

BEZAU
BEATZ

BY SARAH "FLAKE" GROSSER



Luisa Muhr @Beza Beatz' Kloster Beza

JAZZ
IN JULY

BY MARILYN LESTER



Ron Carter @92NY's Kaufmann Concert Hall

JAZZFEST
BUDAPEST

BY MARTIN LONGLEY



Yulhee Kim @JazzFest Budapest's Rákóczi Tér

Nestled in the Austrian Bregenzerwald Alps, the tiny mountain town of Beza becomes home for four days every August to the annual Beza Beatz Festival. This year's edition (Aug. 6-9) was the 19th installment of drummer, founder and label-owner Alfred Vogel's legendary boutique event, renowned for its boundary-pushing, experimental lineups. Tickets are capped at around 250 patrons per day, so the atmosphere quickly becomes familiar, with musicians often casually joining the crowd in seeing the shows. (Many of these artists have also released records on Vogel's excellent Boomslang label.)

The festival home base is the Hotel Post, a day spa run by skincare entrepreneur, Susanne Kaufmann. This means that musicians are subsequently treated to a luxurious weekend alpine getaway, with all the trimmings: panoramic views, swimming pools, sauna, fitness rooms and outdoor reclining areas. The stages are only a short walk away from each other, and the program avoids any overlap between concerts. Unlike many music festivals, at Beza Beatz it is possible to see every show. During the days, concerts are held in the Hotel Post lobby, with additional events in the basement and various other nearby venues. During the afternoon and into the evening, festivities migrate over to the Beza train station: a large shed beside an active railroad. Vast, shadowy peaks, low clouds, broad skies and exciting music—what better place to enjoy the sunset?

Day one was a humid one: windows about town were noticeably covered with blackout curtains to keep out the sun. People gently fanned themselves with programs. Alto saxophonist **Signe Emmeluth's Amoeba** quartet was visceral and aggressive, but with elegant grooves. The crowd shuffled into the basement for **NarrSteidle**, the kooky German experimental duo of Steffi Narr (guitar) and Oliver Steidle (drums). Switching between instruments and electronics, the sounds they created were as zany and colorful as their snazzy attire. Over at the train station, a black steam engine with red details provided a coincidentally complementary backdrop for **Teis Semey's quintet**, the group adorned in red and black. Guitarist Semey's compositions were melodic, but he knew how to rock out. Next up was the all-female quartet of **Hilde**, with its unique instrumentation of violin, cello, voice and trombone. The gliding and bending of strings with vocals blended with the trombone's slide. It was a commanding performance, but such quiet, dramatic music does call for total silence, which was sometimes disrupted by vendors packing bottles.

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The culturally-attuned 92nd Street Y (92NY) birthed a modern era of jazz programming in 1985 when piano master-composer Dick Hyman helmed a new series titled Jazz in July. The baton was passed in 2005 to the hand-picked piano great Bill Charlap and again in 2023, when Charlap chose a third maestro of the keys as Artistic Director of the series: Aaron Diehl. After getting his feet wet in 2024 and 2025, continuing the tradition of primarily mixing straight-ahead jazz with bebop over a couple of nights, Diehl expanded the series this year (Jul. 15-25) to six concerts, capturing a wider swath of programming, four in the large Kaufmann Concert Hall and two in the intimate, upstairs Bittenwieser Hall. This year's series also had an overarching theme: *Echoes of Miles*, celebrating the trumpeter's centenary. Keenly curated, each concert reflected Davis' greatness via various pathways.

On opening night, in the smaller of the two halls, NEA Jazz Master **Billy Hart**, who worked with Miles, among a catalog of other greats, effortlessly demonstrated why, for over 60 years, he's been an innovator, including early days with Herbie Hancock's groundbreaking sextet Mwandishi. Fronting a quartet that included longtime bandmember, Ethan Iverson (piano), plus Tyrone Allen II (bass) and Nicole Glover (tenor), the drummer shared his "divine" spark liberally. Iverson kept a watchful accompanist's eye out while proving his chops, particularly on John Coltrane's "Giant Steps", in recognition of another major 2026 centennial. Glover, incredibly dexterous, glided through transcendently, seemingly without effort from opener "South Hampton" to "Duchess" and "Lorca" to the encore, "Teule's Redemption". The quartet played seamlessly, while all along, with sticks, mallets, ride cymbals, hi-hat and more, Hart literally hit the right notes and made the most judicious moves, revealing himself as a magician of the drums.

Another drummer, the cross-genre **Gregory Hutchinson**, was the leader of an ensemble comprising Marquis Hill (trumpet), Walter Smith III (tenor), Emmanuel Michael (guitar), Aaron Diehl (piano, keyboard) and Matt Brewer (bass), in the grand Kaufmann Concert Hall. The focus was on music from Hutchinson's just-released album *Kind of Now* (Warner Music), reimagining such classic Miles career-spanning tracks as the concert's set opener, Charlie Parker's "Ah-Leu-Cha", the penultimate "Bitches Brew" and closer "Seven Steps to Heaven". Among the wonders of this

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Only a few weeks before its opening, Hungary's JazzFest Budapest (Jun. 27 - Jul. 2) was suddenly canceled, due to poor ticket sales and the fear of a mountainous debt. The original program featured ambitious bookings such as Al DiMeola, Charles Lloyd and the touring *Miles Davis 100* show. The focus on South Korean jazz remained in place, probably due to confirmed embassy funding (also support from the Jarasum Jazz Festival), and a clutch of local Hungarian combos persisted, as well as a lone Italian group. Yes, some sort of momentum was still possible. JazzFest had lost its original single-park location and was now moved to a series of smaller venues around the city center.

All of the performances held free admission, as if in defiance of its unfunded status and in rebellion against the commercial realm. Some shows required a speedy RSVP, so sometimes capacity was limited. The outdoor gigs had no such restrictions. The most impressive location in the greenery was Bákáts Tér, down at the quieter end of the touristic Raday Street, right in front of the scenic Saint Francis of Assisi Parish Church. Here, bassist **Péter Ajtai** celebrated his 40th birthday with a newly-penned large ensemble work, which combined composition with some pools of fevered improvisation. Your scribe had witnessed Ajtai at the 2025 JazzFest, playing a furiously abstract set with reed-gnasher Tobias Delius, and the bassist appears to be one of the most imaginative and powerful players in Budapest. The 12-piece band included saxophonists Mihály Dresch and István Grensó, the music using the entire crew from the onset, no subtle "growth" needed, with two drummers supporting the heavy momentum, tumbling in tandem. An organized theme jumped in, a celebratory cascade, horns a-quiver. For freebie music in a major park square, this set displayed a remarkably uncompromising sonic threat, but most of the audience weren't sent running. Instead, they embraced the free jazz sonics. The music wasn't completely cacophonous, but it did contain fiery abstract incidents. A searing tenor solo reflected memories of the political fires set off by Chris McGregor's Brotherhood of Breath and Charlie Haden and Carla Bley's Liberation Music Orchestra. In some ways, the players were underused, given the band resources: the spread was often quite sparse, making the periodic rousings more potent. Around 25 minutes in, the music began to abandon its snarl, embarking on a swinging chase, as flashing blue lights scampered up the church walls. Prior to this set, **Skylark Metropolitan**

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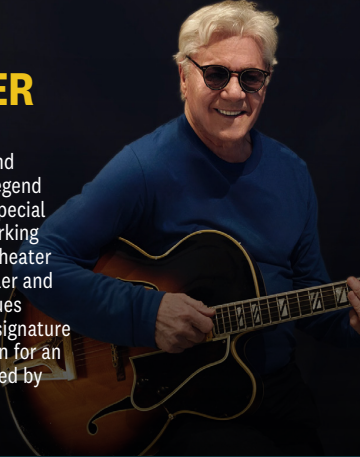
Two-time Grammy Award-winning vocalist Catherine Russell marks her 70th birthday with a joyful celebration honoring the music, the mentors, and the moments that have shaped her remarkable career.



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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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super-group was Michael, who, through native technique and electronics, coaxed ethereal sounds from his guitars, even to the point of emulating horns. A highlight was a piano trio performance (Diehl, Brewer, Hutchinson) of “Fran Dance” in which this core rhythm section began with a balladic opening tempo, rising with intensity, arcing to a climax and then bringing the instrumental story to a gentle, whispering conclusion. Hutchinson’s big spotlight turn came in a wall of percussive sound on “Black Comedy”.

A very different experience came in Kaufmann Hall with the twosome of **Aaron Diehl** (piano) and **John**

Patitucci (bass). The latter’s work in the Akoustic and Elektric Bands of Chick Corea combined easily with his acoustic bass work to channel Miles’ influence. But the chamber jazz focus was right up Diehl’s street of excellence in melodicism and harmonic complexity. Opener, “The Villager” was sheer meditation, the flavor of which carried through into Wayne Shorter’s “Dance Cadaverous”. But it was Duke Ellington’s masterwork, “Reflections in D”, in Diehl’s hands, that grabbed the audience, collective breath held—you could hear a pin drop. Patitucci entered the spotlight for a solo closer on “Dr. Jackle” (composed by Jackie McLean and recorded by Miles on several occasions). The program of ten tunes ended with a surprise guest, **Melissa Aldana**, who demonstrated her fine tenor chops on a lively, boppish rendition of Chick Corea’s “Tones for Joan’s Bones”.

Back in the Buitenvoort Hall, breakout vocalist-composer **Kate Kortum**, 2025 winner of the Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition, held the stage with Diehl’s trio of Peter Washington (bass) and Aaron Kimmel (drums). Kortum has created quite a splash in the jazz world, just releasing her debut album, *Good Woman*. This concert marked her first NYC small group appearance, and it was a hat tip to Miles’ work with songbook standards. The vocalist swings, scats, and, with a trace of her Texas accent, gets into the core of lyrics, with excellent storytelling ability on numbers such as “Love Me or Leave Me”, “Surrey With the Fringe on Top” and “Everything I’ve Got Belongs to You”. A few of her own compositions proved pleasant and revealed compositional promise. A novelty number, Kate Aaron’s “He May Be Your Dog”, was sheer fun. As if we didn’t know already, Kortum is one to watch in the vocal jazz universe.

Another departure from centrist jazz came in Kaufman Hall in a concert that celebrated both Miles’ and Coltrane’s 2026 centennials. Here, NEA Jazz Master and eight-time GRAMMY-winning trumpeter, composer and creative polymath **Terence Blanchard** joined forces with tenor saxophonist **Ravi Coltrane** (son of John) for a nine-tune workout of largely jazz fusion, drawn from the trumpeter’s groove-focused electric ensemble, The E-Collective: Charles Altura (guitar), Tom Oren (piano, synthesizers), David “DJ” Ginyard Jr. (bass) and Jaylen Petinaud (drums). With Blanchard leading, the mighty abilities of Oren easily transcended the artistry of the others—no mean feat. Ravi Coltrane was somewhat surprisingly low key, but interpretations of “On Green Dolphin Street”, “Some Day My Prince Will Come”, “Teo” and “Blue in Green” stood up in the hands of a creative ensemble that aimed to play, have fun and entertain.

In the much-anticipated Jazz in July closing night in the big hall, a deity was in the house: NEA Jazz Master **Ron Carter**, who possesses credits too numerous to mention, including his mid-to-late ’60s work in Miles’ Second Great Quintet. More than 2,500 sessions have made him the most recorded bassist in music history. With his quartet Foursight—Jimmy Greene (tenor), Renee Rosnes (piano) and Payton Crossley (drums)—synchronicity flowed through a set in which these masters easily dispatched “Mr. Bow Tie”, “Flamenco Sketches” and “Seven Steps to Heaven”. A Carter/Rosnes duet on “My Funny Valentine” was a mind-meld of sublimity, but the bassist’s solo on “You Are My Sunshine” was transporting. In what became transcendent, deep meditation, Carter was truly one with his instrument. What a way to end a remarkable, extended 92NY Jazz in July festival.

For more info visit 92ny.org/culture-arts/concerts/jazz-in-july

(BUDAPEST CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12)

opened, lighter and funkier in tone, fronted by the alto saxophonist **Viktor Tóth**. The young guitarist Péter Cseh had already impressed during the 2025 edition,

and he provided a soothing foil to the leader’s serpentine soulfulness.

Across the Danube, at the Fonó house of traditional folk dance and ethnographic musics, the long-established Italian group **Quintetto Atlantico** played a substantial set. Although they had not convened for nearly two decades, a lively freshness emanated from their marriage of jazz and folksy melodies. **Enzo Favata** (soprano, bass clarinet, flute) is the leader, with Daniele di Bonaventura (bandoneon) and Marcello Peghin (10-string guitar), leaving bassist Salvatore Maltana and drummer U.T. Gandhi (who died a month later) to solidify the spread. The membership is drawn from Corsica, Sardinia and the Italian north. Light colors and faint shade blended weaving bandoneon and reverbed, rippling clarinet lines, with the guitarist unfortunately placed too high in the mix. Favata’s bass clarinet, conversely, took some incredibly low-note dives, down into didgeridoo-land.

The festival’s South Korean guests provided diverse styles and approaches. The moderately adventurous singer **Youn Sun Nah** and wild Serbian keyboardist Bojan Z (here restraining himself, solely on acoustic piano) appeared at the slick and intimate Korean Cultural Centre. Bojan romped through “Libertango”—Astor Piazzolla’s classic 1974 tango (transformed by Grace Jones in 1981)—after which the vocalist got somewhat carried away with some very shrill scattings. She could also pull her voice down into substantial deepness, mostly singing in English, as Bojan unveiled a light touch, as well as acting and delicately elaborating as if a mini-orchestra at the keys. The set included a brisk sweep of Hoagy Carmichael’s “Baltimore Oriole”, the pianist pushing an electric button to trigger some basic living room beats, then scooting off. Nah toyed with a small music box (with manually-scrolled trigger-roll), singing “Lilac Wine”, then, in an unusual move, performed “White Rabbit” (written by Grace Slick in 1965, pre-Jefferson Airplane) in cabaret style.

The **Near East Quartet** performed on the Rákóczi Tér stage, which was nowhere near as well-located as the church site. Their early evening set wasn’t ideal for their near-ambient, mood-shaping approach, but the pieces transcended their circumstances. The group’s elements—saxophone, bass clarinet, guitar, piano and drums—were augmented by Yulhee Kim’s soft vocal stylings in a more traditional folk ritual vein, with sparingly-caressed gong in hand, carefully restrained. Slowly and purposefully gyrating, Sungjae Son’s Coltrane-like tenor was melodic yet tough. Abstract drums crafted a cumulative *taiko* frisson.

As a complete contrast, to close out the festival, the **One Mind Trio** played a pair of late sets at Jedermann, one of the city’s finest jazz haunts. The aptly-named Suzy Song steered on piano, buoyed by Jonghyun Kim (fulsome bass) and Hayeon Song (deep-timbre drums), adopting a very American style, almost completely shorn of South Korean content. The songbook set included numbers by Cedar Walton and Thelonious Monk, but also several of her original compositions, such as “Loiter”. Solos were strong across the full trio, extroverted and boldly delineated, swinging straight ahead. Their second set picked out Charlie Parker’s “Confirmation”, not usually heard as a piano trio, which was delivered as a confident stroll and perhaps served as a microcosm of this year’s edition of JazzFest Budapest.

Although shorn of its grander guise, the festival survived via its strategic recalibration, assuming a more modest character, and becoming a very different, though no less successful, event—one that still allowed sonic intimacy, varied styles from different lands and a wily twisting of on-the-run circumstances by artistic director Attila Kleb. As fate would have it, the full JazzFest Budapest, as originally planned, would have been eventually derailed by the intense heat wave that hit the city right at its start.

For more info visit jazzfestbudapest.hu

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