FEEL THE POWER. A TEE FOR TWO, BLUE AND COLOSSAL.



World Cup fever lives on! The Blue Note FC Collection pays homage to the sport that's as funky cool and free as jazz. Messi, Maradona, Ronaldinho, Mo Salah, De Bruyne… their sporty improvisation on the soccer pitch is like a Monk tune in action. And don't forget about another legendary number 10—be like Pelé in Blue Note blue. From jersey number 39, for the year the historic jazz label was founded, to Freddie Hubbard's *Hub-Tones* recording year of 62.

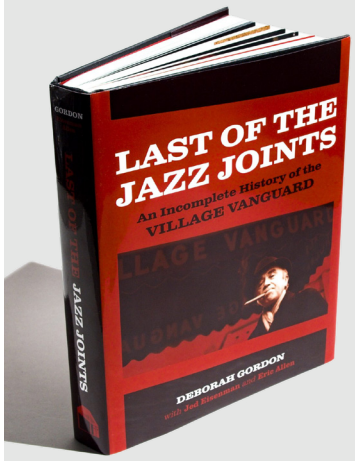
STORE.BLUENOTE.COM/PAGES/FC-COLLECTION $30-75

The last man standing—the last living musician pictured in the iconic "A Great Day in Harlem" photo. Now the legendary saxophonist is gone too, passing away this year on May 26. But memory and music are eternal. Said Sonny: "Jazz never ends…it just continues." And so Walter Theodore "Sonny" Rollins lives on in a sunny collection of hoodies and tees: a great, vibrant memorial to the saxophone colossus.

SONNYROLLINS.COM/SHOP $28-44



READING ONE BOOK IS LIKE EATING ONE POTATO CHIP (DIANE DUANE). YOU'LL NEVER GO HUNGRY WITH THIS JAZZY COLLECTION.

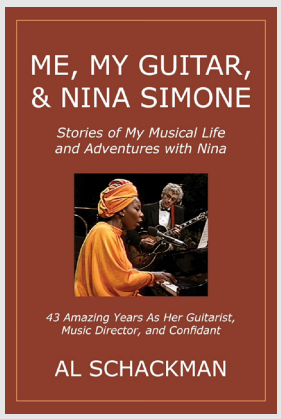


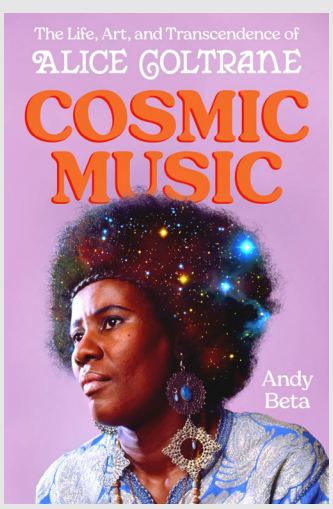
Last of the Jazz Joints: An Incomplete History of the Village Vanguard by Deborah Gordon with Jed Eisenman and Eric Allen is an amazingly thorough history of the legendary Greenwich Village venue, which has occupied the same cellar space at 178 Seventh Ave. since 1935. Deborah Gordon, the daughter of founders Max and Lorraine, has documented the club in a large-format book of 350+ pages via photographs, rare ephemera and exclusive musician interviews. A 30-page section shows the covers for all 180 albums recorded live at the Vanguard (from Getz, Rollins and Coltrane to Miguel Zenón and Immanuel Wilkins). This jazz tome ends with a 45-page listing of every act that played there from December 1938 to May 2026!

VILLAGEVANGUARD.COM/PRODUCT/LAST-OF-THE-JAZZ-JOINTS $60

An on-the-scene biography, *Me, My Guitar, & Nina Simone: Stories of My Musical Life and Adventures with Nina*, by Al Schackman, details the ups and downs of the volatile singer in 224 pages, from the perspective of an author who was probably closer to her than anyone. Friend and guitarist for 43 years, Schackman, now 93, knows if the rumors are true: Did Nina really fly into Casablanca for a concert carrying a gun? Did she make off with a Rolls Royce in Paris with Al and James Baldwin? Although the timeline shifts around, Schackman nonetheless communicates the importance and resonance of their relationship and Simone's place in history, including Martin Luther King Jr. and Simone introducing "Mississippi Goddam" at the Selma March.

NINASIMONE.COM $29.95





Andy Beta has written the first-ever full-length biography of Alice Coltrane (1937-2007), pianist, organist, harpist, composer and thinker in the 416-page *Cosmic Music: The Life, Art, and Transcendence of Alice Coltrane.* The author aims to give Coltrane her due as a forward-thinking musician overshadowed by her more famous husband—even in the years since her passing. Yet, she laid the groundwork for new age, ambient and electronic music, while making music rooted in her own deep spiritual beliefs. Also revealed are her previously unknown connections with other musicians, including Stevie Wonder and Nina Simone, as well as other notables such as Mother Teresa and Doja Cat. In *Cosmic Music*, Beta advocates the full story and legacy, focusing on a visionary whose influence is only just beginning to be fully understood.

DACAPOPRESS.COM/TITLES/ANDY-BETA/COSMIC-MUSIC $32.50



A Very SW!NG OUT Holiday
Eyal Vilner Big Band (s/r)
Winter Songs, Vol. 2
April Varner (Cellar Music)
It's an Ed Palermo Christmas! God Bless Us, Everyone!
Ed Palermo Big Band (Sky Cat)
by Marilyn Lester

Saxophonist Eyal Vilner has long been drawn to collaborations with dancers and choreographers, leading to his work as co-creator and musical director of the *SW!NG OUT* stage show. His newest album, *A Very SW!NG OUT Holiday*, offers 13 tracks of Christmas, Hanukkah and New Year's favorites, with a full-sized big band. The recording features Vilner along with John Lake, Summer Camargo, Brandon Lee, Anthony Hervey and Wayne Tucker (trumpets); Willie Applewhite, Joe Giordano and Becca Patterson (trombones); Mark Lopeman, Jordan Pettay, Julieta Eugenio, Ricky Alexander and Josh Lee (reeds); Luther S. Allison (piano); Ian Hutchison (bass) and Eran Fink (drums). The musicians swing and bop their way through tunes such as a reimagined "Deck the Halls" and "Sleigh Ride"; and vocalist Imani Rousselle sings '40s style on a fun "Frosty the Snowman" and "Winter Wonderland". Holiday esoterica includes the traditional "Maoz Tzur", "Comté Fruité" and "Coffee Bean Stomp Jubilee", featuring dancer/choreographer Caleb Teicher's tap solo. Probably very few listeners will know that Frank Loesser's "What Are You Doing New Year's Eve?" was actually meant to be sung in July (think about it), but Rouselle sweetly sings it. The natural ending for a holiday album, the traditional "Auld Lang Syne", is delivered as a mid-tempo swing-bop, sentimentality intact.

April Varner launched her *Winter Songs* series with a six-song seasonal EP in 2024, then expanded it to a full-length second volume in 2025 (plus a just-released *Vol. 3*). The 11 tracks from *Vol. 2* are fairly traditional, with several tracks featuring the Sunhouse Singers—the trio of jazz vocalist pals Kate Kortum, June Cavlan and Joie Bianco, who met at the University of Miami. Varner and the trio bring plenty of uptempo pizzazz to holiday favorites "Jingle Bells" and "Sleigh Ride", but she slows down the harmony and tone on the mesmerizing and haunting "Hallelujah" (yes, the one by Leonard Cohen). Cohen's original was sung with choral backup, also hypnotic, and this rendition certainly provokes thought on his cryptic intent—it's perhaps Shakespearean in the mode of "the winter of our discontent." Getting back into a happy groove, Varner offers "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year". Her clear, crisp soprano and her precise phrasing carry through on very jazzy, percussive renditions of "Holly Jolly Christmas", a fun "Run, Run Rudolph" and "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree". Closer is a cheerful, rousing "Winter Wonderland". This is an ideal album for those who want their holiday music percussively jazzed up (by drummer-percussionist Ulysses Owens Jr., who also served as album producer). Supplying solid musical support are Luther Allison (piano, arranger), Leandro Pellegrino (guitar) and Yasushi Nakamura (bass), who together add to the swingy, jaunty and jolly holiday cheer. Varner delivers the goods in an uplifting seasonal mode with plenteous verve.

Saxophonist, composer, arranger and bandleader Ed Palermo is a master of eclecticism. *It's an Ed Palermo Christmas! God Bless Us, Everyone!* is a narrative work that often sounds as if it's straight from 1950s radio. And the big band is really big: 26 musicians, described affectionately by Palermo as "virtuosic misfits," with several vocalists. Palermo's originals and arrangements seek to create a song cycle with fanciful sounds, whimsical passages and cinematic sweep, imbued with pop, rock, folk and jazz. He covers tunes from a variety of sources such as Frank Zappa's "Cruisin' for Burgers", Bruce Springsteen's "Candy's Room" and a mashup of Zappa's "Sofa" with the traditional "Little Drummer Boy", sweetly sung by Nina Hennessey. Opener is a narration leading to Zoltán Kodály's "Viennese Musical Clock", followed by Zappa's "Let's Make the Water Turn Black", vocalized by Bruce McDaniel. Statements of affirmation and belief appear in "I Believe in Father Christmas" with McDaniel, and Palermo's "The Christmas Babies", written for his daughters. There's humor in "Dominick the Donkey", sung by Mike James, and finally an ending narration and reprise of "I Believe in Father Christmas". This is the holiday album Charles Dickens would have created had he been in a cheerful humor!

For more info visit eyalvilner.com, aprilvarner.bandcamp.com and palermobigband.com. Vilner's album release concerts are at The Joyce Dec. 1-6 and Museum at Eldridge St. Dec. 25, as well as Penn Live Arts (Philadelphia, PA) Dec. 11-12. Varner's album release concert is at Mezzrow Dec. 13; she is also at Madison Community Center (Madison, NJ) Dec. 6 (presented by NJ Jazz Society), The Django Dec. 7 and 31, St. John's Episcopal Church (Cold Spring Harbor, NY) Dec. 12 and Zinc Bar Dec. 14. Palermo's album release concert is at The Falcon (Marlboro, NY) Dec. 19. See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.