

TCB RECORDS

TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

BY ANDREW SCHINDER

That well-known mantra of Elvis Presley and Bachman Turner Overdrive—“taking care of business”—is one that motivates Barbara Frei Schmidlin, who continues the legacy of her late husband, Peter Schmidlin (1947-2015), in owning and operating Montreux-based TCB Records. One of the jazz epicenters of Europe, the Swiss city is of course home to the Montreux Jazz Festival, whose first edition was in 1967. Peter Schmidlin, a drummer from nearby Basel, spent several decades as a professional musician, playing with some of the finest jazz musicians as they passed through the area, including at the annual festival. Realizing that making a living as a musician was sometimes difficult, in the late '80s he moved to recording, producing and releasing local and international jazz artists, formalizing the TCB label in 1991. According to Frei Schmidlin, the name

was derived from the local musicians’ goodbye: “Take care and TCB!”

“In the '90s, the business would work quite fine,” reports Frei Schmidlin. “You could still sell CDs. We had fantastic musicians. We even had a TCB night at the Montreux Jazz Festival in 1999.” She also notes that her husband had to do everything himself, taking no salary. “It was just his baby.” Since Peter’s passing in 2015 (when Frei Schmidlin took over), she began operating the business in her spare time for love of the music. As a tax attorney, she grew up in a jazz household and has always been a passionate jazz fan, continuing her late husband’s relationships, and additionally cultivating her own network in the local and international jazz communities. But continuing the label’s business has been challenging. Distributors have come and gone, and COVID-19 was a major setback. But Frei Schmidlin is determined. She knows that TCB is an institution and a resource, which drives her to persevere at all costs.

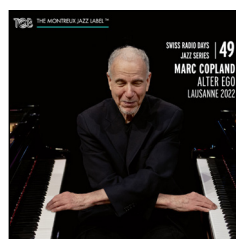
TCB is unique among labels in its catalog classification system. The label assigns different subcategories of albums with color codes: red for

the traditional bebop/post-bop/hard-bop; black for world jazz; blue for Swing era offerings; yellow for contemporary jazz and green for its “Swiss Radio Days” series. The latter is a service greatly important to jazz culture, as it consists of releases of remastered recordings of decades-worth of performances by jazz masters who have passed through Switzerland and recorded sessions for Swiss Radio. The catalog is rich and deep: Charles Lloyd, Cannonball Adderley, Art Blakey, Miles Davis, plus many others. Swiss saxophonist and journalist Yvan Ischer was a friend and collaborator of Schmidlin’s and was heavily involved in Swiss Radio, having hosted a long-running local jazz show. He also helped Schmidlin in the conceptual development of the series. Quincy Jones’ big band appeared on the first Swiss Radio Days series release, and getting Jones’ permission to put out the album was challenging. “I was basically ringing Quincy’s and his lawyers’ doorbell,” Ischer says. Over two years later, they were eventually able to achieve success. “We talked to him for almost

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Backyard (with Barry Harris Trio)
Roni Ben-Hur



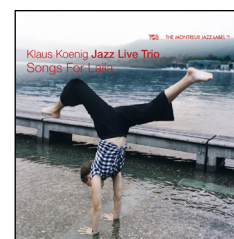
Alter Ego
Marc Copland



Geneva 2007
Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Big Band



Swiss Radio Days, Vol. 33
Nat “King” Cole/Quincy Jones



Songs For Laila
Klaus Koenig

VOXNEWS

SUMMERTIME

BY TESSA SOUTER

And the music is: HOT!

LISTENING...Singer-songwriter **Somi** has a beautiful new album, *What Does It Take to Bloom* (Salon Afrikana), her first collection of original songs in six years. Written and recorded between Dakar, Lagos, Paris and NYC, it explores the ongoing process of staying faithful to oneself amid life’s dissonances. **Katie Bull**’s *The Hope Etudes* (Orchard of Pomegranates) is an improvisational meditation on love and hope, mixing originals (some collectively improvised on the spot) along with totally reimagined versions of “Light My Fire” and “Oh, What a Beautiful Morning” [sic]. Ethereal-voiced Danish vocalist-composer **Randi Pontoppidan** fronts Paper Trio’s gorgeous *Light in the Dark: The Music of Carl Nielsen*. Nite Bjuti, the visionary Afro-Caribbean trio featuring vocalist **Candice Hoyes**, with bassist Mimi Jones and percussionist Val Jeanty, blends Haitian drum rhythms, electronics and spoken word to create a completely original sonic experience. Their *minwi* (Intakt), already nominated for the German Record Critics’ Award Quarterly Critics Choice, envisions a future rooted in empathy and mutual care. West Coast singer-songwriter **Mark Winkler** (his music has been recorded by Dianne Reeves, Dee Dee Bridgewater and Liza Minnelli, among others) has a new album, *Love Comes First* (Café Pacific), featuring six originals and five standards, including “More Than You Know”, his late husband’s favorite song. **Sarah Elizabeth Charles**’ latest, *Dawn* (Ropeadope), is an all-originals, gorgeous, heartfelt tribute to her sons and her late brother. Another all-originals project, **Maryanne De Prophetis**’ *Come O Light* is a beautiful tribute to her husband, the late, great pianist Frank Kimbrough. Boston-based vocalist **Dominique Eade**

appears on two Sunnyside releases: pianist-composer Armen Donelian’s *Inquiry*, and *Roots & Byways*, the latter with nonagenarian pianist Ran Blake. The duo’s third recording together, it showcases the depth of their musical connection with a selection of standards, pop songs, film music and folk tunes. **Denise Donatelli**’s star-studded *Take My Breath Away* (Savant) features arrangements by musical director and producer, pianist Geoffrey Keezer. Hot Jazz star **Bria Skonberg**’s *Brass* is a fun romp that puts the focus firmly on her trumpet playing (only one vocal on the entire album) while her *Indigo* (both albums on Cellar Music) is an exquisite, Gil Goldstein-arranged showcase for her vocals, as well as trumpet. **Sara Gazarek** has produced the debut album of **Nicole Yvette**: *Say Yes* is a bluesy outing of mostly originals, with a guest spot from **Kurt Elling**. **Champion Fulton** also wore the producer’s hat for young singer **Isabella Isherwood**’s debut, the aptly named *The Sweetest Sounds* (Sabrina).

DON’T MISS...Surprisingly, for such a phenomenal live performer, **Catherine Russell**’s *Live at Lincoln Center* (Dot Time) is her first live release. Invited to perform for JALC’s 2023-2024 season theme of “Community and Consciousness,” she crafted a program honoring The Hot Club of New York, a community of enthusiasts who gather weekly to listen to vintage jazz and blues on 78 rpm shellac records. Catch her live at Little Island with Louis Cato + Ron Carter (Aug. 20-24) and Charlie Parker Jazz Festival in Marcus Garvey Park (Aug. 29). Russell has also just co-produced (along with guitarist Gerry Leonard, who together toured in David Bowie’s last band) *Into the Blue*, the debut EP from vocalist **Layla**, who she has been mentoring the past ten years. Passionate and heartfelt vocalist and composer **Claudia Acuña** celebrates *Ave de Luz* (Delfin), a beautiful album rooted in her Chilean heritage and shaped by the rhythms, songs and instruments she grew up with. It is probably her most personal statement yet. Catch her at Brooklyn’s Billie Holiday Theater (Aug. 7). The always brilliant, always reaching **Cécile McLorin Salvant** at Little Island

in duo with Sullivan Fortner (Aug. 15) and in trio (Aug. 16), hopefully playing songs from her stunning new album, *With Every Breath I Take* (Nonesuch), which was recorded with the Metropole Orkest. Vocalist, pianist, arranger and songwriter, **Nicole Zuraitis** celebrates *The Devil I Knew* (La Reserve) at Dizzy’s Club (Aug. 5) —part of her 80-city world tour! Arriving hot on the heels of her GRAMMY-nominated live album, *Live at Vic’s Las Vegas* (La Reserve) it is a transcendent 20-track epic investigation of relationships, told in five parts and interspersing her compositions with poems by iconic female poets Dorothy Parker, Emily Dickinson and others. Also at Dizzy’s Club, celebrating her self-released debut album *Stars*, the soulful **Shenel Johns** (Aug. 20) and **Dida Pelled** (Aug. 19). At Birdland (Aug. 4-8), **John Pizzarelli** celebrates the release of *Dear Mr. Bennett* (Green Hill Music), a tribute to Tony Bennett, whose centennial is this year. Bennett was a frequent collaborator with Pizzarelli’s father, guitarist Bucky. Also paying homage to Bennett is **Lucy Yeghiazaryan** at the Queens Jazz Trail Concert Series (Aug. 27). The Charlie Parker Jazz Festival uptown in Marcus Garvey Park features **Ekep Nkwelle** (Aug. 28) and downtown, at Tompkins Square Park, the superb singer-songwriter **Vanisha Gould** (Aug. 30). The effervescent **Samara Joy** is at the Chautauqua Amphitheater (Aug. 28). **Dianne Reeves** is at the Montclair Jazz Festival (Aug. 15) with Christian McBride, Patrice Rushen and the Spanish Harlem Orchestra, an event that promises to be epic. **Jaana Narsipur**, whose album *The Re-Collection* features jazz arrangements of Britpop standards, is storming up the charts. She appears at Five Spot Jazz (Aug. 9). **Nancy Kelly** is at Dante Park (Aug. 19). **Kaushik Viswanath** is at Jazz WaHi Vocal Series (Aug. 3). **Marianne Solivan** is at Joe’s Pub (Aug. 26). The ever-authentic **Paul Jost** (whose voice you may have heard on Orrin Evans’ Captain Black Big Band’s GRAMMY-nominated *Walk a Mile in My Shoes*) is at Saint Peter’s Church (Aug. 7). And **Alexis Cole**’s trio is at Westchester Collaborative Theater in Ossining (Aug. 1).