

breaking in unexpected places, while the band's joyful interplay—especially between Elijah Thomas (flute) and Scott Robinson (tenor)—showcases Green's knack for assembling intuitive collaborators. As the record glides into "The Very Thought of You", dreamy textures and shifting tempos evoke the heady expansion of a new love. Saxophone and flute lines blend and rise, mirroring the building excitement of a romantic courtship. For the title track, an original where Green's piano leads the charge, the tempo picks up, embodying both discipline and whimsy. Mulgrew Miller's "Tongue Twister" is accented by Wallace Roney Jr's trumpet stylings, as the composition vulnerably explores the desire to make love work; the piano's rippling centerpiece reveals the longing beneath the music, while the band's chemistry creates steady engagement.

The emotional arc gently curves toward introspection with "Solitude", a luminous piano and lingering saxophone conjuring acceptance and self-reflection. By the time "If I'm Lucky" closes the album, Green has come full circle: from falling in love to finding contentment—and satisfaction—in one's own company. Alternate takes add a playful coda, rolling the credits on a nourishing lesson in how to respond to a changing world.

For more info visit kellygreenpiano.com. Green is at One Flight Up Oct. 9, Mezzrow Oct. 29 and Winnie's Oct. 31. She is also at Fat Swami's (Guttenberg, NJ) Oct. 17. See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.



Bern
Roy Hargrove (Time Traveler)
by George Kanzler

This album, from a 2000 concert in Bern, Switzerland, finds the late trumpeter Roy Hargrove, who passed away almost eight years ago (he would have turned 57 this month), at the heights of his power and artistry, leading one of his very best bands. A quintet, it had been on the road for almost a year. In the notes, Gerald Cannon (bass) and Willie Jones III (drums) both remember it as the best band they had ever been in. Unlike many live recordings, wherein tunes are bare frameworks for a string of solos, this one shows that the band's sets were carefully sculpted, some pieces resembling classical works in their division into discrete movements. The first and longest track, trombonist Frank Lacy's riff-based "Stranded", follows this pattern.

After the uptempo head, delivered by Hargrove and Sherman Irby (alto), the trumpeter careens off into a crisp, boppish solo, climaxing in non-stop upper register cascades, courtesy of circular breathing, ending in the stratosphere. As the rhythm section percolates, Irby solos with bop exuberance only to suddenly stop and drop out, along with the rhythm section. Unaccompanied, Larry Willis (piano) enters, slow, impressionistic and semi-rubato, creating a reflective interlude, before revving up to the tune's tempo as the band joins him to take it out. The band's drop-out strategy recurs on the second track, Hargrove's "Depth", a medium-tempo swinger. The band delivers the melody and Irby's alto takes the first solo over an engaged rhythm section. Then all four drop out and the leader enters ruminatively, on flugelhorn, joined by minimal bass and piano, before reverting to a

skittery trumpet solo prodded by the rhythm section, culminating in the horns trading riffs with drummer Jones.

From the time he arrived on the jazz scene as a teenager, Hargrove was a consummate interpreter of ballads. He burnishes that reputation here on the 1956 Nat "King" Cole hit, "Never Let Me Go", as he tenderly limns the melody on trumpet over bass and piano, concluding the tune with an emotionally resonant flugelhorn solo. Two other tracks display Hargrove's facility at funk grooves and Latin-tinged swing, including his own funky "Caryisms", on which the trumpeter engages the audience, encouraging them to clap during stop-time breaks in his solo. This rapport with the audience is yet another distinctive trait of what made Hargrove's live performances so special.

For more info visit instagram.com/timetravelerrecordings. The Roy Hargrove Big Band at The Jazz Gallery Oct. 1 and Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning Oct. 8. See Calendar.



What Does It Take to Bloom?
Somi (Salon Africana)
by Wif Stenger

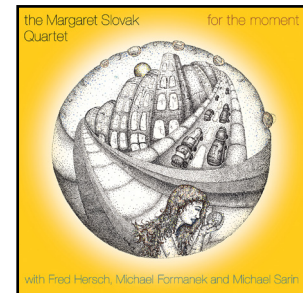
Don't go to Somi for raunchy blues, party stompers or out-there experimentation. Her seven studio albums tend towards the cool, refined end of jazz vocals, with elegant enunciation and classical echoes—though her two live albums are essentially free-flowing and impassioned. Somi's music has deep ties to Africa: from Uganda and Rwanda, where her parents were born; to South Africa, whose Miriam Makeba she honored on her last album; and Lagos, where she lives when not in New York.

Lagos, Nigeria's biggest city, is also home of the Cavemen, a highlife sibling duo who play a strong supporting role on the vocalist's new album, *What Does It Take to Bloom?*, co-produced with drummer Benjamin James. The two brothers—bassist Kingsley Okorie and James—have also recently collaborated with Angelique Kidjo, a frequent guest on Somi albums. The duo adds a fragile falsetto call-and-response and scat on "Sometimes Love", a timelessly romantic tune that could become a standard in its own right. "Throw Something" is a breezy, cheerful song about desperation. Somi's voice swoops effortlessly down to the cellar and back up to the attic before a brief spoken interlude over a taut acoustic rhythm section. Less successful is a two-minute interlude featuring her mother speaking over the phone, which ultimately breaks up the flow of the album—and that ties in with the title track, as it offers a range of answers to the question of "What Does It Take to Bloom?" These affirmations include sun, of course, but also factors that we often try to avoid, such as dirt, rain and pruning. With tinges of the late Cassandra Wilson, her voice is soft and warm, with a slight huskiness, breathiness and vibrato, backed by subtle guitar commentary from Chris Bruce.

In contrast, there's the over-the-top "So You Want to Be a Woman". Starting off with tinges of *The Hissing of Summer Lawns*-era Joni Mitchell, it builds to a fever pitch worthy of Abbey Lincoln, as Lakecia Benjamin's ferocious alto saxophone playing pushes the band into hyperdrive. The album's best moment, however, is its simplest: "Skin to Skin", where Somi improvises over a delicate mesh of palm wine-style arpeggios by

Senegalese guitarist Hervé Samb, highlighting free-floating vocals closer to her live sound.

For more info visit salonafricana.com. Somi is at Sony Hall Oct. 1 (presented by World Music Institute). See Calendar.



For the Moment
Margaret Slovak (Slovak Music)
by Scott Yanow

Guitarist Margaret Slovak, who is originally from Denver, graduated from the Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle in 1986, then spent time over the next two decades in NYC and Portland before settling in Austin. From the beginning of her career, she has had a thoughtful, introverted style that is quietly expressive, a bit reminiscent tone-wise of Jim Hall, if a little more inspired by classical and world musics.

For the Moment (originally recorded in 1989 but not released until 2007) is now reappearing as a vinyl reissue. As Slovak's recording debut, it was made eight years before her sophomore album (*Undying Hope*, which is a solo guitar outing) and teams her up with a supportive all-star cast of Fred Hersch (piano), Michael Formanek (bass) and Michael Sarin (drums). The group performs six of the leader's originals, while she takes "O Solo Mole" as a duet with Hersch, and delivers "Twice" as a solo showcase. Her challenging compositions are harmonically complex (none are based on earlier standards), and while none are particularly singable, they prove to be accessible listens. Though some of the selections are taken at a medium tempo—including the energetic "Charissa", "Face of a Face", which has swinging interplay between Slovak and Hersch, and the lightly cooking "O' Keeffeness"—the overall emphasis is often on introspective improvisations.

Hersch and the tasteful, intuitive rhythm section are generally restrained, allowing the spotlight to shine on the guitarist's performance. Along with the always-welcome presence of Hersch, Slovak's attractive tone and ability to improvise in a relaxed manner over tricky chord changes, make *For the Moment* an appealing outing that, even 37 years after it was recorded, still sounds fresh.

For more info visit margaretslovak.com. Slovak is at Soapbox Gallery Oct. 11. See Calendar.

