

GLOBE UNITY



Rise Again Vol. 2
Manuel Valera New Cuban Express (s/r)
We Are Not the Headliner (Live from Studio 9)
Omar Sosa Quarteto Americanos (Otá)
Nuit Parisienne à La Havane
Roberto Fonseca/Vincent Ségal (Artwork)
 by Daniel A. Brown

The Cuban influence on jazz cannot be understated. Singular elements of Cuban music—including clave and syncopated rhythms, Afro-Cuban percussion instruments, extended chords (including 9ths, 11ths and 13ths), piano-based montuno patterns that lock in with the rhythm section, bass lines grooving on the offbeat ostinato tumbao rhythm-line—all tie together with call-and-response ensemble playing. These pervasive qualities, as well as the influence of groundbreaking musicians such as Mario Bauzá, Machito, Chano Pozo, Chucho Valdés and Gonzalo Rubalcaba, have long since merged the streams of Cuban and jazz music into potent forms. Three recent releases throw light on the current state of Cuban jazz, albums as varied as the unique elements of the storied island's creolized son cubano and drum-based, West African-derived musical heritage.

Born and raised in Havana, NYC-based pianist-composer Manuel Valera is a GRAMMY Award-

nominated artist, Guggenheim Fellow and NYU professor. Valera maintains that credibility with the recent *Rise Again Vol. 2*, boasting the participation of his band the New Cuban Express: Alex Norris (trumpet, flugelhorn), John Ellis and Felipe Lamoglia (tenors), Boris Kozlov (electric bass), Hamish Smith (bass), Jimmy Macbride (drums), plus Mauricio Herrera and Samuel Torres (percussion). Opener "Emilionesque (dedicated to Emiliano Salvador)" is indicative of the album's allure: a syncopated, polished-to-a-chrome-sheen arrangement, courtesy of the ensemble's crackling performance. "Mr. Shorter (dedicated to Wayne Shorter)" is a languid tribute to the late jazz magus, a dreamy ballad featuring sensitive playing from the assembled players, while the percolating "La Otra Mano", with its blinding, unison playing and unpredictable shifts, dips into fusion territory.

Recorded live in concert at the titular venue in North Adams, MA, *We Are Not the Headliner (Live from Studio 9)* is the 11-track debut from Omar Sosa Quarteto Americanos. A seven-time GRAMMY Award nominee, pianist-composer Sosa and his Bay Area-based, Latin-world-jazz ensemble—Sheldon Brown (woodwinds), Ernesto Mazar Kindelán (bass), Josh Jones (drums)—augment their sound with guests Natacha Atlas (vocals), Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Reggie Stephens (spoken word), Camilo Landau and Kai Lyons (both on *tres*, the traditional guitar-like Cuban instrument) and Tito Leliebre (percussion). The light, airy ballad "Back Home to My Dwelling" complements the genre-mashup of "Africa in My Fingers", the latter hinting at contemporary jazz, rock and all points in between. The hip-hop-tinted "Hella

Changui" boasts spitfire rap rhymes, expansive piano chords and a whip-smart rhythm. In total, *We Are Not the Headliner* is a solid collection of the current state of forward-thinking Cuban jazz.

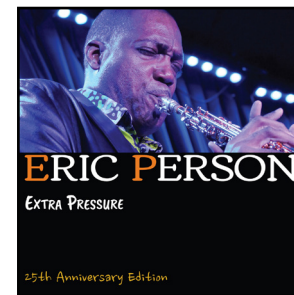
Pianist Roberto Fonseca and cellist Vincent Ségal join forces for *Nuit Parisienne à La Havane*, an 11-song collection of dark, shadow-hued romanticism. The players' career mixtures—from Fonseca (Buena Vista Social Club, Herbie Hancock, esperanza spalding) to Ségal (Cesária Évora, Elvis Costello, Sting)—blend well in creating a potent genre-jumping blend on cuts such as the modern, classical-tinged "Rumbo a Ti", where ethereal cello lines move ghostlike atop metronomic piano rounds. Conversely, "Paciencia Es Lo Que Hay Que Tener" builds like a menacing flame, an unrelenting minor-key swirl of Fonseca's piano trills and Ségal's confident arco work. "Un Homme Qui Dort" evokes a nebulous hint of Duke Ellington's "Fleurette Africaine", as Fonseca's unhurried approach to the arrangement is partnered with plucked and bowed unison lines from Ségal, culminating in a dizzying solo from the pianist that spans the gamut from Cuban to blues and classical. This album proves to be the ideal spin for fans of intimate, candle-lit jazz.

For more info visit manuelvalera.com, omarsosa.com and store.pias.com. Sosa's album release concert is at *Blue Note* Jul. 13-14. Valera's *New Cuban Express* is at *Smalls* Jul. 23-24. Valera is also at *Smalls* Jul. 1, 8, 15, 22 (with *Carlos Abadie*) and Jul. 17-18 (with *Dave Schumacher* and *Cubeye*), *Bar Bayeux* Jul. 8 (with *Duduka Da Fonseca*), *The Django* Jul. 21 (as leader) and *Mezzrow* Jul. 22 (with *Tony Moreno*). See *Calendar*.

to Cohen for an extended spotlight, becoming an equal partner in the storytelling. Varner then closes the arrangement with an unexpected melodic variation.

The album closer, "Undecided" (Charlie Shavers, Sid Robin) sends this new release out on a high note, propelled by a blistering tempo and bold improvisations from Varner and her ensemble. The performance captures both the exuberance and spontaneity that were hallmarks of Fitzgerald's recordings, culminating in an exhilarating finale. Varner avoids replication and captures something more valuable, namely artistic freedom.

For more info visit cellarlive.com. Varner is at *Saint Peter's Church* Jul. 9, *The Django* Jul. 12, *Mezzrow* Jul. 19 and *Zinc Bar* Jul. 20. See *Calendar*.



Extra Pressure (25th Anniversary Edition)
Eric Person (Distinction)
 by Scott Yanow

The reissue of Eric Person's *Extra Pressure* celebrates the silver anniversary of its original release. By the time of this 1999 recording, Person, an alto and soprano saxophonist with his own intense sound and passionate ideas, had already picked up important experience and quite a bit of recognition for his work and recordings with drummers Ronald Shannon Jackson's Decoding Society and Chico Hamilton (with whom he had a long association), as well as the World Saxophone Quartet, plus bassist Dave Holland's quartet.

This album represents the initial release on Person's Distinction label and his fourth album as a leader since 1992, and the only documentation of this particular quartet. Formed in 1998 as the debut recording of his group Meta Four, Person's unit featured John Esposito (piano), E.J. Strickland (drums), and the newest member, Carlos Henderson (bass). Surprisingly, this reissue actually leaves out one of its original 11 songs ("Plummet"), though Person in the liner notes assures listeners that it will be reissued in the future along with alternate takes of this music. All of the pieces excepting Esposito's "Personal Blues" (note: not a blues) are by the leader. None of the selections utilize standard chord changes and, although the opening title cut may remind one in spots of John Coltrane and McCoy Tyner, in general the musicians all display original voices on their instruments.

There are numerous album highlights. The leader's short outbursts of notes are quite effective on the title track, as is his playing without piano accompaniment during the first half of his solo on "Personal Blues". "Fallout" has a somber theme accentuated by the shifting pattern played by bass and drums, and Henderson's half-time walking bass on "The Pull" is an excellent contrast to Person's passionate improvising. The bassist and drummer make for a formidable and flexible team throughout, as they show on the danceable "There Will Be Better Days", and on "This Devotion" in 5/4. "Perfection" may have an immodest title but the inventive and explorative piano and alto saxophone solos come close to reaching that goal.

More than 25 years later, the dynamic music on *Extra Pressure* sounds extra timeless.

For more info visit ericperson.com. Person is at *Smalls* Jul. 24-25 and "Jazz By The Water Festival" on *Governor's Island* Jul. 25. See *Calendar*.

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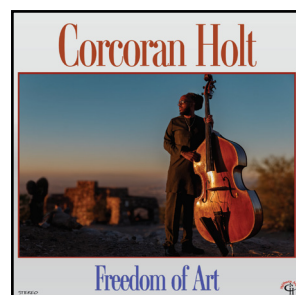
Photo: Angellito Jusay

Jun	1 - 5	Pete Malinverni Improviser, conductor, educator *Thurs + Fri: Juliet Kurtzman (violin)
	8 - 12	Ted Rosenthal American jazz, standards *Thurs: Ayako Shirasaki Tribute *Fri: Gary Smulyan (baritone sax)
	15 - 19	Marc Devine Straight-ahead jazz *Thurs: Junior Mance Tribute
	22 - 24	Ramona S. Baker Ragtime, music historian
	29 - Jul 3	Daryl Sherman Best jazz vocalist <i>Hot House Jazz Guide</i> *Mon: Peter & Will Anderson (jazz sax)
Jul	6 - 10	Jon Weber Jazz, TV score composer, radio host
	13 - 16	Armen Donelian International bandleader, composer
	17	Roy Eaton Played Carnegie Hall in 1937
	20 - 24	Russ Kasso Trio & solo jazz, Broadway, music director *Thurs: Sing-A-Long (2pm-3:30pm)
	27 - 31	Isaac ben Ayala Film recording artist *Thurs: Sing-A-Long (2pm-3:30pm)
Aug	3 - 7	Dan Manjovi Recording artist, performer, composer *Thurs: Sing-A-Long (2pm-3:30pm)
	10 - 14	Larry Ham Jazz, composer, educator *Thurs: Sing-A-Long (2pm-3:30pm) with Dan Manjovi
	17	Roman Ivanoff American Songbook swing
	18 - 19	Celia Tewey Jazz improvisation
	20	American Songbook Swing Trio Roman Ivanoff (piano, harmonica) Paul Nowinski (bass, violin), Nat Harris (guitar)
	21	Victor Neufeld's Jazz Party David Pearl (piano), Linus Wyrch (clarinet/sax) John DeCesare (bass), Tony Galino (drums)
	24 - 28	Joel Forrester Boogie-woogie, swing, stride *Thurs + Fri: Dred Scott (piano jazz)
	31 - Sep 4	Kuni Mikami 12 years with Lionel Hampton's Big Band
Sep	7 - 11	Victor Lin Kennedy Barron-trained, Columbia instructor
	14 - 16, 18	Bertha Hope Jazz, composer, arranger A special week of performances in loving memory of Cobi Narita, Frank Owens, and Danny Mixon *With special guests Lafayette Harris (piano) and Antoinette Montague (jazz singer) on select days
	17	Yuka Aikawa Jazz, composer, accompanist Tap-A-Long with Toes Tiranoff and Friends
	21 - 25	Peter Yarin Stride, jazz, composer *Thurs: Uri Zellig (drums), Dmitri Kolesnik (bass)
	28 - 30	Charlie Judkins Ragtime, protégé of Terry Waldo
Oct	1	Terry Waldo's Gotham City Band

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Freedom of Art
Corcoran Holt (Holthouse Music)
 by Rachel Smith

Bassist and composer Corcoran Holt's sophomore album is well constructed from a thematic point of view, but not necessarily from a sonic point of view. The title, which makes reference to the names of his children (Freedom and Art), captures with admirable poetry the goal of this album: to self-consciously bring together the theme of family with the versatility of jazz. Supported in this highly personal move, the leader is joined by Stacy Dillard (tenor, soprano), Josh Evans (trumpet), Benito Gonzalez (piano, Fender Rhodes), Kweku Sumbry (drums, djembe) and Lewis Nash (drums).

The opener, "Theme for Ma" introduces the album's most inventive thread: the intermingling of music and speech. Holt composes the tune around an everyday voicemail left for him by his mother and his use of the bow here is masterful. There is something melancholy about using voicemails—reminders of a missed connection—as the basis for tunes. That sadness is especially poignant in "Golson Calling", another voicemail (no music) left for Holt by the late great tenor saxophonist, Benny Golson. It's jarringly private, and Holt's musical voice disappears for a moment. But he does deliver some wonderful musical tributes elsewhere on this album, including a rendition of "Kiss to the Skies", written by Kenny Garrett (Holt is best-known for

playing in Garrett's bands). This tune is one of several instrumentals—along with "Transition Blues", "Hello" and "Ibou & Art"—that each serve as high points of the album, highlighting the entire band's chops (Dillard shines in particular). On the last selection, "To My Dear Ones", pianist Sharp Radway delivers an expressive reading of a poem written by Holt's father. Again, the track fits thematically, but the curated sound of spoken word comes at the expense of closure to the album. Though the pieces may not always sound like they fit together, *Freedom of Art* has some very fine moments built around a thoughtful concept.

For more info visit corcoranholt.com. Holt is at *Dante Park* Jul. 15 (part of *Lincoln Square BID's "Summer Jazz Sensations"*). He is also at *Jazz Forum (Tarrytown, NY)* Jul. 10. See *Calendar* and *100 Miles Out*.



Ella
April Varner (Cellar Music)
 by Pierre Giroux

Paying tribute to Ella Fitzgerald is among jazz' most daunting tasks. The temptation to imitate is ever-present. But vocalist April Varner wisely avoids that trap on her *Ella*, honoring by embracing the qualities that made the First Lady of Song unique, including joy, swing, imagination and impeccable musicianship, while remaining true to herself.