

virtual masterclass by the saxophonist in how to build a solo, and Fuller-Royston's inventive variations and strong accompaniment only add to its luster.

There is a heartfelt vocal by Tia Fuller in the meditative "In a Quiet Place" (buoyed by the pianist's rich chords), and her alto saxophone statement conveys the angst of the search for healing. The duo's setting of Freddie Hubbard's "Dear John" (a contrafact of John Coltrane's "Giant Steps"), bristles with energy from the saxophonist who negotiates its familiar changes. Tia Fuller's "Black Viking", inspired by her touring with Polish pianist Leszek Możdżer and his Symphosphere Orchestra, has a Baroque flavor as seen through a modern jazz lens. Horace Silver's "Summer in Central Park" is one of the hard bop pianist's overlooked gems, but the sisters here turn it into a celebratory jazz waltz, sounding as if they are watching children playing on a joyful, sunny day. Tia Fuller's "Descend to Barbados" serves as the album's brief postlude to what is an outstanding release.

For more info visit [cellarlive.com](http://cellarlive.com). Tia Fuller is at Clef Club (Philadelphia, PA) Sep. 26. See 100 Miles Out.



**Talamanti**  
Patricia Brennan/Sylvie Courvoisier (Antlia)  
by John Sharpe

On *Talamanti*, vibraphonist Patricia Brennan and pianist Sylvie Courvoisier transform the familiar duet format into something restlessly inventive, matching one another with uncanny intuition and constant surprise. Each has been featured in the other's ensembles, but this album marks their first recording as a double act, spotlighting their undoubted rapport. It adds yet another entry to Brennan's already distinguished discography following on from the acclaimed Pyroclastic issues *Of the Near and Far* (2025) and *Breaking Stretch* (2024). Seven of the nine cuts on this new album stem from the vibraphonist's pen, while Courvoisier contributes the remainder, but together they share a sense of ambiguity and elusive structure, which pervades the whole set.

Both musicians expand the sonic possibilities of their instruments—Courvoisier through seamlessly integrated preparations; and Brennan through deft manipulations of timbre and reverberation, supplemented by a move to marimba for the dash, crash and abrupt switchbacks of "Corto". Having such distinctive voices avoids overloading the middle registers, making their unisons feel almost startling when they arrive. The vibraphonist alternates ringing runs and clanking rattles, bending her notes for expressive impact, and placing them with exquisite care, while the pianist emphasizes her instrument's percussive origins, with conjunctions of castanet snap, gamelan chime and mechanical grind, particularly striking on the mysterious, then sprightly opener "Disparate Chase".

The writing allows ample space for solo touches and wayward interludes, exploited with a playful exuberance and improv attitude. Tuneful snatches glint amid an array of detours, suspensions and silences, as phrases hang unresolved in mid-air. The rapid shifts between mood and texture lead to a cinematic quality, cutting from close up to crowd scene, even within tracks. But the effect continually beguiles through a range of guises, from the wistfully Satie-esque lyricism

and swinging outbursts of "Perdidos en el Lamento", via the terse exchanges of "Hojas de Malabar", to the somber menace of the brief "Trece Cielos" and the richly enveloping "Coma Berenices", in which the closing melody only slowly comes into focus.

Vibraphone and piano duets can be a niche interest, but in this pairing the instrumental choices soon take a back seat to the fearless way these two singular improvisers hear the world.

For more info visit [antliarecords.com](http://antliarecords.com). Courvoisier is at White Plains Jazz Festival Sep. 26 (duo with Mary Halvorson). See 100 Miles Out.



**Origami**  
Erik Friedlander (ArconomX Music)  
by JR Simon

Cellist Erik Friedlander has been an essential voice in NYC's downtown jazz scene since the late '90s. He has worked with John Zorn and the Masada String Trio and released several recordings on Zorn's Tzadik label. In recent years, Friedlander has increasingly brought his music into the world of film and TV scoring. *Origami* reflects that evolution with its ambient textures, looping and structural arc. His source material is *Floating City*, a 27-minute bonus project released with the 2024 album *Dirty Boxing*. Featuring Sara Serpa (vocals), Wendy Eisenberg (guitar), Mark Helias (bass) and Friedlander, *Floating City* is lush and ethereal, with Serpa's voice generally at the forefront. It evokes a place apart from where we are.

*Origami* is something entirely different. Friedlander has re-pitched, layered and extensively processed snippets from the original recordings. The result feels less like a folded version of *Floating City* and more like an entirely new quilt, intricately stitched together from its constituent parts. Only with careful listening do the original pieces occasionally emerge. "The Dove" is a striking example. Serpa's re-pitched voice is low and deeply resonant, but the individual instruments have dissolved into continuous vibrations that expand and contract like singing bowls. "The Primordial Chaos" introduces more distinct voices, circling one another as they build before fading away. "The Tree of Knowledge" is a standout and also the album's biggest departure from its ambient opening. Its driving rhythm almost morphs into a dance track, jolting the listener into motion. "Eros" similarly shifts dramatically midway through, when a crisp beat arrives with an unmistakable early '90s flavor—a refreshing, though fleeting, nostalgia trip.

The final three tracks are affectionate portraits of Friedlander's cats, Cleo and Ponzu. "Cleo II" incorporates actual feline meows and mews, while "Ponzu" closes the album with twinkling pinpricks of sound over bowed cello: light, airy and gorgeous. There are uncredited piano and drums scattered throughout, including crystalline piano at the beginning of "Cleo I" and the snare in "Eros". Their welcome yet unexplained presence adds another layer to an album built around transformation.

*Origami* is ethereal but never static, experimental without being forbidding, and cinematic without simply becoming background music.

For more info visit [erikfriedlander.com](http://erikfriedlander.com). Friedlander is at The Stone at The New School Sep. 2-4. See Calendar.

## DROP THE NEEDLE



**Surf Ride**  
Art Pepper (Savoy-Craft Recordings)  
by Jim Motavalli

What a great title for a West Coast jazz album recorded in the early '50s before The Beach Boys even existed. The cover, reproduced from the original 1956 Savoy 12-inch, is pretty evocative too. The tracks, originally waxed for Discovery (between 1952-54), are alto saxophonist Art Pepper's first recordings as a leader—after heroin addiction, but before jail.

Despite the harrowing circumstances described in his 1979 autobiography, *Straight Life*, Art Pepper (whose centennial was last September) almost never had an off day in the studio. And that's certainly true of these sides with three different groups (all Pepper originals, with the exception of Kern/Fields' "The Way You Look Tonight" and Lester Young's "Tickle Toe"). Pepper's music publisher, Planemar, got co-writing credit back then—typical of the music industry thievery at the time. The first three selections feature the legendary Russ Freeman (piano), which is where the aural comparison to trumpeter Chet Baker's early groups comes to mind. But Pepper played hot, not cool, and on the other relatively brief pieces (some starting out as 45s), he's joined by hard-core swingers, including Jack Montrose (tenor), Hampton Hawes or Claude Williamson (piano), Monte Budwig or Joe Mondragon (bass) and Larry Bunker (drums). The mood doesn't change hugely between the groups; it's light, the way Gerry Mulligan always was, but though there's lots of California sunshine none of it is compromised as easy listening.

"Brown Gold" is a classic bop line, and Hawes comes out swinging madly, and bluesier than Freeman. The title cut is a wild trip on the waxed board, jerky but melodic and a lot of fun. Pepper is in top form, and Mondragon's bass playing is unheralded; though he never made an album as a leader, he prolifically recorded as a sideman on hundreds of sessions and freelanced widely with many of the usual suspects on the West Coast. "Straight Life" is one of Pepper's better-known tunes. Recorded a few years later on the classic 1957 album *Art Pepper Meets the Rhythm Section*, it would be resurrected as the title of a Galaxy date as well as his biography (both released in 1979). The version heard here is taken at a furious tempo that is clearly chasing the Bird. "The Way You Look Tonight", also played as if the group is in an all-fired up hurry, isn't quite as effective. But the chase between Pepper and Montrose's saxophones is great (the elusive tenor player enlivens the other five tracks he is on too). "Nutmeg", which begins with just the horn players, is another high point, using its time efficiently. The original 45-rpm format served useful for more concise and precise musical statements.

The label apologizes for the sound quality of these recordings, but no need. Though maybe not in Rudy Van Gelder territory, they're crisp and clear on this 180g high-quality vinyl reissue, which comes in a glossy, Stoughton tip-on jacket.

For more info visit [craftrecordings.com](http://craftrecordings.com)