mayer's senior) around the time the pianist became an L.A. transplant, just before the drummer would join Haden's Quartet West. Mayer recalls contacting Larence "for a couple of trio gigs. He had that authentic feel of drummers I had grown up listening to, that East Coast sensibility, like Art Taylor and Philly Joe Jones. It was really a joy

playing with him." It was through Marable's playing that both Mayer and the drummer first met Ernie Watts, a serendipitous occasion, as Watts happened to be window shopping and walked by and heard the drums from an open window to one of Mayer's trio gigs. Watts walked in for what was the end of a set, introduced himself and the rest, as they say, is history – or as Watts recalls one of Marable's many favorite sayings: "It's a small world but I'd hate to have to paint it!" The two would soon become bandmates in Quartet West after the group's original drummer, Billy Higgins, became too busy (including touring with the *'Round Midnight* allstar band, which played with frequency upon the release of Bertrand Tavernier's 1986 titled movie). Watts recalls that it was Higgins who was the one that recommended Marable to Haden as his replacement, as he was a frequent visitor to Higgins' The World Stage (the educational and performance art space, located in South L.A.'s Leimert Park Village, which Higgins founded in 1989). Says Watts, "That's where Marable worked with young people. (And) they took care of him over there."

Over the course of almost a dozen years, Marable recorded a half-dozen albums for Verve with Quartet West (the group rounded out by founding pianist Alan Broadbent), starting with *Angel City* (1988), ending with *The Art Of The Song* (1999). Following a stroke, though, he would eventually develop dementia and start to drift, living in a health care facility before passing away at the age of 83 on Jul. 4, 2012. Watts frequently visited Marable's home in the Little Ethiopia district of L.A. "We had become like family. He hardly recognized us, though. One time my wife and I got a CD player for him and we put on some Bird. All of a sudden, he sat up and started tapping and playing. There was another part of his mind, another aspect, that was triggered. He wasn't talking, but the music of Bird certainly triggered him!"

Marable's legacy has been cemented with a two and a half+ hour long, oral history interview from the UCLA Library Center for Oral History Research (COHR), part of its archival "Central Avenue Sounds" series. The significance of this amazingly vast resource (based on dozens of interviews, mostly conducted in the 1990s by Steven Isoardi) cannot be understated. Collectively it became the foundation for the oral-history project and served as the impetus for the impressive 1998 publication of the 442-page *Central Avenue Sounds: Jazz in Los Angeles* (University of California Press). Marable's interview is available as a transcript as well as an audio recording, alongside many of Marable's West Coast contemporaries, including Buddy Collette, Frank Morgan, Gerald Wilson, Melba Liston, Hadda Brooks, Ernie Andrews, Britt Woodman, Lee Young, Vi Redd and others.

For more info visit [oralhistory.library.ucla.edu](http://oralhistory.library.ucla.edu)

**Recommended Listening:**

- Hampton Hawes – *The Hamp Hawes Trio* (Vantage, 1951)
- Lawrence Marable Quartet (featuring James Clay) – *Tenorman* (Jazz West-Blue Note, 1956)
- Teddy Edwards Octet – *Back to Avalon* (Contemporary, 1960)
- Dexter Gordon – *The Resurgence Of* (Jazzland, 1960)
- Milt Jackson – *Night Mist* (Pablo, 1980)
- Charlie Haden Quartet West – *Haunted Heart* (Verve, 1991)

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two high-hats and two kick drums simultaneously without ever losing his funky feel, while Tyler Gilmore mirrored and manipulated Moran's previously played

phrases, mixing them right back into play, creating the illusion that the pianist was having an acoustic/electric conversation with himself.

The festival was in full swing by the weekend, as Saturday offered 28 shows from noon until almost midnight (Sunday upping that to 29). **Matthew Shipp's** solo piano set in the Theatre for a New Audience at Polansky Shakespeare Center, as viewed from a seat in the top tier (close to the high-vaulted ceiling, directly behind, almost over, the piano) was a marvel of aural animation. Shipp moved like a boxer, shoulders and upper torso panning left and right, long limbs and fingers flailing forward over the keyboard with deft, rapid-fire hooks, jabs, crosses and haymakers, his touch growing more delicate as his tempos accelerated, abruptly down-shifting to slower, heavier motions, hunkering down at last on a few thick, T-bone steak-sized chords. Somewhere in all this unified anarchy were threads of themes, glimpses of swing, even a B-flat blues.

**The Percussion Collective's** performance of "Dressur", a sticks-cum-schtick composition by Mauricio Kagel, staged at the Church of St. Luke & St. Matthew, combined slapstick and other low comedy and pantomime with sophisticated hijinks and innovative eccentricity. The trio of rhythmic tricksters plied unusual home-grown and found wooden instruments (e.g. a pair of clogs) with equal attention paid to fun and finesse, earning as many laughs as they did oohs and aahs for their efforts.

The final day of the festival opened with an immersive piece played by 30 or so musicians on the terrace at the top of Fort Greene Park, just in front of the Prison Ship Martyrs Monument. No one was conducting. Each aerophonist or percussionist seemed to operate independently, spread out over a large area. (It was later discovered that they'd been following pre-taped cues coming from their ear buds.) All seemed to loiter around the key of C, though their short, overlapping motifs never quite meshed. Over the course of an hour the performers slowly moved towards the center of the terrace, as if drawn by a magnet, never acknowledging one another's presence, then reversed this inward migration in the second half hour of the piece, the quality of the music changing as a flute player passed close by a xylophonist or bass drummer. Listeners/spectators could change that quality for themselves by striding or idling in and among the temporarily planted performers – in sum, another example of potentially monotonous material achieving depth and variety.

One of the fest's most sizzling sets came later that evening at Brooklyn Music School with the onslaught of **Marty Ehrlich's** saxophone sextet playing arrangements by the late Julius Hemphill. Comprised of Ehrlich, Caroline Davis (whose soon-to-be-born baby had the best 'seat' in the house), Cleave Guyton, Alex Harding, Brian Landrus and Brian Settles, the ensemble swung and funk'd their collective butts off, playing beautiful lush ballads and attained ecstatically skronking collective climaxes on tunes including "Mirrors" and "Mr. Critical". They ended with a soulful take on "The Hard Blues", buoyed by Harding's bad-ass baritone saxophone. Back at Shakespeare Center, pianist **Kris Davis'** trio – with Robert Hurst (bass) and Jeff "Tain" Watts (drums) – thrived on the polar musical personalities of the pianist and drummer: she mercurial and quicksilver, light and lightning fast; he, sturdy but supple, obviously tickled by the flow of her imagination, shadowing, shunting and variously supporting her with uncanny ingenuity. Back at Roulette, the packed house was treated to an exuberant rendition of **Philip Glass'** seminal *Glassworks*, the composer himself on hand to appreciate the proficiency and unfettered enthusiasm of the Long Play All-Stars' performance.

For more info visit [bangonacan.org](http://bangonacan.org)

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Lewis. So it was this hilarious thing. The whole expression, “that has no business being in there,” was always funny to me. Frank Zappa called it “putting the eyebrows on something.” And for me, that’s a funny thing. Doing something that has no business being in there. And that’s been a theme pretty much throughout my entire life.

**NYCJR:** Are you optimistic about jazz here in NYC? Is there anything in particular that’s exciting you about the contemporary music scene?

**WEBER:** In about a week, I’m revisiting a show of mine called “Joplin to Jarrett,” in which I start with Scott Joplin, and I evolve forward, showing who evolved into whom—how W.C. Handy came along, and then Jelly Roll Morton and so on, saying “Here’s the through line of all these people. This is where this music came from.” I stopped with Keith Jarrett because there have been great players who’ve come along since that I could include, but the thing is, it’s too early to tell if they’re going to shape the music because Jarrett is still affecting the way people play now. Chick Corea’s music, which is in the show, is still affecting the way people play now. I’m waiting for another Thelonious Monk, and whoever he or she is, they’re gonna do it. It’s getting harder and harder to do. YouTube is a great equalizer, but it’s also a great homogenizer in a way because people hear things and they don’t come up with something radical on their own. But somebody will. I can’t wait to hear who the next Scott Joplin is or who the next Jelly Roll Morton is, or James P. Johnson. Some innovator is going to do something that nobody else has tried before, and it’s going to shape everybody else, but the thing is, it’s just too early in their career for me to know *who* they are.

For more info visit [facebook.com/p/Jon-Weber-100063705424124](https://facebook.com/p/Jon-Weber-100063705424124). Weber plays the “Piano in Bryant Park” concert series Jul. 6-10 and is at *Mona’s Tuesdays*. See *Calendar*.

**Recommended Listening:**

- Jon Weber — *Jazz Wagon* (IMI, 1993)
- Jon Weber — *Live in Concert: Flying Keys* (Jazz Connaissanceur, 1997)
- Jon Weber — *It’s Never Quite the Same: Jon Weber Plays the Songs of Livingston & Evans* (Mood, 1998)
- Jon Weber — *Simple Complex* (2nd Century Jazz, 2003)
- Joyce Breach — *Odds & Ends* (Audiophile, 2009)
- Stacy Sullivan — *On The Air: A Tribute to Marian McPartland* (Harbinger, 2014)

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particularly appeal to Piotrowski: “I would say my preference has always been, other than Dave Burrell, in the sort of the collective-run groups.” That preference is audible across High Two’s catalog, which spotlights ensembles operating with lateral decision-making rather than top-down direction: Shot x Shot’s four-way abstraction; Inzinzac’s jagged Franco-Philly manœuvres; Feeler Gauge’s tensile free improvisations; and Special What’s minimalist collisions of texture and rhythm. As Diehl affirms, “High Two really is a fertile ground for that democratic, egalitarian creation.”

Artist autonomy remains a guiding principle for Piotrowski. His role, he says, is largely about clarity and facilitation, not editorial interference. In recent years, Diehl has taken the lead on commissioning and producing, a shift that has brought several new projects under the label’s wing. Among them is *The Omniverse Oriki* by the now 102-year-old Marshall Allen, in which Yoruba drums and chants thread through

buoyant electronics and Allen’s ever-surprising reed work. On *Lingua Franca* by the Instant Arts Quartet, with saxophonist Terry Lawson, the brass and winds of Matt Lavelle and bassist Pete Dennis alongside Diehl, the label leans into a grittier strain of free jazz—robust, declarative and rooted in the community that sustains it. Diehl’s own post-SLF trajectory continues to feed High Two’s forward motion. As he reveals: “I’ve been doing a residency, post-Sonic Liberation Front, so it’s going on over four years. And we call that the AIRLFT series and AIRLFT is an ensemble, which grows and shrinks.” The forthcoming album from this project draws on musicians whose pedigrees map the city’s avant garde continuum: Lavelle, who studied with Ornette Coleman; Elliott Levin, a veteran of Cecil Taylor’s ensembles; and Dave Hotep, long associated with Allen and the Sun Ra Arkestra. In Diehl’s words, “So we have this amazing array of creative perspectives.” Piotrowski’s enthusiasm remains similarly undimmed: “The scene is so great here in Philly that it’s still exciting after 20 years of doing this.”

High Two’s catalogue stands as evidence: a portrait of Philadelphia not as a footnote to larger jazz capitals, but as a generative center in its own right, where artists build their own structures, cross-pollinate freely, and trust that someone—like Piotrowski and Diehl—will make sure the record exists.

For more info visit [hightwo.net](http://hightwo.net). High Two artists performing this month include Marshall Allen at *Grounds for Sculpture* (Hamilton, NJ) Jul. 18. See *100 Miles Out*.

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(Miss Mabry)”, an uncredited Gil Evans reworking of Jimi Hendrix’ “The Wind Cries Mary”, titled after Betty Mabry, the soul-funk singer who was Miles’ wife at the time (aka Betty Davis) and who brought psychedelic rock to his attention. This background must be the reason why Akinmusire elected to play at full throttle on this selection. By contrast, Hermeto Pascoal’s dreamy “Selim” made for a sweet closer.

Down at the fifth floor, audiences were welcomed to a pop-up bar where a listening marathon of 64 LPs recorded by Miles Davis were played in chronological order. The drinks menu offered special brews for the occasion, including the Miles High (Monkey Shoulder Malt Whisky, Weisser Vermut, hausgemachter Mandarinen, Likör, Bitter)—perfect for sipping while listening to Miles on massive speakers, or perusing the newly published *Miles Davis—Three Days in Malibu* photo book by Ralph Quinke. A cool initiative to get in the swing before the shows or prolong the jaunt.

In the late ’60s, Miles Davis declared “jazz needs a new motor, like James Brown’s music has a motor,” and proceeded to build the engine: band members, song structures, plugged sounds, to materialize his ideas. If *Bitches Brew* wasn’t his first album to feature electric instruments, it was a decisive step forward in a direction that proved highly influential on the jazz world and beyond. New York drummer Bobby Previte admits to a lifetime worship of that record, and has been using its contents as a springboard for improvisation since the late ’90s, first with bands to tour with, then as a workshop for young musicians. He describes his *Bitches Brew Reimagined* project as “the perfect vehicle for teaching [students] patience, thoughtfulness, deep listening, and above all, how to banish fear from their playing.” The premise may seem odd to begin with, contradictory even: taking unscripted jams resulting from multiple takes and post-production splicing and editing, as a textbook, transcribed into sheet music for the participating players. At the festival, close associates Brad Jones (electric bass) and Fabian Rucker (bass clarinet) evoked Bennie Maupin’s key presence on the album.

They were joined by violin, saxophones, keyboards, trombone, guitar, electronics and, for the first time, flute by standout Clémence Manachère. Intriguingly, no trumpet. The tentet launched into sprawling versions of “Spanish Key”, “John McLaughlin”, “Miles Runs the Voodoo Down”, “Bitches Brew” and best of all, “Pharaoh’s Dance”. The pieces took no definite shape aside from their basic pulses, sporadic themes and ostinati bass lines. These elements were fleshed out by the younger players who actively engaged in the now moment under Previte’s guidance (when he was not behind his drum kit).

The **Norddeutscher Rundfunk (NDR) Bigband**, Hamburg’s premier jazz ensemble since the mid ’40s, has featured a wide array of musicians through the course of its history, including Chet Baker, Herb Geller, Al Jarreau, Pee Wee Ellis, Susi Hyldgaard, Jiggs Whigham and Michael Gibbs. Its set opened with Miles Davis and Gil Evans’ masterwork *Sketches of Spain*. If you’re familiar with that album (originally recorded in November 1959 and March 1960), you needn’t read further, as the concert was a carbon copy of that record. Hearing it live and loud, however, was a thrilling experience, from opener “Concierto de Aranjuez (Adagio)” and follow-up “Will o’ the Wisp” (its lurching rhythm, including the sound of castanets, calling to mind a horse’s trot), by twentieth century composers Joaquín Rodrigo and Manuel de Falla respectively, to third stream selections and arrangements by Gil Evans, inspired by flamenco and other folk and religious songforms, such as the hypnotic and swirling “The Pan Piper”, the unruly fanfare/bolero “Saeta” and the danceable brass and percussion-laden “Soleá”. On flugelhorn and muted or unmuted trumpet, Germany’s virtuoso Claus Stötter was spellbinding. Olé!

After an intermission, the NDR Bigband reappeared with instruments removed (goodbye harp) and others added (hello electric guitar). The addition of featured artist, Spanish bassist, composer and bandleader **Pablo Martín Caminero** and his *New Flamenco Sketches* to the program made thematical and opened a window onto today’s Iberian jazz. Caminero’s take on flamenco-jazz fusion is joyous and playful, rather than displaying the melancholy, solemn bent of *Sketches of Spain*. Replete with ideas, his writing was tasty, impactful and ever forging ahead.

The *Miles 100* celebration continues at the Elbphilharmonie with a Terence Blanchard/Ravi Coltrane co-led quintet (Jun. 30) that additionally honors the memory of John Coltrane (2026 also of course represents the saxophonist’s centennial) and Marcus Miller’s *We Want Miles!* (Jul. 9) featuring members from that 1981 live album of the same name.

For more info visit [elbphilharmonie.de/en/](http://elbphilharmonie.de/en/)

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