



**Around You Is A Forest**  
**Thomas Morgan (Loveland Music)**  
**Io Pur Respiro**  
**Elias Stemeseder/Thomas Morgan (Squama)**  
by Mike Shanley

In addition to being a highly sought-after bassist, it turns out that Thomas Morgan also knows a good deal about the evolution of computer software. The son of a computer science professor, the younger Morgan was playing with MacPaint as a toddler, long before he took up an instrument. In the liner notes to his *Around You Is A Forest*, he explains in great detail how his fascination with information technology grew, even as his musical studies took precedence. It eventually resulted in WOODS, a virtual string instrument Morgan created through SuperCollider, a real-time audio server. Sounding alternately like a cimbalom, zither, marimba and West African lute-harp, it produces cascading, melodic patterns that move steadily, thanks to generative code written by the bassist.

For his debut album as leader, Morgan invited a group of friends to perform together with music he wrote with WOODS. The title track (the one piece to prominently include his bass) features lines that flow and bend thoughtfully while his “partner” calmly unleashes an arrhythmic pentatonic scale. Dan Weiss’ tablas and Gerald Cleaver’s trap kit make interesting partners with WOODS on their respective tracks,

due to the rhythmic ideas both players throw into the fray. But despite strong performances by other guests (Frisell, Taborn, Henry Threadgill, Ambrose Akinmusire), the non-human contributions start to sound indistinguishable from track to track. While not as minimal as a Philip Glass melody, they feel like relentless arpeggios with slightly melodic variations, all operating in the same, subdued dynamic range. The one selection that feels unique to this, ironically, comes at the end when Gary Snyder recites his poem “Here”.

*Io Pur Respiro* captures Morgan and pianist Elias Stemeseder live in Florence, Italy. With a set that ranges from variations on a 17th-century madrigal to originals, the album reveals the deep connection between both players, which only gets more enthralling, thanks to the warm acoustics of the setting: the Sala Vanni, a concert hall, formerly a 17th-century refectory. “Madrigal, Variation, Courante”, based on the piece that gives the album its name, begins with Morgan’s pensive work in the lead, eventually shifting to a syncopated part with animated chords and a skipping bass line. A similar feeling underlies “On the Euclidian Plane”, where the pianist and bassist both feed off an implied groove that inspires some staccato piano jabs. Here, and on “I Have the Room Above Her” (Kern, Hammerstein), Stemeseder briefly switches to harpsichord, which resonates beautifully in the performance space. Morgan has garnered a reputation for the sensitivity he brings to a wide range of musical settings. Pieces such as “Subjects Carved from Words Uttered” exemplify his reputation by putting his strong vibrato and melodic range in the forefront.

For more info visit [lovelandcph.bandcamp.com](http://lovelandcph.bandcamp.com) and [squamarecordings.bandcamp.com](http://squamarecordings.bandcamp.com). Morgan is at *Village Vanguard* Aug. 11-16 (with Bill Frisell) and *Close Up* Aug. 19, 21 (with Micah Thomas). See Calendar.



**Paramount Quartet**  
**Joe Lovano (ECM)**  
by George Kanzler

Joe Lovano began his career a half century ago playing in B3 organ soul jazz bands, and his style, mostly on tenor, has morphed from that hard-driving groove, through featured big band soloing, to more avant styles with groups featuring guitarists and, in some cases, two drummers. His latest stylistic shift coincides with his move, just over a half-dozen years ago, to the mellow, space-oriented ECM label.

*Paramount Quartet* is another band pairing Lovano’s tenor saxophone (also G-mezzo soprano and tárogató) with guitar and a rhythm section: Julian Lage (guitar), Asante Santi Debriano (bass) and Will Calhoun (drums). The album’s seven tracks divide neatly into two arcs, each begun with one of only two titles not written by Lovano: ballads “First Song” (Charlie Haden) and “Lady Day” (Wayne Shorter). In each case, they are followed by selections that increase, or change up, both tempo and mood. The ravishingly lyrical “First Song” is treated with sublime tenderness by the leader. First Lage, then Lovano, limn the melody and elaborate on it with exquisite warmheartedness, lightly accompanied by discreet brushes and anchoring bass. “Amsterdam”

follows with its theme built on a rising scale in unison from the saxophonist’s G-mezzo soprano (pitched between an alto and soprano, it looks like a small alto saxophone) and Lage’s guitar. “The Call” evokes the title’s description, tenor beckoning over guitar and the rhythm section; Lovano then switches to tárogató (a clarinet-like instrument used in Hungarian folk music), which he plays over spacey guitar chords, while Debriano shifts between pizzicato and arco. The four-track arc ends with “Fanfare for Unity”, a boppish tune with an appropriately swinging tenor solo. Shorter’s “Lady Day” opens with Lage’s introduction of the melody, Lovano elaborating on tenor over soft bass and drums accompaniment, before the guitarist then builds a lyrical feature for himself, paving the way for a closing, warm tenor solo by the leader. A faster rhythm propels “Great Outdoors”, as Calhoun enunciates more of an emphatic pulse. This selection also provides another feature for the G-mezzo soprano, Lovano noticeably sliding in over the rest of the quartet’s implied beats. The second arc ends with the shuffle swing of “Congregation”. Like “Fanfare for Unity”, it’s catchy.

For more info visit [ecmrecords.com](http://ecmrecords.com). The album release concert is at *Village Vanguard* Aug. 25-30. See Calendar.



**Now in Time**  
**Nat Reeves (The Side Door)**  
by Jim Motavalli

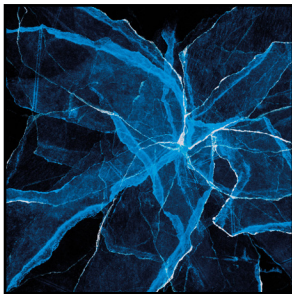
The well-traveled bassist, Nat Reeves, was given a welcome gift at his 70th birthday party from The Side Door Jazz Club owner Ken Kitchings—the chance to record an album with whomever he wanted. So he picked an all-star band—Steve Davis (trombone), Eddie Henderson (trumpet), Eric Alexander (tenor), Orrin Evans (piano) and Jeff “Tain” Watts (drums). The result celebrates Reeves’ saxophone mentors, and it is—as you might expect from a man who has recorded with Jackie McLean, Pharoah Sanders and Sonny Stitt—straight-ahead with a touch of “new thing.”

The bassist’s own snappy “Blue Ridge” (written with pianist Rick Germanson) was originally on the album of the same name and kicks off here in the best ‘60s tradition. The string of solos demonstrates that all of these guys came to play. Stitt’s “Katea’s Dance” proves a bebop gem worthy of this unearthing. Alexander sounds muscular in his lengthy solo, Evans contributes a spiky statement, and Watts kicks up a storm on the fours. Davis, in contrast, is relatively subdued. McLean’s “Appointment in Ghana” features all three horn players digging in. J. Russel Robinson and Gordon Burdge’s “Portrait of Jennie” (adapted from Bernard Herrmann’s “Jennie’s Theme” to the 1948 movie) showcases Henderson at length. It’s a welcome chance for this often-busy player to relax, and it puts him in the company of other great trumpeters (e.g. Clifford Brown, Blue Mitchell, Freddie Hubbard) who have recorded the tune. Evans, meanwhile, nods to another Evans—Bill. And speaking of Bill Evans, the Sammy Fain, Bob Hilliard “Alice in Wonderland” (a theme from the 1951 Disney movie) is Reeves’ spotlight, in which he bases his performance on the Evans/Scott La Faro 1961 *Village Vanguard* recording. But here it’s heard with even more bass on top. It’s gorgeous. Brought in from another dimension is Pharoah Sanders’ “The Creator Has a Master Plan”, which ditches the vocal and much of the ‘60s spiritual jazz vibe to concentrate

on its memorable and catchy melodic statement. Kenny Garrett’s “Sounds of the Flying Pygmies” turns out to be a big-hearted romp for the whole group.

*Now in Time* is an extended-play album, with its dozen selections, including one more go-round of “On Green Dolphin Street”. Understandably, it seems the group just didn’t want to stop playing!

For more info visit [thesidedoorjazz.com/listen](http://thesidedoorjazz.com/listen). Reeves is at *The Side Door Jazz Club* Aug. 14-15 (Old Lyme, CT). See 100 Miles Out.



**Shards**  
**Jason Moran, BlankFor.ms, Marcus Gilmore**  
**(Red Hook)**  
by Ken Waxman

Refining their rapprochement with electronics, pianist Jason Moran and drummer Marcus Gilmore have come up with their second tranche of *Shards*, an eight-track collaboration with electronic musician BlankFor.ms, putting a finer point on both the processed and played parts of the equation. Moran, who is involved with many forms of music, having played with bassist Dave Holland and saxophonists ranging from Lee Konitz, Charles Lloyd and Henry Threadgill to Greg Osby, was also artistic director of the Kennedy Center’s jazz program until just before the Trump debacle. Another veteran, Gilmore has worked across the board with just about everyone from pianists Craig Taborn, Vijay Iyer and Chick Corea to vibraphonist Patricia Brennan. Meanwhile, BlankFor.ms (real name: Tyler Gilmore, no relation to Marcus) specializes in using non-digital media and has composed for film and games, and has created sample packs for sound designers.

Confirmation that the electronic hasn’t subsumed the acoustic is “Shard V”, the album’s closer, in which the pianist elaborates a blues line at a languid pace with bent notes and key clanks breaking free from the synthesized hisses and fizzes that precede it. Contrast this with “Barbershop”, where an affiliated near-danceable groove seems to be propelled from refracted and reconstituted textures live sampled from stopped keyboard and drum reverberations. As the electrified buzzes and scrapes created by BlankFor.ms rumble forward, only Moran’s inner piano string strums confirm acoustic consistency.

The clearest indication of how the electro-acoustic fusion also works is on “Tape Loop A Echo”. Following an introduction of rocket-launching-like explosions, wave form whooshes and looped refractions recede to cushion a piano melody. Projected with pedal point emphasis and a distinctive, descending keyboard glissandi, plus Gilmore adding cymbal clatters and hard, bass-drum smacks, the theme advances alongside compressed but echoing wave forms. Since Moran and Gilmore have proven their expertise with traditional music sounds, there seems little point for them pivoting to electronic fusion exclusively. But the significant advances on this album, and the trio’s preceding one, suggest investigation of electro-acoustic improvisation is an experiment worth repeating.

For more info visit [redhookrecords.com](http://redhookrecords.com). Moran and Gilmore are at *LeFrak Center at Lakeside* Aug. 8 (part of BKLYN Jazz Festival). Moran is also at *Ulster Performing Arts Center* (Kingston, NY) Aug. 9 (part of “Celebrating Jack DeJohnette”). See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.

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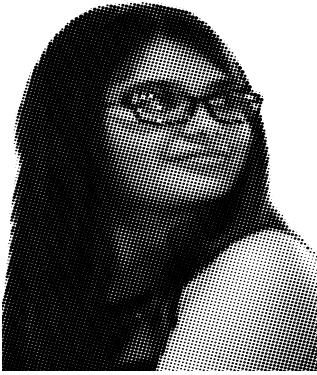
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