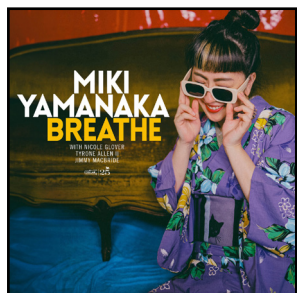


precision and imagination. “Windows”, one of Corea’s most harmonically beautiful compositions, serves as the emotional centerpiece of this release. The leader here treats it with sensitivity, and Norris contributes a thoughtful flugelhorn solo that complements its theme.

“Spain” arrives not as the obligatory, closing crowd-pleaser but as the culmination of the musical journey. The familiar anthem bursts with renewed vitality, and the exemplary solos by Herwig, Handy and O’Connell bring the session to its exhilarating conclusion.

For more info visit jazzdepot.com. Herwig is at The Pocket Aug. 10, 17, 24, 31 (with Mingus Big Band) and Birdland Theater Aug. 14-16 (with Mingus Orchestra). He is also at Montauk Playhouse Cultural Center (Montauk, NY) Aug. 8 (part of Hamptons Jazz Fest). See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.



Breathe
Miki Yamanaka (Cellar Music)
by Ken Dryden

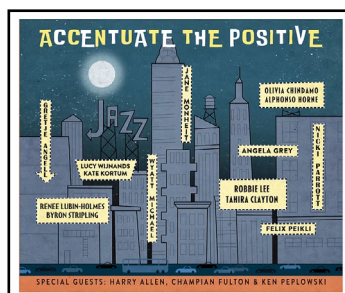
The Japanese-American pianist Miki Yamanaka has been a creative force in recent years with her steady output of inspired originals interpreted by collaborators who bring out the essence of her works, in addition to touring worldwide and occasionally playing in other groups. Her band has included drummer Jimmy Macbride (who is also her husband) and bassist Tyrone Allen, while this session adds tenor and soprano saxophonist Nicole Glover, a close friend of hers and another rising star who has shared the bandstand with the pianist.

Most of the selections are originals, a mix of the leader’s new and old works. The intense post-bop “Indigo” includes an intricate unison line by the saxophonist and bassist, with Yamanaka’s driving piano and McBride’s prominent percussion. The late organist Akiko Tsuruga, a good friend of Yamanaka’s, composed “Dancing Cats”, a funky, soulful piece that is a natural fit for Glover’s spirited tenor. The pianist’s fiery “Tucson” celebrates a city that she loves to visit, as this twisting, uptempo theme finds her burning on all cylinders with the explosive solos that she trades with Glover, while Allen’s interactive bass and Macbride’s rhythms audibly inspire their bandmates. The title track, a gorgeous ballad, is dedicated to the pianist’s father who died last autumn. The spaciousness of the composition allows the listener to catch the subtlety of each player’s contribution (e.g. Glover’s burnished tenor solo certainly invites comparisons to masters such as Ben Webster).

Yamanaka revisits her older work “Dandelion Puff”, which she recorded on her 2012 debut release *Songs Without Lyrics*. This trio arrangement reveals how she has grown as an improviser, utilizing space and restraint in her playing to showcase the facets within this early compositional gem. “Pre-school” represents the pianist’s more-quirky side, as she inserts Thelonious Monk-like humor, sudden twists and a constantly-shifting tempo. Glover adds a suitably playful soprano solo. “Delayed Flight” is a riot for anyone who has been exasperated with repeated travel delays. The leader, along with the saxophonist and bassist, whistle in unison in the introduction, then Glover handles the boarding announcements in the interim as the piece tries to take off. The cadence, however, suggests that

passengers received yet another announcement of dreaded delay or even cancellation, culminating a delightful session that retains its sounds of surprise with each repeated listening.

For more info visit cellarlive.com. Yamanaka is at Birdland Theater through Aug. 2. She is also at Smalls Aug. 14 (with Willie Martinez) and Aug. 28, as well as Mezzrow Aug. 30 (with Jamile Staevie Ayres). See Calendar.



Accentuate The Positive
Various Artists (Songbook Ink)
by Marilyn Lester

The latest release from Jazz at the Ballroom/Songbook Ink, *Accentuate the Positive* is a collection of songs from the ’30s and ’40s in celebration of America’s 250th birthday, featuring 21 tunes that bolstered American spirits during The Great Depression and World War II. The multiple vocal artists contributing to the album are also graced by the presence of the late clarinet and tenor saxophone master, Ken Peplowski who, on a big burner of Ellington’s “It Don’t Mean a Thing (If It Ain’t Got That Swing)” along with Norwegian clarinetist, Felix Peikli, created a legacy-making, breathtaking, whirlwind version of it. Peplowski’s brilliance is also apparent on a sweet delivery of “That’s All” (featuring singer Lucy Wijnands), with a clarinet button beautifully ending the tune. Appearing throughout is Harry Allen (tenor) and on two tracks, Klas Lindquist (alto).

In addition to Wijnands, vocalists on the album include Jane Monheit, Tahira Clayton, Kate Kortum, Angela Grey, Wyatt Michael, Renee Lubin-Holmes, Gretje Angell, Olivia Chindamo, bassist Nicki Parrott, trumpeters Alphonso Horne and Byron Stripling and pianist Robbie Lee (the latter provides features on all the vocal tracks). Horne offers a sunny “On the Sunny Side of the Street” featuring his clear, clarion playing, while Stripling’s fine baritone and bright trumpet brought the famously minor key “Blue Skies” into an uptempo, happy place. Rising star Kate Kortum (winner of the 2025 Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition), with a hint of her Texas accent intact, delivers a relaxed but swinging “Stompin’ at the Savoy”, plus a lively “It Had to Be You”.

Last month six shows at Birdland (Jul. 3–5) were timed for the Fourth of July weekend and presented in memory of Peplowski (who passed away in February at the age of 66). Appearing at the July 4 second set were vocalists Chindamo, Grey and Michael, each performing three numbers apiece, plus vocalist-pianist Lee. Also on board were Peikli, Liany Mateo (bass) and Bryan Carter (drums). From the album, Chindamo sang an uptempo “Let’s Face the Music and Dance”; crooner Michael reprised his bouncy “Too Marvelous for Words”; and Grey, with Peikli, offered “I’ll Be Seeing You”. Lee sang two numbers from the release: a slinky “Makin’ Whoopee” and “You’d Be So Nice to Come Home To”. Peikli with “Moonlight Serenade” no doubt made the spirit of Peplowski proud.

Those titular wise words of Johnny Mercer, “accentuate the positive,” are as necessary now as ever before. This album, as intended in title and music, is not only an antidote to a country now deeply divided, but stands as a terrific release for those who love songbook standards beautifully arranged and executed.

For more info visit songbook-ink.com

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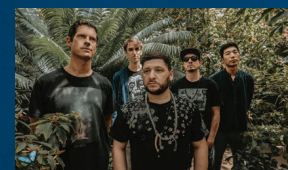
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