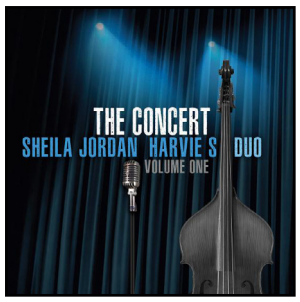


The Concert (Volume One)
Sheila Jordan/Harvie S Duo (Dot Time)
by Ori Dagan

In a sense, we have Charles Mingus to thank. In 1950, he spotted 22-year-old vocalist Sheila Jordan in his audience in Toledo, OH, and invited her to sing a tune with him. Though nervous, she agreed, and they settled on "Yesterdays" in G minor. Jordan had explored the format at Lennie Tristano's loft with bassist Peter Ind, but that night was her first public "bass and voice" performance. Even some of her close friends didn't understand her desire to work with bass only. She later recalled: "When I heard Peggy Lee sing 'Fever' I knew I wasn't crazy!"

Jordan continued exploring bass-and-voice duos with musicians including Steve Swallow, and recorded *Sheila* with Norwegian bassist Arild Andersen in 1977. She met Harvie Swartz, as he was known then (now Harvie S), while touring with Steve Kuhn's quartet. Despite his initial hesitation, she persuaded him to perform a duo concert in Pennsylvania in 1981. There were six weeks of rehearsals; the performance earned five standing ovations, and a remarkable partnership was born.

By the time of their appearance at the 1983 Festival d'été de Québec, the pioneering duo were at the height of their powers, inspired by an attentive audience. Jordan's uninhibited performance ranks among her finest on record. "Sheila was best when she didn't know she was being recorded," Harvie S recalled upon rediscovering the tapes from this performance decades later. "Then she went crazy and did amazing things." Expressive ballad singing shines throughout, particularly on "Am I Blue", where Jordan's angelic voice and daredevil phrasing transform a familiar standard into pure magic. Irving Berlin's "Let's Face the Music and Dance" contrasts the vocalist's ebullient swing with a dramatic bass solo, while "How Deep Is the Ocean" features a clever arrangement that stretches the meter to create tension and release before a dramatic finish.

Having sung "'Round Midnight" at Thelonious Monk's funeral in 1982, Jordan here delivers a poignant reading, complete with a cadenza showcasing her million-dollar ears. Perhaps most fascinating is Charlie Parker's "Confirmation", featuring her wildly-inventive scat at breakneck speed, followed by what sounds like an attempt at the Guinness World Record for fastest tempo ever called. If only there had been a video camera!

Together, Sheila Jordan and Harvie S created a sonic world—or perhaps a universe—entirely their own. How lucky we are to have another recording of theirs to add to ours.

For more info visit dottimerecords.com. Harvie S is at Five Spot Jazz Dec. 6, and Mezzrow Dec. 28 (with Alan Broadbent). He is also at Clement's Place (Newark, NJ) Dec. 11 (with Andrea Brachfeld). See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.





Matthew Stevens
Matthew Stevens (Candid)
by Jeff Cebulski

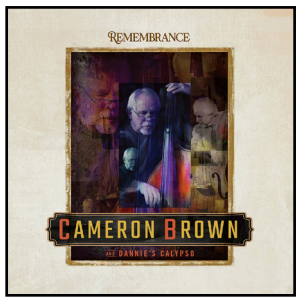
Self-titled albums usually are artist introductions, but guitarist Matthew Stevens' fifth solo album is a reintroduction following a personal transitional period—a prodigious one that included a move from NYC to the Boston area, a remarriage, renewed confidence gained from a teaching gig at Berklee College of Music and working as a producer of the album *I Am a Pilgrim*, a tribute to the late, legendary bluegrass, folk, country and blues guitarist-singer Doc Watson (1923-2012).

On *Matthew Stevens*, the guitarist, who added textured harmonies to recordings by Terri Lyne Carrington, Christian Scott, Walter Smith III and esperanza spalding, continues the cross-genre aesthetic of his first three albums, which was interrupted only by *Pittsburgh*, an all-acoustic outing. The core bandmembers on the new album are Josh Johnson (saxophones), Chris Fishman (keyboards), Kyle Miles (bass) and Eric Doob (drums, percussion), along with a number of featured guests, which typify the breadth of Stevens' stylistic choices: Carrington (drums), Joel Ross (vibraphone), Jeff Parker, Dylan Day and Rich Hinman (guitars) and Paulo Stagnaro (percussion), as well as vocalists Anna B Savage and Corey King.

"Take Heart" rides Miles' jouncing bass and Doob and Stagnaro's percolating percussion, as Stevens and Ross trade statements, supported by Fishman's synthesized blurts. Day and Hinman's steel guitars lend an eerie ambiance to "Hazy", where Johnson has a Weather Report-era Wayne Shorter-style solo in tandem with Stevens. The slimmed-down "SLMS" features Stevens on acoustic, sounding much like ECMer Ralph Towner, as King contributes a wordless vocal.

On the lyrical "1000 Times", Stevens and Ross work in tandem arpeggios, setting up a pleasurable statement from Johnson. "Edgewood" is a bucolic guitar trio tone poem involving Stevens, Parker and Day. Parker is given the lead on a close-to-the-vest version of Sonny Sharrock's "Who Does She Hope to Be?" (from Sharrock's *Ask the Ages*, 1991). Carrington deftly wields brushes while Johnson bolsters the melody with tonal richness, as Stevens joins Parker in a tasty duo moment. The simple melody of "Born of Silence" is rendered in pure fusion tones by the band. Savage's luxurious voice adorns the spare arrangement of Leadbelly's "Alberta", played on acoustic by Stevens with saxophone remarks from Johnson. The finale, "The Air Is Thick", has a subtle funk flavor enhanced by Doobs' percussion and Fishman's vocal-esque keyboard commentary.

For more info visit shop.candidrecords.com. Stevens is at Close Up Dec. 12-13. See Calendar.



Remembrance
Cameron Brown and Dannie's Calypso (Sunnyside)
by Jason Gross

After an impressive run of mid '70s albums with Archie Shepp, bassist Cameron Brown joined saxophonist George Adams and pianist Don Pullen's band from the late '70s through the '80s. Since Pullen's passing in 1995, Brown (who turns 81 later this month), as the surviving member of that great quartet, has named his ongoing project Dannie's Calypso after the group's drummer and a close collaborator and friend, Dannie Richmond (1931-1988). Since the '90s, Brown's prolific session work has included his own bands (including Dannie's Calypso, as well as his Here and Now). He also reunited with former collaborator, vocalist Sheila Jordan (1928-2025), up until her passing. Some of his recent work isn't easy to come by, but that's changing now, starting with this newly-available 2011 NYC live date, *Remembrance*.

The Dannie's Calypso ensemble here features the bassist with Lisa Parrott (baritone, alto, soprano), Jason Rigby (tenor, soprano), Russ Johnson (trumpet) and Tony Jefferson (drums). Album opener is "Sheila, It's You!", honoring Jordan; it starts with alternating soaring saxophone and trumpet solos, followed by a thunderous drum feature, leading to a gliding horn motif. "Baby Suite" begins with a bouncy theme, shifting to a contemplative bass solo and a quizzical horn ensemble before a series of fluttering horns. Richmond's "Soft Seas" is a lively calypso, the horn features capped off with Jefferson's spacious drumming, a tip of the hat to the group's namesake and the tune's composer. "Lullaby for George, Don and Dannie" sounds appropriately mournful. In tribute to his three fallen comrades and longtime collaborators, Brown's unaccompanied bass eventually leads up to a triumphant horn section blast. The 24-bar blues of "Rylie's Bounce" has drum and trumpet trades, transitioning to a fast-paced Brown solo, extended saxophone features and more back-and-forth between Johnson and Jefferson. The ballad "For Dad and Dannie" is a contemplative piece for Rigby.

The "Cocktail Suite" medley begins with Don Cherry's "Remembrance" (note: Brown's 1965 recording debut was on George Russell's two-volume *At Beethoven Hall* with Cherry), which features Johnson's trumpet. Its regal theme leads to a soulful groove and then to a charging horn onslaught. The medley slows for Antônio Carlos Jobim's "Portrait in Black and White (Zingaro)" then glides effortlessly into the honking bop of Dewey Redman's "Mushi Mushi", before returning to Cherry's "Remembrance", the coda a brief take on the relaxed swing of Cherry's "O.C.D.C." In all, Cameron Brown's *Remembrance* is a loving tribute to the bassist's late colleagues and influences.

For more info visit sunnysiderecords.bandcamp.com. The album release concert is at Maureen's Jazz Cellar (Nyack, NY) Dec. 12. Brown is also at Birdland Dec. 1-5 (with Joe Lovano Nonet), Maureen's Jazz Cellar Dec. 18 (with Lizzy Kates) and Mezzrow Dec. 22 (with Harvey Diamond). See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.