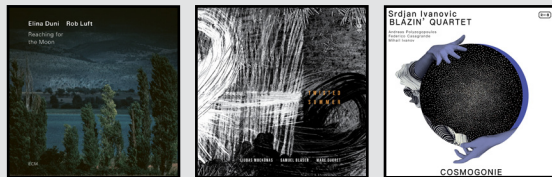


GLOBE UNITY



Reaching for the Moon
Elina Duni/Rob Luft (ECM)

Twisted Summer
Liudas Mockūnas, Samuel Blaser, Marc Ducret
(Jersika)

Cosmogonie
Srdjan Ivanovic Blazin' Quartet
(Rue Des Balkans/L'autre Distribution)
by Daniel A. Brown

In honor of this month's Geography Awareness Week (Nov. 16-20), we turn our attention to an array of groups—a duo, a trio and an augmented quartet—that feature a strong presence from Eastern Europe. These three albums are informed as much by modal folk music themes as free improvisation and electronics. If there is a unifying aesthetic, it involves shared exploration of dissonance and consonance, malleable song-forms and fearless searching.

Reaching for the Moon is an intimate duo between Albania-born, Switzerland-based vocalist-percussionist Elina Duni and London-based guitarist-

electronicist Rob Luft, and the album benefits from the ethereal production that is the sonic calling card of ECM. The pair's savvy eclecticism is evident across the eleven selections, which include both covers and original compositions. On the title track, penned by Irving Berlin, Luft alternates between volume-pedal swells and chiming motifs, as Duni's lilting voice conveys Berlin's lyricism-like blue smoke. On the original "Foolish Flame", Duni mourns and honors the fire of love, while Luft coaxes sonorous chords and arpeggios from his acoustic guitar. "Magnolia" plays like a 21st-century incandescent torch song. Tributes to Ornette Coleman, Gabriel Fauré and others, combined with Duni and Luft's consistently enchanting delivery, make this album a higher-reaching set.

Twisted Summer is a recent collaboration between Lithuanian reedsman Liudas Mockūnas (clarinet, soprano, tenor, bass saxophones), Switzerland-born but Berlin-based trombonist Samuel Blaser and French guitarist Marc Ducret. This international summit of free-form playing takes its inspiration from Jimmy Giuffrè's drummerless trios. Over the course of six pieces, the musicians decode, obscure and then ultimately release a musical conversation spun through the vernacular of dreams. On opener "Drop It", an atonal, heraldic exchange between Mockūnas and Blaser is seasoned by crisp commentary from

Ducret. The 14-minute title track explores an unpredictably hazy chord progression, eventually detonating into full-tilt blast. The miniature "How Lovely" introduces a fourth member of the group—silence—as the trio drops lengthy rests into the roiling playing. All in all, this is solid stuff for open-eared audiences.

Cosmogonie is a collection of (all-caps-titled) pieces that are unpredictable and uncompromising. An intriguing merger of jazz, universal soteriology and creation myths (especially ancient Greek mythology), this 14-song set is led by Paris-based, Serbo-Bosnian drummer Srdjan Ivanovic, and features his Blazin' Quartet—Andreas Polyzogopoulos (trumpet), Federico Casagrande (guitar), Mihail "Misho" Ivanov (bass)—along with select guest players. Opener "CHAOS" invokes '60s Sun Ra with its cosmic percussion rattle and wailing tonalities. Ascending horn lines are buoyed by rich string counterpoint on the threnody of "ÉTHER & HÉMÉRA"; symphonic grandeur is achieved with the echoing "PONTOS". "CRONOS & RÉA" seems to be inspired by Tony Williams' Lifetime. Ivanovic's drumming crackles with a fat-back fusion vibe, as Casagrande and Polyzogopoulos volley metallic riffs across the funky abyss.

For more info visit ecmrecords.com, jersikarecords.com and srdjanovic.com



Live @ Jazz at Lincoln Center
Catherine Russell (Dot Time)
by Pierre Giroux

Though it might be hard to believe, Catherine Russell's first live album feels less like a concert document and more like spending time with someone who knows exactly where she is coming from. *Live @ Jazz at Lincoln Center* was recorded at the Appel Room during a special weekend tribute to the Hot Club of New York, a group devoted to listening to old jazz and blues 78-rpm records. Russell's connection is hardly accidental. She is the daughter of pianist and bandleader Luis Russell (who was also music director for Louis Armstrong) and of vocalist-guitarist Carline Ray (of International Sweethearts of Rhythm fame), so this repertoire is part of her inheritance—yet she never sings it as a historical exercise.

Accompanying Russell is an experienced ensemble, including Ben Paterson (piano), Matt Munisteri (guitar), Russell Hall (bass) and Domo Branch (drums). The horn section features Evan Arntzen (tenor, clarinet), Jon-Erik Kellso (trumpet) and John Allred (trombone). Tap dancer Michela Marino Lerman adds rhythmic vitality to four tracks. Saxophonist Mark Lopeman's arrangements capture the rich musical world from which the songs emerged, moving between the sophisticated swing of the big band era and the earthy vitality of the blues and early jazz, while keeping everything sounding remarkably fresh.

"Now You're Talkin' My Language" delivers an easygoing swing, with Russell in full command and with sharp interjections from Arntzen, Allred and Kellso keeping the groove on track. "Never Too Old to Swing"

has a buoyancy that is hard to argue with. Lerman's tap dancing lends an irresistible swing to the performance. Ram Ramirez, who wrote the jazz standard "Lover Man", also composed "I Just Refuse to Sing the Blues". With her relaxed confidence, Russell doesn't deny the blues; she simply refuses to be imprisoned by them. Jazz writer Leonard Feather penned "Keep Your Mind on Me", a blues-tradition number the singer delivers with smoldering cool, backed by inspired solos from Arntzen, Allred and Kellso, all fully in keeping with the theme.

By the time Russell reached "F' Taint One Thing It's Another", "You Can't Pull the Wool Over My Eyes" and "Everybody Loves My Baby", the concert had settled into a loose, swinging feel, enhanced by Lerman's lightning-fast tap dancing. The band and Russell seem to enjoy each other's company as much as the audience.

For more info visit dottimerecords.bandcamp.com. Russell is at St. Ann's Church Nov. 5 (part of "Singing the Alan Lomax Archive" benefit for the Association for Cultural Equity) and Newark Museum of Art (Newark, NJ) Nov. 14 (part of TD James Moody Jazz Festival). See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.



House of the Singing Blossoms
Anthony Wilson Nonet (Sam First)
by George Kanzler

During the decade from 1997 to 2006, guitarist Anthony Wilson released four acclaimed nonet albums. Last year he resurrected this format, recording this double live album at LA's Sam First jazz club. Wilson's Nonet is an exceptionally nimble and versatile band, equally capable of all-out swing or pensive, delicate moods. It