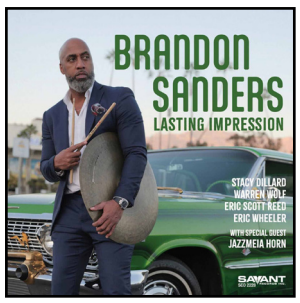

Lasting Impression
Brandon Sanders (Savant)
by Scott Yanow

Brandon Sanders started playing music later than most, not beginning on the drums until he was 25, but has long since caught up with his contemporaries. As he shows 27 years later on his third album as a leader, he is a top-notch drummer who plays spirited, often joyful, hard bop, the type of music that can satisfy even non-jazz listeners. On *Lasting Impression*, Sanders leads an all-star group of modern mainstream players, which includes Stacy Dillard (tenor), Warren Wolf (vibraphone), Eric Scott Reed (piano) and Eric Wheeler (bass). Jazzmeia Horn has two vocal features: a typically over-the-top rendition of "Our Love Is Here to Stay" and Stevie Wonder's soulful "Until You Come Back to Me". On the latter, Horn is accompanied by the rhythm trio of Sanders, Tyler Bullock (piano) and Ameen Saleem (bass).

The well-rounded set consists of two standards, a pair of originals by the leader, two by Reed, the Wonder tune, plus the opener, Bobby Hutcherson's "8/4 Beat". Wolf shines on the latter, and indeed often takes solo honors throughout the set, while Sanders takes a few breaks but otherwise casts himself more in a supportive role. The medium-tempo blues "Lasting Impressions" is a happy piece with concise solos that could have been twice as long. Sanders' "Tales of Mississippi" is a jazz waltz with mostly upbeat vibes that inspires some explorative solos. It pays tribute to residents of the state whom Sanders met on his travels, serving as a contrast with some of the darker songs about the Magnolia State. Dillard claims a feature on a slightly slower than usual version of Mal Waldron's "Soul Eyes".

Lasting Impression is an easily-recommended set of modern straight-ahead jazz, the type of high-quality music that one can always expect from the Savant and HighNote sister labels.

For more info visit jazzdepot.com. The album release concert is at Smalls Dec. 20. Sanders is also at Row House Harlem every Sunday. See Calendar.



Coherence
Cindy Blackman Santana (Mack Avenue)
by Rachel Smith

For drummer Cindy Blackman Santana, coherence is the coming together of everything in creation. Hence, the title of her latest album, *Coherence*, applies perfectly to the sound of her band via its musical choices and the musicians selected to play them. The core band is Emilio Modeste (saxophones), Zaccai Curtis (keyboards), Aurelien Budynek (guitar) and Felix Pastorius (electric bass). There are a number of guest musicians, as well—most notably legendary guitarist Carlos Santana (the bandleader's husband) on six of the album's seventeen tracks, plus iconic jazz fusion guitarist John McLaughlin (on one track). "Illumination" closely pairs Modeste's soprano saxophone and Curtis' keyboards. On "Peace Please", the musicians' voices fluidly slip into and out of one another. It's a sublime sonic statement of 21st-century electronics, and it envelops the listener in sound. The standout "Guitar Love" features guitarists Santana and McLaughlin in a euphoric three-way dialogue with the drummer.

Yet for all this coherence, the album does fall a bit short of its title. Two chanted meditations ("Coherence Tapestry" and "The Coherence Embrace") appear quickly from left field and disappear just as abruptly. "The Message Is Love", while a wonderful showcase for Carlos Santana's mastery, and "Psychedelic Movie House", despite haunting work from strings player Dave Eggar, also struggle to find their places. (Eggar, who plays cello, viola and violin, also arranges and orchestrates the occasional string sections utilized by Blackman Santana.)

This album more generally proves the coherence of music as a whole by simply refusing to break it into styles. For Blackman Santana, spiritual jazz, electric blues and rock coexist on a spectrum. Recognizable melodies lie at the heart of most of the album's selections, and as a result, they have clear arcs, plus improvisations, which do feel like they serve a story. The drummer is best known for her intensity and high-energy performances, and this album additionally showcases the ways she builds tension, especially in "SyZyGy" and "Peace Please", which indeed shape a story arc. The vinyl release is a condensed version of the album as heard on CD (and digital download), which helps increase its coherence, but the pieces still feel a bit forced together.

For more info visit mackavenue.com. The album release concert is at Blue Note Dec. 4-6. See Calendar.



Sizzle Ensemble
Rob Garcia (Connection Works)
by Andrew Schinder

On *Sizzle Ensemble*, the debut album of his new quintet of the same name, Rob Garcia expertly utilizes the drum kit as an instrument of harmony. Garcia's drums are most often out front, keeping the rhythm but at the same time contributing to, or in certain cases being the sole provider of, the melody. This new group is an expanded version of his longtime Rob Garcia 4, and with the larger band he aims for a bigger, more robust sound. The newly-formed Sizzle Ensemble includes Noah Preminger (tenor), Shane Endsley (trumpet), Gary Versace (piano) and Kim Cass (bass), and despite its small size, recalls the explosive sound of past big bands, particularly percussion-forward groups akin to the Buddy Rich Big Band and Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra.

Sizzle Ensemble consists mostly of Garcia originals, with a few covers in the mix. The album begins with a particularly exciting rendition of Thelonious Monk and Kenny Clarke's "Epistrophy". Intensely rhythmic, Garcia is on fire out front, while Preminger and Endsley alternate the melody, both offering dexterous solos over the tune's iconic motifs. The original "Autumn Mischief" is a straight-up banger. Aside from a couple of short solos, the leader mostly recedes into the rhythm section, though he and Cass put on a swing time-keeping clinic. The saxophonist and trumpeter harmonize beautifully on the melody, and the number also provides a fine showcase for Versace. "Department of Peace" is, as indicated by its title, an overtly political work. Slower and moodier than the previous four tracks (out of 13 total), Cass' bluesy bass riffing serves as the tune's intro. It nevertheless acts as a hopeful statement in a time of global strife and upheaval. The group's cover of Herbie Hancock's "Maiden Voyage" takes the famously melancholy standard into a newer, funkier direction, one that would not be out of place on a mid '70s Headhunters album. Hancock's modal piano styling is nowhere in sight, but is rather replaced by groovy beats, Versace's electric piano cooly filling in the spaces, with Preminger and Endsley's solos tying it all together.

For more info visit connectionworks.org/cw-records. Garcia is Ibeam Brooklyn Dec. 10 (with Triplex) and 18 (with Michele Gentile's FLOW), Smalls Dec. 21 (with Sizzle Ensemble) and Mezzrow Dec. 30 (with Jim Whitney). See Calendar.



Carnaval De Oriente
Francisco Mela (577 Records)
by Kurt Gottschalk

Drummer Francisco Mela's personality shines through on most any project with his name on it. He's been featured in Latin bands led by Chucho Valdés and Paquito D'Rivera, and has booked time with Kenny

RECOMMENDED NEW RELEASES

- **Cindy Blackman Santana—*Coherence* (Mack Avenue)**
- **Mike Brothers, Andy Nevala, Tim Aucoin—*House Sessions* (Girod)**
- **Terri Lyne Carrington + Social Science—*Trip the Night Fantastic* (Candid)**
- **Juan Chiavassa Trio—*Three on Three* (Whirlwind)**
- **Mike Clark—*Kuon Ganjo (Time Without Beginning)* (Wide Hive)**
- **Gustavo Cortiñas—*The Drum Also Sings* (Desafio Candente)**
- **Andrew Cyrille, Billy Hart, Bill Stewart, Nasheet Waits—*Drum Stories* (Analog Tone Factory)**
- **Fjall—*Helt* (Discus Music)**
- **Phil Haynes 2 Horns & What?—*JAzZ nOW* (Corner Store Jazz)**
- **Heat On—*150 Swirl* (Cuneiform)**
- **Yoron Israel—*Inspiration* (Ronja Music Company)**
- **Franklin Kiermyer—*Scatter The Atoms That Remain* (Gearbox)**
- **Olavi Louhivuori, Eivind Lønning, Kim Myhr—*Nubes* (We Jazz)**
- **Lesley Mok—*transient* (American Dreams)**
- **Sunny Murray, Arthur Doyle, Rasul Siddik—*Incantations* (NoBusiness)**
- **Sunny Murray, Arthur Doyle, Rasul Siddik—*New Light* (NoBusiness)**
- **Ron Vincent—*Ray's Hat Trick* (Origin)**
- **Jeff "Tain" Watts—*After Mask (Post Pandemic Parables)* (Sunnyside)**
- **Matt Wilson Good Trouble—*Love Is the Whole Thing, We Are Only Pieces* (Palmetto)**
- **Zhitong Xu—*X SHAPE Unfettered Hope* (JZ-Zip)**