

CLOSE UP RECORDS

EMBRACE THE NEWNESS
BY JOSH GAGNON

A jazz venue, a hip neighborhood bar, a cultural incubator. Since its opening in 2024, Close Up has become known as many things. Beyond its reputation for programming some of the city's most notable contemporary voices, this Orchard Street outpost has quickly become a fixture for Lower East Side nightlife, featuring a vinyl listening room and a robust food and beverage program. Last month, Close Up began a new endeavor: releasing nine albums on its inhouse boutique label, recorded live at the club. These albums vary in style and scope, capturing the variety present on any given week in the listening room. With this new

record label, Close Up reminds us that it's more than a venue—it's a movement.

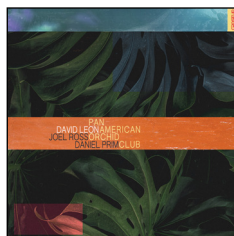
In conversation with some of the musicians featured on these newly-released recordings, one gets the impression that Close Up is a critical part of the current moment the NYC scene is in. David Leon, whose *Panamerican Orchid Club* was among the new label's first releases, likens what is happening at Close Up to the Loft era scene of the '70s. Like the Loft scene, Close Up's programming encapsulates contemporary jazz in all its forms, not tethered to one particular aesthetic. There's also a feeling that, like the lofts, a venue like Close Up almost had to exist. Solomon Gottfried, one of the club's co-founders, describes this phenomenon as something that is "way bigger than us...we're just a container." The label side of the venue now brings this outside the walls of 154 Orchard Street, documenting this new era of and for the music.

Like the hole in the scene that necessitated the club, its new project of starting up a label extends the time-honored tradition of live albums coming from the city's jazz clubs. Whether on bootlegs or formal live sessions, the live jazz album has been a cornerstone of the music for the better part of a century. From NYC clubs such as the Village Vanguard, Blue Note, Smalls or the old Five Spot and Café Bohemia, listeners around the world have been transported into these rooms to hear the masters on record. Close Up brings this tradition to the new age, exposing listeners to a fresh take on the city's scene. The label is run by a small team: producer Gottfried, executive producer Daniel Gaynor, recording engineer (and photographer) Jimmy Katz, mixing and mastering engineer (and bassist) Eivind Opsvik and album designer (and guitarist) Tim

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 34)



A Mysterious Letter
Zekkereya El-magharbel



Pan American Orchid Club
David Leon



Fiesta En Casa
Daniel Prim Y Su Parampaman



I'll Be Thinking of You on Thursday
Carmen Quill



Strands
Tony Malaby

VOXNEWS

THERE AIN'T NOTHIN' LIKE THE REAL THING...

BY TESSA SOUTER

There's been a lot of talk in the news and on social media lately about the evils of AI. A top safety researcher for Anthropic was recently quoted as saying that there's more than a 10% chance it could kill humanity within the next decade. In music, this is already happening before our very eyes and ears: companies using musicians' work without consent or compensation; entirely AI-generated tracks flooding streaming services; fake or cloned voices; and—if it hasn't happened yet, it surely will—companies deciding that a generated jingle or backing track is cheaper than hiring real musicians. "Listeners have been clear in telling us that they don't like seeing an artist profile that seems human, only to find out that the persona is AI-generated," says Spotify. Meanwhile, a Deezer poll found that 40% of listeners would skip an AI track if they knew it was AI, without even listening to it, *even though they may not be able to identify the difference when they do hear it.*

In mid-September, Spotify added an AI Persona badge to artist profiles whose public identities appear to be AI-generated, rather than real people. More significantly, those AI Personas will, by default, be excluded from Spotify's editorial and algorithmic recommendations. Artists will be encouraged to identify themselves voluntarily, but Spotify says it will also review profiles and apply the badge where appropriate. We shall have to see how effective *that* is. It should also be noted that, as Spotify states: "This badge is about the artist's public identity, not about how the music was made." In other words, a human artist can use AI to generate parts

of a song—or even the entire track—and release it under their own name without getting the AI Persona badge. So, contrary to the headlines, Spotify has not "killed AI music." It has targeted AI *personas*, a very different thing.

On the other hand, live music, of which you as an audience member are a vital part, is undeniably human—authentic, imperfect (with flashes of soaring brilliance and graceful recovery), nuanced, spontaneous and responsive in real time. Chilean singer-songwriter **Claudia Acuña's** stunning performance last month, at the newly-opened The Pocket, was a perfect demonstration: about as organic and "real" as it gets. Celebrating her beautiful new album, *Ave de Luz* (Delfin), with a great band behind her, every note, every phrase was in the service of the song and, one felt, her life experience. So gut-wrenchingly real and profoundly emotionally resonant, it landed with almost physical force.

Few artists have done more to shape the modern language of vocal jazz than former Manhattan Transfer member **Janis Siegel**, herself a fabulous—and always fun—live performer. Her new album, *The Art of Vocalese* (Origin), is both a tribute to her mentor, master vocalist-lyricist **Jon Hendricks** (featuring rediscovered Hendricks lyrics) and a reflection on a lifetime devoted to inspired storytelling and beautiful vocal harmonies. "This was my first project immediately after the retirement of The Manhattan Transfer," Siegel says. "It's as much a tribute to Manhattan Transfer and the work we did as anything else." The album also features vocalists **Raul Midón**, **Lea DeLaria** and Siegel's vocal trio **JaLaLa**, with **Laurel Massé** and **Lauren Kinhan**.

New York jazz vocalist, lyricist and educator **Amy London** has announced *Alto Madness* (FiveCat), her first solo album in eight years. A founding member of the **Royal Bopsters**, who appear as special guests on the lead single "New York Afternoon", London wrote three new vocalese passages for the album, adding to the more than a dozen she has written and recorded over her career. The album also memorializes London's five-year weekly residency at Swing 46. "I was so inspired by the high level of musicianship onstage, I decided we should document this wonderful collaboration," says London. Catch her live at Birdland (Oct. 11).

Speaking of spontaneity, **Brigitte Fontaine's**

landmark 1970 Saravah album *Comme à la Radio* has just been reissued. Infused with the freewheeling improvisation of the Art Ensemble of Chicago (the album features AEC members Joseph Jarman, Roscoe Mitchell and Malachi Favors), the recording is about as spontaneous as studio albums get. The deluxe double LP pairs the original album with a second LP of rare bonus material and a 24-page bilingual booklet featuring an introduction by journalist Andy Beta, essays by Wadada Leo Smith (who, along with fellow trumpeter Lester Bowie, also plays on the album), Fontaine biographer Benoît Mouchart and Benjamin Barouh, plus a recent interview with Fontaine and the late Areski Belkacem.

Vocalist-composer **Judi Silvano's** Garden Winds, a voice-bassoon-flute trio, celebrates its new album, *First Flight* (JSL), at Westbeth (Oct. 3) and Jazz at the Barn (Oct. 18). At Ibeam Brooklyn (Oct. 4), catch Trio Nu, a collaborative group of improvisers led by vocalist **Noa Fort**, in a rare appearance while they're in town. **Amber Weekes** celebrates the centennial of her mentor and friend, prolific songwriter, poet, lyricist, vocalist and Civil Rights activist **Oscar Brown Jr.** Her album, *To Oscar With Love* (Amber Inn), honors a legacy that feels as relevant as ever. **Teri Roiger** will celebrate Thelonious Monk's birthday at Five Spot Jazz (Oct. 10). California singer-songwriter **Sylvia Brooks** is in town for the NYC release of her new album, *Soliloquy* (SBM), at Drom (Oct. 4). Billed as "an evening of music meant to be felt in the room," it marries four jazz standards with four original compositions exploring the many facets of human experience. Singer **Jon Regen** celebrates *Live in London* (JRM/Symphonic), recorded last year at the London Jazz Festival. A protégé of the great Kenny Barron, catch him at The Django (Oct. 21). Last year, vocalist-songwriter **Vicki Burns** debuted a spectacular Halloween show at the Green Room 42, which she is reprising at Chelsea Table + Stage in "Love Spell: An Enchanting Halloween" (Oct. 30). Singer-songwriter **Somi** celebrates her new album, *What Does It Take to Bloom?* (Salon Africana), at Sony Hall (Oct. 1) and SOPAC (Oct. 3). The daughter of Rwandan and Ugandan immigrants, Somi weaves global sensibilities into a grounded reflection on the journey toward belonging, through jazz, soul and spoken word. *Tessa Souter appears at Saint Peter's Church (Oct. 11)

(NOMAD CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12)

NoMad Plaza and the **Michael Leonhart Orchestra** at the Rizzoli Bookstore. The Jazz Gallery played host to the **Trap Music Orchestra** and the incandescent **Roy Hargrove Big Band**. The storied jazz club, located just a few blocks north of Madison Square Park, allowed the audience to experience the symbiotic organism that is a well-oiled big band, in a truly intimate setting.

In the Park itself, **Yuhan Su**, the Taiwanese-American composer and vibraphone maven, played a vibrant, playful set on a sunny Saturday. Her compositions included “Ringside”, “Rainy Day” (which evoked memories of the previous day’s deluge) and “Hi-Tech Pros and Cons”, a tongue-in-cheek dig at our phone addictions. Su seemed to embody each note on the vibraphone as she engaged in lively, syncopated interplay with her band. She was backed by some unapologetically sonorous bass playing by Luke Stewart reminiscent of the giant, Charles Mingus, along with saxophonist Caleb Wheeler Curtis and drummer Adam Cruz.

A regal **Godwin Louis** followed, playing saxophone with a searing set of politically relevant music. As expected from the erudite musician, he drew in diverse influences from the Bible (“Psalm 6”), a medley that included “Benin Tovi” (the national anthem of Benin), along with “Soldats de Christ et Haïtiens” and “Ayiti Cheri” (based on traditional Haitian songs). He also performed his arrangement of the Charlie Chaplin-associated tune, “Smile”, which plays at the end of Chaplin’s *Modern Times* (1936).

Erstwhile Jazz Messenger, pianist **George Cables**, at age 81, peeled back the years. His large hands are worn with use, but he still proved a sensitive player, helming a trio consisting of Alexander Claffy (bass) and Jerome Jennings (drums). Cables breezed through his performance, which comprised a couple of his compositions (“Helen’s Song”, “Mr. Baggy Pants”) along with “Speak No Evil” (Wayne Shorter) and “Prelude to a Kiss” (Ellington). His touch and attack bore witness to his deep pockets of experience.

Jaleel Shaw’s set was a step up in pace. He was joined by fellow saxophone colossus and vocalist **Camille Thurman**, the two of them tearing up the stage, going toe to toe for some dream runs. Thurman finished the set crooning in her signature scat style, her voice sounding as much an instrument as a horn.

Joined by professional pianist, **Jonathan Paik**, coached by Alfredo Colón and conducted by public defender turned teacher Keith Szczepanski, the students of the **South Bronx Charter School for International Culture and Arts** played a tight set, which showed a lot of growth, according to their teachers. Saxophone player Aaron Perez Sanchez (17) showed a maturity far beyond his years when he shared, “You have to

understand what torch you’re bearing for the future. So me playing the saxophone is not just me trying to make new things. It’s me also carrying a torch that Benny Golson (and) John Coltrane left behind. It’s me embodying that music and trying to put my voice to it, put my own perspective to it.” Sanchez was joined by trumpet players Oliver Acevedo (17) and Roy Frazier (15), drummer Rony Ramirez Jr. (17) and bassist Jesus Romano (14).

Closing out the NoMad Jazz Festival 2026 were **The Jazz Gallery All Stars**, led by the vocal brilliance of songwriter Renée Neufville, who paid rich tribute to the late Roy Hargrove, her friend and collaborator. “Where Hargrove was with his people, he darn near raised the whole generation of musicians because he was so generous with his gifts,” she said. There were stirring solos from saxophonists Miguel Zenón and Nicole Glover, and sublime trumpeter Skylar Tang, especially on Miles Davis’ “All Blues”.

As the music faded into the night sky, the audience trudged out reluctantly, still greedy for more delectable music. Leslie Spira Lopez, the founder-president of the NoMad Alliance, summed up the reasons for the festival’s success: “When cultural organizations, businesses, property owners, parks and community groups work together, everyone benefits.” Rio Sakairi, however, had a more philosophical take: “Creating the moments of joy and connection and togetherness—that is amazing and it doesn’t have to lead to anything. It could just be that.”

For more info visit nomadjazzfestival.com

(LABEL SPOTLIGHT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11)

Watson. As with the venue, Gottfried emphasizes the artist-driven, collaborative nature of these albums.

In listening to these records, one is struck by what is sonically possible in a live record in 2026. The masterful work of Katz and Opsvik can at times put you right in the listening room or transport you somewhere else entirely. There’s a freshness and energy on records such as drummer-percussionist Eliza Salem’s *Haven* or trombonist Zekkereya El-magharbel’s *A Mysterious Letter*, which could only exist in that setting, or as pianist Yvonne Rogers of My Trio puts it, “It captures a moment, raw and imperfect and alive, and I think that’s really beautiful.” My Trio’s new release, *my live record*, is one of those aforementioned transportive experiences. It’s hard to classify this record into a genre, but this largely electronic album is sure to blow minds. Gottfried, when describing the expanding nature of genre definitions, notes “The My Trio record...there has never been a live album from a jazz club that sounds like this!”

This stylistic variety is one of the new label’s greatest strengths. Despite it being pitched as a jazz label, fans of a variety of genres will find something to like in these releases, and perhaps it will grow the listenership for those other styles in the process. At the end of the day, Close Up does not seem concerned with taking a preservationist approach to running a club or a label. The community in and around this venue continues to push the music ahead, and these nine records are highly representative of this push.

Let’s embrace the newness and look forward to what’s to come from the movement that is Close Up.

For more info visit closeupnyc.com. Close Up presents the Orchard Street Jazz Festival Sep. 30 - Oct. 5 featuring Anna Webber Shimmer Wince, Craig Taborn Trio, Trio Imagination (with Andrew Cyrille, Reggie Workman, David Virelles), Mary Halvorson/Tomas Fujiwara, Dan Weiss Trio, and Close Up Records album release concerts by Kayvon Gordon, David Leon, My Trio (with Tim Watson, Yvonne Rogers, Jon Starks), Zekkereya El-magharbel, Tony Malaby, Carmen Quill and Daniel Prim. See Calendar.

(LEST WE FORGET CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10)

Possessed of an encyclopedic knowledge of jazz piano history, Ingham also ferreted out forgotten or overlooked compositions. “Having worked with Keith on a number of recordings, I have fond memories of the excitement for the tunes covered,” recalls bassist Greg Cohen. “Each song was a Dickens novel to him. His small-group arranging skills were straight out of the book of McKinney’s Cotton Pickers or Andy Kirk. Clear, clean, to the point.” Ingham’s piano style was harmonically rich and adaptable to styles such as Dixieland and stride. On a 1997 appearance on her NPR *Piano Jazz* program, Marian McPartland highlighted Ingham’s sophisticated grasp of genre and style, how naturally he navigated complex harmonic structures while maintaining a deep, infectious groove and his knowledge of jazz. Multi-instrumentalist Scott Robinson notes, “I am grateful to Keith for having me play on a number of his projects, with Marty Grosz and others, and for the many live performances. I learned a lot of tunes from Keith; in fact, one of the tunes on my new all-tarogato album is one I learned from Keith long ago. He knew the history of the songs, the verses, all about the films they were in. He inspired me to get to work and really dig in on learning tunes.”

As a leader, Ingham fronted several bands and ensembles, such as the New York Nine and the Hot Cosmopolites. He also prolifically recorded, including several albums of 1930s songs for Jump Records and tribute albums dedicated to the music of Billy Strayhorn, Victor Young and songwriting teams such as DeSylva, Brown and Henderson. Ingham’s leader discography begins in 1977 with *Keith Ingham Plays the Music of Jerome Kern* (World Records-EMI) and through to 2015 encompasses frequent releases on Sackville and Stomp Off. Saxophonist-trumpeter Glenn Zottola, who was a member of the Keith Ingham Sextet, and who recorded three albums with Ingham for Harbinger, two for Maxine Sullivan and one for Peggy Lee, remembers, “The arrangements Keith did were fantastic and the all-star bands he put together for those sessions were a true joy to play with and a top-notch production. Keith was a great musician and artist with a true passion for the music.”

On a personal level, Ingham lived a relatively private and work-focused life, most defined by the friendships and collaborations of his career. Within that frame was his long partnership with Susannah McCorkle, to whom he was married briefly. (Later she married and divorced jazz critic Gary Giddins in the ‘90s.) Throughout, Ingham and McCorkle were steadfast musical soulmates; his grief following her tragic death in 2001 was well-known in the jazz community. And over his long years, there’s no doubt Ingham was much-loved and respected. Robinson reports that “he once stepped in to rescue my wife from a drunken patron! What a guy!” Indeed, Keith Ingham.

The Keith Ingham Memorial concert is at Saint Peter’s Church Oct. 19. See Calendar. For more info visit artsconservancy.org/events.

Recommended Listening:

- Bud Freeman and The Keith Ingham Trio – *Superbud* (77 Records-Jazzology, 1974/92)
- Susannah McCorkle – *The People You Never Get To Love* (Inner City-The Jazz Alliance, 1981)
- Maxine Sullivan (with Keith Ingham Sextet) – *The Lady’s in Love with You* (Maxine Sullivan Sings the Music of Burton Lane) (Stash-Harbinger, 1985)
- Marty Grosz & Keith Ingham and Their Paswanky Serenaders – *Unsaturated Fats* (Stomp Off, 1990)
- Keith Ingham – *A Mellow Bit of Rhythm* (Sackville, 1997)
- Keith Ingham – *Rockin’ in Rhythm* (Arbors, 2010)

Sarah Pillow
Wanderer

Available on all streaming services

CD release show 10/30 7pm

CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION
209 MADISON AVE.

