

RED HOOK RECORDS

A LABEL'S PHILOSOPHY
BY KEN WAXMAN

Although the New York-founded Red Hook Records label is relatively young, its methodology is similar to that of such independent jazz companies of the '50s as Riverside, Candid and Contemporary. "We provide the practical services of a label at the highest standards," explains Sun Chung, label founder and main producer. "But the primary focus is to create productions from the ground up, with musicians that have a unique voice, and develop projects that may not always fit within conventional industry models but possess lasting musical value." Celebrating this concept, the label is hosting a five-year anniversary, two-night celebration at Roulette this month, featuring musicians who have or will release albums on the imprint.

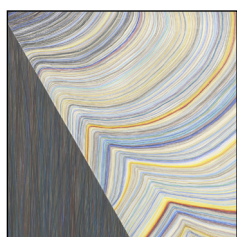
Chung's philosophy is one reason Red Hook has so far only released ten albums. Many companies are merely a "mechanism to release completed masters," he notes, but Red Hook's ultimate goal "is to create a label where listeners can discover music that vibrates with a clear perspective and a strong sense of aesthetics, and build a distinctive catalog where each release contributes to a larger picture. Red Hook is as much a production company as it is a record label. Ten albums may not sound like many, but every one of them reflects an enormous investment of time, collaboration and creative work." Certainly the label has so far provided unique situations for veteran musicians such as Wadada Leo Smith and Amina Claudine Myers, and younger stylists like BlankFor.ms. Going into 2027, new releases by RJ Miller, Kalia Vandever, Thomas Morgan and Patrick Corrigan are planned.

While the imprint also uses designers, photographers, filmmakers, a publicist and recording

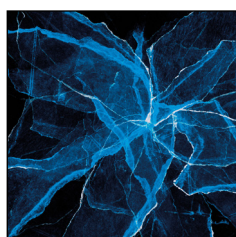
engineers, Chung is the only full-time employee, whose experience led him to formulate his label's goals. Initially a guitarist at The New School of Jazz, he studied composition at the New England Conservatory (NEC), where his interest in production grew. When invited to observe an ECM session, Chung met label head Manfred Eicher. Subsequently he was hired as an ECM assistant producer and moved to Germany from 2012-2020. The experience "gave me a deep understanding of the artistic and practical aspects of making records, as well as the importance of setting the right environment for musicians to express themselves," he explains.

The next step was Red Hook, named for Chung's then-Brooklyn neighborhood. Initially financed by his personal savings, enough copies are now sold to make the label sustainable. This is "a real success for a label that doesn't have a clear commercial genre. The goal is to build something that can grow organically while

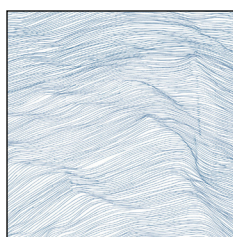
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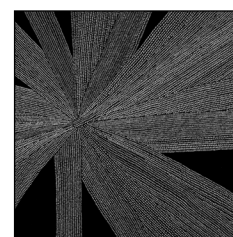
Breaking the Shell
Bill Frisell, Andrew Cyrille, Kit Downes



Shards
Jason Moran, BlankFor.ms, Marcus Gilmore



Two Centuries
Wadada Leo Smith, Qasim Naqvi, Andrew Cyrille



Solace of the Mind
Amina Claudine Myers



Hanamichi
Masabumi Kikuchi

VOXNEWS

A REFRESHING RESTART

BY TESSA SOUTER

September. The lazy (and way too hot this year) days of summer are almost over, the kids are back in school, and it's time for a reset, however you want to do it.

In a year of important centennials—including Miles Davis, Tony Bennett, Jimmy Heath, Melba Liston and John Coltrane—the Branford Marsalis Quartet and Dianne Reeves are revisiting the seminal 1963 album *John Coltrane and Johnny Hartman* (Impulse!). This month marks the centennial of Trane (Sep. 23, the first full day of the autumn equinox), and to honor his legacy, their tribute recording, *Dedicated to You* (Blue Note), reimagines the six songs sung by Johnny Hartman on the original. Their album release worldwide tour includes Carnegie Hall next month.

Speaking of fresh starts, vocalist and composer Carmen Lundy has just released her 17th album, *Notes from the Wine Cellar* (Afrasia), featuring ten of her originals. "I spent the past several years recording and making sketches of these songs by playing numerous instruments including drums, piano, electric keyboards, synthesizers, acoustic and electric guitars, orchestrating with strings, woodwinds and brass, writing and re-writing the music, to make this musical statement," says Lundy. If her recent gig at London's Ronnie Scott's—where she won over a sold-out house with her songs and showmanship—is anything to go by, she's on a roll. And there's plenty to celebrate: Lundy has been named a 2026 NEA Jazz Master, the nation's highest honor in jazz, as well as an inaugural Mellon Foundation Jazz Legacies Fellow, recognizing a five-decade career that includes more than 150 published songs.

The Royal Bopsters are getting a September

refresh, with Tyler Bassett stepping into the tenor chair previously held by Darmon Meader, Pete McGuinness and the late Danny Bacher, completing the current roster alongside Amy London, Jeanne O'Connor and Dylan Pramuk. The band is currently rehearsing for its next album (watch this space). Meanwhile, you can hear Bassett guesting with the group on London's new single, "New York Afternoon", from her upcoming album *Alto Madness* (FiveCat). Originally a self-taught saxophonist, Bassett earned several state-level awards for his playing before hearing the legendary Mel Tormé in his senior year of high school and switching to voice. He's a fabulous addition to the group. "He writes great arrangements, he's a good reader, a great scat singer, and he has a gorgeous sound," says London. "Plus he swings!"

Sometimes a fresh start means giving something unfinished a second life. In 2025, vocalist Suzanne Pittson rediscovered a demo she had recorded with pianist, composer and arranger Bevan Manson in 2002. Never released, the music had remained unheard for more than two decades. Listening again, Pittson was struck by the depth of Manson's artistry and the remarkable chemistry they had captured in the studio. Convinced the music deserved an audience, she set out to bring the project back to life. The result is the beautifully realized *Conversations* (Vineland). Catch Pittson at Five Spot Jazz (Sep. 10) celebrating Coltrane's centennial, no doubt revisiting songs from her 1999 release, *Resolution: A Remembrance of John Coltrane* (Vineland).

Last but not least, Lizz Wright finds renewal in old material on her new album, *Nearness* (Blues & Greens/Candid), a duo recording with pianist Kenny Banks Sr. It's a gorgeous mix of standards and spirituals, delivered in Wright's direct, unadorned style—which is in itself utterly refreshing right now. "It feels like taking old tools out of a museum and running them along a grinder and getting them sharp again and shiny," she says. "If I do my part in taking them out of historical reference mode, I really can bring something new to them."

DON'T MISS...Singer-songwriter Cécile McLorin Salvant at Trinity Church (Sep. 20), where she will sing songs from her new *With Every Breath I Take* (Nonesuch).

Nicole Zuraitis' celebration last month at Dizzy's Club of her astounding new album, *The Devil I Knew* (La Reserve)—an epic 20-track mix of original songs, and poems by famous women poets—was an absolute smash. If you missed that (or even if you didn't), catch her at Drom (Sep. 30), combining another celebration with the Modern Songbook Society Scholarship Fundraiser. Marcus Goldhaber has an album release for *The Promise of You* (Fallen Apple) at 54 Below (Sep. 18). Latin GRAMMY-nominee Claudia Acuña's official release show for *Ave de Luz* (Delfin) is at the Pocket Jazz Club (Sep. 2). A love letter to her Chilean roots, it's a brilliant blending of South American folk music with jazz and world music, rendered with deep emotion. Gabrielle Stravelli has a string of early set Saturday nights at Birdland (Sep. 12, 19, 26). British jazz sensation, Emma Smith, returns to Birdland Theater (Sep. 18-19). Also at Birdland is Monica Ramey with Billy Stritch (Sep. 6) and rising star Emily Braden (Sep. 13). Hot Sardines with vocalist Elizabeth Bougerol (Sep. 29-30) is always huge fun. Brazilian super star Eliane Elias returns for a five-night run (Sep. 15-19). City Parks Foundation's Central Park Summerstage presents a free concert celebrating Verve Records' 70th anniversary at Rumsey Playfield (Sep. 2), featuring headliner Samara Joy and Christian McBride, plus a tribute to Getz/Gilberto by Mei Semones and friends, including British-Brazilian vocalist Liana Flores and an opening set by vocalist-DJ Sparklami. (Joy is also at Jazzcultural Sep. 11-13!) JazzVoice.com and Virginia Beach Vocal Jazz Summit present a new weekly series on Tuesdays at One Flight Up. Hosted by Alexis Cole, guest vocalists (followed by an open jam) include: Emily Braden (Sep. 8), Emily Wade Adams (Sep. 15), Monika Ryan (Sep. 22) and guitarist-vocalist Dida Pelled (Sep. 29). April Varner debuts her new "Vocal Revue" featuring a rotating slew of new young singers at the Zinc Bar (Sep. 21). Pianist Hod O'Brien's widow, vocalist Stephanie Nakasian (parents of vocal wunderkind Veronica Swift) is putting on a special tribute to her late husband: "All You Can Swing Bebop Buffet at Mezzrow" (Sep. 15) will feature his music on the tenth anniversary of his passing.

(BEZAU BEATZ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12)

Back to the hotel for a nightcap of **Wobble8's** metal-infused jazz, complete with double bass-drum pedal from drummer Valentin Schuster. Dan Peter Sundland's bizarre metal vocals must be heard to be believed, particularly when growling in harmony with Schuster. Due to the late hour and the extreme nature of the music, the crowd dwindled towards the end, but a dedicated posse stayed and danced throughout. Extensive cheering and an encore topped off what was a successful opening day for the festival.

An early morning, avant garde concert in the monastery saw late-night partygoers tottering bleary-eyed into the offerings of day two. Austrian-New Yorker vocalist **Luisa Muhr** stood before the altar, with cellist Elisabeth Coudoux and saxophonist Jonathan Reisin on each side. They performed a powerful spoken-word German poem with screeching operatic bursts, heavy on the vibrato, and earned a standing ovation. Heading into the afternoon, the hotel lobby was crammed for the heavy-duty **Philip Zoubek** trio, which over the last decade has evolved into one of the most delightfully disturbing and disorienting groups. Relentless and crushing—the crowd ate it up like chocolate. Saxophonist **Camila Nebbia's** The Hanged One sextet created an intense mystical space with gliding strings from cello and bass to reverberating electronics.

The high art was temporarily paused for a rail excursion into the countryside. It was a 20-minute ride to the next town over, and the party carriage and DJ were located at the very back of the train, so if Eurythmics, Daft Punk and Cher weren't your bag, you could still enjoy the pretty scenery in peace. A mobile drink service operated throughout: this was Austria, where the beer comes to *you*! Back at the train shed, drummer **Edward Perraud's** Sauvages Paradis was a strange, but enticing combo of flute, organ, guitar and drums. The songs built like epic rock or prog. Perraud was especially animated, with fast trills and galloping beats evoking a primal urge to at least bop along. Banshee-like distorted cries on flute further amplified the ensemble's ritualistic element.

An equally packed third day featured workshop performances from Luisa Muhr and an impressive show from **Jonathan Reisin's** trio. Next up, Detours—the virtuosic fusion trio of **Kalle Kalima** (guitar) with Leo Genovese (keyboards) and Christian Lillinger (drums). Kalima shredded up and down the fretboard, while Genovese's organ playing added a tripped-out, psychedelic '70s twist to the overall frenzy. Lillinger appeared right at home amongst the speedy chaos, effortlessly adding his own stylized rhythms. Another trio in the form of **Shelley Hirsch** (voice) with Christian Weber (bass) and Vogel (drums) also proved memorable. Hirsch was a true show-stealer, though, utilizing phenomenal wit in her lyrics that flowed like streams of consciousness. The band invited Vogel's son Viktor on stage to yodel with her. In a bright yellow dirndl (traditional Austrian dress), he led the crowd in the most heartwarming call-and-response. If jazz yodeling has gone out of style and favor, it's back now!

The final live act was **Gabriel Zucker** (piano, synth, vocals) with Attila Gyárfás (drums), which featured confessional stories told via Zucker's unique tenor voice. It was a maximalist avant-indie affair, and a strong, emotional finish to a massive weekend. One last coda appeared in the form of **Vera Morais Eupnea**, a quintet of vocals, flute and piccolo. Bewitching, complex harmonies of scarily accurate pitch made for a beautiful, satisfying *finis*.

Even after the final notes had been played, the magic and creativity of the festival continued to smolder, as some artists stuck around to make use of Vogel's onsite studio. This year it was Kalima's Detours, which will see its debut album eventually released on Vogel's Boomslang.

For more info visit bezaubeatz.at

(LABEL SPOTLIGHT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11)

remaining artistically independent." All of the label's albums are available for download and streaming. Still, as Chung notes, "physical formats remain preferred for the quality of the listening experience. A great deal of care is put into each album and the physical edition (LP and CD) allows that to be fully experienced through sequencing, artwork, design and presentation." Three or four singles are released from each production, leading up to the release of the full album.

"Every Red Hook project is on a per album basis," reports Chung. "I believe that collaborations should continue because both parties are genuinely inspired to continue working together. When a partnership feels meaningful and the artist and the label believe there is more to explore, we continue that relationship." Making albums is a very demanding process, Chung further explains: "Pre-production alone can take a year or more, as we work with musicians to shape the artistic direction. Editing, and when appropriate, overdubbing often requires 50 to 100 hours of listening and musical decision-making before the final form begins to emerge. Then there's mixing and mastering, a significant portion of what makes an album happens long after the musicians leave the studio."

Brooklyn-based composer-electronic musician BlankFor.ms, who has been part of two Red Hook releases with pianist Jason Moran and drummer Marcus Gilmore, explains how for years he and Moran had been thinking about a project featuring electronic musicians and improvisers, but it needed a proper context. So when Chung contacted BlankFor.ms with a similar idea, "it became clear that this might be a great home for that project." He was interested, he says, since "Red Hook's philosophy is entirely different from other labels. My other albums have been with electronic music labels, where they often accept a completed work with minor notes if any. Being present and having a voice in the entire process is central to Sun's conception. We don't always tend towards the same solutions to some problems. But more often than not we all find different aspects to focus on, and the end result is better for it."

Adds Harlem-based pianist-educator Moran: "Sun is a very supportive ear in the studio. His attention to the fidelity is part of the label's success. The sounds he captures from the piano are uniquely intimate and special. Our sessions are tranquil and nonjudgmental—literally finding a sound while the tape is rolling." Still, Moran, who was BlankFor.ms' teacher at NEC, stresses that the sessions were primarily BlankFor.ms'. "I greatly enjoyed being a passenger on the ride, even though it [may] feel like the piano is primarily driving the conversation."

Peace Anthems, the imprint's most recent release, is both a departure and a continuation. Given the quantity of unreleased music left over from previous albums, the idea of creating a compilation seemed entirely logical. "Given the terrible conflicts taking place around the world, it felt like the project could become more than a compilation," notes Chung. "I invited additional musicians to participate in an album dedicated to the idea of peace." The artists contributed their music pro bono, and 100% of profits from its sales, along with additional Bandcamp donations, goes to the International Red Cross.

"I actually see this album as a natural extension of the label's philosophy," adds Chung. "Red Hook has always been about collaboration, listening, community and making great albums. This project brings those same values together while allowing the music to support a broader humanitarian purpose."

For more info visit redhookrecords.com. The Red Hook 5th Anniversary concerts are at Roulette Sep. 18-19 (featuring Wadada Leo Smith, Andrew Cyrille, Qasim Naqvi, Amina Claudine Myers, Jason Moran, BlankFor.ms, Marcus Gilmore, Caroline Davis and Grey McMurray). See Calendar.



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OCTOBER 2-3

CATHERINE RUSSELL AND FRIENDS

WITH SPECIAL GUEST CYNDI LAUPER

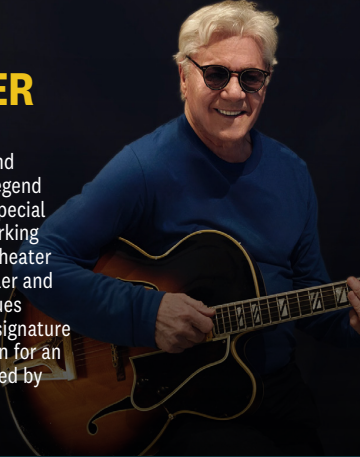
Two-time Grammy Award-winning vocalist Catherine Russell marks her 70th birthday with a joyful celebration honoring the music, the mentors, and the moments that have shaped her remarkable career.



OCTOBER 9-10

STEVE MILLER

Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and Songwriters Hall of Fame legend Steve Miller returns for a special milestone performance marking his 10th year on the Rose Theater stage. A masterful storyteller and bandleader in the Texas blues tradition, Miller brings his signature sound to the hall once again for an unforgettable evening, joined by special guests.



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