



Universal Truth
Emmet Cohen (Mack Avenue)
by Jeff Cebulski

Jazz ambassador Emmet Cohen's pianistic *joie de vivre* and his infectious, creative muse uncannily transport vitality into whomever he plays with, as demonstrated by his award-winning, home woodshedding *Emmet's Place* livestream. Cohen's democratic philosophy is prominent on the new album *Universal Truth*, his contribution to the centennial celebrations of Miles Davis and John Coltrane. While sticking to his post-bop predilections, the pianist gathered an adroit ensemble and celebrates his respect for, and inspiration from, the two revered giants, involving two important icons from Davis' career while receiving inspiration for new music from the spirit of Coltrane.

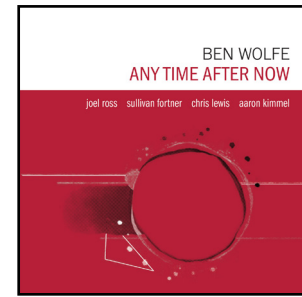
Of the album's eight selections, five are energized and tethered by the swinging duo of Yasushi Nakamura (bass) and Joe Farnsworth (drums). Farnsworth, who always seems to be in motion, is a solid choice for the bop-peripatetic Cohen, whose post-Ellington keyboard energy keeps the energy high. On three middle selections, as a tribute to Davis, Nakamura is replaced by the eminent Miles alum Ron Carter, who never fails to serve as a

fulcrum for great music. On "My Funny Valentine", Carter reunites with eloquent elder tenor saxophonist George Coleman, as the pair revisit Davis' version from the classic live album *My Funny Valentine: Miles Davis in Concert* (Columbia, 1964), on which they both appeared. Coleman here is no less eloquent; Carter's solid center is demonstrated nobly on "Well You Needn't" and "Gingerbread Boy", while supporting trumpeter Jeremy Pelt's playing exudes a welcome brightness and verve, his arpeggios and striking tone lifting the tunes considerably.

A second tenor saxophonist, Tivon Pennicott, provides a partner for Pelt during Cohen's three-part suite, "I. Eternal Glimpse, II. Compassion, III. Universal Truth", which is the pianist's testimony to Coltrane's influence and a personal philosophy statement. "Eternal Glimpse" moves on a shimmering Cohen intro to a pleasant two-horn refrain advanced atop a mild calypso groove, exuding good vibes. "Compassion", the least-energized album piece, is anointed by Pelt's exquisite, Davis-coned statement. The final movement/section (and album title) of the suite finishes the testimony with a solemn opening refrain that leads to a powerful ensemble convergence where Nakamura and Farnsworth provide a deep pocket for an expansive Cohen expression and a stirring Pelt solo. The group gathers one last time for the classic "Blue Train", performed mostly on the nose but in more of a celebratory spirit.

On *Universal Truth*, Emmet Cohen again showcases his ability to convene fellow artists in his comfort zone where swing dominates and respect reigns.

For more info visit mackavenue.com. Cohen is at *Smoke Jul. 8-12* and *Caramoor Jazz Festival (Katonah, NY) Jul. 25*. See *Calendar* and *100 Miles Out*.



Any Time After Now
Ben Wolfe (Resident Arts)
by Thomas Conrad

For his twelfth recording as a leader, bassist Ben Wolfe assembled a new quintet and brought in two players who are rapidly becoming famous. Sullivan Fortner and Joel Ross are, according to the 2025 *DownBeat* Critics Poll, the #3 pianist and #2 vibraphonist in jazz. Wolfe's other two choices were tenor saxophonist Chris Lewis and drummer Aaron Kimmel. The leader booked this band for three nights at Dizzy's Club, then took them into a studio (Power Station at BerkleeNYC) and recorded this album in one day. Jeff "Tain" Watts wrote the liner notes, which reports, "It feels like one of those days where everything works." It is true. *Any Time After Now* has a natural, poised, self-possessed, even elegant quality. Wolfe has said, "It is about the ensemble sound." That is also true. Fortner and Ross are both special improvisers. But here they are so intuitively complementary that you almost forget which one is soloing.

"If Only" is a typical track: each intertwines their personal versions of Wolfe's alluring melody, gliding in and out of one another's thoughts. Fortner has achieved his current stature not through ostentation

but through sensitivity to nuances of lyric beauty. Ross is a sound poet. They were meant for each other. As for the others, Kimmel proves he belongs in this fast company from the first (title) track, on which he swings the band firmly but gracefully and takes a clear, concise, declarative solo. Lewis does not play on every selection, but when he gets his moments, as on "Down with Gravity", his warm tone and measured, intelligent flow of ideas comply with the album's emphasis on finesse. Wolfe's bass is the primary source of this music's subtle yet fervent energy, and he composed all ten songs. He may not be gifted with titles (he gives his pieces names such as "Blues" and "Waltz II" and "5/4 Groove"), but he writes some nice melodies. His most important contribution is his shaping influence on ensemble form. Every track feels like an integrated, finished, organic whole.

For more info visit benwolfe.com. Wolfe is at *David Rubinstein Atrium Jul. 12* (with "From Black Codes to Magic Hour: Wynton Marsalis' Small Group Sound"). See *Calendar*.



Dial Up
Dave Rempis, Jason Adasiewicz, Chris Corsano
(Aerophonic)
by Mike Shanley

The company a musician keeps can make all the difference when the tapes are rolling. Chicago saxophonist Dave Rempis excels in the presence of many longtime associates and often adds new friends to his free improvisation performances, with the results appearing on *Aerophonic*, the imprint he has run for 13 years. When vibraphonist Jason Adasiewicz returned from a musical hiatus of several years and drummer Chris Corsano relocated to the Windy City, the opportunity for a new enterprise was obvious.

On a typical session, Rempis will feature his mastery on a variety of horns—including soprano, alto, tenor and baritone saxophones. Each instrument brings out different ideas, which adds to the variety and dimension to the music he plays. On his new album, *Dial Up*, each musician brings energy and focus, but the album's intrigue lies in what is created by the instrumentation. Rempis' alto and Corsano's cascading drums might sound turbulent on their own, but Adasiewicz brings a sense of serenity to the opening track "Cutups". His vibrato floats over Corsano, before Rempis enters on a slow-moving blue line, taking a hint from the vibraphonist's lines. The drummer launches "Down the Path/Madness", serving as a reminder that Corsano's enthusiasm always comes across, whether in person or through speakers. The saxophonist tests listeners' ears on this one, since the opening blasts that could be from his alto ultimately reveal themselves as altissimo barks from his baritone. "One Dollar Cheaper" finds the trio stretching out for a solid 18 minutes, with Adasiewicz creating a dreamlike drone as Rempis switches to tenor for what is some of the album's most impassioned playing. Album closer, "Third Person" features some unhinged soprano wailing, which, in its final minutes, seems to channel both the tone and attack of John Coltrane's later, exploratory work. That might sound like a herculean effort but Rempis—never one who intentionally spends his time channeling the masters—sounds perfectly natural as he unleashes a series of

short music cells over Corsano's rolling, thunderous rhythms and Adasiewicz' swirling, malletted pulse. Combined with the track's spiky, unaccompanied soprano saxophone introduction, the whole piece reveals itself as a deep, original statement.

For more info visit aerophonicrocordings.com. Dave Rempis is at *The Stone at The New School Jul. 23* (with Larry Ochs). Chris Corsano is at *The Stone at The New School Jul. 17* (with Yoona Kim and Joe Morris). See *Calendar*.



The Copenhagen Session Vol. 2
Scandinavian Art Ensemble with Tomasz Stańko
(April)
by Ken Waxman

Partially a graduation concert and partially a newly unearthed piece of jazz history, *The Copenhagen Session Vol. 2* is the companion and completion of sessions Polish trumpeter Tomasz Stańko created with participants after a week-long summer course he led in 2016. Stańko (1942-2018)—whose birthday and eight-year deathaversary fall in this month—was involved in the birth of Polish free jazz in the '60s with the likes of Adam Makowicz, Krzysztof Komeda, Zbigniew Seifert and others, worked internationally with ensembles such as Globe Unity Orchestra, and in the last decades of his life toured with a Polish quartet and composed film and theatre soundtracks.

A rare teaching gig for Stańko, the participants here were younger but already professional and have since gone on to decisive careers in creative music: they include Poles in Tomasz Dąbrowski (trumpet), Artur Tużniak (piano) and Radek Wośko (drums); Danes, Thomas Hass (tenor), Martin Fabricius (vibraphone) and Richard Andersson (bass); Icelander Snorri Sigurðarson (trumpet); and Finnish Johanna Elina Sulkunen (vocals). With three trumpeters featured it's difficult to ascribe individual solo work, though it's likely that most of the moody, atmospheric brass patterns are Stańko's even though the others—especially Dąbrowski—continue to make a distinctive mark on the European scene. Participants noted that Stańko made a point of always joining the ensemble, creating space for all the players. Besides layered trumpet setups, most prominent are the pianist's sympathetic comping and the vocalist's mostly wordless murmurs in sync with expositions and elaborations.

Andersson's potent pulse makes "Anti-Freeze" one standout track as his pumps and Wośko's ruffs create a rhythmic whirlpool upon which constant keyboard swirls and an assemblage of brassy shakes, triplets and narrowed smears rest. Energetic throughout, there are still places here and elsewhere where then-popular fusion stylistic cadences predominate. Other interjections from trumpet obligatos, throaty vocalized syllables and a heartfelt saxophone solo on the concluding "Sunrise" also make an impression. However, the overall slow pace and languid narratives produce a certain sameness with some sequences more enervating than exciting. But still that's hardly the point, as this decade-old archival recording allows yet another instance of Stańko's work as a player and organizer to be heard by the public at large. It also offers a rare glimpse of soon to be notable Northern European players during a pedagogical apprenticeship.

For more info visit aprilrecords.com

DROP THE NEEDLE



Jazz Message #2
Hank Mobley (Savoy-Craft Recordings)
Introducing Lee Morgan
Lee Morgan (Savoy-Craft Recordings)
by Duck Baker

At the time of these November 1956 recordings for both album releases, 26-year-old tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley (1930-1986) was already recognized as a new star. Young as he was, he was a grizzled veteran compared to 18-year-old trumpeter Lee Morgan (1938-1972), who was participating in only his second recording session (the first having occurred the day before).

This month marks the birthday of each Mobley and Morgan. The latter was still developing his own style at the time, while the former was already very much his own man. But a note of caution for those getting into Mobley's early recordings: he recorded five LPs in 1956, the first four of which are called *The Jazz Message of Hank Mobley, Mobley's Message, Jazz Message #2* and *Mobley's 2nd Message*. Listeners and collectors need to pay attention or they'll wind up missing or duplicating these records. All of this activity was of course to capitalize on the popularity of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, of which he was an original member.

A lineup featuring Morgan and Mobley along with Hank Jones (piano), Doug Watkins (bass) and Art Taylor (drums) is heard on *Introducing Lee Morgan* as well as on Side A of *Jazz Message #2*. The quintet on Side B of that record finds Donald Byrd taking Morgan's place in the front line, while Watkins returns to a rhythm section filled out by pianist Barry Harris and drummer Kenny Clarke. The program kicks off with a medium-tempo blues by Thad Jones and continues with "Doug's Minor B'ok", an attractive theme contributed by Watkins. The three tunes that make up the B side are all Mobley originals, and show that he was already an above-average hard bop composer. All the soloists shine throughout. The leader somehow sounds relaxed even at breakneck tempos, providing a foil for the brilliant young trumpeters who were Clifford Brown's foremost acolytes at this point. Hearing Jones and Harris on the same record is interesting, as Jones' subtle influence on the decade-younger pianist is impossible to miss. The rhythm section work is terrific, and both drummers, plus Watkins, make good use of a fair amount of solo space.

Introducing Lee Morgan starts off with another Mobley original, the blazing "Hank's Shout". The composer delivers a terrific solo, and Morgan's scorching statement demonstrates not only his mastery of Clifford Brown's style, but the ways he was finding to use that as the basis for his own. He follows by saluting Brown's biggest influence, Fats Navarro, who used a mute for his most famous tune, "Nostalgia", and Morgan follows suit, but at a slightly faster tempo. Both of the horns turn in solid solos, but it's Jones (the pianist had actually worked with Navarro) who strikes the right chord, as he always did. The record ends with a medley of four standards, each being a showcase for a different soloist.

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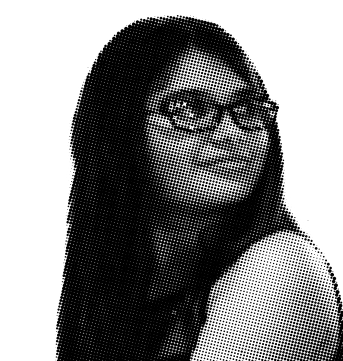
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