

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.

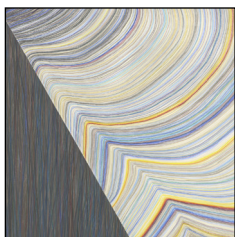
Chung's philosophy is one reason Red Hook has so far only released ten albums. Many companies are merely a "mechanism to release completed masters," he notes, but Red Hook's ultimate goal "is to create a label where listeners can discover music that vibrates with a clear perspective and a strong sense 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

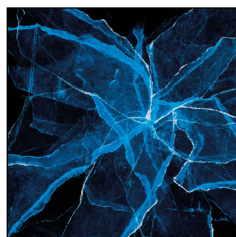
engineers, Chung is the only full-time employee, whose experience led him to formulate his label's goals. Initially a guitarist at The New School of Jazz, he studied composition at the New England Conservatory (NEC), where his interest in production grew. When invited to observe an ECM session, Chung 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

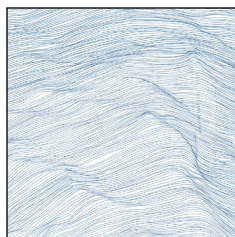
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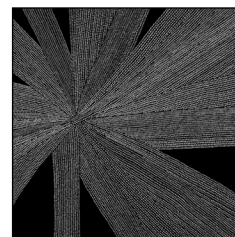
Breaking the Shell
Bill Frisell, Andrew Cyrille, Kit Downes



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.