

EARS&EYES

20TH ANNIVERSARY? OH SNAP!

BY KEN WAXMAN

Of all the ways a record company expands a roster, ears&eyes is one of the few in which the director's peripatetic life helps define its catalog. The imprint, which has released over 250 albums during its history, is located both in Buenos Aires, Argentina, as well as near Raleigh, NC, where bassist, producer and label director Matthew Golombisky currently lives.

Over the years, as Golombisky moved to various cities in North and South America, ears&eyes recorded musicians in those areas. "In the beginning, there was no real plan to actively seek out artists outside our circle," he says. "Wherever I live tends to become the focus. Once the label started gaining more recognition, though, people from all over began reaching out. My first big artist outside my circuit was Matija Dedić from Croatia. His album was amazing. As long as the music is killing, I'm open to it." That enthusiasm was the original impetus when in 2007 Golombisky and drummer Quin Kirchner started ears&eyes in Chicago. It was part of a film, art and music mini-festival, hence the name. Golombisky, who "pays close attention to

the visual side of things," also wanted an upper and lower case balance for the "ears&eyes Records" logo.

Frustrated by a lack of interest in their music from established labels, the duo decided to self-release. Eventually, Golombisky took on the role of sole producer and label boss. "I was just trying to find a home for local artists who weren't getting attention," he explains. "I was still a full-time bassist-composer. How I run the label developed over time, shaped more by how I wanted to help artists produce and promote their music than by how to make it profitable. It's always been rooted in believing in the music that comes to me and wanting to help get it out into the world."

One of the factors that sets ears&eyes apart from most North American imprints is its focus on Argentinian artists. That resulted from Golombisky's 2010 move to Buenos Aires, where he stayed for 10 years. There, he was able to concentrate on the label and eventually extended his experience as a teaching artist with the Institute for Creative Music in the US by becoming conductor and artistic director of a youth orchestra. The impetus came after he attended Dedić's Buenos Aires Jazz Festival concert backed by a local trio. The next day, the trio's bassist contacted him, he recalls. "We got talking, swapped CDs. I couldn't stop listening, and I started digging deeper into the scene. I discovered incredible musicians and eventually invited

them into my own compositional world. The scene is so vibrant and exciting that there was no way I wasn't going to help it reach further."

Berlin-based Argentinian tenor saxophonist Camila Nebbia met Golombisky then and soon released her first ears&eyes album. Since then she has recorded eight albums as a leader and several more as a sideman. Why record for ears&eyes? "Matt really cares about the story behind each album and how it's communicated to the audience," she notes. "This helps create a deeper connection with journalists and new listeners. The diversity of the label creates space for artists who might not otherwise have access to a platform like this, simply because they're not yet known or because of where they're based. He does the work, listens to the music (and) builds a diverse catalogue and audience."

Although he's on twenty ears&eyes albums (with five more soon ready to appear), and even though he sets the release schedule, Golombisky doesn't prioritize his own projects. "I always push my own releases behind other artists' work," he admits. Overall, "the number of ears&eyes releases varies by year and according to a schedule allowing enough time for publicity and promo. The largest spike came during the COVID-19 years, as more music had to be available

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 30)



Resistance of the Earth
Igor Lumpert Quartet



Colibrí Rojo
Camila Nebbia/Axel Filip



Pulses
Elsa Nilsson



KYN
KYN (Yoon Sun Choi, Hanna Schorken, Noa Fort)



Prohibido Andar en Sully
Santiago Leibson

VOXNEWS

THIS TIME OF YEAR...

BY TESSA SOUTER

"Competitions are for horses, not artists," Béla Bartók once declared, reflecting the belief that art is so subjective that it is impossible to rank. Yet, there's no doubt that winning the Herbie Hancock Institute International Jazz Vocals Competition can be a career-maker. So congratulations to **Malou Oheix**, winner this year, and to the ten semifinalists: **Joie Bianco**, **Anouk Chemla**, **Lucy-Anne Daniels**, **Georgia Heers**, **Courteney Hooper**, **Kate Kortum**, **Kristin Lash**, **Zhenxuan "Jimmy" Lin**, **Ashley Pezzotti** and **Tawanda Suessbrich-Joaquim**. The finals for the equally career-launching Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition will be held at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) on Nov. 22, so get your tickets now.

Thrilling French-Dominican singer **Cyrille Aimée**, another Sarah Vaughan competition winner (who incidentally came third in the Herbie Hancock competition in 2010) will be at Birdland (Nov. 3-7). Veteran vocalist and NEA jazz master (and Herbie Hancock competition judge) **Dee Dee Bridgewater** appears a week later (Nov. 11-14). The late, legendary vocalist **Sheila Jordan** will be honored at Dizzy's Club with a birthday tribute (Nov. 17) and a new, live album release (on Dot Time). Earlier in the month, **Janis Siegel** (a guest at the Jordan tribute) celebrates *The Art of Vocalese* (Origin) at Dizzy's

(Nov. 4). **Elizabeth Bougerol**, the fabulous voice of the Hot Sardines, is celebrating the release of her eponymous (and first solo) album, at Joe's Pub (Nov. 12). Hot Sardines fans, don't despair. She has no plans to leave the band. "This is an expansion, not an exit," she says.

Gregory Porter and **Madeleine Peyroux** will perform together at NJPAC (Nov. 13). Also at the same venue, Broadway icon **Ben Vereen's** 80th birthday celebration will feature **Shoshana Bean**, **Melba Moore**, **Stephanie Pope**, **Brian Stokes Mitchell**, **Lillias White** and five-time GRAMMY nominee, jazz singer and songwriter **Karrin Allyson** (Nov. 21). At The Stonewall Inn (Nov. 23), John Pietaro and his punk-jazz, neo-beat ensemble the Red Microphone will present his latest work, *Scarlet Streets* (The Bodily Press), in collaboration with and produced by vocalist-producer **Ellen Christi**, who will also be performing.

Herbie Hancock competition finalist **Georgia Heers** will appear at Trinity Church in the Jazz at One series (Nov. 11). **Noa Fort** has two notable NYC concerts: her Plant People at Threes Brewing (Nov. 11) and in quartet at Five Spot Jazz (Nov. 15). Guitarist-vocalist-songwriter **Dida Pelled's** new album *I Wish I Was Single Again* (La Reserve) is part of her longtime project to recover songs from women musicians whose voices deserve to be heard. And speaking of voices who deserve to be heard, **Vanisha Gould** has a new album, *What an Interesting Girl* (Cellar Music), featuring her quirky original songs, delivered in a distinctive voice with more than a hint of humor.

Celebrating 61 years of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), improvisational power couple Adegoke Steve Colson and **Iqua Colson** will be at Roulette (Nov. 4). The M³ Festival, founded by experimental vocalist-composers **Jen Shyu** and **Sara Serpa**, will also be at Roulette,

featuring, among others, **Theo Bleckmann**, **Martha Redbone**, **Alexandria DeWalt**, **Noa Fort**, **Mama Dee** and bassist-vocalist **Devon Gates** (Nov. 7). **Becca Stevens** is at The Jazz Gallery (Nov. 23-24). Rising star **April Varner** celebrates her newly-released *Winter Songs Vol. 3* (Madre Vaca) at Zinc Bar (Nov. 24). Violinist Zach Brock features **Theo Bleckmann** and **Melissa Stylianou** at Westbeth Artists Housing (Nov. 6).

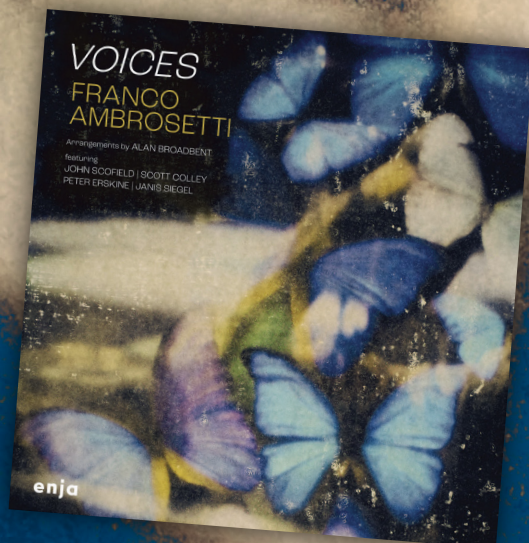
As for the GRAMMYS, the jostling for which lasted through October, choosing whom to vote for is never easy given the talent on display. Meanwhile, it's worth remembering that the iconic John Coltrane was never nominated during his lifetime. Nor were Chet Baker, Blossom Dearie or Chris Connor. A useful reminder that awards, however prestigious, tell only part of the story. It will be interesting to see who makes it through the first round this year.

LISTENING...Two major live releases debut this month: **Louis Armstrong's** 1957 *One Night in Highland Park* (Verve) and **Samara Joy's** first-ever live recording, *Live at the Blue Note LA* (Verve). She is a spectacular live singer, so this album is long overdue. The *Two-o-Duo Project* (ArtistShare) by John Clayton and **Rene Marie**, is a gorgeously intimate mostly bass and voice album. **Gretchen Parlato's** seventh album *The Wise Ones* (Edition) also features vocalists **Becca Stevens**, **Amber Navran** and visionary **Meshell Ndegeocello**. Brooklyn-based composer-performer couple **Paula Jeanine Bennett** and Richard X Bennett's new album *Amaryllis 2* (Ropeadope), is a collection of songs about love, pain and the natural world. Born of Richard's three-year bout with a serious illness, it's a triumphant illustration of how to squeeze beauty from pain.

*Tessa Souter will be at *One Flight Up* Nov. 24. See Calendar.

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and divisive times. It's
what we need now.“

— Bill Milkowski

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(SAALFELDEN CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12)

by Cuban tenor saxophonist Roman Filiu (a frequent employee of Henry Threadgill and David Murray) and alto saxophonist Alex LoRe.

A case of last-minute replacement reaching highlight status, the septet *You're What's for Dinner* was assembled from the pool of musicians present at the fest. After an appropriately in-your-face intro, rhythm monsters in drummer-percussionist **Jim Black** and bassist **Ingebrigt Håker Flaten** locked into a series of grooves for the other players to give their all. Vocalist and soundsmith Zanshin, seated on the floor and hunched over the electronic gear and knobs in front of him, contributed some arresting textures.

Britanny's **Erwan Keravec**, on the peculiar-sounding and -looking bagpipes, gave two solo sets, one atop a tall church tower that resounded across the whole city and one on a rowing boat on the Ritzensee lake. He also had a first-time encounter with **Rob Mazurek** (trumpet, piccolo trumpet, whistle, shamanic chanting and dancing) and **Lukas König** (drums, electronics). Heated segments, featuring adept percussive mayhem from König (a member of The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters), modal cogitations and ominous ambient textures were heard, with continuously-wailing pipes courtesy of Keravec's circular breathing.

Over three days, flutist **Delphine Joussein**, who took part in a 70-strong fanfare covering Albert Ayler's *Truth Is Marching In*, was one-half of Trunk with trumpeter Aymeric Avicé and one-fourth of vigorous quartet Sauvages Paradis with compatriot Eve Risser (organ, piano, flute, vocals). Joussein then brought her silver flute and effects pedals to the Museum Schloss Ritzen for a solo set dubbed Calamity, also the title of the latest release on her Gigantonium label. Joussein proved a perfect fit for the fest, and the crowd in the gallery beamed with enthusiasm. Forget any carefree, bucolic notions associated with the instrument. Incendiary blowing, tongue slaps, foot-triggered loops, with only occasional acoustic hiatuses—the sounds were for the most part augmented, filtered and altered, the flute a conduit for sound, preferably dirty and overdriven, with onomatopoeia thrown in as punctuation. With an antifascist stance, Joussein built a piece on words from Etienne de la Boétie's "Discourse on Voluntary Servitude" (1577). Such attitude and contents made for informed, consistent protest music.

Two excellent sets came in the form of trios in the age-old acoustic piano format, which melded the impromptu with a contemporary chamber feel. German-Serbian pianist **Tamara Stefanovich**, known for her performances of works by Boulez, Bartók and Stravinsky, joined forces with bassist Jonas Westergaard and drummer Christian Lillinger (moving like a martial artist behind the kit). Stefanovich and the bassist faced each other, eyes locked as in a duel, as the pianist provided liaison for the ultra-kinetic set. **Industriesalon** was ace pair Christian Weber (bass) and Michael Griener (drums) together with classically-trained Serbian pianist Marina Džukljević. Their album was one of last year's best surprises, and the concert amply confirmed that impression. Improvised music simply doesn't get much better.

Next up was a trombone-led, three-guitars extravaganza. **Jacob Garchik's** *Ye Olde 2: At the End of Time* featured the combined talents of Brandon Seabrook, Mary Halvorson and Jonathan Goldberger, who brought their distinctive poetry to compositions tailor-made for them, while drummer Vinnie Sperrazza maintained a dazzling propulsive energy throughout. Saxophonist-clarinetist **Chris Speed's** *Yeah NO's* reunion was a hoot, in its original line-up of trumpeter Cuong Vu, e-bassist Skúli Sverrisson, whose delightful touch is not unlike Steve Swallow's, and Jim Black. The quartet first appeared in 1997. Now nearly 30 years later, it was time for a happy throwback to the buoyant Downtown NY brand of jazz regeneration, with

maximal interplay. The first hour belonged to the early years and the remainder to new tunes, just as good, and on their way to becoming an album.

The merriment ended with the Spiritual Unity Session organized by bassist **Lukas Kranzelbinder**, with a number of artists taking turns at the jam-packed Nexus bar. The first-time encounter between trumpeter Avicé and the ubiquitous drummer Black made sparks fly by virtue of sturdy, steadfast playing.

The festival lived up to its reputation with more vital, uncompromising acts on display than the most dedicated visitor could hope to witness. Its 47th edition is scheduled for August 19-22, 2027.

For more info visit jazzsaalfelden.com/en

(LABEL SPOTLIGHT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11)

online." Typically, musicians contact him with sessions that have already been recorded, mixed and sometimes mastered, with the players already paid. Through his agency Thirsty Robot Media, Golombisky provides art, layout design and publicity. "Together we work out the best strategy for release and timing, and I help get the album ready for sale and for streaming platforms," he explains. "Once sales start coming in, the artist keeps 80 per cent of the profits."

The Brooklyn-based Swedish flutist Elsa Nilsson, who now has four albums on the label (with another pending), recalls of her first album for the label in 2022 (*Atlas of Sound – Coast Redwoods*): "I recorded it the year before and once it was mixed and mastered, I pitched it to Matthew and he was on board...Longevity of vision and involvement in the process is something I really appreciate," she continues. "It adds a level of world-building to the artistic process. Matthew brings an open-mindedness and an eye for design to the projects. *Atlas of Sound*, for example, is released as a book and the design is used as a template for the subsequent releases. The creativity, support and input around the creation of the merch with my out-of-the-ordinary ideas for the multimedia project is what I appreciate about ears&eyes."

The COVID-19 interlude was when Golombisky realized that there didn't have to be physical copies of every release, and now some of the label's product is only available as digital downloads. Still, every session is on Bandcamp, because, as he says, "about 99 percent of sales came through Bandcamp. As for the streaming platforms, we specifically hold off for a while. After the excitement of a new release settles, we talk with the artist about when it makes sense to bring the album to streaming, and eventually it does make its way there." More ears&eyes projects about to be released include ones from several Argentinians: drummer Santiago Lacabe, pianist-singer Lucía Boffo and singer-songwriter Julián Muro. Also on tap is one from Slovene saxophonist Igor Lumpert as well as some archival sessions.

Golombisky may be very occupied teaching and running a one-person imprint, and when asked if anything is planned for the label's 20th anniversary, his immediate response is: "Oh snap...not yet!"

For more info visit earsandeyesrecords.com. ears&eyes musicians performing this month include: Caroline Davis at Roulette Nov. 7 (part of M³ Festival), Nov. 18 (with Qasim Naqvi), The Jazz Gallery Nov. 20 (with Alexis Cuadrado) and Bar LunAtico Nov. 24 (with Arthur Kell); Davis and Gregg Belisle-Chi at Reason & Ruckus (Poughkeepsie, NY) Nov. 6; Leo Genovese at Nublu 151 Nov. 16 (with Igor Lumpert), Bar LunAtico Nov. 17 (as leader) and Symphony Space Nov. 20 (part of "Coltrane 100"); Noa Fort at Rizzoli Bookstore Nov. 1, Roulette Nov. 8 (part of M³ Festival), Threes Brewing Nov. 11 and Five Spot Jazz Nov. 15; Elsa Nilsson at Lydia's Café (Stone Ridge, NY) Nov. 21. See *Calendar* and *100 Miles Out*.