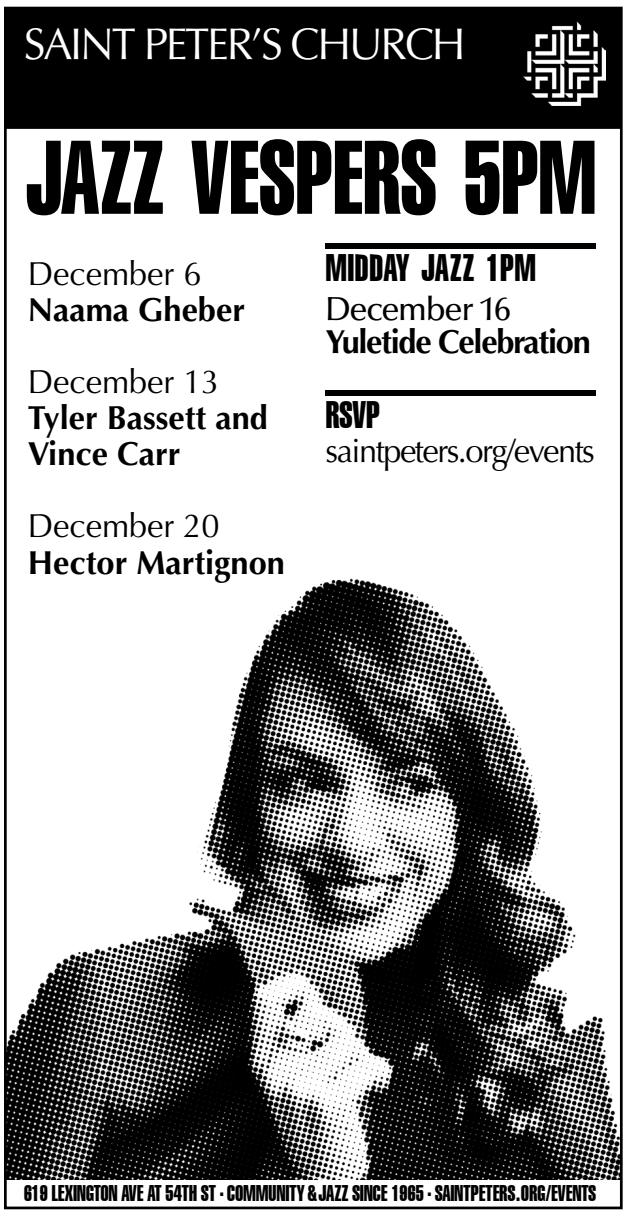


House of Trane
Jim Snidero (Savant)
by Scott Yanow

The title of *House of Trane* might lead one to expect that altoist Jim Snidero's recent recording would be a set of John Coltrane tunes. But the album is actually dedicated to the John and Alice Coltrane Home (in Dix Hills, NY), where John resided during 1964-67 and Alice lived until 1973. Snidero was deeply touched while visiting the house, which is registered as a local, state and national Historic Place and is designated as a National Treasure by the National Historic Trust for Preservation, and will soon be transformed into a museum.

The alto saxophonist assembled an impressive quartet here that features pianist Stefan Karlsson (a member of bassist Eddie Gomez' trio for over 30 years), bassist Nat Reeves (a veteran who has worked with Pharoah Sanders, Jackie McLean, Kenny Garrett and many other greats) and drummer Jason Tiemann (who in the last decade has been a first-call drummer, recording prolifically for labels such as SteepleChase, Posi-Tone and Cellar Music). The group performs six Snidero originals, plus two songs from the Coltrane repertoire.



One can hear aspects of Trane's sound and style in Snidero's playing even though he is an altoist, which Coltrane did play on super-rare occasions (e.g. with Dizzy's Gillespie's big band; Gene Ammons Allstars' *The Big Sound* album; in Japan a year before he died, and on the posthumously released *Stellar Regions*, recorded shortly before his 1967 passing). Snidero's originals utilize modal structures, showcasing a yearning and passionate sound, which stylistically harks back to the kind of material Coltrane was playing in the early '60s. While Karlsson has a gentler approach than Tyner usually displayed during his years as the pianist in the Coltrane Quartet, he does play in a similar Tyner-influenced style. Snidero's rhythm section as a whole sounds like Coltrane's during his more restrained performances. In addition to the originals, which all reference aspects of Coltrane's life at home, the quartet performs the standard ballad "A Weaver of Dreams" (recorded by Coltrane in 1959) and gives a spirited rendition of his "Resolution" from *A Love Supreme*.

There have been many tributes to Coltrane and to Miles Davis during this, their centennial year. *House of Trane* is one of the better homages, because Snidero plays creatively within the framework and spirit of Coltrane's music rather than copying him too closely, or playing much of his music.

For more info visit jazzdepot.com. The album release concert is at Five Spot Jazz Dec. 10 and The Side Door Jazz Club (Old Lyme, CT) Dec. 12. See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.



A Supreme Blue
Nicholas Payton & Butcher Brown (Concord Jazz)
by Jeff Cebulski

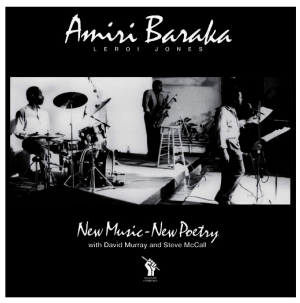
Trumpeter and multi-instrumentalist Nicholas Payton, and the contemporary jazz ensemble Butcher Brown—Marcus "Tennishu" Tenney (saxophones), DJ Harrison (keyboards), Morgan Burrs (guitar), Andrew Randazzo aka R4ND4ZZO (electric bass) and Corey Fonville (drums)—do not refer to *A Supreme Blue* as a "tribute" album. Yet it is clearly an homage to Miles Davis and John Coltrane, whose centenaries are being fêted this year throughout the world. This new album's versions of two seminal works, *Kind of Blue* and *A Love Supreme*, demonstrate respect while using reconstructed melodies and arrangements to point in different directions.

One representative tactic involves layering a familiar tune on top of alternative rhythms that suggest deeper historical connections. On "Freddie Freeloader", after a funky Clyde Stubblefield/"Jabo" Starks-style lead-in from Fonville, Payton hews closely to Davis' original trumpet theme before Burrs chimes in with his own funky statement. Payton responds in similar style on echoey trumpet, accompanied by R4ND4ZZO's resonant bass. "All Blues" pairs African-influenced percussion, including Payton on thumb piano, with the familiar trumpet and saxophone riff. Fonville's groove is augmented by Burrs' subtle picking and Tennishu takes a tenor solo that splendidly binds the two motifs.

Payton shines throughout the album, notably his sterling trumpet on "Blue in Green" and his piano work on "Flamenco Sketches", where his intro is dotted with references to Bill Evans' contribution to "So What". His echoed pronouncement of Coltrane's "call to worship" on "Acknowledgment", this time on trumpet, is striking, as the seasoned listener always expects a saxophone entreaty. R4ND4ZZO proceeds with Jimmy Garrison's iconic bass line, which Fonville supports with a nuanced R&B evolution of Elvin Jones' quietly rumbling cadence. "Resolution" becomes a swinging keyboard-centered hip-hop instrumental, with Tennishu's saxophone taking over. On "Pursuance", Fonville provides a slower, Latin-flavored rhythmic base, while Tennishu flourishes over Burrs' delicate comping. "Psalm" moves from Payton's vocoded performance of Coltrane's prayer-poem into a more sedate charismatic praise service litany.

Due to the production atmospherics, some of *A Supreme Blue* (especially the nearly ambient "So What") could become background music in hip bars, but that would miss the point; this non-tribute that moves the famous music forward turns out to be quite a tribute after all.

For more info visit concordjazz.com. A Supreme Blue (featuring Nicholas Payton) is at Smoke Dec. 28 to Jan. 3. See Calendar.



New Music—New Poetry
(with David Murray, Steve McCall)
Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) (Modern Harmonic)
by John Pietaro

"Poetry, 1st of all, was & still must be, a musical form. It is speech musicked…highly rhythmic communication. High speech." So begins Amiri Baraka's original, lengthy liner note to *New Music—New Poetry*, an often volcanic album first heard in 1982 (originally released on India Navigation), then lost to time prior to this, the album's first-ever reissue (as LP, CD and digital download), thanks to Modern Harmonic. It was recorded live at NYC's now defunct Soundscape space early into the supposedly trickle-down Reagan years. This was also a period of renewed fightback, still bloodstained from the assassination of Dr. King and the Newark riots. The Newark-born, cultural-political activist Baraka (whose 12-year deathaversary at the age of 79 is next month) makes the argument that "Black poetry means to show its musical origins," claiming that words and music were largely made into one by Langston Hughes at the Five Spot.

Opening with "The Last Revolutionary (for Abbie Hoffman)", Baraka's resolve is on display, as he emotes about the Chicago 7, federal government crimes and the need for ongoing revolution. David Murray's tenor saxophone drops R&B riffs and modern jazz fragments amid the poet's lines as drummer Steve McCall, in turn, creates a uniquely soaring rumble about them. The three immediately demonstrate an artful telepathy ("tremendous wings," as Baraka described the musicians), on equal terms, perhaps harmolodically so.

Among the cuts that capture the ear are the humorously titled (if you follow Italian) "Strunza Med", which asks "If the world was a poem / what kind of poem would it be? / What kind of goddamn poem would it be?," citing beauty, ugliness, tragedy and happiness within a sonic enclosure of bass clarinet and gently-liberated drumming. The piece for John Coltrane, "I Love Music", opens with a frighteningly beautiful ostinato by Murray before Baraka's vocalizations turn the piece inside out, followed by the saxophonist's subtones and embouchure explosions. Another work that magnificently illustrates the jazz