

ON SCREEN



Being Hipp: First Lady of European Jazz
Anna Schmidt (schmidtFilm)
by Paul Gaita

In most artists’ biographies, the moment in which they step into the spotlight is often seen as a high point, the first rung on their ascent to fame and acclaim. For German pianist and Blue Note recording artist Jutta Hipp (1925-2003), stardom proved to be a disappointment. But Hipp’s life, detailed in affectionate and efficient terms in writer-director Anna Schmidt’s documentary, *Being Hipp: First Lady of European Jazz*, was marked by a shattering of norms—she was, at various times, the first female jazz instrumentalist on Blue Note, a white artist appreciated by her mostly Black peers (well, not drummer Art Blakey, but he came around), and a woman who became a marquee name in an art form dominated by men. Despite the laurels, Hipp found little to love about reaching the pinnacle of her profession and retreated, finding anonymity to be a more comfortable fit.

Schmidt’s film covers a great deal of biographical information in a brief (54 minutes) amount of time, beginning with Hipp’s formative years in Leipzig, where an all-consuming passion for American jazz—and a desire to escape the Russian takeover of East Germany at the end of WWII—led her to the club scene in Munich. Her piano talents—marked by a staccato drive and unmissable swing—attracted the attention of critic Leonard Feather, who brought her to New York under the banner of “First Lady of European Jazz.” She earned admirers, including multi-instrumentalist David Amram and vocalist Sheila Jordan (along with Dodo Greene, the vocalist followed Hipp as another early and rare female Blue Note signee), both of whom speak warmly of her music in the film; her recording contract was capped by the two-volume *At the Hickory House* in 1956. But the encouragement and applause had an inverse effect on Hipp; she recoiled from the business side of jazz (pushed by Feather, who also pressed her with amorous advances) and dismissed her own talents as wanting. Disillusionment and alcohol led her to leave music for a more subdued life as a seamstress, and later, a celebrated painter. Three years before her death in 2003, Blue Note didn’t even know where to send royalty checks.

But Hipp’s talent means that her legacy is more than a footnote and cautionary tale, and Schmidt’s film helps to dispel those ideas. Her approach—crisp direction and cinematography by Matthias Jim Gunther and Simon Roloff, judicious use of clips and images and appreciative interviews (including with trumpeter-educator Ingrid Monson, saxophonist and biographer Ilona Haberkamp and drummer Terri Lyne Carrington)—detail an artist who lived admirably by her own terms, even at the expense of a career that many would dearly desire.

For more info visit schmidt-film.com/en/filme/being-hipp. (The movie’s screening is Nov. 1 at Delphi LUX, part of Jazzfest Berlin, Germany.)



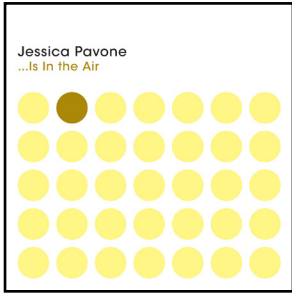
Nothin’ Better to Do
Betty Bryant (Bry-Mar Music)
by Scott Yanow

As remarkable as it seems, considering her youthful enthusiasm and still-formidable playing and singing, Betty Bryant (who turns 97 later this month) was 95 at the time of this recording. Her long career began in Kansas City, MO, and she worked regularly for many decades in Southern California—but Bryant made only one album under her own name during all that time, in 1972, and otherwise went unrecorded until 1996, when she was already in her mid-60s. Fortunately, she has recorded frequently since then, mostly for her own Bry-Mar Music label.

Bryant’s piano playing and singing are very much in the timeless KC swing tradition that one associates with Jay McShann, Julia Lee and their contemporaries. She has a gentle approach that draws one in; her playing is inventive and her vocalizing, witty and sometimes saucy. For *Nothin’ Better to Do*, her 15th album, Bryant is joined by Robert Kyle (tenor, soprano, flute), Richard Simon (bass) and Kevin Winard (drums); Hussain Jiffry (bass) and Aaron Serfaty (drums) are on two numbers apiece. Tony Guerrero (trumpet) guests on Kyle’s hard bop blues “Awrite Then”, and two songs add overdubbed strings from Luanne Homzy (violin, viola) and Niall Taro (cello).

The vocalist contributes two originals and is at her best on “You Are Not My First Love”, “He May Be Your Man”, the Latin-ish “Time Was”, a carefree “I Haven’t Got Anything Better to Do” and “Awrite Then”. Kyle takes warm, tasteful spots on tenor throughout the joyful set, and Bryant sounds happy and inspired on what is some of her best music to date.

For more info visit bettybryant.com



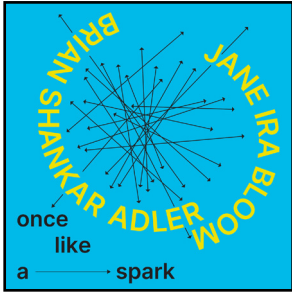
...Is In the Air
Jessica Pavone (Relative Pitch)
by Bill Meyer

On Jessica Pavone’s *...Is In the Air*, the Queens-based violist-composer strikes a balance between consistency and novelty. This, her sixth solo album, resembles its predecessors in its pith (its four tracks last a little over 28 minutes) and performer-friendliness. When Pavone composes for other musicians, she intentionally avoids prescribing techniques that might precipitate injury, and during the writing process, she often consults with musicians on what they most like to play. Her solo pieces don’t hurry, nor do they overload the senses of either listener or player. They do, however, strive for impact. “Quiet Rupture”, the first track, begins with quick repetitions that erect a veil of bright sound. That veil persists even after she suddenly stops and switches to deliberate, widely-spaced strums that gradually accumulate dissonance. You could say that both

elements are in the air, persistently vibrating in shared space. Pavone further explores the effect of proximity in the next track, “Stellium”, referencing a cluster of planets in the same zodiac sign within a birth chart, and so the piece’s high, bowed pitches and dogged scratches combine to likewise form a center of energy.

While the first two tracks extend paths of inquiry that Pavone has explored since her first unaccompanied disc, *Knuckle Under*, the balance of this new record erodes the definition of solo music. Both are remote collaborations, developed through the exchange of ideas over time. While neither is strictly a solo performance, it’s fair to note that the musicians weren’t in the same room to record them. “Step, Line, Trade”, with guitarist Fred Frith, begins with a long blast of feedback, but from which instrument, it’s hard to say: it evolves into a sort of layered, electric gamelan. “And At Last”, with bass guitarist Joe Lally, is a more conventional duet between rustic bowing and spare, strategically-deployed low notes. Each piece is absorbing on its own terms, raising the question: does Pavone have more of these encounters in store?

For more info visit relativepitchrecords.bandcamp.com. Pavone is at Striped Light Nov. 9 and Tenri Cultural Institute Nov. 15. See Calendar.



once like a spark
Jane Ira Bloom & Brian Shankar Adler (Adhyāropa)
by JR Simon

Jane Ira Bloom and Brian Shankar Adler’s *once like a spark* may be a duet album, but it doesn’t feel like one. From its opening moments, the familiar hierarchy of melody over rhythm is quite simply absent. Instead, Bloom (soprano) and Adler (drums) meet as equals in a fluid, intimate exchange where both shape melody, texture and pulse in real time. The result is something broader and more immersive than a typical two-instrument setting: a shifting sound world that feels fuller than its instrumentation suggests. That expansiveness owes much to Adler, a true melodic drummer. His kit, augmented by tabla, gamelan metallophones, chromatic discs and found objects, produces a remarkable range of timbre and texture. Nothing ever feels flat.

On “Drums Like Dancing”, Adler establishes a buoyant, inviting groove while Bloom answers with a clear, soaring soprano tone, hinting at the seamless interplay to come. The title track, drawn from e.e. cummings’ poem about strangers meeting truthfully, captures the album’s spirit. Even for long-time collaborators, there remains a sense in which each encounter is new, shaped by honesty, attention and discovery. For “Psalm” the pair is joined by bassist Ken Filiano, who provides a drone support to Bloom’s unhurried, contemplative lines and Adler’s grounding, cyclical tabla pattern (an avatar). The effect is meditative without drifting, anchored yet open. “Shan Dara”, the album’s longest track, expands the palette further with gamelan textures. Adler’s metallophones add shimmering resonance beneath Bloom’s effortlessly unfolding runs. Later highlights include “Be a Cowboy”, an off-kilter, post-bop burst of energy showcasing Bloom’s virtuosity and dynamic control and “Song for Khan”, where a haunting melody rises over the return of tabla, balancing lyricism with rhythmic subtlety.

Across fourteen concise tracks, *once like a spark*

unfolds as a meditation on interplay. Bloom’s unmistakable tone, equally commanding in her raspy lower register and piercing highs, pairs with Adler’s richly-textured approach. The duo creates music that is exploratory and intricate yet deeply relaxed. Above all, the album is a testament to two master improvisers listening as intently as they play.

For more info visit adhyaroparecords.com. Bloom is at Soapbox Gallery Nov. 29. See Calendar.



I’ll Be Thinking of You on Thursday
Carmen Quill (Close Up)
by Emily Steinhilber

Recorded live at the Lower East Side’s Close Up, with Jacob Sacks (piano) and Billy Hart (drums), bassist Carmen Quill’s *I’ll Be Thinking of You on Thursday* examines the elasticity of ensemble roles: how quickly musical authority can migrate when three improvisers listen closely to each other. Leadership is provisional. A change in Sacks’ attack reorganizes the rhythmic field. An increase in Quill’s note density draws a response from jazz veteran Hart.

Herbie Nichols’ “2300 Skidoo” makes that elasticity audible. Sacks grows increasingly percussive, sending figures across the keyboard until the motion feels almost circular. Hart catches that energy and redirects it before the texture opens for Quill. “The Sweetest Sounds / I Will Wait for You” begins with the bassist and drummer exchanging phrases before Sacks expands the duo texture. His touch becomes increasingly spacious, as piano and drums orient themselves around Quill’s bass. On her “Pencils of Color”, pianist Sacks moves between restrained single-note phrases and bursts of activity, changing the ensemble’s temperature without disturbing its intimacy.

Tadd Dameron’s “Hot House” gives this responsiveness its clearest rhythmic expression. Quill walks beneath Sacks’ spare lines and Hart’s swing, then increases her density as the drummer’s rhythmic activity changes around her. She audibly vocalizes alongside her playing as the trio swells. The pianist’s attack becomes emphatic, and Hart moves into the foreground for a drum solo whose final rhythmic figure elegantly leads the band directly back to the melody. Quill’s “Anthem / Fanfare” reveals the same sensitivity through restraint. She opens alone for nearly two minutes before Sacks enters with delicate descending figures; Hart follows with an exceptionally light touch. Their entrances preserve the openness the leader established, allowing the trio to accumulate without becoming dense. The music seems to wrap itself around her.

The repertoire places Quill’s compositions alongside those of Coltrane, Nichols, Dameron, Ellington, Rodgers and Legrand, giving the trio a deep well of material to draw from in negotiating its own language. The album’s appropriately empathetic title emerged from an ordinary exchange: Hart told Quill about an upcoming doctor’s appointment, and she told him, “I’ll be thinking of you on Thursday”—and Hart heard a song title.

For more info visit closeup154orchard.bandcamp.com. Quill is at Threes Brewing Nov. 19. She is also at SEEDS Brooklyn Nov. 4-5 (with Sonya Belaya), Roulette Nov. 7 (part of M³ Festival) and Barbès Nov. 9 (with Bryan Drye). See Calendar.

SYMPHONY SPACE

COLTRANE 100



FRI, NOV 20 | 7PM

Celebrating the centennial of the birth of the legendary **John Coltrane**, this extraordinary evening unites an all-star ensemble—**Joe Lovano, Melissa Aldana, Leo Genovese, Linda May Han Oh, and Jeff “Tain” Watts**—for a powerful tribute to one of jazz’s most transformative voices. Together, these acclaimed artists honor Coltrane’s enduring influence across generations, cultures, and musical traditions.

TICKETS ON SALE NOW!
SYMPHONYSPACE.ORG | 95TH & BROADWAY | 212.864.5400

All artists and programs subject to change.