

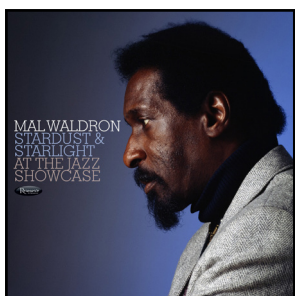
Memento
Marilyn Crispell/Anders Jormin (ECM)
by David Cristol

Closely associated with the ECM label, Swedish bassist Anders Jormin has appeared on 30+ album releases since 1993, starting with *Dona Nostra*, which appears to be pocket trumpeter Don Cherry's final studio album; American audiences might best know Jormin from a string of Charles Lloyd's mid '90s recordings for ECM. Pianist Marilyn Crispell has been as, if not more, prolific within the same timeframe, including a recent partnership with saxophonist Joe Lovano and his remarkable Trio Tapestry trilogy. The first encounter between the elegant and sensitive Jormin and like-minded Crispell can be heard on the former's *In Winds, In Light* from over twenty years ago, an album whose structure is programmed, opening with four free improvisations before transitioning into written compositions by both musicians.

Titled after its track with the shortest running time, their newly-released *Memento* offers music of the thresholds—elusive, inconceivably nuanced, immune to ostentation and overstatement. Its 38 minutes of mostly modal improvisations and compositions explore the notion of memory and loss. While “memento” has come to be most used meaning a souvenir in English, the original Latin means “remember” and as the well-known phrase, *memento mori*: “remember you must die.” Thus, Crispell offers a tribute to the young victims of current wars, and another one to the late bassist and past frequent collaborator, Gary Peacock (the heartbreaking “Dragonfly” for solo piano closes the album). Other album selections stem from the pianist's recollection of a visit to the coasts of Cornwall to newer versions of songs recorded in previous eras with different setups and instrumentations.

An antidote to our mindlessly noisy times, *Memento* best exerts its magic through focused and exclusive listening: not background music by any stretch, its sparseness and lightness of touch only lead to an increased and sometimes overwhelming intensity of emotion. This musical impressionism strikes a perfect balance between clarity and abstraction, joy and sadness. It's one for the ages.

For more info visit ecmrecords.com/product. Crispell is at *The Maverick* (Woodstock, NY) Aug. 22 (with the CMS Legacy Ensemble). See 100 Miles Out.



Stardust & Starlight: At The Jazz Showcase
Mal Waldron (Resonance)
by John Sharpe

Mal Waldron's *Stardust & Starlight: At The Jazz Showcase*—a previously-unreleased live recording (available as a limited edition double-vinyl or single CD) drawn from club owner Joe Segal's personal

archive documenting a weeklong engagement in August 1979—captures the pianist at a revealing juncture, balancing his austere late style with a surprisingly direct program of standards. Waldron's career followed an atypical arc, and after a drug-induced breakdown in 1963, he had to relearn his instrument, and gradually developed a much darker, more percussive style that leaned towards the avant garde. This recording, with only two originals, stands as an outlier in his output at the time, perhaps a nod to the jazz club environment as well as the practicalities of working with limited rehearsal time and a house band of Steve Rodby (two years prior to the bassist joining and spending the following three decades with guitarist Pat Metheny) and Wilbur Campbell (the legendary Chicago drummer, who frequently accompanied such Windy City royalty as saxophonists Johnny Griffin and Von Freeman). However, Waldron's sense of time—his *own* time—remained so strong that he didn't really need assistance: he performs three of the nine tracks entirely unaccompanied and a fourth nearly so.

The album opens with a brooding rendition of the pianist's own “All Alone”, conjured from simple ingredients: somber chords and shimmering right-hand tremolos. Moments of consolation and desolation vie with one another in a deeply affecting performance. Rodby enters just before the close, with imaginative, melodic touches. Waldron's other composition, his well-known “Fire Waltz” (originally recorded on the pianist's 1961 *The Quest* with Eric Dolphy and Booker Ervin and again the same year live *At The Five Spot* with Dolphy and Booker Little), proves almost as compelling. He digs into distinctive minimalist variations, building tension and subsequent release in a miniature version of his approach to freer settings. Even on “All God's Chillun Got Rhythm” and “Stella by Starlight”, taken straight with bass and drums, the pianist sustains repeated motifs just that bit longer than might be expected, creating an elevating frisson of discomfort.

At the heart of the album lie three solo pieces. Waldron renders “I Thought About You” as a ballad packed with drama, while he litters a dancing “It Could Happen to You” with playful quotes, fleetingly alighting on “Oh! Susanna” and Thelonious Monk's “Locomotive” among others, before he turns to the real thing, as he carves out his own spaces in a close reading of “Round Midnight”. The pianist takes a back seat on the final two cuts, “Old Folks” and “Stardust”, on which bebop royalty Sonny Stitt (on alto saxophone) poignantly holds court, alternately stately and note-filled, to the audible delight of the audience. *Stardust & Starlight* catches Waldron, whose centennial was last August, at his most relaxed, but he still twists familiar material into a private conception of mood, memory and time.

For more info visit resonancerecords.org



The Latin Side of Chick Corea
Conrad Herwig (Savant)
by Pierre Giroux

Trombonist Conrad Herwig has never treated his *Latin Side of...* series as a mere exercise in rearrangement, and *Latin Side of Chick Corea* is no exception. From his new album's opening bars, it is clear that these performances are fresh interpretations rather than

affectionate reproductions. Corea's music has always welcomed rhythmic adventure. While the honoree's melodies remain instantly recognizable, Herwig and co-arranger Bill O'Connell, surround them with vibrant Afro-Caribbean rhythms, inventive harmonies and room for the musicians to stretch, making familiar material sound surprisingly new.

The album's ten compositions span every stage of Corea's remarkable career and receive thoughtful, imaginative treatment from a stellar group led by Herwig, with Craig Handy (soprano, tenor, flute), Alex Norris (trumpet, flugelhorn), O'Connell (piano), Ruben Rodriguez (bass), Robby Ameen (drums) and Mauricio Herrera (congas). Opener is “Matrix”, a clever programming choice, signaling that this is not a “greatest hits” tribute centered on “Spain”, a number which is this tribute's closing track. By saving that number for the end, Herwig builds anticipation and lets listeners appreciate the depth of Corea's catalog before arriving at his most celebrated composition. As for “Matrix”, one of Corea's early gems, it bristles from the opening notes and quickly establishes the album's adventurous spirit. The ensemble attacks the tune with confidence, transforming its post-bop complexity into an exhilarating Afro-Latin groove. One of Corea's earliest and most sophisticated compositions, “Tones for Joan's Bones”, receives a thoughtful reimagining. The intricate harmonic structure remains intact, yet the Latin rhythmic undercurrent lends the piece unexpected warmth and buoyancy. Herwig, alongside Handy on tenor and O'Connell, offers solo interjections that unfold with graceful inevitability. “Humpty Dumpty” is among Corea's most rhythmically playful creations. Herwig, Handy and O'Connell are again front and center, delivering solos filled with unexpected twists and shifting accents, as the ensemble showcases its

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