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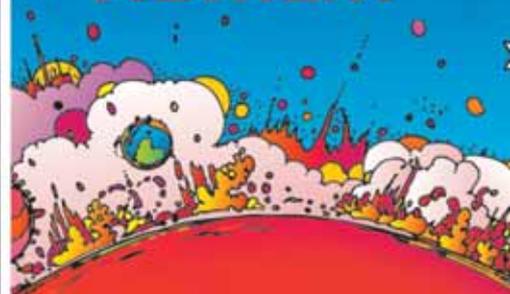


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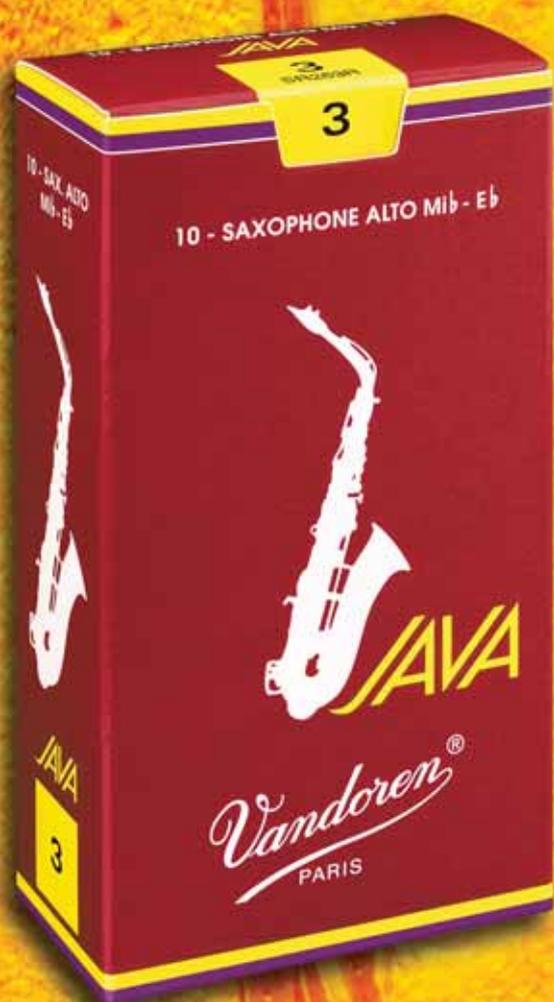
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CISFRIDALLE

**28 Béla Fleck**  
*Thrown Into Deep Water* | By Geoffrey Himes

The banjoist appears to not know how to just work on something as a side project. First he starts a project, and next thing he knows, he has immersed himself into a new musical vein. From his new Africa project to his work with the Sparrow Quartet and Edgar Meyer and Zakir Hussein—not to mention his ongoing, immensely popular Flecktones—Fleck stands as one of the most inquisitive, adventurous players in improvised music.

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## First Take

By Jason Koransky



Béla Fleck: African collaborations

COURTESY BELA FLECK

## Curiosity Creations

I first met Béla Fleck in 2000, around midnight at a hotel lobby in Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain. The Flecktones had headlined the evening concert at the Vitoria-Gasteiz Jazz Festival, and the post-show festival "hang" was in full swing, with Christian McBride and Russell Malone fronting their respective groups in two separate rooms at the festival's official hotel. Being Spain, the music would last until near dawn.

Fleck had played a long show, but this did not stop him from delving into more music. Not long into our conversation, the banjoist told me that he had recently started to learn about Indian classical music, studying the complex tala rhythmic patterns and raga melodies. Next thing I knew, I was counting and clapping along with Fleck in 5, 7, 9, 15—honestly, I can't recall the specific patterns, but they weren't your standard 4/4 swing. Fleck had such enthusiasm about the new music he was learning, as this helped to stoke the fire of his immense musical curiosity.

This sense of exploration is a trademark of Fleck's music—you never know what direction the Flecktones may go in, or what guest instrumentalist will appear on their album or at one of their concerts. This month's cover story on Fleck by Geoffrey Himes (Page 28) emerges from new musical directions apart from the Flecktones that Fleck has veered toward because of his curiosity. Most prominently, his travels to Africa resulted in an album and documentary, and he has recently toured the U.S. with a number of the African musicians from the album. His relentless search for new music has helped him produce one musical surprise after another.

"There's such pleasure in learning new music," Fleck told Himes. "I love busting my ass and feeling like I've got it."

Fleck's openness to new music stands as a good example to all of the winners and entrants of this year's 32nd Annual Student Music

Awards. Once again, the judges did amazing work listening to the boxes of entries that we received. They had hundreds of difficult decisions to make to cull the best from this magnificent batch of entries and pick the winners, which shows the amazing level of student talent that exists around the world. The complete list of winners, and stories on some of the winners, can be found on Page 75.

Besides prodigious chops, a willingness to explore music beyond standard jazz fare makes the SMA winners stand out from the pack. They have open minds, and exhibit the potential (and ability) to create individual sounds on their instruments or with their voices. They can look to Fleck as an example of someone who, even though he has is a virtuoso on his instrument, never rests in his laurels. I know that the some of the winners in this year's Student Music Awards will be making music as adventurous as Fleck's in the not so distant future.

Other artists featured in this issue, including twin brothers guitarist Nels and drummer Alex Cline (Page 40) and multireedist Ken Vandermark (Page 46), have also built their reputations by smashing musical boundaries and engaging in pursuits of new musical frontiers.

Marcus Roberts has taken a slightly different route. As Howard Reich explains in his story on the pianist on Page 34, Roberts delves into the repertoire of the jazz and classical masters (his new album, after all, is called *New Orleans Meets Harlem, Vol. 1*, and features the music of the likes of Jelly Roll Morton, Duke Ellington and Fats Waller). His goal is to fully explore the work of the past masters.

"Genius is a timeless thing," Roberts said "It's never a question of looking back to something."

That sure sounds like another valuable lesson from a master to the SMA winners. **DB**

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*Fred Gretsch  
President, The Gretsch Company  
Savannah, Ga.*

### Another House Party

Nice article about jazz house gigs ("The Beat," April '09). Betty Hoover does a terrific job with her Jazz At The 'A' Frame series. But the story failed to mention the granddaddy of all such "home" jazz events—the Bach Dancing and Dynamite Society at Pete Douglas' beach house in the San Francisco Bay Area. This Sunday afternoon series of jazz concerts began in the early '60s and is still going strong. One of the best gigs I ever played was there, with my group in the '70s.

*Dick McGarvin  
Studio City, Calif.*

### Mobley's Heroic Stature

Frank-John Hadley should know there's nothing wrong with hero worship ("Reviews," March '09). Had Derek Ansell's book, *Workout: The Music Of Hank Mobley*, been written in a Ben Stein voice, the book would not have been as interesting. Nor would it have stimulated me to contact Mosaic and other labels and try to locate some Mobley recordings that I hadn't thought I needed prior to reading the book. It was also nitpicking for Hadley to write that Ansell should have contacted Horace Silver or the late Freddie Hubbard. I hope that the book sells well and that many readers will use it to enhance their Mobley collections or try Mobley for the first time.

*Judith Pavitt  
Chelsea, Mich.*



DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES

### Remembering Louie

I was shocked, stunned and saddened reading about the passing of Louie Bellson, one of the premier drummers of all time ("The Beat," May '09). My fondest recollection of Louie as a member of the great Duke Ellington Orchestra was his showcase number, "Skin Deep," when I went to see the show at either the New York Paramount, or the Strand or Capitol theaters in the 1940s. At the end of the show, as the stage lowered into the pit, we'd rush to say hello to Duke, Louie, Cat Anderson and other members of the Ellington Orchestra. Louie would hand out Louie Bellson Drumsticks as a souvenir (I've got mine). In the realm of big band music, Bellson will never be forgotten.

*Herb Stark  
Massapequa, N.Y.*

### Chicago Guitar Props

With your headquarters in such proximity to Chicago, I find it hard to believe that you could have overlooked Bobby Broom and Jeff Parker in your "75 Great Guitarists" article (February '09). Both of these musicians have been staples of the Chicago and international music scenes for years. Broom has not only been playing with some of the greatest jazz musicians for his entire career, but he is a wonderful solo artist. Parker is also a great jazz musician and he deserves recognition for his association with Tortoise.

*Kenneth Oshodi  
New York*

Have a chord or discord? E-mail us at [editor@downbeat.com](mailto:editor@downbeat.com).

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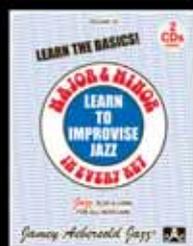
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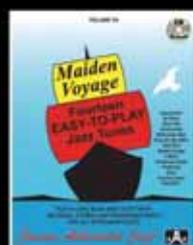
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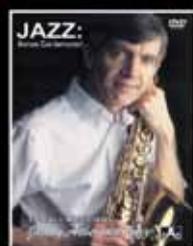
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Kendra Shank

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## Brass Panorama

**Dave Douglas shows off new alternative brass band on disc, the road and online**

Brass bands have been heard for centuries, but this format still shows off new twists. Enter trumpeter Dave Douglas' Brass Ecstasy, which has just released its debut, *Spirit Moves* (Greenleaf Music). His band's sound is tied to its distinctive lineup: The other instruments are French horn, tuba, trombone and drums.

"In the first few years of the band I wanted to get into this idea of alternative brass music," Douglas said. Referring to inspiration Lester Bowie's *Brass Fantasy*, he added, "Brass Ecstasy is not a tribute to Lester, but is influenced by popular music and jazz. It's its own thing, with original compositions."

Initially, the Festival of New Trumpet Music (which Douglas directs), jumpstarted the idea for this group in 2005. Then, the music grew out of an appearance at the 2008 Chicago Jazz Festival, which commissioned new music from Douglas. "It clicked with the guys," Douglas said. "It opened up windows where we can play freely, with no chords, piano player or guitarist. I try to cover harmony and melody."

While most of the music is Douglas', covers on *Spirit Moves* include Rufus Wainwright's "This Love Affair," Hank Williams' "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry" and Otis Redding's "Mr. Pitiful."

"I listened to it in a cab somewhere, and never heard a horn line like that before," Douglas said of the Redding track.

French horn player Vincent Chancey, a veteran of Bowie's *Brass Fantasy*, said, "I always thought of [Douglas] as an incredible composer, so I was more than interested to play his music and share the stage with him. He has a unique take on brass writing like he does with everything. His music goes places you don't expect and takes odd turns. But at the same time it is musical and poignant. He has redefined the brass quintet."

Drummer Nasheet Waits helped shape the sound on *Spirit Moves*.

"Dave is thorough," Waits said. "He has a specific vision that is embellished by the individ-



Dave Douglas

MARK SHELDON

uals bringing that vision to fruition. For this project, the instrumentation creates an uncommon environment. The way we recorded was pleasurable. There was no separation. This transmits an organic feeling, one where you're responding to the true sound of the instrument in real time. In most studio recordings, what you hear is filtered through a headphone mix."

Referring to Brass Ecstasy's unique instrumentation, Waits said, "Most of the groups I've found myself involved with over the last 10 years or so have had piano. There has also been a bass present. With Brass Ecstasy it's just me and Marcus Rojas, the tuba player, in the so-called rhythm section. This setting provides freedom."

"I finally got it to sound the way I want it to sound," Douglas said. "I struggled with the instrumentation for a long time, so when Vincent came in, the French horn formed a bridge between the trumpet and the lower instruments. Technically, the French horn is a woodwind and that solved it. It's a panorama of brass."

One of those other "lower instruments" is played by another Bowie alum, trombonist Luis Bonilla.

The group will tour this year—with stops at the Umbria Jazz Festival in Perugia, Italy, in July and at Jazz Em Agosto in Lisbon in early August. Audiences are offered a different view of the band's creative process on greenleafmusic.com.

"I am the owner of my own masters, and my own boss at Greenleaf," Douglas said. "This project is self-made—the distribution, interaction online. I can put more of myself into the music. The artist has a message that they can get out there."

This includes a digitally released free video of the group recording the album.

"We filmed the whole session," Douglas said. "The Internet is so interactive, with comments on my blog, people writing in. We have so much to learn from each other. It's not just that the artists put out their music and that's the end of it."

—John Ephland

## Riffs



**Chairman Hancock:** Herbie Hancock took the baton from Christian McBride as the creative chair for jazz for the Los Angeles Philharmonic Association on March 16. Hancock's two-year tenure will start with the Hollywood Bowl's 2010 season. Details: [laphil.org](http://laphil.org)

**City's Saints:** New Orleans Saints quarterback Drew Brees will help stage *The Domino Effect*, a concert that will pay tribute to Fats Domino and raise money to rebuild damaged schools and playgrounds in New Orleans. The concert on May 30 at the New Orleans Arena will feature Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Taj Mahal and others.

Details: [dominoeffectnola.com](http://dominoeffectnola.com)

**Buddy's Turns 20:** Buddy Guy will celebrate the 20th anniversary of his Chicago club, Buddy Guy's Legends, with a party at the venue on June 16.

Details: [buddyguys.com](http://buddyguys.com)

**Motown Lessons:** Songwriter Lamont Dozier will lead a master class in songwriting on June 16 at New York's Kaufman Center as part of the Songwriters' Hall of Fame Master Class series. Dozier was part of Motown's '60s house songwriting team with Brian and Eddie Holland. Details: [songhall.org](http://songhall.org)

**WGBO Launch:** Radio station WGBO of Newark, N.J., has started a new weekly jazz show and web site, "The Checkout." Details: [checkoutjazz.com](http://checkoutjazz.com)

**Detroit Award:** The Detroit International Jazz Festival received a \$50,000 grant from the Joyce Foundation to support John Clayton's composition paying tribute to Thad, Hank and Elvin Jones, as well as the city's Guardian Building.

Details: [detroitjazzfest.com](http://detroitjazzfest.com)

**RIP, Oquendo:** Percussionist Manny Oquendo died in New York on March 25. He was 77. After working with Tito Puente and Eddie Palmieri, Oquendo founded Conjunto Libre.



Zack Pride (left), Takana Miyamoto and Marcus Printup at the Diana Wortham Theatre in Asheville, N.C.

HENRY NEUFELD

## Grassroots Jazz Societies Bring Major Talent to Small, Affordable Performance Spaces

As part of April's Jazz Appreciation Month, The Smithsonian Institute started listing organizations that promote jazz performance and education. It ended up with more than 200 organizations in 44 states. Many of these non-profit societies were founded in the 1980s and 1990s to foster a jazz following in music-starved communities. In large cities, these groups promote alternative venues removed from the circuit of restaurants and clubs. Big and small, with both meager and healthy budgets, the goal of these organizations is simple: provide affordable access to jazz.

In the past decade, additional societies have entered the picture. Channel Cities Jazz Club in Oxnard, Calif., was born in 2002, and Jazz Lovers of the Lowcountry formed in 2004 in Hilton Head, S.C. New groups in Atlanta, Santa Cruz, Calif., Palm Beach, Fla., and Baltimore have also started holding concerts. Others, like Seattle's Earshot Jazz, have grown to the point where they produce an annual festival, as well as smaller events in museums and libraries throughout the year.

"Jazz societies try to present this music at as moderate a price they can," said Bo Farson, who runs the Western North Carolina (WNC) Jazz Society in Asheville, N.C. Tickets for his six-show concert series, which is housed in the 500-seat Diana Wortham Theatre, are \$22 each with a \$30 membership. "[Jazz societies] want to make the music available to as many people as possible."

Farson, a New York City transplant, is from the latest crop of music promoters. He started producing concerts in 2003, modeling

them after shows sponsored by the Presbyterian Jazz Society in Mt. Vernon, N.Y., which started in a small church. Jazz is hard to find in Asheville. "I wanted more of a jazz scene," Farson said. "There's a lot of dance, a lot of theater—there's all kinds of music, but little to no jazz."

Concerts in the WNC series are populated by local artists who serve as the rhythm sections for musicians like Kenny Barron and Wycliff Gordon. These headlining performances are booked by initiating personal contact with the players on jazz cruises. "If they trust that you're on the up and up and you're not going to make a big profit off them, they will work with you," Farson said, noting that most artists perform for a fraction of their normal fee. "I can't compete with Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola or some jazz festival. By meeting the musicians, it's all become possible."

The Jazz Arts Foundation in Lexington, Ky., is trying to unite the loose conglomeration of musicians who call the region home. In 2007, the organization began holding free monthly concerts at a 140-seat theater in the Lexington Public Library. The performers mostly come from nearby universities.

"There's a wealth of jazz talent in this area, but there aren't many opportunities, other than casual gigs, for them to go out and play," Jazz Arts Foundation President Dave McWhorter said. "The biggest thing in Lexington now is dueling pianos. It's a wild and crazy scene—they go late into the night over there—but it's not jazz. We needed to do something to get jazz alive in our community again." —Jon Ross

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Tiempo Libre: Jorge Gomez (left), Luis Castillo, Joaquin Diaz, Hilario Bell, Leandro Gonzalez, Tebelio Fonte and Cristobal Ferrer Garcia



CRACKERFARM

## Cuban-American Tiempo Libre Fires Up Bach-Fused Timba

When Miami-based Tiempo Libre signed to Sony Masterworks last December, it would have been expected for the band to bring solid Afro-Cuban timba to wider audiences. But the seven Cuban émigrés, together since 2001, took a surprising turn toward the baroque on the new disc *Bach In Havana*.

“We mix everything,” said bandleader/key-boardist Jorge Gomez.

Tiempo Libre’s fiery conflation of Johann Sebastian Bach works with traditional Cuban sounds, Latin jazz and pop. It isn’t a huge stretch. Cuba has a long tradition of embracing European classical music and the members of Tiempo Libre studied at Havana’s prestigious

National School of the Arts, where Bach’s music is respected. Bach was heard at Gomez’s home, too, as his father, Jorge Gomez Labrana, is a respected classical pianist. Evenings found the students caught up in Afro-Cuban music at dances and religious ceremonies.

“It was inevitable that the two would eventually merge creatively,” Gomez said. “We revere Bach for his musical genius. He was composing works for his contemporaries as a popular artist, while also creating deeply religious compositions. He was fascinated with dance rhythms, which makes him an even more powerful inspiration.”

Tiempo Libre’s take on “Minuet In G” and

“Mass In B Minor” fuse Bach with Cuban dances, including bata, bolero, danzón, guaguango, son and timba. Guest saxophonists Yosvany Terry and Paquito D’Rivera also add to *Bach In Havana*’s improvisational direction.

The group, whose name translates as “free time,” was one of the first bands to specialize in timba. Gomez called timba “a combination of the Buena Vista Social Club and Chick Corea.” He drew a distinction between timba and better-known salsa: “We have different instruments. We play electronic keyboards, and the bass has five or six strings, looking for a big sound. We’re more energetic and more jazzy. We have a lot of solos.” —Frank-John Hadley

## Shank Sailed Above Expectations

Bud Shank, a leading multireed voice of West Coast jazz, died of a pulmonary embolism at his home in Tucson, Ariz., on April 3. He was 82.

After a tenure with Charlie Barnet, Shank gained national attention as Stan Kenton’s lead alto in the Innovations in Modern Music band of 1950–’51. He seldom got to solo and went to Los Angeles, where he gained confidence in George Redman’s raucous r&b band. He joined Howard Rumsey’s Lighthouse All-Stars and blossomed as a player, sharing fluidity with his main inspiration, Lester Young.

Shank picked up the flute casually around that time. He led his own bands from ’56–’61 and, when the jazz market was depressed, Shank’s treatments of pop material—like the *Michelle* album—were big sellers.

Shank then plunged into recording work and became Los Angeles’ first-call flute player, enhancing “California Dreamin’” by the Mamas and Papas and The Association’s “Windy,” among others. But Shank chafed at being what he called “a studio sausage” and found gratification in racing sailboats.

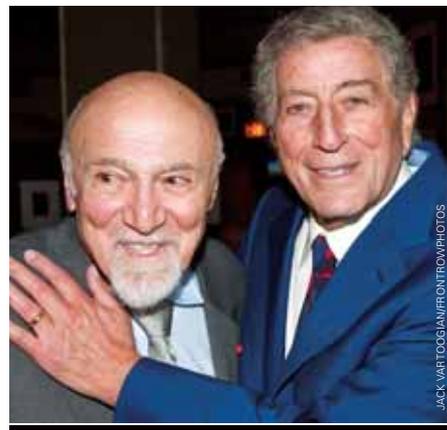
Beginning in 1980, Shank began to remake



Bud Shank

himself into a hard-edged alto saxophonist. He continued touring and playing throughout the past few years, including duos with Brazilian pianist João Donato.

Pianist Bill Mays played with Shank since the early ’70s. “Bud wanted to be taken seriously as a jazz player, that’s why he gave up the flute,” Mays said. “He felt he was typecast as part of the old West Coast jazz period and he wanted to be seen as a bebopper. He was stubborn. The same thing that made him sail from California to Hawaii made him continually reach for something in his music.” —Kirk Silsbee



JACK WART DOBRIAN/FRONTROWPHOTOS

## Avakian Hits 90

Columbia Records producer George Avakian (left) celebrated his 90th birthday with his wife, violinist Anahid Ajemian, on March 18 at New York’s Birdland. Guests included Tony Bennett (right), Quincy Jones and Bob Newhart. Paquito D’Rivera was also on hand and sat in to perform Louis Armstrong songs with David Ostwald’s Gully Low Jazz Band.

# Backstage With ...

By Eric Fine

## Kendra Shank

JACK VARTOOGIAN/FRONTROWPHOTOS



Singer Kendra Shank not only looks beyond the Great American Songbook for inspiration. She searches beyond the songs' lyrics. She will scat, sometimes suggesting a muted trumpet or even a birdcall, and her penchant for taking liberties with a melody can suggest a horn player. Shank spoke at New York's 55 Bar on March 27, where she performed before embarking on a three-week tour in support of her quartet's new album, *Mosaic* (Challenge).

**I assume your decision to credit *Mosaic* to your quartet reflects the group's chemistry. Would you elaborate?**

That was deliberate. This group (pianist Kimbrough, bassist Dean Johnson and drummer Tony Moreno) has made three records together, and it's always been under my name. But we're a group. We've been together 10 years, and the music is a result of our collaborative approach. I wanted to call it the Kendra Shank Quartet to acknowledge that this isn't just me. This is an ensemble of musicians of which I am only one member.

I don't approach it as a typical singer fronting a band, where I'm calling all the shots, everything is set in stone and the arrangement has to go this way in order for me to be comfortable. The arrangements are a collaborative effort.

**How prominent is original and unconventional material in your repertoire? Is this a growing trend among jazz vocalists?**

I was always looking for songs that were off the beaten path. Maybe part of it has to do with the fact that the standard songs

have been done by so many great vocalists over the years. Maybe it's that the generation I come from didn't grow up with the Great American Songbook songs as popular music.

I grew up with Joni Mitchell and James Taylor. I look in all kinds of places for those songs. I ask my peers about their original tunes. I sometimes look for old chestnuts that come from Tin Pan Alley or the Great American Songbook but haven't been recorded so much. I've always looked into the '70s music that I grew up with. In addition, there are more singer-songwriters in jazz today than there have been.

**Of those songs from the '70s, can you name one or two that translate well to jazz?**

Great jazz musicians have taken simple folksongs and made beautiful music, like "The Water Is Wide" that Sheila Jordan did with Kenny Barron. And like Charlie Haden doing "Goin' Home" or John Coltrane doing "My Favorite Things." It's what you do with it. Some songs are composed with rich harmony and a lot of harmonic movement, and some aren't. Joni Mitchell's material lends itself well to jazz. She has a jazz influence in what she does, anyway. But I took James Taylor's "That Lonesome Road," which basically is hymn-like. It's simple, but Frank Kimbrough and I reharmonized it.

**Do you still perform the music from your previous album, *A Spirit Free: Abbey Lincoln Songbook* (2007)?**

I love those songs, they're part of my book now. Those songs are so powerful, and that's why I did that record. I met Abbey in 1994. I'd seen her perform at Jazz Alley in Seattle, and she knocked me out. She was so powerful. Her songwriting is full of truth. The songs deal with subject matter that is timely, philosophical and has social importance.

I thanked her for her music, and we became friends. She made me realize that I shouldn't abandon my folk music roots, and I shouldn't be embarrassed by them while trying to be a jazz singer. She told me I should be embracing all of myself, all my musical influences and roots. **DB**

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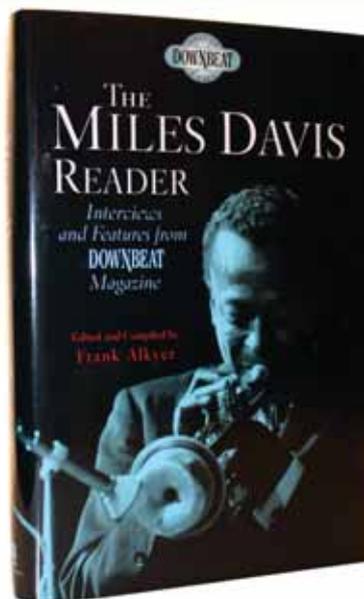
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# EUROPEAN SCENE

By Peter Margasak

Jazz's roots in Europe are strong. This column looks at the musicians, labels, venues, institutions and events moving the scene forward "across the pond." For questions, comments and news about European jazz, e-mail [europescene@downbeat.com](mailto:europescene@downbeat.com).

## Swedish Perspectives Festival Offers Cross-Genre Conversations

Perspectives, an ambitious and fiercely adventurous event that reedist Mats Gustafsson has organized in Västerås, Sweden, looks and behaves like a music festival. The latest installment of the fest was held this past March, and it has been staged sporadically since 2004. Dozens of concerts were held on multiple stages in different buildings. There were festival passes for sale, a thick brochure with bios of the artists and special releases produced to mark the occasion. But Gustafsson prefers to think of Perspectives as a "meeting."

"Festivals are meeting points," Gustafsson said. "When musicians tour and play club gigs we meet the audience, but we don't meet many other musicians, organizers or media. The festival is a great platform to meet people, to get ideas, to start new collaborations. The word meeting is key. It should be relaxed and you should be able to sit down and have a beer or a coffee and talk."

During the 2004 Perspectives, Anthony Braxton first heard the chaotic electronic-noise combo Wolf Eyes—an unlikely pairing that went on to perform together and released *Black Vomit* (Victo) in 2006. While other first-time encounters at the festival haven't been as celebrated, the latest installment witnessed some gripping new constellations of musicians, including a brilliant set by British keyboardist Pat Thomas,



Raymond Strid (left) and Mats Gustafsson

Australian bassist Clayton Thomas and Swedish percussionist Raymond Strid.

"Festivals around the globe that are run by musicians are the best ones because we have the network," Gustafsson said. "We have the contacts, we know each other. If we don't know each other, we can get recommendations and contacts quickly in a way a normal organizer can't."

Most of the musicians who've performed at Perspectives are interested in different sorts of music, so someone like France's Xavier Charles can play a set of improvised clarinet music and then turn around and create *musique concrète* with his long-running trio Silent Block. This year's event included people associated with jazz like

pianist Marilyn Crispell, bassist Barry Guy and drummer Sven Åke-Johansson, and figures from the noise and experimental scene like Hijokaidan, Borbetomagus and Otomo Yoshihide. But even that analysis misses the point, as Guy ended playing Baroque music and Åke-Johansson sounded experimental.

Gustafsson and Lennart Nilsson—the former jazz club owner and philosophy professor who handles the financial and logistical needs of Perspectives—have had to rely on an ever-shifting array of funding sources over the years, but they've never succumbed to tacky corporate presence.

Perspectives will hold another event in 2011, but without Gustafsson at the helm.

"It takes an enormous amount of work and time," he said. "You live with it, waking up in the middle of the night, thinking about different ideas. But with I need to be with my family more and I need more time for my own work."

Bringing in new blood has been one of his goals from the start.

"You have to put it out and to find the tools to present the spectrum. Then people can make up their own minds. I would love young people attending the festival starting to think that they might be able to do something of their own on a smaller scale somewhere else. That would be great." **DB**

## Rising Canadian Singer Yanofsky Begins U.S. Push

On a Monday night in March, a near-capacity audience at Catalina Jazz Club in Hollywood was on its feet after a 90-minute set by singer Nikki Yanofsky. The crowd contained notables like Phil Ramone, who produced her recent disc, *Ella ...Of Thee I Swing* (A440). The Montreal native, who was making her Southern California debut, commanded the stage, including a funk-beat arrangement of "The Wind Cries Mary." More remarkably, she's 15 years old.

The youngest artist ever to sign with Verve (she participated in the *We Love Ella* tribute album), Yanofsky sang on Disney's *High School Musical 2* and debuted at the 2006 Montreal Jazz Festival. Afterwards, she performed with the Count Basie Orchestra, Marvin Hamlisch and Wyclef Jean. Yanofsky has also been nominated as Best New Artist in Canada's Juno Awards, which will be held in June.

While Yanofsky's father, Richard Yanofsky, is a pianist, Fitzgerald's voice

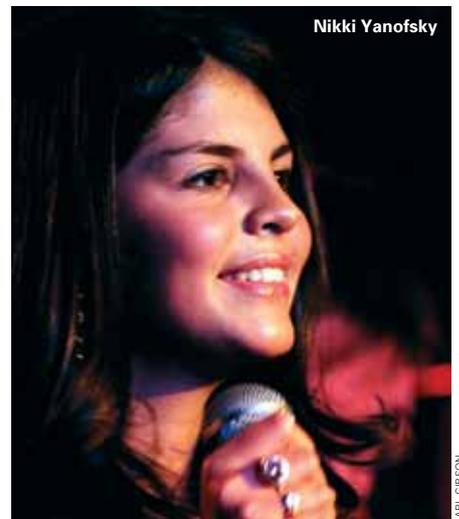
turned her on to jazz.

"I fell in love with her sound, phrasing and her tone—that's perfection to me," Yanofsky said. "I needed a song for the Montreal Jazz Festival program. As an experiment, my teacher at the time, Nancy Martinez, brought me an arrangement of 'Airmail Special.' I heard Ella's recording of it, and something clicked. I learned it in three days and discovered that I had an ear to hear music and transpose."

Along with swing, Yanofsky's disc includes a couple blues standards, such as "Evil Gal Blues." She's equally enthused about the time-honored American genre. "The blues are so important," Yanofsky said. "It's roots music."

After her U.S. visit, Yanofsky plans to tour her country's festival circuit this summer. She's also keeping the brighter spotlight from changing her attitude.

"I try to stay grounded and I do that by keeping close with my family and friends," she said.



"I want to keep growing as an artist and learn more about music." —Kirk Silsbee

# Jazz Legends, Indian Masters Join Forces for Goodwill Celebration

As Herbie Hancock, George Duke and Dee Dee Bridgewater entered the Ravi Shankar Institute of the Performing Arts in New Delhi in February, they noted the welcome sign adorning the entrance: "Peace Through Music." It was the first time that Hancock and sitarist Shankar met and played together—a convergence of cultures reminiscent of the event they were celebrating.

The U.S. State Department, Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations began planning this event last summer. The musicians gathered for the tour, which included concerts in New Delhi and Mumbai, between Feb. 13 and 18 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s month-long pilgrimage to India to study Mahatma Gandhi's teachings on nonviolence. Martin Luther King III was also part of the group of visiting dignitaries.

Besides the main concerts in New Delhi and Mumbai, the headliners and students from the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz in New Orleans performed at an orphanage as part of an outreach program in Mumbai. At the Ravi Shankar Institute, Hancock and Shankar taught a master class.

"There's no greater ambassador than a

musician for goodwill among nations," Duke said. "Music is the true international language. It speaks to people's hearts and you don't need a language to be completely understood. Musicians can do way more than any politician on a one-to-one level."

The U.S. Information Agency, as part of the State Department, founded the Jazz Ambassador program in the mid-1950s to counter Soviet propaganda in the midst of the Cold War. During the past decade, the Jazz Ambassador program has seen a revival in its transformation into programs like The Rhythm Road: American Music Abroad, co-organized by New York's Jazz at Lincoln Center.

"If you're going to celebrate an American transformation, what better art form than jazz?" said Michael Macy, cultural attaché for the U.S. Cultural Affairs Office. "Jazz is popular in India. It communicates to an Indian audience. And we had tabla player Zakir Hussain, who has his own influence on American music."

This was Hancock's third Jazz Ambassador



George Duke (left), Ravi Shankar and Herbie Hancock

ROBERT PILON

tour of India (his first was in 1996 with the Monk Institute) and Duke's second in three years, performing before with Al Jarreau, Ravi Coltrane and Earl Klugh.

"This is a great moment for the musicians to be working under Hancock and hopefully that will help to bring more of the Indian art forms out there," Hussain said.

Bridgewater said the musicians' visit met their expectations.

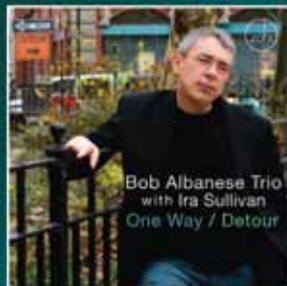
"Music is a healing force," Bridgewater said. "Just the reaction of the audience in Delhi was evidence that music could indeed bridge cultural gaps." —Brian Dwyer



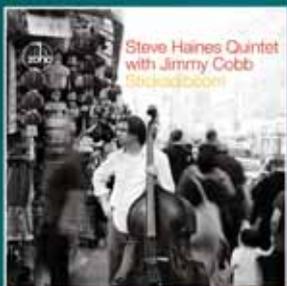
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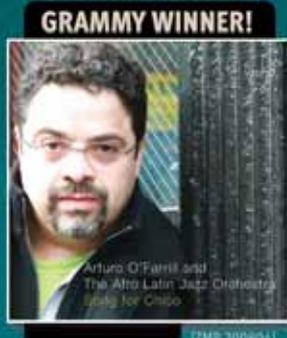
This is the finest band I have ever performed with in my life. They make me feel as if I have returned to Cuba." —*Bebo Valdés*  
"The Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra sounds great with precision brass and saxophone work ... a warm, cohesive sound." —*The New York Times*

**RUFUS HUFF — Rufus Huff**

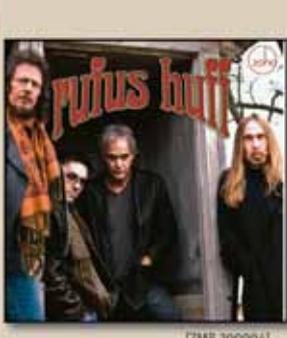
Named after obscure Blues men Whistlin' Rufus and Luther Huff, Kentucky's Rufus Huff features Greg Martin, known for his raucous, incendiary guitar playing in The Kentucky HeadHunters. "Rufus Huff delivers hard riffage soaked in Southern soul. Greg's spine-tingling guitar solos evoke Duane Allman, Mick Taylor, and Bluesbreakers-era Eric Clapton, while remaining utterly his own." —*Andy Ellis*

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## Corea, McLaughlin's Five Peace Band Stirs Up Fusion Onslaught

Tending to old and new alliances has been part of jazz since the music began, as musicians filter in an out of projects. Still, some connections can strain expectations and stereotypes of what fits where in the music. Take, for instance, the Five Peace Band, a short-term group uniting pioneering jazz-rock fusion architects guitarist John McLaughlin and keyboardist Chick Corea. The band breezed through tours of Europe and elsewhere, and played the United States this spring, stopping at Royce Hall at the University of California, Los Angeles on March 19.

For anyone who has followed these two jazz titans, from their brief hook-up in Miles Davis' early electric group in the late '60s through their diversified projects, the sight and sound of these two disparate legends together was logical and a bit disarming. All these decades, they have been the friendliest of "rivals," on either side of the fusion aisle. Named after a McLaughlin tune (which this band doesn't play), the Five Peace Band warrants all-star status, considering a lineup fortified with bassist Christian McBride, also saxophonist Kenny Garrett (who, like the leaders, is a Davis band alumnus) and drummer Vinnie Colaiuta (for dates Colaiuta missed, the drum chair was filled by Brian Blade, who no doubt brought a different pulse to the band).

At Royce Hall, the band navigated through a feisty post-fusion blowing fest, but with enough solidity and interplay to give the show bone structure and present a persona worth pursuing further.

As the chief instigator, Corea supplied the



Chick Corea (left) and John McLaughlin

EARL GIBSON

band's two new originals. "The Disguise" is a moody samba-flavored piece, which the band deftly handled. By contrast, Corea's extended suite "Hymn To Andromeda" took up much of the concert's second half, basking in a sense of an epic sweep, from Corea's impressive, abstracted piano solo intro through rounds of intricate tutti lines, emotional shifts and a volcanic, John Coltrane-colored solo by Garrett.

Other material was culled from McLaughlin's recent albums, the latter-day chapter in the 67-year-old guitar hero's revived fusion history. "Raju," from last year's inspired Indo-fusion album *Floating Point*, opened the show in fervent form, with the guitarist showing supple phrasing and expressive command. All night, McLaughlin, deploying an edgy guitar tone, spun out his signature spidery flurries, yet always graced with touches of expressive filigree, including phrase-ending nuances on the whammy bar and his natural, breathy sense of phrasing.

From McLaughlin's underrated 2006 return to fusion form, *Industrial Zen*, the fast-slow,

hubristic-sensuous Latin pulse of "Señor C.S.," gave the band a ripe, rewarding workout. McLaughlin's fractured, odd-metered "New Blues Old Bruise," also from *Industrial Zen*, was one of the guitarist's deceptive variations on the blues theme. A fusiony shuffle was folded into a compound meter, but was still somehow soulful in McLaughlin's brainiac way. Colaiuta, who loves a good metric challenge, seized the occasion to play a solo of articulate thunder.

Beyond the leaders' songbooks, Jackie McLean's hard-bop classic "Dr. Jackle" ushered more conventional jazz energies into the set, providing fodder for McBride's dynamic acoustic bass solo. The band returned to the stage for a collective history-dipping encore of themes and riffs from Davis' *In A Silent Way*—the point, 40 years ago, when McLaughlin and Corea musically met. They offered a pocket-sized abridged version, a warm but short bath of nostalgia for "two old hippies" (McLaughlin's joking term) who altered the course of music and are still coaxing artistic worth from the "f-word" genre they helped create. —Josef Woodard



Charles Tolliver

JACK WARTOGIAN/FROMPHOTOS

## Tolliver Re-creates Orchestral Monk

In the opening night of a Thelonious Monk tribute at New York's Town Hall on Feb. 26, conductor Charles Tolliver revisited the historic tenet orchestral debut of the pianist/bandleader that took place a half-century earlier. That concert was released as *The Thelonious Monk Orchestra At Town Hall*. Tolliver himself attended the 1959 concert as a teenager. Ancient history? Hardly.

Duke University commissioned Tolliver to re-create Hall Overton's original arrangements and assemble a 10-piece orchestra to mirror the original show. That included the opening solo performance, with pianist Stanley Cowell's tumblers and whorls through "In Walked Bud," a trio tune ("Blue Monk"), then a quartet number ("Rhythm-A-Ning"), as well as the orchestral encore of "Little Rootie Tootie." That piece

appeared in the original performance because Monk missed the signal to pause for a change of tape and thereby performed it again, sped up, to the satisfaction of the recording team.

Like Monk had done before his show, Tolliver rehearsed his band to negotiate the twists and turns of the swinging arrangements. As a result, the group was intent, tight and spirited in a refined jazz fluidity. Tenor saxophonist Marcus Strickland was a revelation of grace and beauty in his solo spotlights. Tolliver delivered piercing, staccato, off-kilter notes on the sassy "Friday The 13th" and Howard Johnson exclaimed booming, joyful runs on baritone saxophone, especially during the turning point of the show, the tugging, pushing, sweeping launch through "Little Rootie Tootie."

Before that number, the show exhibited full-

bodied gusto, but the tenet proved formidable during "Little Rootie Tootie." Tolliver pointed out that in the original recording, Monk's band momentarily lost its way. His group played the piece to perfection.

The final orchestral piece was a lyrical swing through "Crepuscle With Nellie," after which Town Hall hailed the band with another standing ovation. With that, the orchestra romped through "Little Rootie Tootie" again to conclude the satisfying 75-minute performance.

As fine as it was, Tolliver's offering won't go down in history like Monk's landmark concert

did. But it provided a lucid reminder of the vitality of Monk's legacy. And it hastened a return to the original recording, where the pianist, obviously enthralled by his band and the arrangements, doodled throughout with his trademark idiosyncratic, whimsical, wrong-note comps. Despite Cowell's solid performance, including the geometric shapes he created in his solo during the first run through of "Little Rootie Tootie," there was no mistaking that he couldn't—and wouldn't dare to—compete with the odd grace notes of the master.

—Dan Ouellette

## Jazz, Neo-Soul Stars Honor African American Legacy at Carnegie Hall

As Carnegie Hall's "Honor" performance series set out to present "A Celebration of the African American Legacy," an all-star lineup took on that lofty goal. Opera singer Jessye Norman curated a repertoire that spanned blues, jazz, rock 'n' roll, r&b, hip-hop and classical music. The Carnegie-sponsored event ran for three weeks in March at venues throughout New York. Yet on March 4 at Carnegie Hall, "Honor!" grappled with satisfying its educational mandates. Spoken introductions and testimonials by Ben Vereen and Avery Brooks amounted to a rehashing of what has been written countless times. The portraits of icons projected above the stage were also unnecessary.

Perhaps the most daring aspect of the Carnegie Hall program was booking singers from the neo-soul era for a tribute to vintage soul music. If neo-soul fell short of its more visceral predecessor, performances by Leela James, Kem and Anthony Hamilton saluting James Brown, Aretha Franklin, Donny Hathaway and Bill Withers highlighted the concert.

James made the strongest impression. She brandished her voice like a weapon on Brown's "It's A Man's Man's Man's World" and "I Never Loved A Man (The Way I Love You)." James' voice echoed the wildly expressive style of Koko Taylor and even Janis Joplin while rising above the 14-piece house band.

The jazz portion of the program sometimes fell short of its star power. James Carter provided a couple of thrills, but his performance was uneven. He overwhelmed on "A Night In Tunisia" during a tribute to Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis and John Coltrane. Carter tackled the timeless bebop tune on soprano, an instrument that had no profile during the bop era. The ploy worked—Carter's outpouring of notes recalled the upper reaches of Gillespie's trumpet and the harmonic concepts Coltrane pioneered.

Ron Carter and James Carter's duet on Duke Ellington's "Degas' Racing World" had its



moments, so did Terence Blanchard during his quintet's reading of "When It's Sleepy Time Down South." But James appeared out of her element when she joined the group for its tribute to Billie Holiday on "Good Morning Heartache," and James Carter's unaccompanied tenor intro on "Naima" missed its mark.

Saxophonist Carter redeemed himself on "All Blues," where another unaccompanied intro ignited a tenor solo matching the intensity of "Naima," but with greater coherence. Jeremy Pelt built his flugelhorn solo from a series of riffs that climbed into the upper register, where his tone acquired an appealing edginess.

Singer Freddie Jackson closed out the show with likeable covers of Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On" and Luther Vandross's "Never Too Much." While the program ebbed and flowed, the talent shone through. Music of this magnitude requires little or no explication. It speaks for itself.

—Eric Fine

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- 5/24/09 - The Dakota - MINNEAPOLIS, MN
- 6/1/09 - Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola - NEW YORK, NY

## Gerald Clayton

### Expansive Tastemaker

References abound on pianist Gerald Clayton's debut, *Two Shade* (ArtistShare). His trio navigates original repertoire that encompasses early-'60s soul and chamber jazz, the American Songbook, the European classical canon, and the complex harmonic and rhythmic structures that underpin 21st-century musical invention. But in a generation of technical, and resourceful, wunderkinds, Clayton, 24, stands out for his nuanced touch, precise articulation and the way he constructs a narrative for his solos.

Clayton presented these attributes last summer at Umbria Jazz in Perugia, Italy, where his trio fulfilled a 10-day booking in the cavernous room that served as the festival's nightclub and late-night hang. Early in the week, close to 2 a.m., Clayton launched into the insinuating melody of "Is That So?," a Duke Pearson song that was a favorite selection of the late John Hicks. While Hicks took it as a medium swinger, Clayton played it almost rubato, fragmented his lines, and during the swing section incorporated a quote from Charlie Parker's "Cool Blues" into his flow.

Clayton probably could parlay his off-the-hook chops and intimacy with the tradition into a comfortable career. He recently left Roy Hargrove after a three-year run, substituted frequently in 2007-'08 for Hank Jones as Roberta Gambarini's pianist, and has recorded with Diana Krall and Michael Bublé. But his primary interest lays in broadening his voice within the present-day conversation.

"When I need to shed a lot to learn somebody else's music for a gig, I can feel myself taking the next step up," said Clayton, referring in this case to a concert at New York's Jazz Gallery with Yosvany Terry. "Yosvany gave me four charts, and it was intimidating. I had to spend a day or two at the piano trying to figure them out and get inside the rhythms. That process gives you a key into the mind-set of the people you play with."

A full-time New Yorker since the beginning of 2008, Clayton increasingly focuses on his trio, and also gigs with his father, bassist John Clayton, in duo performances and with the Clayton Brothers band, supporting their new release, *Brother To Brother* (ArtistShare). He capitalizes on new-found down time by engaging in extensive research and development, much of it accomplished in the north Harlem apartment that he shares with Justin Brown, his drummer, a floor below the apartment occupied by Joe Sanders, the trio's bassist. Among those who come by to play are young talents like Ambrose Akinmusire, Marcus Strickland, Logan Richardson, Dayna Stephens and Terry.

"When I was younger, I wasn't ready to hear certain harmonies or melodies, or couldn't imagine enjoying playing in 5 or 7," he said. "Now I'm trying to figure out how to play Joe's new tune in 19. You keep searching, and your taste buds expand."

As a youngster growing up in California, Clayton recalled, "The



JACK VARTOGGIAN/FRONTROWPHOTOS

soundtrack to my life was Oscar [Peterson], Benny [Green] and Monty [Alexander]," all master purveyors of swinging, orchestrated piano-trio music and also family friends. "My father was involved, but he never pushed too hard. The answers were there if I asked for them; at most, if I was practicing and he was cooking in the kitchen, he might say, 'F-sharp!' if I played an F-natural. Occasionally, he would find the original recording of something I was playing."

From his father, Clayton learned to take a long view while navigating the treacherous waters of the jazz business. "When people say the music business is tough, to dad that means they've already given up," he said. "His mentality is to do it for the music, and the rest will come. He emphasized 'no rush.' I'm thankful that he did, because I'd hate to have an early album out that would be nothing but embarrassing today."

At 17, Clayton took the piano chair in the Grammy Jazz Band, where he met Sanders and Brown. "Even then, I could tell that we would be making music together in the future," he said. They reconnected when Clayton attended the Manhattan School of Music from 2004-'05, before returning West to complete his studies at the University of Southern California. He studied composition at U.S.C. with Billy Childs, whose ideas inform his present musical production.

"I've hit somewhat of a wall finding more ways to express myself on just standards," Clayton said. "I still love to play them, and exploring composition is helping me find my voice a little bit. It's exciting to get a new tune out, to write and edit, try stuff again." —Ted Panken

## Mike Holober Bucolic Inspiration

The word “Gotham” conjures the grittier side of New York City in all its frenzied, menacing glory. When the term is applied to a jazz orchestra, one would usually expect the music to evoke similar attributes. But pianist Mike Holober’s new disc with his Gotham Jazz Orchestra, *Quake* (Sunnyside), evokes the opposite. Modifiers like “spacious” and “serene” come to mind after a listen. Perhaps it’s no coincidence that Holober is a self-described “outdoor person.”

“When I’m outside, it puts me in the mood I need to be in to write,” Holober said. “I just feel positive about everything. Ever since college, I have spent close to about three total years outside. [The title song] is motivated by the sound that aspen trees make when the leaves rustle in the breeze, particularly in the fall.”

Holober wrote a bulk of *Quake* at the bucolic artist resorts of MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, N.H., and Yaddo in Saratoga Springs, N.Y. In addition to his own songs, his ensemble interprets The Beatles’ “Here Comes The Sun” and the Rolling Stones’ “Ruby Tuesday.”

“Every time I do an arrangement of a pop tune, I try to transform the song into a jazz orchestra work, but one that also expresses what made me excited about the tune in the first place,” Holober said, before revealing that he and his wife often sing The Beatles’ melody every time they see the sun break through clouds or during a sunrise. He shares a similar story for “Ruby Tuesday.”

“My whole life I’ve been into hiking,” he said. “My wife and I had been in the Sierras in California and we went to Ruby Lake, and we started singing all the tunes with ‘Ruby’ in them.”

Those George Harrison and Mick Jagger/Keith Richards tunes also



COLLEEN CHRZANOWSKI

reveal Holober’s love for singer-songwriters.

“There’s something about the emotional quality, the optimism or sadness from singer-songwriters,” he said. “Sometimes when you hear their music, it feels personal. I hope all of that exists in my music.”

Still, Holober’s compositions for the Gotham Jazz Orchestra place more emphasis on the repertoire itself, rather than the personalities of the bandmembers, including trumpeter Scott Wendholt, saxophonist Tim Ries and bassist John Herbert—all of whom are his friends.

“I’m not writing to a specific audience,” he said. “But my hope is that people will get my personal perspectives and my music isn’t just some jazz language that’s well done and well executed. I want someone who doesn’t know anything about jazz to listen to my music and say, ‘Play that again,’ not because there was a burning solo, but because the solo went with the composition.”

—John Murph

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## Melissa Morgan Elegant Diarist

Singer Melissa Morgan steps out of a silver Porsche on the cover shot on her debut, *Until I Met You* (Telarc). Her classy authenticity also comes through her musical choices, like the title track, a take on Count Basie's "Corner Pocket." But Morgan's catchy oblique voice and choice of repertoire show that her vintage sensibility hasn't stood in the way of her originality.

Morgan does echo many legends—Peggy Lee's easy sigh, Nancy Wilson's precision intonation and bluesy twist, Anita O'Day's airy turnarounds, and a hushed acquiescence that hints of Shirley Horn. But Morgan also mentions male singers as inspirations, saying that Bill Henderson in particular inspired her on "The Lamp Is Low."

Essentially, Morgan calls the disc a diary.

"I listen first for gripping lyrics that resonate with me, then a moving, strong melody," Morgan said. "Some are brand new, but I wanted to find rare standards that no one has recorded for decades to make a real jazz record for the real jazz fan. 'Is You Is Or Is You Ain't My Baby' is a tune that covers a lot of bases for people."

Morgan and co-producers Chris Dunn and Christian Scott (who plays trumpet on four tracks) winnowed through tunes for months, varying layered instrumentation, guitar, trio and small bands.

"We thought about pacing and sequence from the beginning, so people could feel the arc and movement of the set," Morgan said. "We wanted to maintain the traditional feel of the tunes to give that refreshing feeling. A diary should be honest and open. We left in the flaws. On 'Is You Is' we kept the first take. I'd planned on ending a little earlier, but we go on for a minute longer. It's organic, not too clean or modern."

On the disc, sweet moments balance the tart, particularly when she's alone and vulnerable with Gerald Clayton's piano on "I Just Dropped By To Say Hello." She also shares a history with his instrument.

Growing up in New York, Morgan studied classical piano at 4 and played Schumann and Ravel duets with her grandmother, a classical singer. The shy teenager tried opera in high school.

"People find it ironic that I'm a singer," she said. "I was so shy I preferred to play piano alone. Today I still play, but I'm not comfortable yet playing a full set."

Now living in California, Morgan's background away from a microphone contributes a lot to who she is today. "I grew up fast with my



EARL GIBSON

ears and eyes open," she said. "Maybe I did see and hear a lot, and I sing the way I live—not polished or technical."

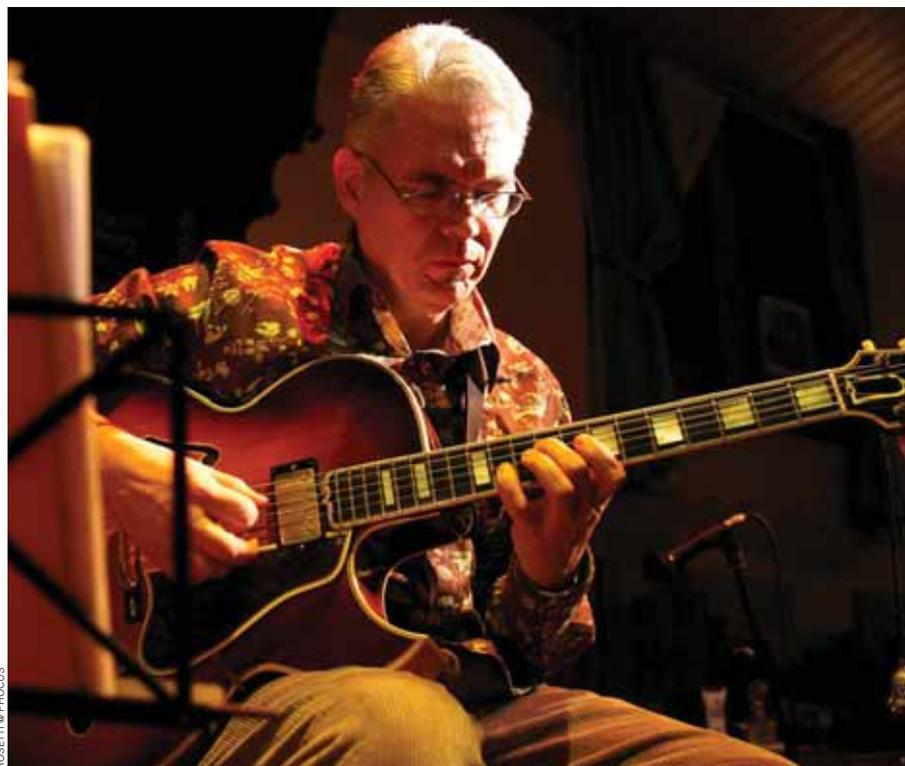
With her debut out, Morgan is looking ahead to her future.

"You can't throw everything you love on your first record," she said. "I want to record Brazilian and bossa nova, maybe on my third CD. And I'd love to work with pianists like Harold Mabern and Cedar Walton."

That upbeat confidence does include her choice of cars—on her disc cover or when she's driving around Southern California.

"My dad taught me to hold a shift car in neutral on a hill," Morgan said. "I love my Mini Cooper stick—it's yellow, a happy color."

—Fred Bouchard



ROSETTI © PHOCUS

## Garrison Fewell Delta-Silk Road Journeys

These days, travelers searching for peaceful destinations would hardly place Iran and Afghanistan at the top of their lists. But in 1972, with the Vietnam War raging and social unrest in the headlines at home, 18-year-old guitarist Garrison Fewell left Philadelphia for what was then a much more placid Middle East. He spent a year in the region, playing music with locals and even working as a disc jockey in Kabul, Afghanistan.

"I was on a path to discover the world and see what other cultures were about," Fewell said from his office at Boston's Berklee College of Music. "Kabul was a beautiful town with tree-lined boulevards and great musicians. If you went to a tea house and just hung around, you could jam with people playing tabla, rubab, dutar, all kinds of instruments."

Memories of those jam sessions reemerged during the recording of *The Lady Of Khartoum* (Creative Nation), Fewell's duo recording with Boston guitarist Eric Hofbauer. Although the

recording was spontaneous, it grew out of a year of regular meetings for beer and conversation.

"Whereas a lot of free-jazz guitarists come from the rock perspective," Fewell said, "Eric plays acoustic jazz guitar, which appeals more to my folk background."

Much of their discussion was rooted in tracing the sound of the blues through unexpected geography, from the Muslim call to prayer to microtonal Indian and Iranian music to the Moorish influence in Spanish music. While Fewell and Hofbauer didn't enter the studio with a concept in mind, what emerged through their use of prepared guitar and small percussion instruments was an album that made the same journey musically, connecting Delta blues, Thelonious Monk and the Silk Road.

"On a deeper level, music spans space and time, and connects past cultures with the present," Fewell said. "The collective human imagination could appear anywhere, and any of our musical/cultural interactions could come out at any moment."

Fewell began playing guitar at the age of 10, and grew up in Philadelphia on blues and folk music. In his late teens he chanced upon Pat Martino playing on Philadelphia's South Street, which opened his ears to greater possibilities of his instrument.

After his year abroad, Fewell returned to the States to attend Berklee. By the time of his senior recital in the fall of 1977 he was already teaching at the school, where he remains a professor after more than 30 years.

Fewell's first album, with Fred Hersh, Cecil McBee and Matt Wilson, was released in 1992, and he recorded in a relatively straight-ahead style for the remainder of the decade. But around 2002, he decided that he wanted to explore a more avant-garde direction, which led to work with vibraphonist Khan Jamal and a collaboration with saxophonist John Tchicai.

"The way that Art Blakey's and Miles Davis' bands were a learning school for many musicians, working with John has had that effect on me," Fewell said. "He doesn't allow you to be too comfortable with yourself, so that you won't fall back on playing something familiar."

Another result of Fewell's explorations is the Variable Density Sound Orchestra, a larger improvising ensemble whose self-titled debut has just been released by Creative Nation Music. A second recording, which expands the group from seven to nine pieces, is already in the can. Fewell said the ensemble's name refers to early film soundtracks, and that the large unit can be broken down into smaller subgroups.

"It gave me the musical palette to do anything," Fewell said. "The hardest thing is to sit down and write. When you're improvising, if you start to judge what you're doing then you inhibit yourself. In creative music you cannot inhibit yourself—you can't hold back and you can't hesitate. You have to jump in with your first reaction and be confident." —Shaun Brady



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# Thrown Into DEEP WATER

From his new Africa projects to his work with the Sparrow Quartet, Béla Fleck follows his heart down challenging new musical paths beyond the Flecktones.

By [Geoffrey Himes](#) // Photo by [Jimmy Katz](#)

**B**ackstage at the Birchmere nightclub in Alexandria, Va., Béla Fleck was exhausted. The banjo virtuoso, wearing an unbuttoned red shirt over a black T-shirt, had just finished two long sets with the Flecktones. He seemed drained, but a question about the show coaxed a smile.

This was last December. The quartet was touring behind its first-ever Christmas album, *Jingle All The Way* (Rounder), and those tunes had dominated the show. The restrained lyricism of the solos by Fleck and bassist Victor Wooten on “Silent Night” had segued into a fast, fusion rampage through “Sleigh Ride.” A medley of familiar carols had become a freewheeling jam until Fleck was playing one song while saxophonist Jeff Coffin played another—and

making the two fit nicely.

The highlight had been a version of “The Twelve Days Of Christmas” that sequentially tackled each of the song’s 12 days in a different key and in a different time signature—1/2, 2/2, 3/4, 4/4, 5/4, 6/8, 7/8 and so on. It’s the kind of bizarre musical challenge that the band thrives on, and yet the results had been so tuneful and accessible that the audience had willingly chimed in on the line, “Fi-i-ive go-o-olde[n] rings.”



As he towed off after the show, Fleck outlined his upcoming schedule. It became clear that while the Flecktones have served as Fleck's primary musical vehicle for the past 20 years, he is moving in so many new musical directions these days that the quartet has almost become a side project. (In fact, the Flecktones' only 2009 touring plans come with a small tour at the end of the year.)

As soon as he finished the Flecktones' tour last winter, he recorded his new album with bassist Edgar Meyer and tabla player Zakir Hussain. Then he went back out on the road with the Sparrow Quartet, the chamber-music/old-time string band led by Fleck's girlfriend, Abigail Washburn.

When that ended at the end of February, he went into rehearsal for his March/April tour with some of the African musicians on his new album, *Throw Down Your Heart* (Rounder). At the same time he had to prepare the theatrical release of the documentary film of the same name about his 2005 trip to Africa. In June and July, he will tour again with a different set of African musicians. In September and October, he'll hit the road with Meyer and Hussain to support their album with shows as a trio and with local orchestras.

Having rattled off this schedule, Fleck seemed more tired than before. But when he talked about the prospect of playing with Hussain, Washburn and the South African singer Vusi Mahlasela, his weary grin spread wider. It was as if he couldn't believe what he had gotten himself into but couldn't wait to do it.

"There's such pleasure in learning new music," he said. "I love busting my ass and feeling like I've got it. It's hard for me to turn down the opportunities that come my way.

"I'm choosing battles that I think I have a chance to win. I try to pick things that are just beyond my reach rather than things that are way beyond my reach that I'll never grasp. If there are rhythms or melodies that I can acquire that are related to what I'm already doing, I'll go for it. If they're unrelated or beyond my scope, I'll leave them alone.

"At least for the time being."

**W**hen Fleck answered the phone at his Nashville home in early January, he said, "I can only talk for 45 minutes, because Edgar and Zakir are coming over to record some tracks for the new album. And I can't talk tomorrow because we're flying to Detroit to record the rest of the album with the Detroit Symphony."

The full orchestra will be featured on the 30-minute "Triple Concerto" that forms the core of the forthcoming album, which comes out in August on Koch. The trio tracks will fill out the CD by further exploring themes from the concerto. The most recent album that Fleck has released is *Throw Down Your Heart: Tales From The Acoustic Planet Vol. 3—The Africa Sessions*. This audio documentary of his collab-

orations with African musicians—on that continent and in North America—kicked off a year of African-related activity. He followed up the CD with his "Africa Project" tour that featured four musicians from the album: Malian kora player Toumani Diabaté, Mahlasela, Tanzanian singer-thumb pianist Anania Ngoglia and Madagascar guitarist D'Gary. He's also performing some shows with only Diabaté.

It's a full agenda, but that's the only way Fleck knows how to live. Turning over so much of his calendar to these African collaborations shows his commitment to the project.

"There were several factors pulling me toward Africa," he said. "One big factor was the history of the banjo. The Africans had brought it over here during the slave trade, and I wondered if there was still a banjo or a banjo-like instrument being used over there. But more than that, I'd been interested in African music from way,

doing serious research on African musicians and instruments—including the two most likely ancestors of the banjo: the Bambara tribe's *ngoni* and the Mandinka tribe's *akonting*.

The Flecktones had decided to take 2005 off, so that seemed the year to put his African fantasies into action. As often happens when Fleck hatches a plan, a modest project soon becomes an immense undertaking. It wasn't enough, he decided, to just go over there and play with some African musicians. If he was going to devote that much time and money, he might as well tape the collaborations for a possible CD. And if he was going to create an audio document, he might as well create a film document as well. His younger half-brother, Sascha Paladino, is an accomplished filmmaker who had already made a short documentary called *Ostinato*, about Fleck's collaborations with Meyer.

Sony Classical, Fleck's label at the time, got



way back. I knew there was great music, but before the world-music explosion it was hard to find. Every once in a while, a friend would show up with a recording of Pygmies playing flutes or something. You couldn't tell where the one was, but you couldn't stop listening.

"The breakthrough moment came around 2002 when Jeff [Coffin] played an Oumou Sangare CD on the Flecktones bus," he continued. "It hit me like hearing Earl Scruggs or Ralph Stanley for the first time. I went out and bought all her CDs, and every party I'd have, I'd put Oumou's music on. Everyone would love it because it's great party music. I immediately wanted to hear her in person."

Nichole Smaglick, who organizes tours of Africa, contacted Fleck around the same time and proposed a banjo safari, where Fleck would come along and teach banjo around the campfire each night. "I was unenthusiastic," he admitted, "because if I went to Africa, I'd want to play with Africans, not teach banjo to banjo players from the U.S."

Smaglick understood and began sending Fleck music from the countries she visited. This whetted his appetite even more, and he began

excited about the project and promised some money. By the end of 2004, a film crew and music engineer were hired, plane tickets were bought and an itinerary was arranged. They were all set to leave in late January and stay until early March. Then things started falling apart.

"In December Sony backed out, and I was left without any funding," Fleck recalled. "At the same time a friend of mine had IRS problems and I was told if I didn't show up as a witness at his trial I would be arrested as a felon when I reentered the country. I said, 'You know what? I'm going to go. If I have to empty my personal savings, so be it. If I have to go to prison for a while, so be it.'"

He didn't go to prison (the trial was postponed), and he didn't lose his house (although he did lay out a lot of money). He spent five weeks in Uganda, Tanzania, Gambia and Mali and came home with 250 hours of film and more than 40 pieces of music. Because he was so invested financially and musically, Fleck got heavily involved in editing the film and the music. The movie version of *Throw Down Your Heart* won five awards as it made the rounds of the film festivals last year.

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"I learned so much more from watching the footage and editing it than I did while I was there in person," he said. "When I was there, everything was happening so fast and I was just trying to keep my head above water. Watching the footage, I could think about what had happened and how I was responding and put it all together in my head. It's weird to watch yourself coping with one new situation after another, because so much of it happened while the camera was rolling, I don't think I would have felt so natural if it hadn't been my brother filming it."

As the film opens, Fleck is leaning against a green SUV, in the remote village of Jinja, Uganda, picking out a bluegrass breakdown on his banjo, much to the delight of the young kids in second-hand American T-shirts and the old women in brightly dyed dresses. When Fleck finishes, a young man steps out of the crowd with his homemade, one-string violin and begins sawing out a tune. Fleck cocks his head, catches the key and starts playing along.

Fleck's Ugandan guide, Haruna Walisimbi, takes the visitor to his hometown, Nakisenyi. After visiting the mud hut where he was born and the nearby grave where his father is buried, Walisimbi picks up a thumb piano and begins to sing, "Death, which used to be for chickens, is now among us." Fleck picks up his banjo, and by the end of the song, both men are moist-eyed.

"What he wanted," Walisimbi said on camera about Fleck, "was to bring the banjo back to Africa, [so] it could play with its old folks. And with some small difficulties, that's what [happened]."

"That's what great about America," Fleck insisted. "This African instrument could come here and be used by so many different kinds of people, and someone like me, who grew up in the '60s in Manhattan, could play music from Kentucky on an instrument from Africa. When I carry my banjo through an airport, and people shout, 'Yee haw,' I don't like it. I want people to know that the banjo has a much longer and broader history."

Fleck is the first to acknowledge that not every cross-cultural collaboration is successful. Too many times, he says, an American artist and an African kora player, a Tuvan throat singer or a Peruvian pan piper will be thrown together and it will sound like two musicians playing two different kinds of music with no real give and take. For such a collaboration to work, Fleck insists, both parties must do enough homework to understand what the other musician is doing.

"In a lot of world-music collaborations," he said, "people just do what they always do; there's no sense that anyone changed in any way. I always try to get enough of a grasp of what they're doing that I can reflect it in my own music and respond to it. When I play with Zakir, I'm not an Indian musician any more than he's an American musician, but I can learn enough to be respectful in my ignorance. We can find a place to meet. I'm an improvising

artist, and that's what I can add—that and my background as a bluegrass banjo musician."

Mahlasela is not in the movie, but he is on the CD version of *Throw Down Your Heart*. He and Fleck were guests on the same installment of the "Etown" radio show taped before a live audience in Boulder, Colo. Fleck seized the opportunity to rehearse a couple songs in the dressing room and at sound check so they could play together on stage that night. One of those performances, Mahlasela's composition "Thula Mama" featuring Fleck's banjo accompaniment, is a highlight of the CD. The South African claims it was a much different situation from so many cross-cultural exchanges.

"You have to have respect for the other music," Mahlasela said by phone from his home in Pretoria, South Africa. "Sometimes you like

Quartet went into a Nashville studio and knocked out a five-song eponymous EP.

On the second trip they became the first American band to officially tour Tibet, and the 10 days they spent in that Himalayan region playing for and with Tibetan musicians "made us a band," according to Washburn. Connecting with a culture as far-away as Tibet's instilled the feeling that they were on a "mission of cultural understanding." They began to feel as if they were starting to have a Sparrow Quartet sound.

When the Sparrow Quartet played the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival in 2008, the four musicians sat in a semi-circle of chairs between large paintings of Clifton and Cleveland Chenier. The three men wore black shirts and white ties, but Washburn wore a strapless red blouse and a flowery peasant skirt, her



Fleck with the Atseo Jazz Band

COURTESY BELLA FLECK

the music and you get so excited that you're playing with Mr. So and So that you want to get in there so badly that you overplay. If you don't know the music well, you can't jump in and play. It's better to relax and ease your way in. You don't want to embarrass yourself. But if someone says, 'Come on, play some more,' then that's different. When they say, 'This is nice; we want some more,' it's enjoyable."

**T**he Sparrow Quartet offers an example of the way Fleck can take on a small side project because he believes it won't take up much time, only to find himself committing more and more energy to it. He had fallen in love with Washburn, a fellow banjo picker who played with Uncle Earl, an all-female old-time string band. Washburn is also a Chinese scholar who has learned the Mandarin language and Chinese folk music well enough to use both on her recordings. In 2005, as she was preparing for a trip to China, she invited Fleck and their mutual friends, fiddler Casey Driessen and cellist Ben Sollee, to come along.

Fleck had the dates available. The 2005 trip went so well that all four players agreed to do it again in 2006. If they were going back to China, Fleck suggested, they should probably bring a CD along. So the newly dubbed Sparrow

corkscrew curls spilling over her bare shoulders. Her percussive style of clawhammer or frailing banjo was so different from Fleck's Scruggs-style, three-finger roll that it justified having two banjos in the same group.

When they played "Captain," adapted from a Georgia Sea Islands song, Driessen at first echoed Washburn's soprano with his fiddle phrases and then locked in with Sollee's cello to provide thickened chamber-music harmonies. On the Western Chinese folk song "Taiyang Chulai," Washburn's Mandarin vocal warbled above the bowed drones until Fleck entered with arpeggiated 16th notes that took the Sichuan melody into the realm of American improvisation. On "Strange Things," Washburn whispered that "strange things are happening every day," and Fleck backed up her claim by yanking the old blues tune into Chinese intervals and then into post-bop substitute chords while Sollee added pulsing, Philip Glass-like patterns.

The musicians' varied interests have helped this group expand its musical palette.

"Béla and I are different," Washburn said. "I'm mostly interested in American folk music, Chinese folk music and where they overlap. Béla's interested in everything. But what we share, on the deepest level, is a desire to feel more connected to the world around us, partly

for understanding and partly for finding new ways to express ourselves.”

“It was appealing to be in an acoustic group again,” Fleck said, “without having it be a bluegrass band. I liked the sound of the old-time banjo and three-finger banjo together. I liked the Chinese aspect of it. Abby’s music is great and I love her singing, and I’d always wanted to work with a great singer. I liked the challenge of developing the music like a chamber music group.”

“It was going to be a side project, but once we got into it, we got into it and everyone wanted to make each piece perfect like a gem,” Fleck continued. “It ended up being a lot of work, and once we’d invested all that time and energy in it, we wanted to protect it. It became a cause, like the Flecktones in the early days.”

This is how it goes for Fleck: He dips his toe in the ocean and before he knows it, he’s swimming in deep waters. He agrees to help out his girlfriend, and then spends most of 2008 with her band. A Return To Forever concert changes his life as a teenager, and he ends up making a duo album with Chick Corea (2007’s *Enchantment*) and wrangling an opening slot on RTF’s tour last summer for the Flecktones. Why is he driven to pursue so many different projects?

“I’m probably dissatisfied with myself on some level,” he confessed, “and I have to prove I have value. It probably comes from growing up in a broken home. That has a lot to do with my drive. It’s also that I’m drawing from all these things so I can do my own thing with them. A lot of times I try to justify what I do for business reasons, but that’s a defense mechanism; the real reasons are different.”

When he toured India with New Grass Revival in the ’80s, for example, he found himself entranced by the tabla drums. Convinced that the tabla could inject new rhythmic patterns into his banjo playing, he bought as many recordings and instruction books as he could. Then he ran into a tabla expert named Sandip Burman at a festival in Virginia. Fleck began taking lessons from Burman, and that grew into a series of duo concerts.

His interactions with Hussain emerged from his work with Meyer. In 2006, the Nashville Symphony asked Fleck and Meyer to write a concerto for the opening of the city’s Schermerhorn Symphony Center. Three years earlier, the Symphony had commissioned Fleck and Meyer to write a double concerto for banjo and bass, so this time they wanted a concerto for banjo, bass and a third instrument. They saw this as the chance they’d been seeking, so they got in touch with Hussain.

“I had the album *Making Music*, which [Hussain] did with John McLaughlin and Jan Garbarek,” Fleck said. “Neither Edgar nor I knew him, but we used the commission as an opportunity to get to know him. There was a lot we wanted to learn from him, and now we had

something to offer him in return.

“One of the many amazing things about Indian music is the rhythmic complexity,” he continued. “There’s more math in Indian music than any music I’ve ever heard. At the same time, it felt natural to play with Zakir. He described it as ‘getting together with some brothers he hadn’t seen in a long time.’”

This is the type of spark for which Fleck constantly searches. This is why he crams projects into his schedule. He can cope with the stress and fatigue as long as he’s learning and growing. “I’m always looking for situations like the

Africa trip,” he said, “where I throw myself into deep water, where I put myself in situations where I can’t possibly be fully prepared and see if I can rise to the occasion. I’d like to do this again, to go to other countries and play with new musicians.

“As the Flecktones’ audience grows, I feel a duty to turn our audience onto other great music,” he continued. “With success comes responsibility. The Africa project will be good for the audience, good for the musicians from Africa and good for me. I like it where everybody wins.”

DB



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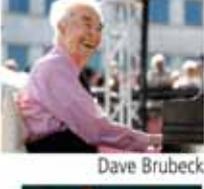
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# J Master's *Return*

By Howard Reich // Photo by CISFR/Dalle

**Marcus Roberts didn't exactly disappear from the jazz scene, but the end of his recording hiatus marks the reemergence of an important voice in the music.**

Whatever happened to Marcus Roberts?

Eight years ago he released his last CD, *Cole After Midnight* (Sony). Since then, silence—at least as far as American recordings are concerned. Considering that Roberts recorded *Cole* a decade ago, it's astonishing to realize that an artist of Roberts' stature and comparative youth (he's 45) could go so long without producing another musical statement.

The wait has ended with the recent *New Orleans Meets Harlem, Vol. 1* (J-Master), a self-released trio recording that represents a dramatic updating of Roberts' pianism. He considers it a turning point in his career, after a remarkably long sabbatical.

"It was kind of deliberate," said Roberts of his time away from the recording bins. "It wasn't like for eight years I disappeared and locked myself in my apartment. I view that eight-year period as preparation. It's like I finished one big stage of my career and was preparing for the next."

Nor was Roberts exactly dormant during the past decade. On the contrary, he worked prolifically—but largely outside the spotlight he had basked in throughout the 1990s. He estimates that he has recorded seven or eight CDs' worth of music; four of them, said his long-time recording engineer, Les Stephenson, are mixed, edited and ready to go out the door.

Moreover, in 2003 Roberts—whose friends call him the “J Master”—premiered a visionary jazz-trio version of George Gershwin’s “Concerto In F,” with Seiji Ozawa conducting the New Japan Philharmonic (the CD is available only in Japan). In 2004 Roberts and Ozawa revisited the retooled concerto with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, by many observers’ estimates the greatest symphony orchestra in the world. In addition, Roberts has taken a faculty position at his alma mater, Florida State University, in Tallahassee; and he composed and performed major jazz suites, such as “From Rags To Rhythm” (commissioned by Chamber Music America) and “The Sound Of The Band” (commissioned by ASCAP and Jazz at Lincoln Center).

More important, perhaps, Roberts plunged into a major overhaul of his technique. He built the trio that is now at the core of his work and artistic identity, and reimagined how to release his music. Roberts isn’t the only major jazz figure to have stepped away from the limelight, with forebears such as Sonny Rollins and Thelonious Monk famously taking significant periods of time to regroup. The key issue is what the artist produces when he returns, and in Roberts’ case the results prove impressive.

Though *New Orleans Meets Harlem, Vol. 1* builds upon Roberts’ long-time fascination with historical periods and landmark compositions, he and his colleagues—drummer Jason Marsalis and bassist Roland Guerin—have radically re-envisioned works such as Jelly Roll Morton’s “New Orleans Blues,” Duke Ellington’s “Black And Tan Fantasy” and Monk’s “In Walked Bud.”

Yet this historically informed approach to jazz improvisation long has drawn critical fire, with the Los Angeles Times in the early 1990s

questioning Roberts’ “heavy involvement with impressions of other pianists, at a relatively early stage of his career, [which] would seem to work against the development of his own personality. How, amid all these Duke and Monk and Morton acknowledgments, can there be a Marcus Roberts style?”

Then, as now, Roberts rejects the underlying premise of the criticism—that exploring the works of jazz luminaries diminishes contemporary perspectives. To the contrary, Roberts argues that every field or discipline builds on past achievements, and that past masterpieces open windows to new insights.

“I would argue we’re not looking back,” Roberts said. “Jelly Roll Morton has not been explored, really, at all. Genius is a timeless thing. It’s never a question of looking back to something. It is figuring out a way to bring the genius of what these masters did into our generation, and figure out a way to use that information for our own art and our own imagination in the contemporary society we live in.”

Roberts has leapt whole-heartedly into this mission on *New Orleans Meets Harlem, Vol. 1* (he expects to release a second-volume follow-up). The trio brilliantly fractures rhythms and reconceives strands of Joplin’s “The Entertainer”; applies contemporary harmonic language to Ellington’s “Pie Eyes Blues”; and makes room for a piano soliloquy worthy of Chopin or Liszt in Morton’s “Jungle Blues.”

Furthermore, Roberts’ pianism—always notable for the fleet virtuosity of his right hand and the stride-inspired buoyancy of his left—shows a new tonal sheen and sensitivity of expression. This is part of what Roberts aspired toward in his time away. He reworked his play-

ing by studying Bach “Preludes” and “Fugues” to obtain better command of individual melodic lines. Chopin etudes helped him master touch, tone and various technical challenges; and Mozart piano sonatas allowed him to perfect a lighter approach to the keyboard.

But during his time away from the recording studio, Roberts was after something even more formidable than honing his pianism: He wanted to create a trio in which each player reaches for a similar level of tonal luster and control, an ensemble in which each musician plays so important a role that no individual stands out. Instead, the trio itself becomes the primary instrument, albeit a malleable one in which the musical focus constantly shifts from one player to the next, often from one phrase to the next.

For Roberts, that is the challenge that has preoccupied him since the end of the last century, when he, Marsalis and Guerin decided to commit to the long hours of rehearsal involved in forging this kind of trio, with all the intricate cues and explorations of repertoire this entails. They spent years developing their musical discourse to a point in which they could improvise fluidly, not only with one another other but with a symphony orchestra, as in the Gershwin concerto.

“In 1999 we hunkered down and tried to deal with some music,” said drummer Marsalis, who had been playing with Roberts periodically since the mid-1990s. “What Marcus wanted to do was essentially have a group that would make a great statement in jazz music and explore what in his view was a high level of musicianship. We constantly got together to practice, work on fundamental things, try to develop our sound and our swing.”

If there was a model, Marsalis said, it was celebrated trios of Ahmad Jamal and Oscar

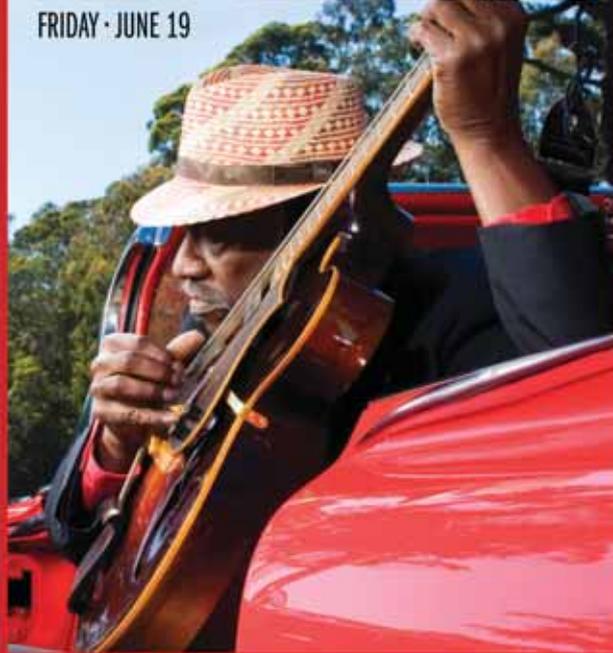


Roland Guerin (left), Jason Marsalis and Roberts at the Village Vanguard in 2003

JACK VARTOGIAN/FRONTROWPHOTOS

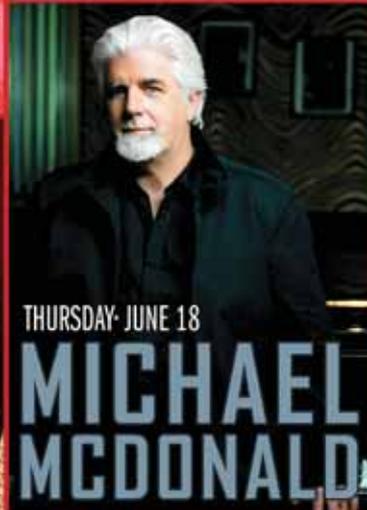
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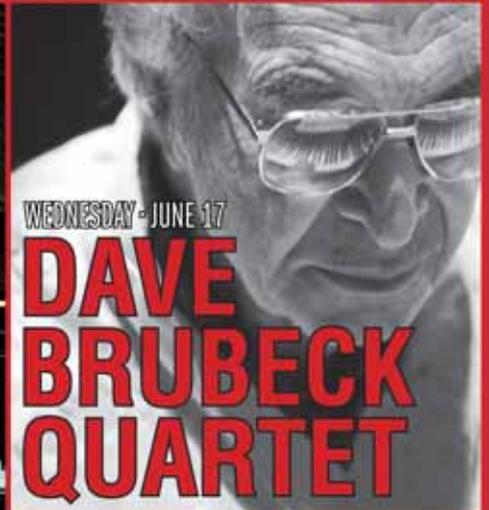
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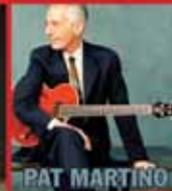
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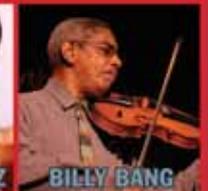
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Peterson, each of whom raised the bar on this format. But there was more than just technical finesse at issue.

"It's about freedom of expression," Guerin said. "We developed this definite trust in each other. It's a big thing, because if you have trust, that means you're not trying to just impose ideas on somebody else. You can trust that they can have good ideas, and that you can question your own."

By 2004, the trio headed into the recording studio and laid down all the tracks to *New Orleans Meets Harlem, Vol. 1*, after which engi-

neer Stephenson and Roberts readied the final product for distribution. But two problems existed. First, as the trio continued to develop, its live performances outshone the finished recording. So Roberts killed the record, in effect extending by several years his time away from the CD marketplace.

"I tried to figure out what was wrong with it," Roberts said. "It sounded good, but it wasn't what I wanted. I couldn't tell you what was wrong. It wasn't like it was bad. But, bottom line, I decided, 'I'm not going to put this out.'"

"I wasn't happy with it either," Stephenson

recalled. "From the time that music was recorded to the time we were finishing it out, it seemed like their playing style had taken a quantum leap [forward]."

The second problem was that even after Roberts and the trio re-recorded the music, in 2006, the pianist hadn't yet determined how he was going to deal with the new media environment of the 21st century. Though he had worked for major labels RCA and Sony/Columbia in the 1990s, these and others had dismantled their jazz departments. Roberts, meanwhile, had grown disenchanted with the major-label approach to marketing—and owning—an artist's work and decided he didn't want to return to the old way of releasing music.

"I thought it would be kind of cool to get away from the traditional structure, which I do believe is dying," Roberts said.

Amidst the on-again, off-again recording angst, Roberts busily pursued an area of musical thought rarely broached in jazz: creating improvised versions of classical works for piano and orchestra. He had made a considerable splash with his improvised "Rhapsody In Blue," which he released on his 1996 *Portraits In Blue*. After performing "Rhapsody" with Ozawa, the conductor urged him to try the same approach with the "Concerto In F."

But the concerto posed a tougher challenge than the "Rhapsody," a single movement work that itself feels spontaneous (Gershwin, in fact, improvised his solos during the work's 1924 premiere). The "Concerto In F," by contrast, stands as a formal, three-movement structure that offers fewer obvious places in which a jazz trio can cut loose.

Nevertheless, at Ozawa's urging, Roberts and colleagues spent a year-and-a-half developing the new-old opus. "I am amazed at the artistic gift of Marcus Roberts," Ozawa said. "His ear, knowledge and feeling toward the music—the only thing is he's a jazz player, so we don't have a common repertoire, between he and I. When he told me he could do a jazz arrangement, or improvised version, of the 'Concerto In F,' like we did first with 'Rhapsody In Blue,' that was good. That is a small area where we can be together, and in this area he is a genius."

In "Rhapsody" and "Concerto In F," Roberts poetically reimagines American masterpieces, preserving the thematic material of the originals but giving the works a rhythmic lift and creative freedom that are unique to jazz. To Roberts, the concerto experience represents more than just a fusion of related musical languages. It's nothing less than an attempt to nurture new listeners.

"Jazz and classical—each audience is in jeopardy of getting lost," said Roberts, referring to the ongoing marginalization of everything but the most commercial musical products in America these days. "If we come together with respect, we can rebuild both audiences."

So far, however, that has not been easy—at least not with the concerto projects, which

Roberts has performed only sporadically.

"In Berlin, it was a big, huge success, and many orchestras in Europe were [initially] interested," Ozawa said. "But I don't know why any real [European] engagements didn't happen. Maybe it's my fault, because they think I have to conduct. It's not true. I thought this was going to be a big thing for the future, but, unfortunately, there is not another Marcus Roberts who can do this kind of thing."

Still, Roberts and the trio will play the "Concerto In F" with Ozawa at the Tanglewood Festival, the summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, in 2010. Ozawa hopes to record the concerto and the "Rhapsody" with Roberts and an American ensemble. It could make a spectacular release.

Even so, there's a sense in jazz—at least among Roberts' more ardent admirers—that the music world has yet to acknowledge, or even understand, Roberts' gifts. The eight-year recording hiatus has done nothing to help.

Yet consider what Roberts has accomplished. Having begun noodling on a toy piano at age 3 in Jacksonville, Fla., Roberts had an instrument of his own at 8 and discovered jazz at 13. Though born with sight, he lost it after cataract surgery at age 5. Still, he studied with a student of the great Russian pedagogue Rosina Lhévinne at Florida State University; won the piano competition at the convention of the International Association of Jazz Educators in Chicago, in 1982, where he met Ellis Marsalis; replaced Kenny Kirkland in Wynton Marsalis' band in 1985; won the 1987 Thelonious Monk Piano Competition; and proceeded to release such major recordings as *Alone With Three Giants* and *Deep In The Shed* on RCA/Novus.

Further recordings, such as *The Joy Of Joplin*, *Blues For The New Millennium*, *Gershwin For Lovers* and *Portraits In Blue* (Sony/Columbia), attest to the man's creative outpouring in the 1990s. And though it's little known, even in jazz circles, Roberts has been instrumental in launching several major careers.

"He is responsible for me being the musician I am," said trumpeter Marcus Printup, who plays in the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra and was coached by Roberts starting in 1991, when Printup was studying at the University of North Florida. "He taught me how to be mature through music. He taught me how to not just float through the [chord] changes. He helped me have a thorough knowledge of this music."

Others share the sentiment.

"Marcus is my mentor, the man who brought me out on the scene—that started in 1991 with a rehearsal band down in Tallahassee," said trombonist Ron Westray, who used to play in the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra and now teaches at the University of Texas, at Austin. "We would sit in awe at the comprehensive nature of how Marcus deals with music. Everybody was astounded with the music and conception that he had studied and had in his brain, and the technical facility to boot."

Whether Roberts' prowess as improviser, composer, pianist and jazz conceptualizer receive their due remains to be seen. By releasing the new CD as a download via TuneCore and via CD on his web site, he's operating within the current directions of music distribution, but also somewhere outside the jazz mainstream.

Still, Roberts feels optimistic about the future, eager to release the music that has been pent up for nearly a decade and to compose more. Innovations in assistive technology for the blind make it easier for him to write and orchestrate, leading him to imagine penning his own

jazz piano concerto. In addition, he's contemplating a jazz version of Maurice Ravel's "Piano Concerto For The Left Hand," a jazz-tinged piece that seems ripe for development.

But will the world listen?

"I don't think people do know about him, but it was the same thing with Monk," Printup said.

Roberts, meanwhile, pushes forward.

"I want to put out a lot of the stuff we've worked on, and I want to expand on my ability to collaborate with people who have talent, who can provide inspiration," he said. "That's the theme for me for the rest of my career." **DB**

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# CONFLUENCE

**TWIN BROTHERS  
ALEX AND NELS CLINE  
BOTH BREAK EXPERIMENTAL  
MUSICAL GROUND WITH  
THEIR RESPECTIVE PROJECTS**

By Josef Woodard // Photos by Anne Fishbein

**M**usical brothers have long figured into the lineage of jazz, including the famous Jones brothers out of Detroit (Thad, Elvin and Hank), the Heaths out of Philadelphia (Jimmy, Albert and Percy) and the Marsalis clan from New Orleans (Wynton, Branford, Delfeayo and Jason).

Meanwhile, out West and lesser-known in the fraternity of musical brothers work the Clines, guitarist Nels and drummer Alex.



# *of* DIVERGENCE

Whereas brothers from other settings have heeded the theory of a musical household and the passing-down of wisdom from an older to younger siblings, the Los Angeles-born and based Clines are in synch as twins.

“You have solidarity, a best friend who’s obsessed with all the same stuff as you,” said Nels about the relationship he has with his twin. “We probably have some psychic connection.”

Starting in the '80s, the Clines (born on Jan.

4, 1956) have figured strongly in the jazz and adventurous music scenes in L.A. and beyond. Both have played with Julius Hemphill, Oliver Lake and Charlie Haden, as well as numerous West Coast players to the left of straightahead. Their influential Oregon-like acoustic group Quartet Music lasted for much of the '80s.

In recent years, the Cline name has bumped up in recognition after Nels joined the rock group Wilco. But his newfound fans have a lot

to learn about Nels’ twisty musical story, involving work with his trio, the Nels Cline Singers, and other liaisons in jazz, rock and experimental circles.

This year, the brothers simultaneously released solo projects on Cryptogramophone, the 10-year-old L.A.-based indie label run by violinist Jeff Gauthier. Similarities and differences mark Alex’ *Continuation* and Nels’ *Coward*. The former is an expansive chamber

jazz project, featuring pianist Myra Melford, cellist Peggy Lee, Gauthier, bassist Scott Walton and Alex on his large and texturally varied drum and percussion set-up. *Coward*, conversely, is Nels' first all-solo project, although it features a layered collection of acoustic and electric, abstract and lyrical sounds. It includes such seemingly incongruous—but to Cline, logically linked—references as Ralph Towner, Derek Bailey and Thurston Moore of Sonic Youth.

On a mid-January afternoon, the Clines convened in the Culver City home where Alex lives with his wife and young daughter. The interview took place a few hours after Barack Obama's inauguration, which partly explained the excitable atmosphere, not to mention having their albums timed for a joint release.

While the brothers grew up together musically, they have cleaved personal directions and lifestyles. For instance, at the interview both Clines wore black T-shirts, with telling distinctions. Nels sported a facsimile of the album cover of the first release by the Bad Brains, the Washington, D.C., punk band, but retooled with the words "Barack Obama." Alex, the more poised and introspective of the twins, wore a shirt with the Zen-like inscription "this is it."

A week earlier, the brothers played a rare duo gig in San Diego. On the set list were Keith Jarrett's "Angles Without Edges," a snippet of Pink Floyd's "Interstellar Overdrive," the Jimi Hendrix instrumental "Beginnings," Ornette Coleman's "Law Years" and John Coltrane's "India." The set list speaks volumes about the eclecticism embedded in the Cline family crest, and manifested in their ongoing musical output.

**When you play in a duo, is it a fluid process of falling into an existing, mutual musical understanding, or is there culture shock?**

**Alex:** The only culture shock for me is that lately, I haven't been rocking out that much. So to keep up with the intensity and volume is challenging. Being mostly a parent besides a working stiff over the past few years, I never have time to practice. That doesn't usually pose many problems, except when I'm confronted with that sort of challenge. As Nels would say, "You need more than a chop for that." Most of the music I've been playing lately isn't so in that direction. Other than the tunes we decided on, there's nothing to talk about. We just start playing.

**Nels:** When we did that duo gig at the Jazz Standard in New York, which was virtually unpremeditated, there were a lot of hilarious unison moments and moments where we stopped at exactly the same time and then continued playing.

**You have both come up with impressive new albums. Certainly, Nels, this was a departure, going the solo, layered approach. Have you ever done something like that before?**

**Nels:** No, but the funny thing is that I've been talking about doing this for almost 30 years.

"Prayer Wheel" is from the '80s. I slightly revised it.

**In both of these projects, the acoustic and chamber-esque qualities hearken back to Quartet Music in a way.**

**Alex:** My record is the first one I've done with no electric instruments. That wasn't a concept, but it was something I realized after I decided what I wanted to do. A lot of the music that I'd done before this had a lot of electronically processed sounds on it, from people like [guitarist] G.E. Stinson, not to mention the occasional use of the synthesizer or Jeff augmenting his electric violin with effects and things. None of that is present on this album.

**There is a careful balance maintained between the written note and free space in the music. Was that one of your original concepts behind the project?**

**Alex:** That's an important component in the musical experience, a balance between composition and improvisation. This CD, like the ones that preceded it, tends to generate a lot of questions from listeners who can't tell when the composing ends and the improvising begins, and vice versa. That's a gratifying blurring confusion, because it signals that I'm doing something that is to my liking.

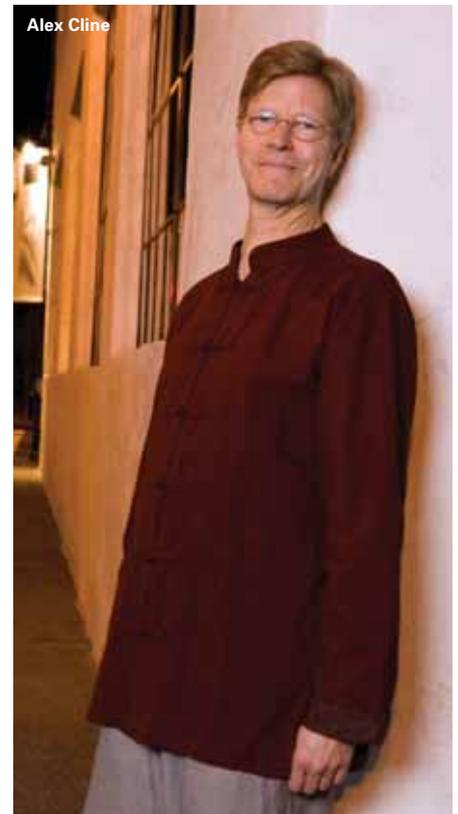
It does say a lot about the musicians that this can happen, because if you don't have that kind of understanding among the people playing the music, it isn't going to work. Remarkably, these musicians had never played together in this particular combination. Most of them had never even played my music before. It was a risk.

When we got into the studio, the musicians who were not already familiar with playing my music, particularly Myra and Peggy, were taking the music where they wanted it to go. They had their way with it and made things happen. That was mind-blowing, because that was exactly what I'd hope would happen.

**Nels, your album also has a nice blend of free zones and themes, written-out parts. I assume that was part of the game plan.**

**Nels:** After thinking about this record for 20-something years, I went into the sessions with virtually no material. I had out-thought myself. I'd thought about it for so long and rejected and came up with ideas, everything had changed. Life had changed.

But I just decided that, psychologically and spiritually, this record had to get done. There was a window of opportunity, after a lot of high-stress times. I wanted to address what [painter] Robert Motherwell used to call the "innermost necessity." I went in there and flailed around. My friend Mark [Wheaton] was at the controls, and he let me go in there and spaz out. It couldn't have been without computers. I would get ideas and then want to move entire sections to other parts of a piece, which is so easy with Pro Tools.



There were times when he thought I had no idea where I was going, but it all came out in the wash. The piece for Rod Poole ("Rod Poole's Gradual Ascent To Heaven") was never even intended to exist. It just created itself.

**One of the distinctions of your lives as Los Angelenos, in contrast to East Coast-based jazz musicians, is your proximity to show biz machinery.**

**Nels:** Which is weird, and I think Alex would agree, but I feel immune, for the most part. It didn't ever have much impact on our household growing up. Our parents did not shun films. Our dad had been informed by going to films every Saturday afternoon as a boy. As a way to get him out of the house, his mom would give him a nickel and he'd go watch movies all day on Saturday. This was likely where he formed the idea of life outside of San Pedro, life off the docks, out of the Navy, all the things that were his milieu.

**How did things develop musically, in your formative years?**

**Nels:** I was fixated on rock 'n' roll from 1965 onward. The moment at which our friend Pat Pile, in elementary school, took us over to his house after school and showed us his snare drum, and played us the drum exercises he was working on. He was talented. Hearing him play a snare drum in his bedroom, I felt my face was going to crack in half. I could not stop smiling.

**Alex:** This was the time when AM radio was starting to experiment with playing album tracks.

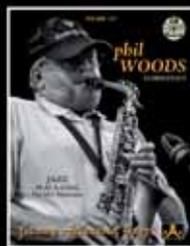


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**Nels:** Obviously, there were The Beatles and Rolling Stones, and I was super into The Byrds. I liked Love. Then there was Jimi Hendrix, who was an epiphany. One Saturday afternoon, I was in the back room at our folks' house listening to KHJ. They played "Manic Depression," which was odd, because it wasn't the single. We were jumping up and down, yelling and freaking out. It was like being zapped for three-and-a-half minutes by pure electricity.

**So the path of interests led you from Hendrix through progressive rock and then into jazz? Was that roughly the trajectory?**

**Nels:** Yeah. The jazz and prog rock thing happened simultaneously, though. The jazz thing was before the prog rock thing. We had a friend who had bought a John Coltrane record for his father. Our friend had heard the record and he thought, "Alex likes that instrumental Frank Zappa stuff. He might like this." In retrospect, that seems odd, but delightful.

We had lumped this all into a general fascination of things instrumental and things uncategorizable. In 1971, Mahavishnu Orchestra's *The Inner Mounting Flame* came out, and pre-funky Weather Report was starting up, Herbie Hancock's septet—stuff we were enchanted by.

A weird desire to play a combination of King Crimson, the Allman Brothers and Weather Report—that's what we were trying to do in high school. I joke that our music hasn't changed at all since high school, except that we play better. The parameters are constant.

**Nels, you have come full circle, working in jazz and rock contexts.**

**Nels:** My fixation on Buffalo Springfield and the Byrds is paying off. And Humble Pie.

**Alex:** Captain Beefheart and the Mothers were big for me, and some heavy metal bands, because being 14 and playing the drums, you've got to like visceral, hard-hitting music. Although my favorite drummers at the time, I realized years later, were essentially approaching the music like jazz players. Mitch Mitchell was my first drum hero, Clive Bunker—the original Jethro Tull drummer—and Mike Giles, the original drummer for King Crimson. Hearing Tony Williams' Lifetime was what changed everything, the group with John McLaughlin and Larry Young.

**Was hearing McLaughlin early on an epiphany for you, Nels?**

**Nels:** No. Alex was obsessed with McLaughlin. I liked the acoustic stuff the best. *My Goal's Beyond* blew my mind. Seeing Mahavishnu Orchestra live was like having all your hair burned off in one fell swoop, but his guitar playing wasn't influential. I was trying to go in a different direction. Alex was bummed out. I was listening to Pat Martino, Joe Pass and George Benson, and trying to adapt all that to a slightly more hippie-ish feeling. There was finger vibra-

to involved. But I liked that cleaner sound, less emotive. Alex was saying, "No note-bending? No distortion? You're useless."

**Alex:** That's not exactly what I said.

**Nels:** But I remember one time, on a particularly good rant, you said, "This guy Pat Martino is a bad influence. What's up with that tone? There's no definition. It's all bass." Finally, John Scofield came along and he had the best of both worlds. You can hear the horn influence and an incredible harmonic knowledge and bluesiness.

Not to go too far with that, this period that we're talking about was a period of complete exploration, when things were not defined. Radio wasn't formatted yet. Ronald Reagan hadn't come along and ruined everything. Why are the '70s maligned? We've all long since accepted disco, and punk rock is supposedly the greatest thing since sliced bread. So what was wrong with the '70s? What was also going on was the AACM, the ascendance of Anthony Braxton, and concurrently Air and Leo Smith.

At the same time, there was the so-called electric jazz before it was called fusion. There were incredible groove records coming out, whether they're overt, like Tower of Power and hit singles, or groove records like Ramsey Lewis records or Lonnie Liston Smith. Pharoah Sanders was still putting out great stuff, infused with African and Indian influences. Nobody is saying, "You can't do that. Put on your suits. This is not dignified." But it was absolutely intuitive. It was time to explore. That's when we were trying to figure out music and what to do.

**Alex:** This is also the time that ECM records became a huge presence in our lives.

**Is that partly what led to the formation of Quartet Music?**

**Nels:** It led to the duets with me and [late bassist] Eric Von Essen, which led to Quartet Music. When we first met him, Eric was playing guitar and table and piano. We went and heard him practicing in the practice room at UCLA, playing Chick Corea's "Song Of The Wind," and couldn't believe a student could play those wild chords.

**Alex:** Quartet Music signaled a newly prominent period for Nels as a performer. For me, it was another aspect to what I was doing. It became a constant working group, even though we mostly played here, because there was no practical way to do much else. It was also unfortunate that we made so few recordings, considering the amazing wealth of material we had in our repertoire.

The milestone in the middle of all this was Julius Hemphill's JAH Band, in 1984 through '86. I had played with Julius prior to that time, in 1977 and '78, in a trio with Baikida Carroll.

Julius had this idea to put this electric band together. He wanted to know if Nels would be interested in playing, and if I knew any good



bass players who I thought would be good. I said, "Get Stuart Liebig." He had Juma Santos playing percussion. We started playing together as the JAH band—Julius Arthur Hemphill. For our second tour, in 1985, we did what Julius had always imagined and wanted to do, which was add a second guitarist, Bill Frisell.

Unfortunately, that band was never adequately documented. In the mid-'80s, this was considered a controversial move, having a band with a bass guitar and two electric guitars, playing a lot of not only rock and blues-based music, but, in true Julius fashion, leaving it open to the talents of the musicians to take their music anywhere.

**Nels, I was thinking that you have dual citizenship, in rock and jazz.**

**Nels:** That's what I used to call my weird double life. People were interested in my jazz experiences. But most of my jazz guys I play with, I don't even tell them about my so-called rock experiences. They don't even know about it. It's like I have some private secret life.

**Something interesting is happening with your Wilco connection. You, drummer Glenn Kotche and keyboardist Pat Sansone are infusing the group with these experimental touches, which were always bubbling beneath the surfaces but are now more integrated into the sound.**

**Nels:** I don't think there's anything conscious about that. I don't ever think that I'm adding anything new to the band, but people keep telling me I am. I know that live, things have ramped up, with Pat and me joining. The band

became a little different. It is the longest that Wilco has had solid personnel, and I can probably speak for my bandmates in saying that we're having a blast, playing gigs that we're proud of. The music is still fun to play and we're playing to the best of our ability. Everybody seems to be doing the music for the right reason, and we have so much freedom. It's not like playing in a normal rock band.

Jeff [Tweedy] just writes songs and we play them. It's tapping into my latent Buffalo Springfield and Byrds interest. It's odd for me only because it's odd for other people, that I go out and play the same songs. I'm not immune to rock pageantry. There are things I like about it. I had never got in front of an audience that was that obsessed with a band. On the first gig I did with Wilco, the crowd hollered so loud when we took the stage, it scared the hell out of me.

I'm encouraged to do as much of my extracurricular stuff as possible, with the attitude that everything you do is bringing something to this group. The management started working with me, because they like what I do and they're into jazz. Ben Levin, who works at management, also manages Dave Douglas.

**Both of you, maybe because of your experimental proclivities, grew up with the do-it-yourself and self-reliance genes. Did that come naturally?**

**Nels:** That's what everyone was doing in the '70s. Before punk rock, there was Kabell—Leo Smith's label. Julius had Mbari. Oliver had his Passin' Thru label. Jerome Cooper had a label. New Music Distribution Service collected it all and distributed it. It wasn't like, "Oh, I must suck. That's why I have to do my own little release." It was a point of pride. Punk rock came along and did the same thing.

**Alex:** The other side of it, at the most fundamental level, is that if you want to play and you want to do your music the way you want to do it, and no one is going to book you at their venue, then you figure out a place to do it. It's that simple. You rent a church or you play in an art gallery. That's what we always did, even right out of high school. We weren't going to get gigs at a rock club or a jazz club.

This self-determination idea is, for example, how [L.A.-based reedman Vinny Golia's] Nine Winds started. Similarly, this is how Cryptogramophone started. Everything is a response to something else. We've benefitted from the amount of success that Jeff [Gauthier] has had, because of all this labor-intensive, non-musically inclined endeavors that have taken him even out of his own musical pursuits, to a point that also is something of a concern for him.

**There is the theory that having a somewhat crazed and committed force at the helm is what makes artistic enterprises work.**

**Nels:** I'm more lucky. I play guitar. People like guitar. I'm so glad I don't play trombone.

**Alex:** When I've made these CDs, I've always made them with the sense that this could be the last time I get to do this. I may not get this opportunity again, to record this music in this way, at this level, with these musicians, and not have somebody dictate how they want it to turn out. I have to maximize what I've got and turn out something that's not only something I would want to listen to, but something that expresses what I want to express.

**Could you and Alex see doing something together on a more regular basis, in terms of**

**gigs or recording?**

**Nels:** It's unlikely. Recording would be fun. That would have to be planned ahead of time. I travel constantly, which doesn't mean we can't gig or make recordings. But I don't think about dragging Alex out of the house too often.

I'm not thinking of doing a bunch of solo gigs to promote my record. That's something else our records have in common, apparently, along with the titles and the fact that they were recorded in the same week. I just made my record with the idea that I would enjoy it and the people who know me would like it. **DB**



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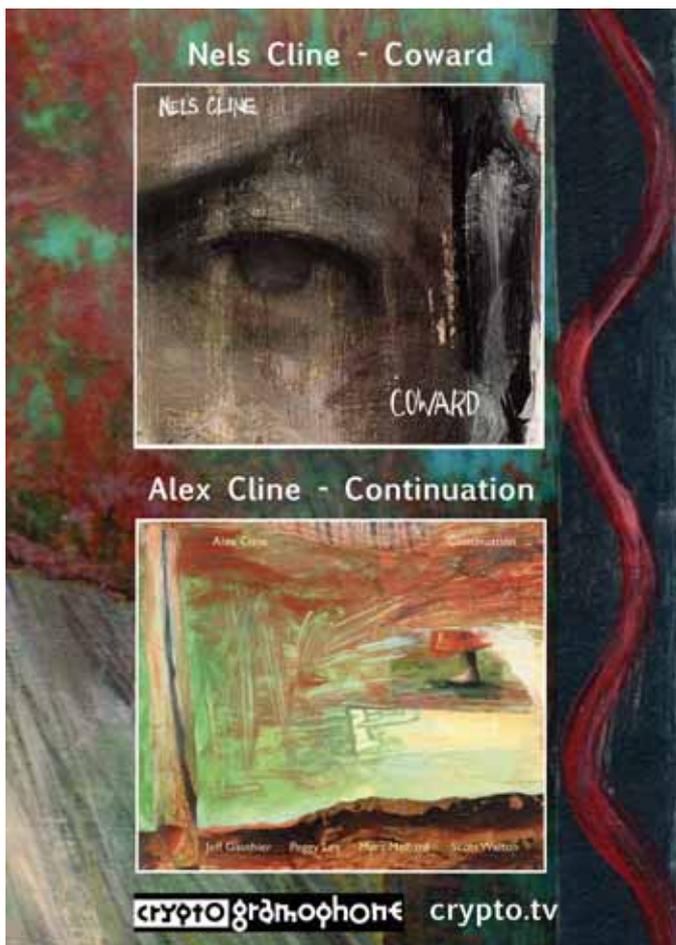
# Refreshing Initiative

Ken Vandermark won't (and can't) slow down his musical output. Rather, the saxophonist keeps creating new groups and projects, and finding innovative ways to present his music.

By Peter Margasak  
Photos by Peter Gannushkin







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**THERE'S AN ASTONISHING TWO-AND-A-HALF MINUTE** sequence at the start of the 2007 Daniel Kraus documentary *Musician*, the unglamorous cinéma vérité portrait of the everyday reality of reedist Ken Vandermark that shows the discipline and drudgery required to eke out an existence playing uncompromising music. Wedged into a closet-like office, Vandermark checks phone messages, fine tunes details for gig posters, negotiates fees for a weekend performance, pencils in appointments on a heavily marked-up wall calendar, asks if he can crash with some friends on an upcoming trip, and tries to schedule some time with his wife. The montage is even more stressful and harried than that description sounds.

"I would've stopped playing a long time ago if I had to deal with the stuff he does," said multi-instrumentalist Joe McPhee, a long-time collaborator of Vandermark, in reference to that scene. "When we're out on the road he's always off on his cell phone or computer looking for the next gig."

There's no question that part of Vandermark's international reputation stems from his tenacity and ability to organize and motivate. Beginning in the early '90s, when his first Chicago band began attracting attention, he's never waited for the phone to ring; he's always made things happen on his own. His example was replicated time and time again in Chicago, and a once-moribund free-jazz scene has experienced some of its most fruitful and creative years in the wake of Vandermark. When he was awarded a prestigious and generous MacArthur Fellowship in 1999, some naysayers complained that he got the award for those extramusical efforts. But a full decade later his work speaks for itself.

Vandermark has established his place as one of the most prolific and daring figures in improvised music, excelling in totally improvised settings, leading ambitious large ensembles and hammering away with his long-time Chicago-based outfit the Vandermark 5, among numerous other contexts.

Vandermark, who turned 44 last September, ranks as one of America's best-known and celebrated free-jazz musicians. Yet during a recent conversation in the Chicago home he shares with his wife, Ellen Major, and a couple of dogs—just days before he's to leave for Europe for a month of concerts with the Peter Brötzmann Chicago Tentet and Vandermark 5—he makes it clear that every day is a struggle, and that the passage in *Musician* accurately reflects how much energy he must expend on the business end of his career.

"A lot of the people I work with, unfortunately, work as hard on the business side as the music itself," he said. "I don't think that's going to change. The biggest issue I've got now is time, and having enough of it to work on the music the way I need to, and to also make sure the work's coming in. We're all freelancers and we're hoping that people are going to remain interested in what we're doing, but you have to create the work."

The rapidly changing music business has presented all musicians with a tall pile of challenges, and while it may be easier for jazz artists to ignore them and try to carry on as usual, Vandermark has thought hard about the disappearance of record stores, the ascent of downloading (much of it illegal) and the debilitating impact the tanking

economy has wreaked on arts and entertainment budgets. He admits that he's unsure about where it's all headed and how he'll fit into it. But he knows things are transforming quickly.

"How are you supposed to convince people—especially younger people who've come up with this in place where they can get anything for free—that they should spend \$10 to get this person's record?" he asks. "They're going to be like, 'You're high.' There's no way, logically, that's going to make sense to them. I have friends who understandably get angry about the situation and try to prevent people from recording shows or doing this or that. I see their point of view, but the dike has broken and you're standing there with your finger pointing at it. The issue of making a living with work that is essentially free now—how do we continue to do that work and pay our bills?"

While Vandermark prefers a more stable environment than the one he finds himself within right now, his music has always thrived on the same kind of uncertainty afflicting the business. In fact, his passion for exploration and pushing hard upon his own limitations is a quality that seems vastly underappreciated by the mainstream jazz community in the United States. He's a process guy, compelled and energized by the act of creation. For him, the act of improvisation is an all-encompassing ethos.

"A long time ago [veteran British percussionist] Paul Lytton told me that 'improvisation is an attitude,'" Vandermark said. "There is a common attitude with the people I like to work with, where they are interested in the moment of playing and not being satisfied with what happened last night, and not resorting to what works, who instead try to discover stuff and take chances with the music. This is exactly why I like to do this."

Powerhouse Norwegian drummer Paal Nilssen-Love, a steady collaborator of the reedist during the last decade, loves this facet of Vandermark's work. "He's at his best when he's losing control, and he doesn't know what's happening," Nilssen-Love said. "That's good for all of us, but especially him."

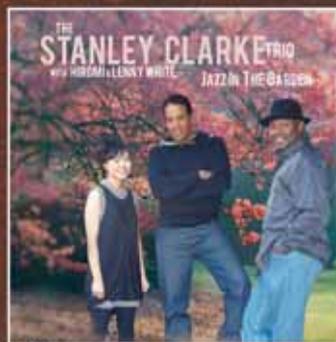
The percussionist isn't suggesting that Vandermark gets lost in the music, but that when he clambers to gain a foothold, he taps into rich musical instincts.

"I still feel as driven as I ever have been to push myself and to try to put myself in situations where I'm challenged," Vandermark said. "I don't want to get into a place where I'm feeling comfortable, which is why I try to do different things. I've always tried to put myself in contexts where I'm out of my element or I'm forced to play above my ability."

Context has been a major preoccupation for Vandermark. Over the years he's formed a dizzying array of ensembles to explore specific strains of music making. Some of them lasted only a few gigs, others soldiered on for a year and made a lone document, while the Vandermark 5 has endured for 14 years. His web site lists more than 60 different contexts, which is by no means a complete list of the projects he's helmed over the years. His predilection for dedicating original compositions to individuals (musicians, visual artists, acquaintances) isn't his way of making random shout-outs; by using a specific person for inspiration he attempts to inhabit someone's spirit or methodology, thus bringing new ideas to his own work. But the real thinking goes into putting his bands together.

When he assembled the Vandermark 5 back in 1996 he had broad aims for the ensemble, which then featured bassist Kent Kessler, fellow reedist Mars Williams, drummer Tim Mulvenna, and trombonist and guitarist Jeb Bishop. "I wanted to put together a small group that could be as expansive as possible," said Vandermark of the group, which now features Kessler, drummer Tim Daisy, saxophonist Dave Rempis and cellist Fred Lonberg-Holm. "I wanted to have a group that could do everything I was interested in, whether it was a funk thing, a new music thing, jazz or whatever, and to have an outlet where I could write whatever I could imagine and have a pool of musicians who were willing to work on it and realize it."

Over time, however, he realized that this aim was misguided, because all musicians have specific strengths and weaknesses, and personal interests tend to dictate flexibility. Vandermark points to his deficiencies as a



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"I've always tried to put myself in contexts where I'm out of my element or I'm forced to play above my ability."

harmonic thinker.

"As I gained experience I realized there's no way you can have a group that can do everything," he said. "I've realized that the V5 is an idea."

He points to the specific aims of his quartet Powerhouse Sound, which seeks to explore an imagined nexus between electric Miles Davis, Lee "Scratch" Perry and Public Enemy. "The reason I put that group together was that I became more interested in the electric Miles material and I heard all of these things that could be done with it in a different way, so having [Tortoise drummer] John [Herndon] was ideal," he said.

He reconnected with Herndon after working briefly with him in Rob Mazurek's Exploding Star Orchestra. "I realized he would be the perfect drummer for this, and with Jeff [Parker on guitar] and Nate [McBride] on electric bass I knew I could go much deeper into that space than I could with the 5," he said. "That's not qualitative; it's just a difference of possibilities with the players. In the last few years, it's been more about a better realization of the dynamic between the players and the material, and that part of organizing a group isn't just having a set of charts, but having the right people in the band. It's almost part of the compositional process."

Nilssen-Love echoes this assessment in regard to Vandermark's ambitious Territory Band—an international large ensemble financed largely with money from the MacArthur Fellowship. "He wrote specifically for each member of the group," Nilssen-Love said. "It was great to see how he extracted the quality of each musician and to push them. He got Paul Lytton to play time and I don't know who else could have gotten him to do that."

Whether formulating new groupings or constructing new pieces, Vandermark's ultimate concern is to create new contexts that will inspire fresh improvisation. "I'm probably more occupied with the idea—more than a lot of other people—that the compositional aspect of things right now doesn't seem to be as key as maybe it used to be," Vandermark said. "There aren't a lot of people concerned or involved with that. The arc of improvised music has become a set of languages—styles and schools of thought. Any time that happens, there's a potential to get into a rut with something."

"I'm interested in trying to do that from the compositional side of things, to try to get people to play in ways they wouldn't arrive at with their own general approach," he continued. "I want to try to push them into situations that might get them to do something different or construct things that maybe haven't been heard before and come up with different ways of organizing things, to keep the music surprising. Even the forms of the music themselves aren't thoroughly dictated and mapped out, so they can fold in on themselves and be improvised on the spot as well."

Vandermark finds this aspect of his work important, as he constantly strives to find new ways to deal with improvisation. He wants to think outside of traditional schools of thought. "Most people, when they write for improvisers, they write head tunes, but if you look at Duke Ellington or Miles Davis, they're people who thought of totally different ways to organize material," he said. "That's something I'm devoted to and that's why I'm not going to be on these mainstream jazz festivals. The work I'm interested in doesn't belong there for them, or me. I'm not interested in the past except as a resource."

This year, Vandermark is touring and recording with some of his steadiest units—like the Vandermark 5—as well as fledgling ones. Sonore, his free-improv trio with fellow reedists Mats Gustafsson and Peter Brötzmann, has a new album coming out on Okka Disk, and the label will also release the debut album from his Chicago-based Frame Quartet (with Daisy, McBride and Lonberg-Holm). The Norwegian label Smalltown Superjazz will release a new album by his chamber trio Free Fall (with pianist Håvard Wiik and bassist Ingebrigt Håker Flaten), the debut of a new quartet called Lean Left (with Nilsen-Love and guitarists Terrie Ex and Andy Moore from The Ex), and two new volumes of improvised duo recordings with Nilssen-Love. He also just finished his first film score, for *Roads Of Water* by Italian director Augusto Contento.

Later this year he'll tour Europe with his latest large band effort the Resonance Project, which he first launched in Poland in November 2007, a joint initiative between himself and Krakow's Marek Winiarski, owner of the increasingly impressive Not Two label. Vandermark had been finding his various ensembles playing at the Krakow club Alchemia more than any other venue in Europe, but he had little interaction with Polish musicians. In the end, only saxophonist Mikolaj Trzaska participated, joining an international cast that included drummers Michael Zerang and Daisy, and reedist Rempis (all Chicagoans), along with New York trombonist Steve Swell, Swedish trumpeter Magnus Broo, and Ukrainian bassist Mark Tokar and reedist Yuri Yaremchuk.

Vandermark put the whole project together in Krakow. "I had been writing some notes and sketches, but I had a week in Krakow for composing, with nothing else to do but compose," he said, nothing that it was the first time in his career he had the luxury of devoting himself exclusively to a specific project without interruption. "I hadn't thought about how much I missed writing for a larger group until I started working on it."

Over the last few years, Vandermark has spent an ever-increasing amount of time in Europe. Although his collaborators have become more international, the main reason is simple economics: The U.S. doesn't support improvised music in the same manner that Europe does. The situation has forced him to make some tough adjustments. Last fall he walked away from his day-to-day involvement in Umbrella Music, a musician-run coterie of Chicago presenters that he helped launch in 2006, although since the mid-'90s Vandermark essentially set a new precedent for musician-run series in the city. As he notes, the practice picked up on the standard set by the AACM back in the '60s.

"It was a difficult decision because I'm a

control freak," he laughed. "It's the first time since I can remember not being involved in a weekly program in Chicago. Those kinds of changes are alien to me, but that change essentially made no change in things, and that says a lot about where things are versus where they were a decade or 15 years ago. That resiliency says a lot about the substructure of what's going on in Chicago."

Of course, Vandermark embodies a similar resiliency. He's determined and seems unwilling to be crushed by the non-musical forces that

seem to conspire against jazz. He continues to be an inspiration to young players in Chicago, but his approach has made believers of musicians several decades older than him as well. "Ken is one my heroes," said McPhee, who's been riding a wave of increased visibility since Vandermark first brought him to Chicago to perform and record in 1995. "The essence of what Ken's about is his sense of adventure, his willingness to tackle anything head on and not be afraid of it. It's just a new experience for him, and I find that incredibly refreshing." **DB**

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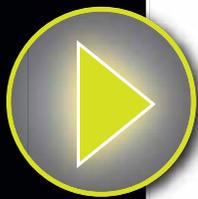












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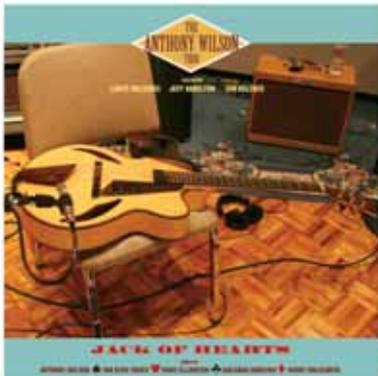
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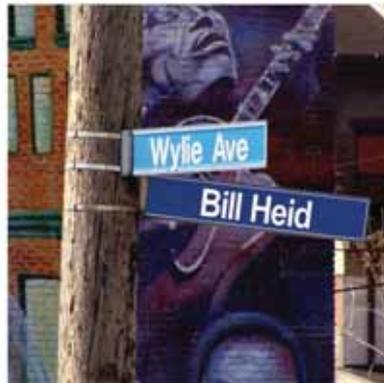
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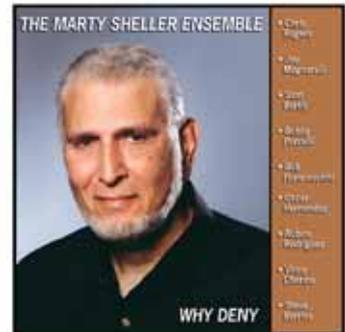
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## Big City Attorneys, Policemen Find Rewards in Peer Jazz Bands

A courtroom can be a lot like theater—especially when it serves as an after-hours rehearsal space for a group of Windy City lawyers.

The Barristers Big Band, whose members include about 25 Chicago-area attorneys and a judge, makes a strong case for musically talented career professionals who escape the grind by banding together into jazz ensembles of their peers. Equally compelling is the work done by New York's Finest Jazz Ensemble, a big band of full-time policemen who share a love for swing, improvisation and charity.

An outgrowth of the Chicago Bar Association Symphony Orchestra, the Barristers Big Band was formed in May 2000. Since its first year, the group has practiced every Monday evening in the U.S. Federal District courtroom of Judge Blanche Manning, who occupies one of the tenor sax chairs. The group plays a free annual fall concert as well as a spring charitable ball. Other gigs pop up throughout the year—such as weddings, dances and outdoor noon-time concerts—giving them a chance to work out new charts in front of an audience. Their repertoire ranges from Count Basie and Benny Goodman to Charles Mingus, Dizzy Gillespie and even original compositions by former Basie trumpeter and arranger Bob Ojeda, who has performed with the group.

With full rhythm, brass, saxes and a quartet of vocalists, the Barristers Big Band performs at a level equivalent to a college ensemble. The vibe of camaraderie and relaxation draws talented attorneys into their ranks and brings audiences to their performances, more so than any showcase of chops or jazz virtuosity.

"I might spend a whole day fighting with people on the phone," said bandleader and clarinetist John Vishneski at a party following the Barristers' fall 2008 concert. "I might be mad. But when I leave and walk from my office to the federal court building, I cool off. When I get there I'm ready to have fun, to be energetic.

It's a different mind-set."

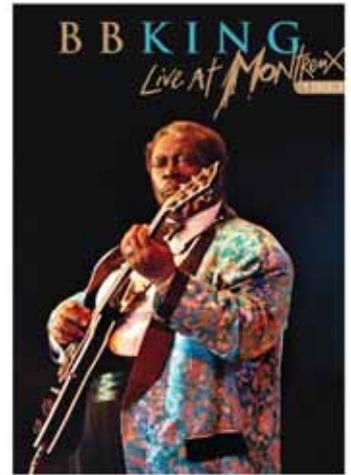
Pianist Steve Thomas, a founding member of the Barristers who also plays in their affiliated small group, Scales of Justice, noted the irony of having lawyers operate a big band out of a federal courthouse. "There are people who are being tried for their lives in this place all the time, so the incongruity of it was overwhelming at first," he said.

In the Big Apple, members of New York's Finest Jazz Ensemble meet for rehearsals and gigs while off duty from their police precincts. Formed in 2005 by Officer Tony Stewart, a trumpeter who doubles on sousaphone, the 18-member big band has performed around the world. They have played concerts at Jazz at Lincoln Center, the San Jose Jazz Festival and on "The Tonight Show With Jay Leno"—all in full police uniform.

Under the direction of Lieutenant Tony Giorgio, New York's Finest Jazz Ensemble pulls from a large repertoire, ranging from classic to contemporary jazz as well as some original compositions.

Each of their shows contributes to a charitable cause of one form or another. "In addition to performing at veterans' and children's hospitals, in their spare time band members give workshops and concerts at New York public schools teaching young people about jazz," Stewart said. "The ensemble has been successful in reinforcing to our youth that music can enhance their lives, and that something which is done for free can be of great value."

The players in these bands of professionals find their reward in the sense of community they create with fellow policemen or lawyers and the impact their efforts have on the real world. "We get hundreds of letters from students, teachers, principals and parents thanking us for making a difference," Stewart said of New York's Finest Jazz Ensemble. "Each letter is special to us."  
—Ed Enright



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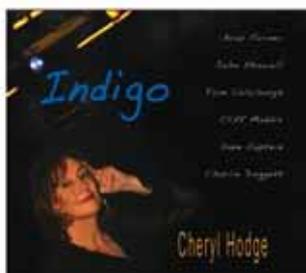
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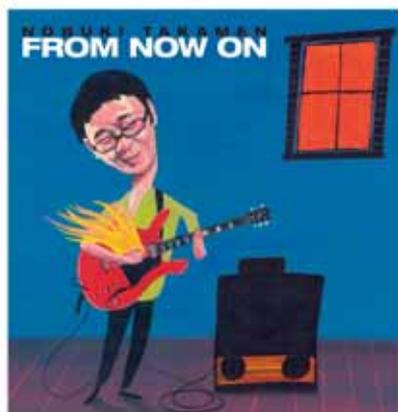
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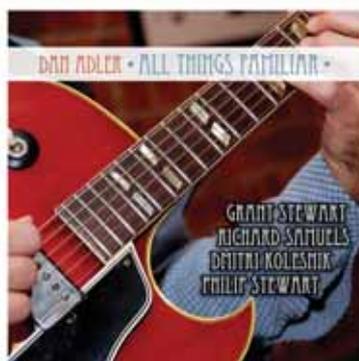
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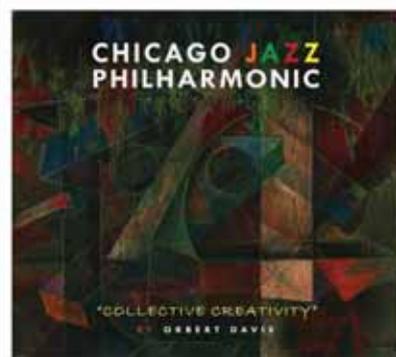
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## Pianist Mintel Takes on Brubeck's Model, Life Lessons

Pianist Eric Mintel devoted his new album, the self-released *50 Years After ... A Tribute To Dave Brubeck*, to his mentor's repertoire. But the Philadelphia-area pianist looks to Brubeck for more than just musical inspiration.

Brubeck worked tirelessly to raise the profile of jazz. He performed at college campuses during an era when such bookings were uncommon, and so he relied on himself to make the tours happen.

"This is another thing I learned from Dave Brubeck early on: You've got to create the environment that you're going to thrive in," Mintel said. "So if they're not going to come to you, you've got to go to them. So I wound up trying to find creative ways to get my music out there."

Those creative ways have led Mintel's quartet to play at a wide range of venues away from the regular club circuit. He's performed at the Hayes Performing Arts Center in Blowing Rock, N.C., the University of Vermont at Burlington, the Second Congregational Church in Greenwich, Conn., and Hunterdon County Library in Flemington, N.J.

"By going into churches, libraries, colleges and universities, this is how my career all came to be," Mintel said. "The final result is the music, and we're getting an incredible response."

Mintel's new disc strikes a balance between Brubeck's classic tunes like "Take Five" and obscurities such as "Nomad," "Unisphere" and "Elana Joy." "We've forged a great friendship over the years," Mintel said. "But even more so, Dave has been a positive role model in my life."

Brubeck not only expressed admiration for Mintel's commitment to his career, but also his ability to perform technically challenging compositions like "Blue Rondo À La Turk."

"He's the most determined person I've ever known about making it," Brubeck said of Mintel. "He has a marriage of talent and hard work. I first heard Mintel as a teenager, and I saw promise there. He's tackled a lot of my hardest pieces and these are tunes that I had written and had almost forgotten. I was impressed that he'd been doing things that I



was no longer doing, and that's a good feeling."

Mintel, 41, has carved out a niche without the benefits of management or formal training. He learned to play the piano by ear during high school while focusing on Brubeck's recordings, notably *Time Out* (1959), *Jazz Impressions Of Japan* (1964) and *Jazz Impressions Of New York* (1964). Mintel worked as a house painter and an advertising salesman before he began pursuing music on a full-time basis in 1999.

The pianist has appeared at jazz festivals in Philadelphia, Hartford, Conn., and Savannah, Ga. He performed during a White House holiday dinner reception for President Bill Clinton in 1998. In addition, Mintel has earned an endorsement deal from Yamaha.

Mintel's daily commitment for booking and publicity exceeds 40 hours each week. "I'm on the phone 24/7," he said at his home in Bucks County, Pa. "I have a list of venues to call every day. I'm working on bookings weeks, months, sometimes a year or so in advance. I'm wearing so many hats.

"It starts with making that phone call," he continued. "You've got to talk to that person who's in charge of booking the entertainment. Then you've got to send them your information: either send them a press kit in the mail, or send an e-mail message with a link to your web site. Then follow up with that person; it could be over two weeks, it could be over two months or it could be over six months. And finally, you hope to get a gig and then you go on to pitching the next venue." —Eric Fine



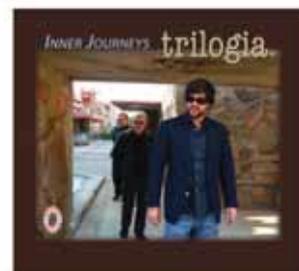
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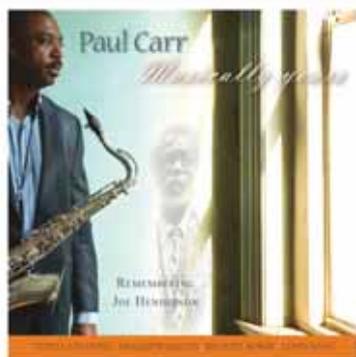
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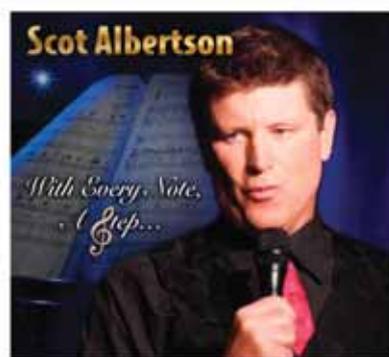


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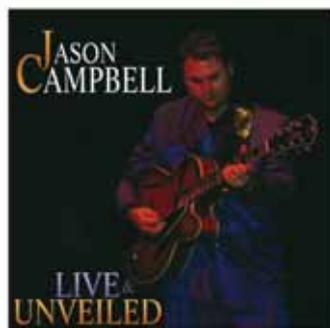
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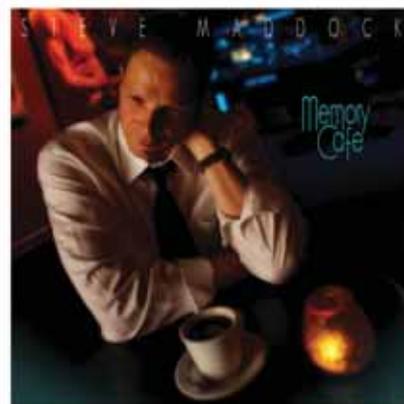


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BLUE NOTE 50999

★★★

Wynton Marsalis continues his exploration of spoken word, which he began with *From The Plantation To The Penitentiary*, and the blues, which he and Willie Nelson embraced on *Two Men With The Blues*. Using the vernacular of Langston Hughes, but writing in a formal, Olympian style inspired by Irish national poet William Butler Yeats, Marsalis alternates between words and music, reciting a stanza then dramatizing its theme with his quintet. At the end, he strings all the stanzas together, declaiming his long poem about the trials of love in a satisfying finale. The result is a form new to me, something that might be called jazz art-song with the components teased apart.

A quintet plucked from the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, with the appropriately soulful Walter Blanding on reeds, renders Marsalis' artful compositions, which range from ballads and brief tone poems to vintage two-beat, burning bop sometimes at dazzling speed. Most of the pieces are written in waltz time—the meter of romance—but with a pulse of four nudging at the sidelines. This makes for some delicious rhythmic ambiguity, especially on the halting, slow-motion honky-tonk “A Train, A Banjo, And A Chicken Wing.”

“The Razor Rim,” the most exciting cut on the album, casts an intricately accented melody in 9, then runs through 5 and 4. The timbres are vintage Marsalis (which is also to say vintage Ellington)—plunger sprays and squalls; seductive, low-register tenor sax jaunts; pert harmonies for the two; and, on “First Kiss,” a hocket for trumpet and soprano sax. Some of the percussion parts feel composed, but there's no shortage of swinging and fine brush work from Ali Jackson.

Pianist Dan Nimmer sparkles throughout, especially on the tender, cottony “First Slow Dance,” a high point. Interest also peaks with the bluesy, Harmon-muted reverie “The Sun And The Moon,” with a great Blanding obbligato. Marsalis shines on the dark and driving “The Razor Rim” and turns in some fine, shapely phrases with a snappy grace-note motif on the aptly named “Sassy.”

The problem with this well-played, well-crafted album is that it feels oddly detached from the intense emotions it describes. It's as if Marsalis, like the wise old blues man he invokes in his poem, were looking down from on high at the follies and foibles of love rather than actually experiencing them. That's in keeping with his avowed inspiration, Yeats' “Under Ben Bulben,” which was the work of an old man looking back on life (and even writing his own epitaph).

Marsalis is 47. His poem is wise and witty in places—and what a voice he has, reciting it!—but the classical distance he keeps from emotion, his stress of craft over abandon, makes this heartfelt foray into romance and the blues all the more dissonant. If you want to play the blues, don't just talk about them. Play 'em. —Paul de Barros

**He And She:** School Boy; The Sun And The Moon; Sassy; Fears; The Razor Rim; Zero; First Crush; First Slow Dance; First Kiss; First Time; Girls!; A Train, A Banjo, And A Chicken Wing; He And She. (75:15)

**Personnel:** Wynton Marsalis, trumpet; Walter Blanding, tenor and soprano saxophone, clarinet; Dan Nimmer, piano; Carlos Henriquez, bass; Ali Jackson, drums.

» Ordering info: [bluenote.com](http://bluenote.com)

## Fareed Haque + The Flat Earth Ensemble

*Flat Planet*

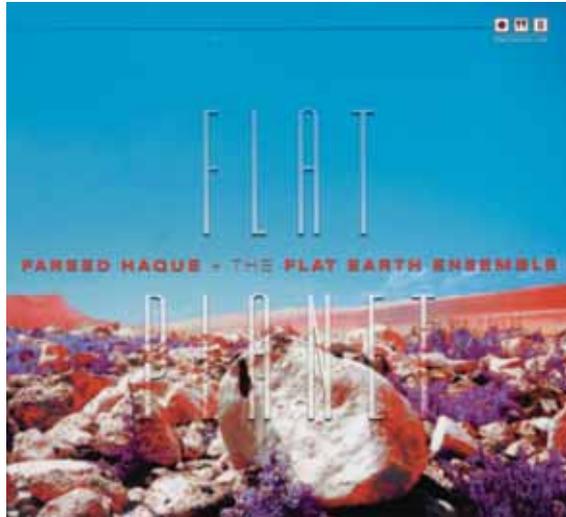
OWL STUDIOS 00133

★★★★½

Chicago-based guitarist Fareed Haque is a chameleon, working in a variety of settings from nylon-string classical concerts to groovy funk-oriented bands. In many contexts, a penchant for the flamboyance of flamenco and Gypsy music comes through in his playing, without any Django tendencies. With a mixed heritage, half-Chilean and half-Pakistani, Haque has spent ample time enjoying and infusing himself with the popular and classical musics of the Indian subcontinent. The Flat Earth Ensemble concentrates these influences, using South Asian percussion as a basis for improvisations steeped in jazz, sometimes adding a soul twist.

Of course, a guitarist playing with Indian elements is apt to draw comparisons with John McLaughlin's *Shakti*, and for those deeper into the progenitors of world music, the earlier example of Indo-jazz-fusion violinist John Mayer. Haque's project doesn't sound like either. In places, such as "The Four Corners Suite," the most jazz-fusion of everything on *Flat Planet*, the synthetic progressivism, jagged portent and limber virtuosity of *Shakti* are evident. But there's also a playful sense of openness to newer musics from South Asia, which are based in folk and classical musics—the bubbling bottom on the percussion intensive "The Chant," for instance.

"Big Bhangra" sports sweet soul-jazz guitar over a jazz-trap/tabla rhythm team that's smooth and confluent. On more stripped-down tracks, like "Bengali Bud," which pits Haque's distorted, blues-tinted electric guitar against Indrajit



Banerjee's sitar and Subrata Bhattacharya's tabla, some of the deeper affinities and contrasts to emerge. Here, the classical Indian improvising and jazz meet in a modal showdown.

An overdubbed duet with percussionist Ganesh Kumar ("32 Taxis") is even more successful in this regard, with flamenco chords and combustible rhythms rolled together in an unforced way. Some post-M-Base harmonic complexity is worked out on "Blu Hindoo" and "Fur Peace," both spotlighting the nimble fingers of the leader. To these ears, these are not as interesting as the tracks with their feet dancing more ecstatically on both sides of the planet.

—John Corbett

**Flat Planet:** Big Bhangra; The Chant; Uneven Mantra; Blu Hindoo; Bengali Bud; Fur Peace; The Hangar; 32 Taxis; The Four Corners Suite—North, South, West. (75:38)

**Personnel:** Fareed Haque, guitars; Indrajit Banerjee, sitar; Ganesh Kumar, kanjira; Kala Ramnath, Hindustani violin; Elihu Haque, djembe, voice; David Hartsman, saxophones, flute; Rob Clearfield, Willerm Delisfort, keyboards, piano; Alex Austin, Jon Paul, bass; Cory Healey, Jason Smart, drums; Subrata Bhattacharya, Jim Feist, Salar Nader, tabla; Kalyan Pathak, dhol, sticked percussion.

» Ordering info: [owlstudios.com](http://owlstudios.com)



## Sean Jones

*The Search Within*

MACK AVENUE 1044

★★★★

Working with a core group of five players, two of them saxophonists, trumpeter Sean Jones flexes more than sufficient muscle to conjure the illusion of a big band on this compact package of mainstream modernism. Yet, when the heat and tempo are dialed down, his playing assumes a placid serenity so soft and mellow you'd think you were hearing a flugelhorn (which he does play on "Life Cycles"). On this, his fifth CD for Mack Avenue, Jones focuses on a dozen proficient but rather uneventful originals that display his range as a player without providing much in the way of stimulating context.

Why it seemed like a good idea to spread the title tune, "The Search Within," out in three fragmentary installments eludes me. The CD begins in a tranquil and vibrato-less reflection against what appears to be mock strings for sweetening. Fine. But after about a minute it fades away, as if to say "never mind." We rejoin it for another couple of minutes on cut seven, fading in and then out again as it gathers lift. Finally, we come back to it at the end as it comes to closure. It's silly and gives the piece, if not the CD, a kind of Dean Benedetti feel, the

## John Scofield

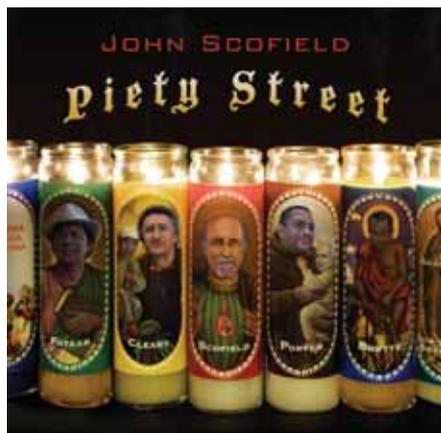
*Piety Street*

EMARCY/DECCA B0012656

★★★★

John Scofield hit on a pithy career statement when he titled his previous Decca disc *This Meets That*. Deep artistic breadth has led the guitarist from the graceful trio romps of *Bar Talk* to the fractured funk of *A Go Go* to the psych-prov excursions of *Überjam*. He not only brakes for monster booty (as one 2002 song title declared), he brakes for any and all doorways that lead to intriguing groove music.

So the gospel tunes of *Piety Street* seem a natural part of Scofield's contoured playing field. Working his well refined jack-of-all-trades role (whether it's Charles Mingus or Medeski Martin & Wood, he knows how to get a new



lingo down quick) he glides into N'awllins mode, connecting with keybster Jon Cleary and bassist George Porter, Jr. for some prayer meet-

ing pyrotechnics. The Crescent City has long been part of his parlance. No wonder, then, that Team Sco brings a loose-limbed feel to these spirituals.

From "His Eye Is On The Sparrow" to "Just A Little While To Stay Here," the guitarist is in a plaintive mode, making his notes sob their way through the changes. The outro solo in the latter may be the most evocative of the entire disc. Its trajectory is a great reminder that Scofield's keen dynamics enable him to inject cranky licks into consonant volleys, not only making the entire statement meatier, but delivering the unexpected as a matter of course. *Piety Street* is chock with vocals (Cleary and John Boutté both take to the mic), but Sco's stinging sermons, dancing between verses, are most commanding.

Indeed, this approach somewhat mars the

# The HOT Box

fan who recorded only Charlie Parker's solos. It's also pointless, since it's heard uninterrupted on a final hidden track.

The music begins with "Transitions," a hyperactive whirl that features Brian Hogans on alto sax and Jones soloing in an almost hysterical frenzy intended to evoke the wild leaps and plunges of a roller-coaster. Programatically effective perhaps, but musically a bit barren. More arresting is the brief but snapping interplay between the two. "The Ambitious Violet" is a nice ballad that Jones lifts to an expansive passion with a big-toned solo. Guest soloist Grégoire Maret contributes a supple harmonica interlude on "Life Cycles," which is otherwise Latin-lite background music before fading out.

"The Storm" has a Stan Kentonish feel with its audacious ensemble dissonances before Jones breaks out one of his best solo turns of the set. There's lots of percussion to stir the mix as well. Vocalist Carolyn Perteete brings a soft, flat breathiness to "Letter Of Resignation," a lovelorn ballad with the worldly sophistication of a Billy Strayhorn tune. Another guest, flutist Erika von Kleist, brings a light, wispy presence to "Summer's Spring." "Love's Lullaby" is something of a tour-de-force for Jones, who carries the piece in a carefully paced solo that unfolds in expansive layers before a final telescoping coda.

Jones is certainly a fine player, but I've expressed a consistent ho-hum view of the material. Only "Sean's Jones Comes Down," a Frank Foster original, shows the kind of zip that might have kicked this good CD up a star.

—John McDonough

**The Search Within:** The Search Within (Interlude); Transitions; The Ambitious Violet; Life Cycles; The Storm; Letter Of Resignation; The Search Within (For Less); Summer's Spring; Sunday Reflections; Sean's Jones Comes Down; Love's Lullaby; The Search Within (Postlude). (62:18)

**Personnel:** Sean Jones, trumpet; Erika von Kleist, flute; Brian Hogans, Walter Smith, saxophones; Grégoire Maret, harmonica; Orrin Evans, piano; Luques Curtis, bass; Obed Calvaire, drums; Kahill Bell, percussion; Carolyn Perteete, vocal.

» Ordering info: [mackavenue.com](http://mackavenue.com)

music. The singers aren't the most engrossing, and it occasionally seems that the leader is a secondary player on his own disc. Tracks like "Motherless Child" and "The Old Ship Of Zion" spark only when the boss takes charge. Quicker tempos help. The band has a blast on "It's A Big Army," and the vocal-less "But I Like The Message" finds the group utterly animated. But wan moments crop up—I'm surprised that all that Bible-thumping didn't chase those devilish passages to the fires below.

—Jim Macnie

**Piety Street:** That's Enough; Motherless Child; It's A Big Army; His Eye Is On The Sparrow; Something's Got A Hold On Me; The Old Ship Of Zion; 99 And A Half; Just A Little While To Stay Here; Never Turn Back; Walk With Me; But I Like The Message; The Angel Of Death; I'll Fly Away. (62:12)

**Personnel:** John Scofield, guitar; Jon Cleary, keyboards, vocals; George Porter, Jr., bass; Ricky Fataar, Shannon Powell, drums; John Boutté, vocals.

» Ordering info: [deccarecords-us.com](http://deccarecords-us.com)

CDs	CRMCs »	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	Paul de Barros
<b>Wynton Marsalis</b> <i>He And She</i>		★★★★	★★★½	★★★½	★★★
<b>Fareed Haque + The Flat Earth Ensemble</b> <i>Flat Planet</i>		★★★	★★★½	★★½	★★½
<b>Sean Jones</b> <i>The Search Within</i>		★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★
<b>John Scofield</b> <i>Piety Street</i>		★★★	★★★	★★★	★★½

## Critics' Comments

### Wynton Marsalis, *He And She*

The poem/song-poem structure isn't as awkward as it might be, primarily because Marsalis has such a rich reading voice and because he is a good storyteller. The playing is, across the board, beautiful, almost surgically so, and the tunes almost all have unexpected elements and fortunately don't follow the familiar ye faux olde path of "School Boy."

—John Corbett

With many warm, often clever, mostly captivating musical moments here, one cannot carp that poetry displaces music. Steeped in tradition without exactly being "trad," Marsalis swerves up 12 small-scale pieces that, despite dabs of artifice, avoid the trap of hyper-expectations that has swallowed earlier projects. Best, his longest oration is an encore.

—John McDonough

Arresting tracks such as "Fears" should hush anyone who thinks Marsalis' compositional ideas are monolithic. And throughout this quintet date the use of structural intricacies goes hand in hand with the signature grace that has become the cornerstone of his art. Again and again he makes oddities (the full-flutter theme of "First Time") seem engrossing and natural. Here's to romance.

—Jim Macnie

### Fareed Haque + The Flat Earth Ensemble, *Flat Planet*

Another fashionable excursion into jazz as ethnomusicology. But you needn't be credentialed in arcane Hindu folk idioms to enjoy Haque's accomplished guitar mastery on its own terms. It's all comfortable and approachable, but only occasionally unexpected. To wit, Rob Clearfield's piano on "Uneven Mantra."

—John McDonough

Vamp, solo; vamp, solo; vamp, solo—man, that trajectory is wearying. The collective squalls that arise along the way are sometimes worth waiting for, but the guitarist has delivered a string of tepid excursions that ultimately feel rather weightless. Decent playing by all, though.

—Jim Macnie

Wow, this started off great, with the bhangra club beats, but then just went off in lebendy leben directions, as Br'er Rabbit used to say. Haque's obviously accomplished, but he doesn't accomplish much with these faux fusions of boogaloo, jazz, Indian classical, Bollywood and rock.

—Paul de Barros

### Sean Jones, *The Search Within*

The punchy hard-bop tunes are the strong suit here; the tail-wagging medium-tempo moments are where the program gets dreary. But even when things cook, a singularity is lacking. Jones and company adhere to formula too much, and it ultimately neuters several flashes of brilliance.

—Jim Macnie

A magnificent player, Jones seems to be going for something introspective here but winds up with atmospheric mood music—not smooth jazz, certainly, but too creamy for my taste. Still, "Love's Lullaby" is gorgeous, Jones burns on "Transitions" and it's great he gives air time to young players like Obed Calvaire and Erika von Kleist.

—Paul de Barros

No shortage of chops and some real fire down below. Slick and for the most part tasteful (lovely rhythm ideas on "Sean's Jones Comes Down"), though I'm missing a real signature. There are too many fade-ins and fade-outs, which are compositional cop-outs.

—John Corbett

### John Scofield, *Piety Street*

Nothing fancy here, just fiercely in-the-pocket blues toasting old-time religion. Scofield's guitar speaks as eloquently and judiciously as B.B. King or Count Basie—a real voice, no extras. John Boutté's hoarse vocals hit the sweet spot, especially on the haunting "Angel Of Death."

—Paul de Barros

The guitarist has been moving further into populist terrain, this being some logical evolution out of the collaborations with MMW. But the blues magic only intermittently takes over, and what looks good on paper doesn't always translate. The super-compressed, slippery Scofield sound does make sense in a gospel setting in part because of its sonic affinity with the similar sensibility of sacred steel.

—John Corbett

Scofield interprets gospel's rich, earthy changes with insight and feeling but never takes them beyond the church doors. John Boutté preaches the texts with an authority that nearly makes the guitarist a sideman on his own date. All that's missing is a chorus of believers. Solid but unsurprising.

—John McDonough

## Lynne Arriale

**Nuance**  
MOTÉMA 00022  
★★★★

Over the last 15 years, Lynne Arriale has made a case for herself as a top-rank jazz pianist through her recordings. If any doubt existed that she can run with the big boys, this release dispels it. She stands

toe-to-toe with trumpeter Randy Brecker in a stunning and affirmative collaboration. Their rapport is lucid, and their spontaneous exchanges often offer jewels of invention and exchange.

Sting's "Wrapped Around Your Finger" crackles with passion and dynamism, without resorting to exhibitionism. In deference to the piano, Brecker might not play forte, but holds nothing back. He has a heartbreakingly beautiful flugelhorn feature on Arriale's elegiac "Longing." His lyricism is wistful yet aching, real holding-back-the-tears stuff.

Few pianists have such a spectrum of dynamics at their disposal as Arriale. She may whisper or attack, but never pounds. Her melodic improvisation on "Ballad Of The Sad Young Men" is crystalline and touching. Her playing features spiky treble statements that press the beat. Drummer Anthony Pinciotti seems to know



players seem a little more playful with the material. Arriale's classical depth makes her virtuosic uptempo flight on "La Noche" a mini tour-de-force. Mraz, an ensemble player on the CD, gets a couple of solos on the DVD: pithy yet understated on "Young Men," and nimble and articulate on "Gumbo." "I Hear A Rhapsody" is a noticeably more adventurous—almost deconstructed—exploration. The rubato journey hangs together precariously, yet hangs just the same.

—Kirk Silsbee

**Nuance:** CD—Wrapped Around Your Finger; I Mean You; Longing; Crawfish And Gumbo; Ballad Of The Sad Young Men; Carry On; La Noche; Yada Yada Yada; I Hear A Rhapsody; A Night In Tunisia; A Gentle Soul. (55:04) DVD—Wrapped Around Your Finger; I Mean You; Carry On; Longing; La Noche; Ballad Of The Sad Young Men; I Hear A Rhapsody; Crawfish And Gumbo; Yada Yada Yada; A Night In Tunisia; A Gentle Soul. (86:20)

**Personnel:** Lynne Arriale, piano; Randy Brecker, trumpet, flugelhorn; George Mraz, bass; Anthony Pinciotti, drums.

» Ordering info: [motema.com](http://motema.com)

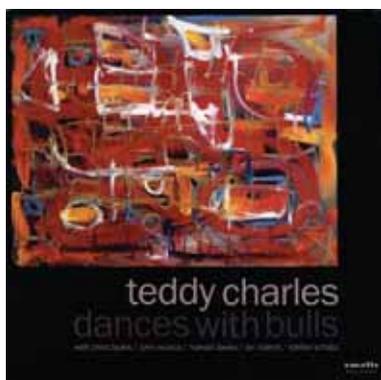
## Teddy Charles

**Dances With Bulls**  
SMALLS 0038  
★★★★½

It's amazing that *Dances With Bulls* is vibraphonist Teddy Charles' first studio recording since the early 1960s. Perhaps even more amazing is how good he sounds after all these years.

Much credit must go to Chris Byars, as the alto saxophonist has helped energize Charles into getting back in action after decades away from jazz working as a sea captain. Byars generously brings his own quartet to the table, and they form the nucleus of this formidable ensemble. He also arranged all the tunes.

The other key player drafted here is old-hand pianist Harold Danko, who helps bridge the gap between Byars' younger group and Charles' vintage approach. A veteran of countless recording sessions and a member of Charles Mingus' band in the mid-1950s, Charles is a steady, confident bandleader, a smart, nuanced composer,



and an excellent soloist. The band's 14-minute odyssey into Mingus' "Nostalgia In Times Square" is an obvious highlight, and Charles' obtuse soloing is colorful and melodic. The band hits a laid-back groove, and Byars shows multiple talents on alto and flute.

Danko's playing is clean and intelligent, and the relaxed atmosphere is

one byproduct of the collected players' steady confluence. John Mosca is ebullient on trombone, drummer Stefan Schatz swings outright, and bassist Ari Roland plucks and bows with equal skill. Let's hope that Charles' return continues with more solid recordings like this.

—Mitch Myers

**Dances With Bulls:** Dances With Bulls; Nostalgia In Times Square; No More Nights; Bunni; Arlene; Blues Without Woe. (53:53)

**Personnel:** Teddy Charles, vibraphone; Chris Byars, alto saxophone, flute; John Mosca, trombone; Harold Danko, piano; Ari Roland, bass; Stefan Schatz, drums.

» Ordering info: [smallrecords.com](http://smallrecords.com)

what she's going to play before Arriale does, and he's right under her when he needs to be. Bassist George Mraz is the model of tasteful support and strong rhythmic input. Rhythm isn't Arriale's strong suit, and Mraz and Pinciotti buoy her admirably.

The CD includes a DVD of a live recital of the same program. The



## Clayton Brothers

**Brother To Brother**  
ARTISTSHARE 0085  
★★★★

Known professionally as the Clayton Brothers on their not-infrequent pairings since 1977, alto saxophonist Jeff Clayton and bassist John Clayton are one of the few brother combinations in jazz history able to transcend the pitfalls of sibling rivalry and sustain a long-haul musical partnership. Perhaps that explains the ebullient optimism that suffuses *Brother To Brother*. This accomplished, idiosyncratic paean to the joys of filial jazz-making is primarily dedicated to the brothers Jones (Hank, Thad and Elvin) and Adderley (Cannonball and Nat), who each receive a pair of non-formulaic tone-parallels from the co-leaders plus a subtly subversive reworking of "Jive Samba" by John Clayton's son, pianist Gerald Clayton.

Four of these lead off the program. The ambiance is explosive, propelled by young drummer Obed Calvaire's idiomatic shuffles, funk, swing and Elvin-esque 6/8 grooves. John Clayton offers authoritative bass lines and resonant tone. Jeff Clayton and Terell Stafford provide crisp, one-breath front-line blowing and forceful solos. The mood mellows on tunes five through seven—Gerald Clayton navigates Kenny Burrell's slithery "Bass Face," written for his father's mentor, Ray Brown, with a greasy sophistication rarely heard in pianists born in the '80s. He also engages in a trio dialogue with his father (arco) and uncle on the yearning melody of "Where Is Love" from the 1960s musical *Oliver*.

Indeed, *Brother To Brother* connects to the hip populism that marked the best mainstream jazz of the '60s, and articulates it in a fresh manner, as though picking up loose threads. With the exception of one selection—Keter Betts' Oscar Brownish "Walking Bass"—the music is entirely in the moment.

—Ted Panken

**Brother To Brother:** Wild Man; Still More Work; Jive Samba; Big Daddy Adderleys; Bass Face; Walking Bass; Where Is Love?; The Jones Brothers. (63:34)

**Personnel:** John Clayton, bass; Jeff Clayton, alto saxophone; Gerald Clayton, piano; Terell Stafford, trumpet; Obed Calvaire, drums.

» Ordering info: [artistshare.com](http://artistshare.com)

## Abdullah Ibrahim

**Senzo**  
SUNNYSIDE 1212  
★★★★½

The last track of Abdullah Ibrahim's *Senzo*, "Ocean And The River," ends with a question mark—its final, unresolved note resonating with an unmistakable search

for the next horizon. It's a promising finish to an album that might otherwise feel like a valedictory, as it represents Ibrahim's virtual autobiography in song.

The 22-part solo suite, all original except for a transformative musing on Duke Ellington's "In A Sentimental Mood," is a ruminative, deeply felt integration of themes and sounds from throughout the pianist's life. The title translates as "ancestor" in Japanese and Chinese, and is also the name of Ibrahim's father—an apt confluence of the cultural and personal that captures the at once introspective and expansive feel of this breathtaking CD.

Ibrahim relates his history in the manner of a weaver of folk tales, distilling his concepts into forms related in accessible, broad strokes that nonetheless communicate layers of meaning. Calling them simple might seem disparaging,



but it's the difference between the simplicity of limited ideas and a simplicity achieved. Superfluous gestures have been dispensed with in favor of a direct emotionality.

Take "Blues For A Hip King," which in the course of six minutes evolves from smoky blues to wistful optimism to a memorable

pop lyricism that would make Paul Simon jealous, to a gospel prayer almost too private to listen in on. With all of the tributes to John Coltrane that have been recorded over the years, "For Coltrane" has to be one of the most striking. No gushing love letter, it's a quietly spiritual tribute passed in a steely whisper. "Banyana, Children Of Africa" briefly touches upon the South African swing so important to Ibrahim's catalog, while "Blue Bolero" offers grand chamber drama.

—Shaun Brady

**Senzo:** Ocean And The River; In The Evening; Blues Of Be; Prelude "For Coltrane"; Aspen; Blues For A Hip King; Third Line Samba; Tookah; Pula; For Coltrane; Dust; Corridors Radiant; Jabulani; Dust (Reprise); Nisa; "Senzo"—Contours And Time; Meditation/Mummy; Banyana, Children Of Africa; Mamma; Blue Bolero; In A Sentimental Mood; Ocean And The River. (57:19)

**Personnel:** Abdullah Ibrahim, piano.

» Ordering info: [sunnysiderecords.com](http://sunnysiderecords.com)

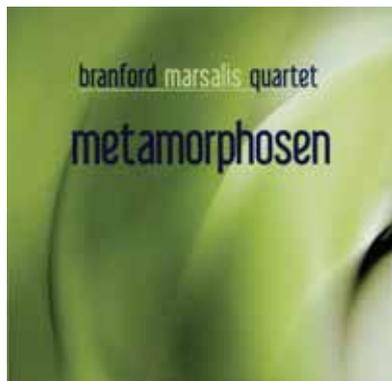
## Branford Marsalis Quartet

**Metamorphosen**  
MARSALIS MUSIC 74946  
★★★★

It's a bit strange that Branford Marsalis titled the latest album by his superb group with the German word for metamorphosis, as the recording captures his band

attaining new levels of refinement, not transformation. Interestingly, on an album where the band, which has maintained a steady line-up for more than a decade, sounds stronger and more unified than ever, the personalities of the members have never been more clearly displayed. Each contributes two or more tunes, while the leader only penned one, the wonderfully slaloming "Jabberwocky." That piece features Marsalis on the alto sax for the first time in 20 years, unleashing a 19-bar melody that seems like it was made for Lee Konitz.

The various elements each player brings to the fold are all part of the band's dynamic sound, so rather than seeming disparate, they highlight different facets of their approach. The



band can stop on a dime; accelerating and decelerating like opening and closing a fist, such as the way their invigorating take on Thelonious Monk's "Rhythm-A-Ning" uses the tune like a big piece of taffy. Pianist Joey Calderazzo provides two pensive ballads that manage to sound weightless—even while drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts

riddles the gauziness of "The Blossom Of Parting" with probing, hard-hitting volleys.

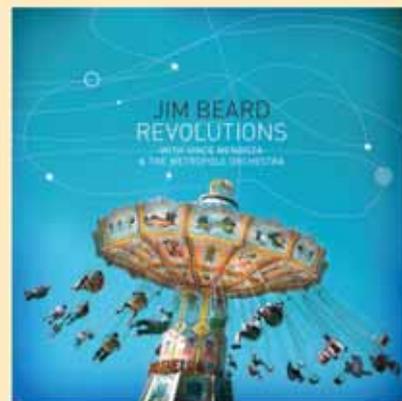
Unsurprisingly, Watts brings in some of the heaviest tunes, including the ferocious opener. But my favorite piece here may be "Sphere" by bassist Eric Revis, a jagged, lurching gem that acknowledges its Monk-like qualities in its title and some sly quotes by Marsalis and Calderazzo. Metamorphosis or not, this quartet has rarely sounded better.

—Peter Margasak

**Metamorphosen:** The Return Of The Jitney Man; The Blossom Of Parting; Jabberwocky; Abe Vigoda; Rhythm-A-Ning; Sphere; The Last Goodbye; And Then, He Was Gone; Samo. (61:38)

**Personnel:** Branford Marsalis, saxophones; Joey Calderazzo, piano; Eric Revis, bass; Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums.

» Ordering info: [marsalismusic.com](http://marsalismusic.com)



**JIM BEARD**  
**REVOLUTIONS** SSC 1227  
with **VINCE MENDOZA & THE METROPOLE ORCHESTRA**

In Stores May 5, 2009

A great musical composition will always catch a listener's ear. An equally great arrangement can stop a casual listener dead in his tracks. Pianist and composer Jim Beard has been writing and recording arresting music for many years with luminaries such as Wayne Shorter, Pat Metheny and John McLaughlin. On his new recording, *Revolutions*, Beard was fortunate enough to recruit Vince Mendoza and the Metropole Orchestra to perform his compositions with the colorful vividness that only a group of this talent and size can. The Metropole Orchestra is the world's largest pop and jazz orchestra and has been used frequently for recordings by many fantastic musicians. The Orchestra was established in 1945 by the Dutch Radio Foundation for public radio broadcast and continues the tradition as one of the last remaining radio orchestras. The current chief conductor is the highly regarded writer/arranger Vince Mendoza, who brings his years of experience in sound to this beautiful project.

The creation of *Revolutions* was a joint effort by Beard and Mendoza as they selected tunes and worked out arrangements for big band with strings. The recording is a testament to both Beard's beautiful compositions and Mendoza's Metropole Orchestra's unbelievable ability to make the music bloom ever more fully.



[sunnysiderecords.com](http://sunnysiderecords.com)



## Brian Blade

### Mama Rosa

VERVE FORECAST B0012613

★★★★

One can't help but wonder if Brian Blade's many years playing with all kinds of musicians—not just jazz musicians—hasn't played a major role in the production of *Mama Rosa*. For those most familiar with Blade the drummer, this one's an ear-opener. Not only is there less drumming than with previous efforts like his Fellowship Band album *Season Of Changes* (2008), but *Mama Rosa* (named for his grandmother) is essentially a pop record. It's Blade's first recording as a singer, guitarist and songwriter, one that grew out of home demos he worked on for years.

The prime singer is none other than Blade himself, who also plays piano and acoustic guitar. He also wrote practically everything here and co-produced it. Daniel Lanois' presence (instrumentally on pedal steel, guitar, bass and backup singing) may have had a hand in the mannered, atmospheric vibe delivered with most of the material. This is mood music that occasionally rocks, and can haunt and inspire. It can be soft and slightly ambient, with each song gliding right into the next, yet somehow each song manages to distinguish itself from the pre-



vious one. Guest spots include Fellowship members bassist Chris Thomas and pianist Jon Cowherd, along with guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel, who plays on the one cover, Milton Nascimento's spirited "Faithful Brother" (with words, additional music and arrangement by Blade).

Blade has a smooth and youthful voice. It carries

some heft with its distinction, and on some tracks is blended with vocals from Lanois, Kelly Jones, Daryl Johnson and the Silverlake Male Chorus, which appears on the dreamy "At The Centerline." Greg Leisz on Weissenborn, and pedal and lap steel guitars, and Patrick Smith on pedal steel help give *Mama Rosa* an alt-country feel.

*Mama Rosa* offers a study in understatement. Including the otherworldly sonic-scape instrumentals "All Gospel Radio" and "Psalms 100," it carries a quasi-religious feel at times, with a road-song quality running through songs about love, family and the need to connect.

—John Ephland

**Mama Rosa:** After The Revival; Mercy Angel; At The Centerline; Faithful Brother; Get There; Second Home; You'll Always Be My Baby; Nature's Law; Struggling With That; All That Was Yesterday; Her Song; All Gospel Radio; Psalms 100. (52:17)

» Ordering info: [verveforecast.com](http://verveforecast.com)

## Ruthie Foster

### The Truth According To Ruthie Foster

BLUE CORN MUSIC 70901

★★★★

Ruthie Foster's career arc has been in place since the singer left the Navy and got things going in the mid-1990s. That trajectory peaks with her fifth album. Her latest has a Southern soul slant, though it's a disservice here to assign this searching Texan to one stylistic group or another given her fluency in gospel, rock, blues, folk and various hybrids. *The Truth* was recorded at Ardent Studios in Memphis with local dignitaries like Jim Dickinson, Wayne Jackson and Charles Hodges. But the main man among her supporting cast turns out to be a Californian, Robben Ford, who shows again and again here why he's one of the best blues guitarists of his generation.

Not about to fall into the trap of fixating on the Memphis soul past, Foster relies on her unusually strong and expressive voice to comment on the power of love in modern times and



the need to stay true to oneself no matter what the crazy world dishes out. She telegraphs the affirmative messages of Patty Griffin's "When It Don't Come Easy" and country classic "Hangin' On" with striking economy of effort. She digs to the real grit of the album's one historic Memphis soul song, "Nickel And A Nail."

She's gained in authority as a songwriter. "Tears Of Pain"

is a rousing blues that's a well-seasoned slice of real life, and "Truth!" makes its point about locating emotional honesty within oneself through her sure delivery of the lyrics; Ford's guitar, with its nasty brusqueness, indicts insincere communicants. Foster even manages to impress when sizing up two Eric Bibb songs, "Love In The Middle" and "Thanks For The Joy," that would come off as smiley face mush in less discerning hands. —Frank-John Hadley

**The Truth According To Ruthie Foster:** Stone Love; I Really Love You; When It Don't Come Easy; (You Keep Me) Hangin' On; Truth!; Love In The Middle; Nickel And A Nail; Dues Paid In Full; Joy On The Other Side; Tears Of Pain; Thanks For The Joy. (46:02)

» Ordering info: [bluecornmusic.com](http://bluecornmusic.com)



## Jason Marsalis

### Music Update

ELM 19788

★★★★½

*Music Update* explodes from its first track, a short but intense drum number marked by a second-line beat-driven call to attention. Jason Marsalis sets the stage for the furthest-reaching and most compelling album of his career.

Over the past eight years, Marsalis has turned his attention to the vibraphone, with tremendous results. His agility as a drummer and graceful compositions are enhanced by his focus on melodic percussion. He's been playing with overdubs since 1998's "Discipline" on his first album as a leader, *The Year Of The Drummer*. Here, the so-called "percussion experiment" theme expands. The overdubs widen their range from uptempo and fun to romantic, Eastern-tinged and even second-line-meets-disco.

The swinging "Discipline Mellows Out" shows off the group's softer side, and Marsalis also explores Japanese Taiko drumming on "Discipline Vacations In Asia." The album closes with a characteristically quirky take on the concept—this time, adding a light '70s groove sensibility to the layers of dubbed drums and finishing it off with "Discipline Spotted Baby And Zutty At Studio 54."

After the high-intensity kickoff tracks, Marsalis, Austin Johnson (piano) and Will Goble (bass) revisit classical with the almost tongue-in-cheek carousel ride that is the sometimes bluesy "Ballet Class." Even the restrained, swinging "Offbeat Personality" winks at Marsalis' idiosyncratic style with its title alone.

Beneath these layers, Marsalis' technical precision still shines through, both with complex patterns and in the physicality of the music. Ballads like "Durango Kid" benefit from Marsalis' gentle touch on the vibes.

The disc survives repeated plays, and at just under an hour, its biggest drawback is that it's over too soon.

—Jennifer Odell

**Music Update:** Guess Who's Back?; Offbeat Personality; Ballet Class; Discipline Returns Once Again; Characters; Blues For The 29%ers (Down To 19); Discipline Vacations In Asia; Midnight Sun; Seven Come Eleven; Discipline Mellows Out; Durango Kid; Western Vacation Ranch; Discipline Spotted Baby And Zutty At Studio 54. (54:34)

**Personnel:** Jason Marsalis, vibraphone, drums; Austin Johnson, piano; Will Goble, bass; David Potter, drums.

» Ordering info: [jasonmarsalis.com](http://jasonmarsalis.com)

## Throw Down

Vinnie Cutro & New York City Soundscape's *Sakura* (Royal Blue Ensembles 72307; 60:14) ★★★½ is full of talented players hitting on 10 tunes, six written by trumpeter Cutro. Featuring tenor saxophonist Jerry Bergonzi and drummer Billy Hart, this quintet/sometimes sextet with trombonist Bob Ferrel reflects the focus and expertise that Cutro's fierce yet eloquent horn exudes. Straightahead in character, *Sakura* is Cutro's fourth album as a leader, with straightforward approaches to "Freedom Jazz Dance," "Round Midnight" and "Willow Weep For Me" nestled in with Cutro's material that makes this group sound like a band.

Ordering info: [vinniecutro.com](http://vinniecutro.com)

Nathan Eklund's *Trip To The Casbah* (Jazz Excursion 117; 60:01) ★★★ plays out as a tandem between trumpet/flugelhorn player Eklund, guitarist John Hart and (occasionally) tenor saxophonist Donny McCaslin. "Passing Trains" features Hart and Eklund in uptempo swinging form, with bassist Bill Moring and drummer Tim Horner providing a solid rhythmic core to this group. There's lots of soloing all around in this all-Eklund program, with spots for immediate expression, as when Eklund duos with Moring on the lullaby-ish "Happiness Is ..." along with his precise yet fluid playing on the jangly swinger "Big Bro's Backstop."

Ordering info: [jazzexcursionrecords.com](http://jazzexcursionrecords.com)

On *Heart Beats* (Smalls 0041; 45:25) ★★ from Omer Klein, the opener features pianist Klein on hand drums only on the somewhat mesmerizing title track. In 12 songs, all composed by Klein, there is expertise but little in the way of personal expression. Klein plays piano in a kind of Chick Corea solo-excursion vein—"Voices Of War," "Niggun"—but, ultimately, there is little to recommend on this disc. And yet, the lullaby vibe that surfaces can be convincing, as with the spritely "Alma."

Ordering info: [smallsrecords.com](http://smallsrecords.com)

"The Freighttrain" and "Re: Frayne" stand out on Steve Haines' *Stickadiboom* (Zoho 200903; 51:25) ★★★, a promising quilt of acoustic jazz. Bassist Haines is rapt and focused as a soloist and leader, but the music stumbles on funky fodder like the title track and generic fare like drummer

Vinnie Cutro:  
fierce yet eloquent



STEVE HOCKSTEIN

Jimmy Cobb's "Composition 101." Tenor saxophonist David Lown, pianist Chip Crawford, Cobb and alternate drummer Thomas Taylor work best together on swingers like the uptempo "Sutak 9-1-1" and reflective "Patience," which highlight Haines' playing.

Ordering info: [zohomusic.com](http://zohomusic.com)

Hawaii-based Bop Tribal's eponymous release (*Pass Out* 9020; 57:01) ★★★★★ moves from evoking the music of John Coltrane and McCoy Tyner, as on the bluesy "One Bad Song A Day," to Horace Silver with the whimsical waltz "Melancholic Toes." In this all-original program of eight songs, pianist/leader Satomi Yarimizo, trumpeter/flugelhorn player DeShannon Higa, tenorist Reggie Padilla, bassist Shawn Conley and drummer Abe Lagrimas, Jr., establish straightahead moods convincingly, as with the robust, swinging title track, which sets up a series of energetic and engaging solos.

Ordering info: [boptribal.com](http://boptribal.com)

In a program that offers surprises with each new song, the Brenan Brothers' *The Throw Down* (*Death Defying*; 60:55) ★★★★★ is a swinging delight. Key among the stars here is keyboardist Geoff Keezer, who stands out on acoustic and electric piano. But tenor saxophonist Jim Brenan and brother Craig on trombone call the shots in this can't-miss outing. Also on board are drummer Dana Hall, bassist Rubim de Toledo, altoist Ralph Bowen and Terell Stafford on trumpet (two tracks). Highlights include the uptempo blitz "Kingdom Come," where everyone flexes their chops, and "Were The Colour," which offers a meditative, dreamy side to the band. The Brenans' combination of saxophone and trombone reflects a partial lifetime of synergy worth more than a listen. DB

Ordering info: [jimbrenan.com](http://jimbrenan.com)



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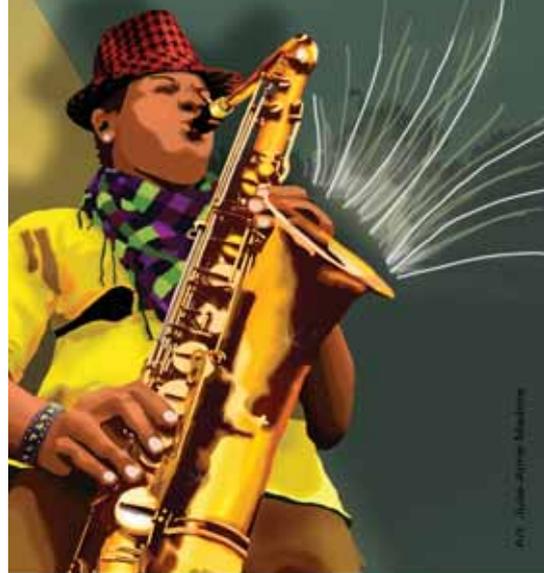
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## Claudia Acuña

En Este Momento

MARSALIS MUSIC 74946

★★★★



Although she's toured widely since releasing 2004's *Luna*, it's taken Claudia Acuña a few years to complete the recording of her new material, some of which was inspired by a trip to Tulum, Mexico, more than two years ago, where she wrote the beginnings of the hauntingly elegant song of the same name.

In fact, the whole album works as a tour of Latin American musical heritage, as interpreted by Acuña's emotive and soulful alto. As her voice alternates from dreamy to dark, her influences pull from classic Chilean folk, tango, bolero as well as from the deeply rooted working relationships with pianist Jason Lindner and guitarist Juancho Herrera.

Opening the album with a pair of classic folk songs ("El Cigarrito" and "Te Recuerdo Amanda") by Víctor Jara, a politically charged popular singer in Chile who was executed while singing an ode to the country's toppled populist party, sets a pensive tone for the next 45 minutes of music. The songs, which have been covered by American folk artists including Pete Seeger and Joan Baez, get back to their roots under the warm blanket of Acuña's intoxicating voice.

Her music, though, connotes more than beauty. The emotions inspired by political and social issues like the war in Iraq or a loss of civil liber-

ties in other countries come to the surface of Acuña's unglossed tone and Lindner's angry wave of notes in their original, "That's What They Say."

Later, her unwavering alto imbues "Cuando Vuelva A Tu Lado" with an updated take on the particular feminine strength that its composer Maria

Grever (one of the first famous female Mexican composers) conveyed.

The force of so much nuanced drama never overshadows the essential roles played by Acuña's band, including Branford Marsalis, who plays soprano on "Cuando Vuelva A Tu Lado." Meanwhile, Lindner's choice of Rhodes and Melotron give way to a soft groove that piano alone wouldn't quite achieve. The rest of the rhythm section's washed beats make Acuña's earthy voice that much more tenuous.

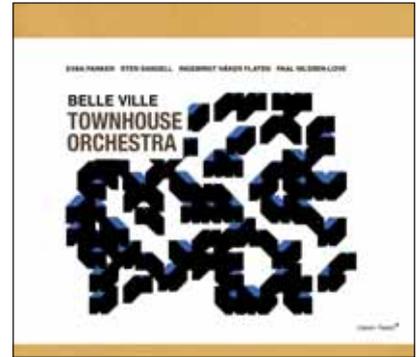
This album's merit reaches beyond its exquisite sound and into the realm of deep meaning. Acuña has woven an important social history out of the short stories these songs narrate.

—Jennifer Odell

**En Este Momento:** El Cigarrito; Te Recuerdo Amanda; Tulum; That's What They Say; El Derecho De Vivir En Paz; Contigo En La Distancia; Cuando Vuelva A Tu Lado; Vuelvo Al Sur; Sueño Contigo; La Mentira (Se Te Olvida). (48:24)

**Personnel:** Claudia Acuña, vocals; Jason Lindner, piano, Rhodes, Mellotron, organ; Juancho Herrera, guitar, mandolin; Omer Avital, bass; Clarence Penn, drums, cajon, percussion.

» Ordering info: [marsalismusic.com](http://marsalismusic.com)



## Townhouse Orchestra

Belle Ville

CLEAN FEED 125

★★★★

Director David Lynch insists that his films be released on DVD without chapter stops, thereby preventing viewers from randomly accessing scenes. On the one hand, this makes artistic sense: Lynch's films thrive on atmosphere, which would be destroyed without being experienced in their totality. But Lynch is also a master at creating memorable and beautiful scenes that last for mere moments, things of mystery worthy of being explored out of context.

The monumental block of music represented on the Townhouse Orchestra's second release is similar. Each of the two CDs contains a single 45-minute block of music, which rewards being experienced as a whole. These four remarkably attuned musicians spin an epic spontaneous narrative, with breathtaking contrasts between disparate segments. But some of those segments are so striking on their own terms that an index would help one to return and examine them in greater detail.

The quartet—saxophonist Evan Parker, pianist Sten Sandell, bassist Ingebrigt Håker Flaten and drummer Paal Nilssen-Love—are all familiar with one another, evidenced by the absence of down time or meandering transitions in the double-disc set. A dense whorl of four-part sound is the default, but many of the highlights come from smaller sub-units: the dark clouds conjured around disc one's 14-minute mark by Sandell's portentous left-hand hammering and Parker's eerily swooping tenor, complemented by Nilssen-Love's bowed cymbals, or two broad-shouldered solo spots by Håker Flaten on disc two.

The scale of these improvisations can be overwhelming, akin to staring at two huge abstract murals aswarm with detail. It could more accurately be described as a diptych, two pieces similar in size and effect, at times echoing and at others deviating from one another, rich on their own, stunning in combination.

—Shaun Brady

**Belle Ville:** Disc 1—Belleville. (44:47); Disc 2—Villeville. (45:10)

**Personnel:** Evan Parker, tenor saxophone; Sten Sandell, piano; Ingebrigt Håker Flaten, bass; Paal Nilssen-Love, drums, percussion.

» Ordering info: [cleanfeed-records.com](http://cleanfeed-records.com)

## The Flatlands Collective

Maatjes

CLEAN FEED 127

★★★★



The word "maatjes" has a double meaning in Dutch, referring to mates and a raw herring dish that is a delicacy in Holland. The title captures the spirit of this ensemble, both its camaraderie and essential Dutchness.

The Flatlands Collective is a quintet of Chicagoans convened by Dutch saxophonist Jorrit Dijkstra. In the album's liner notes, Dijkstra explains that while American music has impacted his own since he was a kid, that influence has been filtered through The Netherlands' peculiar take on jazz. The sidemen he's selected are sufficiently attuned to improvisational developments on both sides of the Atlantic that they aren't thrown by his everything on one plate compositional approach. Whether it's reimagining Terry Riley-style minimalism as march music on "In D Flat Minor," laying down some

soulful Sun Ra worship on "Scirocco Song" or negotiating the abrupt shifts between disciplined, downbeat swing passages and episodes of agitated improvisation on "Druil," they render his often challenging material with vivid clarity.

The American Flatlanders don't just play Dijkstra's tunes; they inhabit them, bearing down on a burner like "Phil's Tesora"

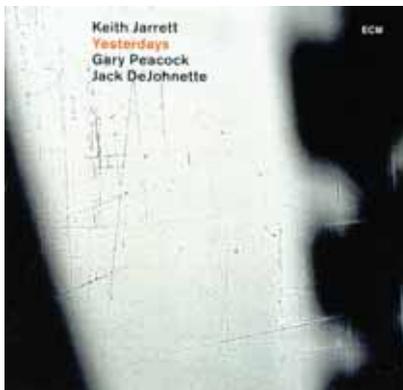
with the all-for-one enthusiasm of real mates. Dijkstra capitalizes on the band's spirit by playing a splendidly gnarled alto on that track, and elsewhere his grainy, retro-futuristic electronics contrast strikingly with the cleanly executed horn charts. It adds up to a rewarding record by a band with a singular identity.

—Bill Meyer

**Maatjes:** Mission Rocker; Micro Mood; Partially Overdone; Maatjes 1; Druil; Phil's Tesora; The Gate; Maatjes 2; In D Flat Minor; Scirocco Song. (62:39)

**Personnel:** Jorrit Dijkstra, alto saxophone, lyricon, analog synthesizer; James Falzone, clarinet; Jeb Bishop, trombone; Fred Lonberg-holm, cello, analog electronics; Jason Roebke, bass; Frank Rosaly, drums, percussion.

» Ordering info: [cleanfeed-records.com](http://cleanfeed-records.com)



## Keith Jarrett/Gary Peacock/ Jack DeJohnette

*Yesterdays*

ECM 2060

★★★★½

Silver anniversaries seldom come along in jazz, and Keith Jarrett's trio rolls along into a recession-proof golden future. Twenty-six years and counting, Jarrett and his redoubtable rhythm section continue their benign if bankable assault on the Great American and bebop songbooks, piling up sterling renditions of standards and bop gems. Still on top of his game, Jarrett mixes reveries with punchy explorations in this live date from Tokyo in 2001. The Japanese fans' respectfully restrained applause lightly ruffles under Gary Peacock's one-chorus solos and Jack DeJohnette's occasional blunt fours.

Jarrett selects repertoire impeccably and paces his sets admirably. Though "Strollin'" leads off with a lumpy warmup hardly reminiscent of Horace Silver's natural wit, they soon smooth it out. Ditto on "Scrapple From The Apple," but "Shaw'Nuff," launched with silent-movie chase piano, never flags. Old favorites reappear—a whimsical "You've Changed" and the ragtime-feel solo intro to "You Took Advantage Of Me"—freshly reimagined with more pure melody and less funk and blue notes. Somehow the sleepier ruminations, such as "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes" with its dirge-like verse and turning-leaf exploration, seem more pleasantly apropos of the celebration.

Completists will admire the sweet legato lines, some recalling Dave McKenna's glorious sweep, that Jarrett unleashes on the Jerome Kern title track and those enveloping "A Sleepin' Bee" (an expansive, daring solo) that summon the concentrated approbation of his mates, both in solo and ensemble. A snappy medium clip backstage track of "Stella By Starlight" fills out the date's encore, an easy textbook reading with bass and drums given one chorus each.

—Fred Bouchard

**Yesterdays:** Strollin'; You Took Advantage Of Me; Yesterdays; Shaw'Nuff; You've Changed; Scrapple From The Apple; A Sleepin' Bee; Smoke Gets In Your Eyes; Stella By Starlight. (75:37)  
**Personnel:** Keith Jarrett, piano; Gary Peacock, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums.

» Ordering info: [ecmrecords.com](http://ecmrecords.com)

## BLUES

by Frank-John Hadley

### Sweet Zones

**Enrico Crivellaro: *Mojo Zone***

(Electro-Fi 3411; 72:15) ★★★★★ This Italian guitarist, once a student of Ronnie Earl, sets the gold standard for blues instrumental albums by someone under 40 here. Stellar technique aside, Crivellaro pours inspiration into eight originals and songs he knows from old Earl Hooker, Junior Wells and Kenny Burrell records. Hypnotic feeling levitates the eight-minute "Hubert" (as in Sumlin). The dankest depths of wretchedness envelope the slow blues "Blues For Larry Johnson" (who's he? a little-known, deceased guitarist). Amazing shades of emotional delicacy are revealed in Burrell's "Midnight Blue." Pietro Taucher's Hammond C-3 is a blowtorch of energy. If the good Lord's willin' and the creek don't rise, Crivellaro will conquer blues America.

Ordering info: [electrofi.com](http://electrofi.com)

**Nicole Hart: *Treasure* (Blues Leaf 9839;**

49:45) ★★★ Two Harts showed up in the New Jersey studio. The first is a poised, far-ranging singer capable of folding in sensuality with ingenuity on tunes she composed with her keyboardist-husband Lance Ong. She scores big with "Treasure," about a reckless female who once dallied with "the man on my dreams," just as good is the revealingly titled "I Just Want To Cry." The second is a passable blues bar entertainer not sure how to feel her way into, for instance, Nina Simone and Stevie Wonder classics.

Ordering info: [bluesleaf.com](http://bluesleaf.com)

**Roxy Perry: *In My Sweet Time* (Blue-**

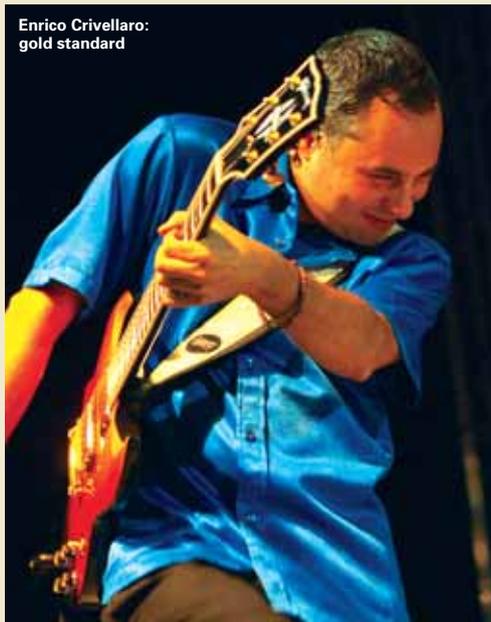
Perry Hill 3868; 51:15) ★★★★★ New Yorker Perry is a veteran blues singer with a straightforward delivery and lots of sassiness. On her third outing, she broadens her horizons with enjoyable forays into uptown r&b, funk, rock, country, Latin music and finger-snapping jump-blues. Perry knows her business all right; she's a more than capable songwriter and harmonica player. "Not Bad Enough" sounds like a scratchy 78 from the time when blues queens ruled the land.

Ordering info: [roxyperry.com](http://roxyperry.com)

**Guy Davis: *Sweetheart Like You* (Red**

House 211; 62:30) ★★½ Davis owns the most valuable discography of any modern blues artist, but he gets it only partly right this time around. His gruffly expressive midnight-cry of a voice highlights intelli-

Enrico Crivellaro:  
gold standard



ANNA SHARIBZHANOVA

gent songs he has penned on infidelity ("Sweet Hannah") and the intertwined poetic brilliance and social consciousness of his actress-mother Ruby Dee ("Words To My Mama's Song"). But Davis fails to invigorate several dog-tired tunes, including "Hoochie Coochie Man," and he indulges in an unfortunate over-dramatized quality when singing the field holler "Ain't Goin' Down."

Ordering info: [redhouserecords.com](http://redhouserecords.com)

**Ramon Goose Band: *Journey Into The***

*Blues* (Tekni 003; 40:56) ★★½ Goose, based in England, goes with cover material (Stevie Ray Vaughan's "Rude Mood," Robben Ford, more) on a straightahead trio blues set that's a departure from his thrilling neo-blues band, nubluues. He passes muster as a guitarist, but doesn't always cut it as a vocalist. He's not keen on his intonation or inflection.

Ordering info: [ramongoose.com](http://ramongoose.com)

**B.B. King: *Live In Africa '74* (Shout!**

Factory 11043 DVD; 48:00) ★★★★★ King's famous appearance before 80,000 Zairians was part of the festivities surrounding the Muhammad Ali-George Foreman championship bout. Sweat dripping, King sings with stentorian earnestness and uncorks single-note runs as if it were his last night on Earth. Great power emanates from some secret place within him. Then-young guitarist Larry Carlton is one of the hirelings seen and heard along King's regular touring group and a big band on "The Thrill Is Gone" and seven more staples of the grand master's repertory. Bonus: a short, OK interview from 1981.

DB

Ordering info: [shoutfactory.com](http://shoutfactory.com)

## Delivering the Icons

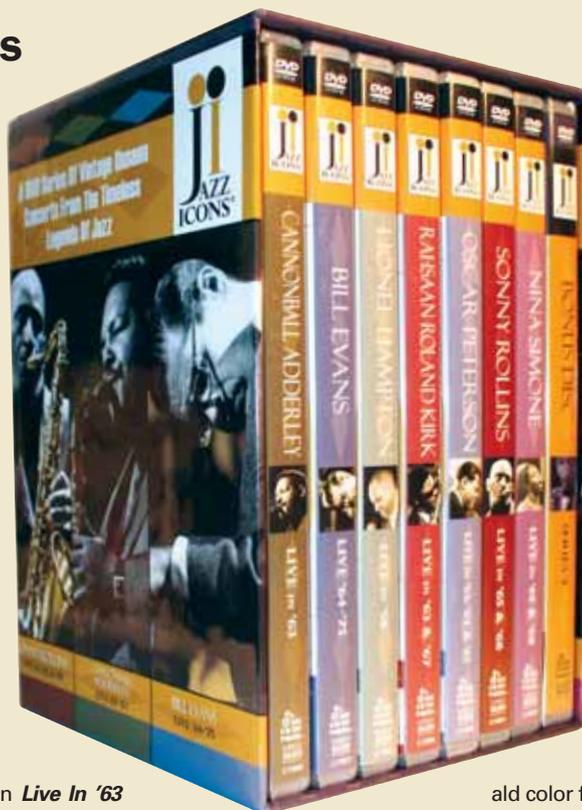
What a delight to witness heroes of yesteryear in their digitally transmogrified, post-celluloidal flesh. These DVDs allow one to examine close up Rahsaan Roland Kirk orchestrating the polyphony of his multiple horns, Nina Simone brow beating hapless audiences with her ferocity of intent and the discipline of Lionel Hampton's orchestra behind the show biz front

Stretching from 1958 (Hampton in Belgium) through to 1975 (Bill Evans in Denmark), *Reelin' In The Years* has exhumed magic monochrome moments from seven singular artists in its third Jazz Icons series. Plus, the DVDs offer the music of such superb sidemen as the late Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen (who appears with Sonny Rollins, Kirk and Evans), tenor saxophonist Andy McGhee (with Hampton), Clark Terry (with Oscar Peterson) and Yusef Lateef (with Cannonball Adderley).

The space Adderley spares Lateef on *Live In '63 (Reelin' In The Years 2.119009; 98:37) ★★★★★*, reminds us of the altoist's inclusivity, a generosity of spirit that fueled his own ecstatic phraseology. During the German broadcast (in an impressively customized studio set), Adderley smiles at Lateef after playing melismas reminiscent of the tenorist, who brought ethnic scales and multi-instrumentalism to the sextet. Hearing Lateef squeeze a slow blues from the oboe, however, makes one eager to return to the crackling cornet of Nat Adderley or the leader in full bore.

Hampton's efforts to get across on *Live In '58 (Reelin' In The Years 2.119012; 57:23) ★★★★★* are quixotic. He presents a "history of jazz," from dixieland to Hot Club to modern, with an inexplicable reference to Thelonious Monk after "The Chase." Initially, bandmembers make furtive glances and seem detached from the leader's bombast, but by the end of show we see how efficiently coiled Hampton's team is, delivering a preposterously tight, ostensibly spontaneous response to Hamp's final drum beat on "Sticks Ahoy." Fine solos from forgotten heroes Leon Zachery (alto) and guitarist Billy Mackel and a nice trumpet face-off between Art Hoyle and Eddie Williams remind that even without marquee names like Illinois Jacquet and Dexter Gordon, this was a killing band.

If you doubted Nina Simone was the "High Priestess of Soul," the concerts from Holland and England on *Live In '65 And '68 (Reelin' In The Years 2.119014, 63:16) ★★★★★* will straighten you out. Through heavy mood swings Simone takes us to church, the womb, the grave, heaven and hell with fire and brimstone protest songs one minute, a superb gutbucket "Backlash Blues" the next, then shooting shivers down spines with Oscar Brown, Jr.'s "Brown Baby" or her signature "Four Women." Simone makes her reparation agenda clear with an ominously angelic remake of Charles Aznavour's "Tomorrow Is My Turn." The bonus DVD's film from 1965, though it has poor sound, focuses on her versatile pianism. Simone clarifies her position to a Swedish interviewer: "I am a colored girl, it's my fight, it's all that matters." In the U.K. she's playful,



but adopts a different persona after a dramatic costume change.

Contemporary audiences generally appear chastened and rigid, but during exciting footage of Oscar Peterson on *Live In '63, '64 And '65 (Reelin' In The Years 2.119010; 83:08) ★★★★★½* the crowd claps in unison. A high point occurs during Peterson's take on "Yours Is My Heart Alone" in Finland when Ed Thigpen attacks the drums with teenage glee. Contrasting the joyous Peterson is the introspection of Evans' trios on *Live '64-'75 (Reelin' In The Years 2.119013; 97:10) ★★★★★*, where each musician inhabits an individual orbit, telegraphing from some higher force without eye contact. Evans fans are in for a treat. This DVD offers feature-length, era-spanning evidence from five sessions in venues large and small. The '70s her-

ald color filmstock and an intimate Swedish club features a probing "Round Midnight" intercut with saturated street scenes, window shopping blondes and vintage Volvos. The music, throughout, is hypnotizing.

*Live In '65 And '68 (Reelin' In The Years 2.119011; 86:33) ★★★★★* offers a glorious document of Sonny Rollins' virile trio-play. Though the playing is less maverick than live bootlegs from the period (perhaps Rollins played it straighter for TV cameras), he hints at how mercurial he could be, smacking together the tempos of "Oleo" and "Sonnymoon For Two" and snatching at "I Can't Get Started" as an aside on the elusiveness of inspiration—highly ironic, as is "Three Little Words," given the tenorist's relentless unspooling of ideas.

As sartorially hip as Rollins looks during this period, the sight of Kirk festooned with a hodgepodge of plumping still amazes on *Live In '63 And '67 (Reelin' In The Years 2.119008; 79:05) ★★★★★*. There were precedents for his circular breathing, multiple horns and innovative flute approach, but no one will ever put it together like Kirk, his ambition against adversity apparently limitless. Close-ups reveal how in mid-flight he'd dexterously pluck snuff from his pocket, adjust his shades or mess with tiny music boxes. He even catches his strich as it tumbles off its stand behind him during a shocking moment, barely missing a beat. His cadenza on "There Will Never Be Another You" is breathtaking (or rather not), and the topicality of his listening is evidenced with quotes from *The King And I* and Wayne Shorter's "Lester Left Town." Hats off to George Gruntz, the Pedersen brothers and Daniel Humair for their dime-stop support—check Humair's creative fours with Kirk during "Bag's Groove."

A minor carp: Composer credits appear at each film's end but not in the packaging. However, authoritative supporting literature, image collages of concert posters and other memorabilia, plus interviews and introductions by surviving kin such as Olga Adderley-Chandler, Lisa "Simone" Kelly and Bill Evans' daughter Maxine make each of these beauties indispensable. **DB**

Ordering info: [jazzicons.com](http://jazzicons.com)



## Refuge Trio

WINTER & WINTER 910

★★★★

The alchemy practiced by percussionist John Hollenbeck and vocalist Theo Bleckmann has always been extraordinary. In Hollenbeck's Quartet Lucy and occasional duo projects, the pair has created a sound that flits between Berlin's cabarets, South America and New York's Lower East Side. Adding Gary Versace's spectral accordion and impressionistic keyboards only deepens and broadens the sonic landscape.

As with everything Bleckmann and Hollenbeck do, this recording is full of tiny, stark details, from the singer's precise diction to the acrid decay of some of the drummer's metallic instruments. These elements mix with gauzier effects, often a blur of electronic noise: partially obscured shouts on a chaotic version of Thelonious Monk's "Misterioso" or a swell of sound on "To What Shall I Compare This Life."

What dominates, however, is Bleckmann's distinctive voice. Whether unaffected, as on the opening solo reading of Joni Mitchell's "Refuge Of The Roads," or manipulated with electronics on Versace's explosive "Pinwheel," it is a haunting, memorable instrument. At times, when vocalizing wordlessly, Bleckmann can assume the role of a cello, filling out the texture of a piece like Versace's beautifully rendered "Hymn." On several songs he shifts between exclamatory prose poetry and ethereal vocal effects, most effectively on "Bright Moon," which includes a stunning intervallic leap.

While he dominates, this is far from a Bleckmann-centric project. In addition to their close interaction with the singer, Hollenbeck and Versace have brief solo features. Hollenbeck creates a rippling chorus of metallic sound on crotales, tinged with electronics, while Versace's "Edges" is a rich accordion miniature.

—James Hale

**Refuge Trio:** Rufuge Of The Roads; To What Shall I Compare This Life; Pinwheel; Rural Bliss; Edges; Bright Moon; Peace; Misterioso; Child's Play; Yang Peiyi; Hymn; Happiness; All Our Yesterdays. (58:40)

**Personnel:** Theo Bleckmann, voice, live electronic processing; Gary Versace, piano, accordion, keyboards; John Hollenbeck, drums, percussion, crotales, vibraphone, glockenspiel.

» Ordering info: [winterandwinter.com](http://winterandwinter.com)

## Miles Okazaki

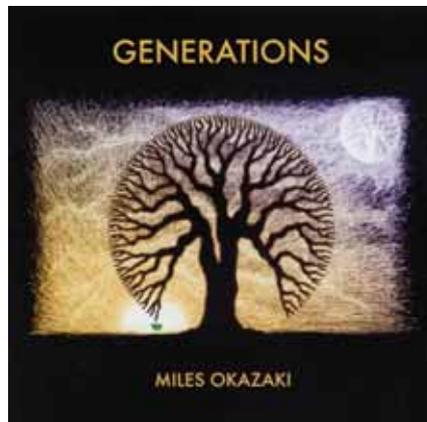
**Generations**

SUNNYSIDE 1214

★★★½

If brilliance was all that was required in jazz, Miles Okazaki would be on this issue's cover. Rarely does even a minute elapse on *Generations* where the emphatic first impression that the composer has a rare acuity for form, rhythm and harmonic movement is not reinforced. Ditto that for Okazaki's skills as a guitarist, the most impressive of which is his somewhat paradoxical ability to be commanding and understated at the same time. He's also a fastidiously disciplined leader, recording the album's nine technically exacting pieces in one continuous take.

But, you also have to put some dirt in the music. The risk of performing such meticulous, exacting charts as Okazaki's is that the requisite virtuosity to execute them is often heard as anti-septic. Few composers endeavoring this have any of Henry Threadgill's knack for the perfectly placed scuff or Steve Coleman's for melding



line and rhythm. More often than not, Okazaki's music has enough of both traits. The three-alto front line of David Binney, Christof Knoche and Miguel Zenón can summon Threadgill's raspy bellow and Coleman's even simmer. Vocalist Jen Shyu does much more than reinforce the Coleman tip; when

Okazaki favors a gliding tempo and churning chord progressions, Shyu provides an ease and brightness comparable to that which Norma Winstone brings to Kenny Wheeler's charts.

Despite the album's many fine attributes, however, Okazaki's music doesn't have the organic feel of Threadgill's or Coleman's, or the aura that it is conjured instead of orchestrated.

—Bill Shoemaker

**Generations:** Overture; Sun; Waves; Magic; Generations; Ghosts; Fractal; Break; Moon. (57:10)

**Personnel:** Miguel Zenón, David Binney, Christof Knoche, alto saxophone; Jen Shyu, voice; Miles Okazaki, electric guitar; Dan Weiss, drums; Jon Flaughner, acoustic bass.

» Ordering info: [sunnysiderecords.com](http://sunnysiderecords.com)

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FROM RAG TIME **360** TO NO TIME

**Web 360° Music © 2009**

**THE BROOKLYN FOUR PLUS ONE, INC.**  
Press Release

The Brooklyn Four Plus One, Inc. would like to thank The Charles Evans Foundation for its generous donation for our collaborative outreach program with The Recovery School District and The Louisiana State Museum. The donation will help the program, originally designed by Wade Barnes for the students of The Recovery School District, in July, 2008, to occur annually. Heretofore the program will be known as, "The Charles Evans Initiative in New Orleans featuring Wade Barnes and Unit Structures."

## Appreciating Petrucciani

In life as in art, sometimes the things left unsaid move us most. So it was during the brief career of Michel Petrucciani, whose legacy this extraordinarily comprehensive CD and DVD box set celebrates.

**Michel Petrucciani: *The Complete Dreyfus Jazz Recordings* (Dreyfus Jazz 1446430) ★★★★★** contains nine albums, including two solo piano double-disc sets, *Piano Solo: The Complete Concert In Germany* and *Au Théâtre Des Champs-Élysées*. Aside from a few bonus tracks, the music has all been heard before, beginning with the wonderfully intimate *Conversation*, recorded in 1992 and featuring Petrucciani with his father, Tony Petrucciani, whose gifts as a guitarist have been overshadowed by his apparent excellence as a mentor to his son. From here we revisit a series of albums. These include *Eddy Louiss/Michel Petrucciani*, an organ/piano summit that swings harder than any session without bass and drums has a right to do; the equally invigorating combination of string quartet with bassist Dave Holland, drummer Tony Williams and Petrucciani on *Marvellous*; and other titles that capture the late pianist's facility as a composer and his distinctive mixture of wit and eloquence as a player.

Above all, Petrucciani celebrated melody. The smaller the group, the more he could express himself through the long lines that were the essence of his improvisation. Some combinations seemed to restrict this aspect of his performance. On *Live In Tokyo*, the muscle of Anthony Jackson's electric bass and Steve Gadd's backup on drums push him toward a more extroverted expression and even shift the focus of "Home" away from nuances of performance toward the drama of an extended crescendo. He seems nearly lost in the funk jams supervised by Marcus Miller on *Dreyfus Night In Paris*. And though he plays fluently within Bob Brookmeyer's arrangements on *Both Worlds*, Petrucciani's best moments occur when he joins with saxophonist Stefano Di Battista in a duet on "Chloé Meets Louise."

When working alone, Petrucciani made full use of his freedom.

## Mining Kuhn, Codona Catalogs

Those who know pianist Steve Kuhn for his musical production over the last quarter-century—he's led 20-plus trio recordings, swinging repertoire drawn both from the American Songbook and his own corpus—may have trouble recognizing the artist represented in *Life's Backward Glances: Solo And Quartet* (ECM 2090-92; 44:57/41:32/37:59) ★★★★★, comprising Kuhn's second (*Ecstasy*), third (*Motility*) and fifth (*Playground*) ECM recordings, from 1974 to 1979.

The results are mixed. The most successful date is *Ecstasy* (disc 3 of the set), a solo recital on which, addressing a first-class piano, Kuhn improvises with raw materials drawn almost exclusively from 19th and 20th century classical music. He places his subtle, exemplary technique and sense of structure at the service of self-expression. It's as strong as any contemporaneous ECM solo recording by Keith Jarrett—or, for that matter, Paul Bley. Kuhn projects an introverted, melancholic tonal personality, and his narrative circa 1974 contained none of the redemptive sacral strains that allowed Jarrett's extended meditations to resonate so strongly with a broad audience.

The ensemble sessions evoke a dated '70s laxity. *Motility* features a working quartet with Steve Slagle on woodwinds, Harvie Swartz on bass and Michael Smith on drums. The ensemble flow is gauzy, diffuse and self-conscious. Grooves are scarce, except for "A Danse For One," a Jaki Byard-ish solo track on which Kuhn deconstructs stride and boogie-woogie. Some people swear by *Playground*, with Bob Moses on drums, on which Sheila Jordan works hard to develop



Michel Petrucciani:  
celebrating melody

HYOUIELZ

Like Keith Jarrett, he took the time he needed to make his statements; his "Trilogy In Blois" runs 11 minutes on *The Complete Concert In Germany*. But Petrucciani produced more intricate and yet more communicative results, which invited listeners into the music. On that same album, he performs a third of an original tune, "Little Peace In C For U," with his right hand only, but that's enough to illuminate the structure of his composition through artful implication.

This set has no supplementary booklet, but two DVDs leave us feeling this great artist's presence as if we had enjoyed his friendship as much as his music. First, there is abundant concert footage, some of it richly informative. The camera allows us access to a piano technique that rivals Thelonious Monk's in its idiosyncrasy and power.



Steve Kuhn:  
exemplary technique

ECM RECORDS

Kuhn's ironic, alienated lyrics to his tunes. But it seems a stretch to claim, per the liner notes, that it's "as good a collection of original songs as the jazz world has produced in the ensuing three decades."

***The Codona Trilogy* (ECM 2033-35; 42:53/39:31/46:26) ★★★★★** collates the output of the collective trio named for protagonists Collin

This is displayed on his imposition of an 11-against-16 left-hand pulse on "Les Grelots" and the rapid, stiff-fingered jabs and side-hand chops before and during "Take the 'A' Train" at a recital in Marciac, to the eloquence he brings through right hand alone to the theme to "Caravan" during an outdoor show in Paris.

The gem amidst these treasures, though, is *Non Stop: Travels With Michel Petrucciani*, a film by Roger Willemssen that brings us into intimate communion with its subject. This documentary brings everything into a human context through conversation, interview and observing the pianist in his element. He flirts playfully at a Paris café, after instructing the crew to film "beautiful foreign women." He points to a commode in a hotel room to announce with wicked solemnity, "This is where it all started ... and ends!" He plays a bit of one of his tunes, "She Did It Again," and explains that the title refers to the prolific farting of Charles Lloyd's dog.

He speaks about love, silliness, God and laughter, the things that concerned him more than the disability he had since birth, which is evident whenever we see him and painful in his later concert videos, where he has become portly, his breathing labored, perspiring as he plays with undiminished inventiveness and romanticism. This tragic disease was a defining element in Petrucciani's life, but from this film we learn that it also liberated him to create and live as he pleased while he could.

Seated outdoors in Big Sur, he tells Willemssen, "I'm scared of death. Pain I could cope with. I'm used to pain. ... But we're not going to make people cry here. It's not very important."

Not, at least, until the last moment of this film, where we see Petrucciani behind a piano on a rooftop in Manhattan, shot from a helicopter on the rise as he plays his tune "Looking Up" against the swirling skyline. A gust of wind blows his hat from his head. We hear his voice overdubbed, admitting "I hate to say goodbye."

And just like that, it's over.

—Robert Doerschuk

Ordering info: [dreyfusrecords.com](http://dreyfusrecords.com)

Walcott (Co), Don Cherry (Do) and Nana Vasconcelos (Na). Their investigations into cross-pollinating the sounds and vocabularies of "world music" idioms were important signposts for subsequent generations of creative musicians looking to grab the "universal one." It's interesting to observe their evolution. The group initially followed Walcott's cues. On *Codona*, convened by Walcott in 1978 and propelled by his sitar and tabla, they navigate three of his compositions (including "Mumakata," a tour de force for sanza, berimbau, douss'n'gouni and three overdubbed voices), an Ornette Coleman–Stevie Wonder medley and a three-way improv.

Ritualistic imperatives and endless dialogue prevail on *Codona 2*, which traces a narrative arc from start to finish. On the kick-off, "Que Faser," Cherry blows clarion trumpet rhythms over Walcott's riffing sitar and Vasconcelos' overdubbed cuica and berimbau strut. Cherry overdubs trumpet and melodic to open "Malinye," which concludes with a percussion jam.

Recorded in 1982, *Codona 3* is the most programmatic—call it ECM-ish—of Codona's corpus. The references include shakuhachi ("Goshakabuchi"); a sitar-trumpet-berimbau stomp ("Travel By Night"); a multitracked sitar ballad ("Lullaby"); sound collage ("Trayra Boia"); sitar blues ("Clicky Clacky"); and an ambient drone piece (Cherry's "Inner Organs"). Organ and sanza create a sort of primal sonic sea in which overdubbed voices, trumpet and hand drums burble up, gradually establishing a groove atop which Cherry gently skitters.

—Ted Panken

Ordering info: [ecmrecords.com](http://ecmrecords.com)



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## Amadou & Mariam

### Welcome To Mali

BECAUSE/NONESUCH 517673

★★★★

With their previous album *Dimanche A Bamako* (2005), the Paris-based blind Malian couple Amadou Bagayoko and Mariam Doumbia lifted themselves out of the world music ghetto and became international pop stars. With the help of producer Manu Chao, they accomplished that trick without eschewing their West African roots. In fact, those circular, bluesy grooves remained at the core of the music.

With *Welcome To Mali*, the pair continue to broaden their sound and their reach, but even with the album's opening track "Sabali"—a swirling synth-pop confection produced by Damon Albarn (Blur, Gorillaz) that relegates Bagayoko's trademark guitar to the sidelines—they haven't ditched the template. While Amadou & Mariam also embrace electronics on "Ce N'est Pas Bon," collaborate with Somali MC K'nann on "Africa," take a stab at their first English language tune on "I Follow You," and groove over a loping funk breakbeat on "Djuru," they simultaneously incorporate ancient sounds from Africa.

Cameos from Toumani Diabaté on kora, Zoumana Tereta on the violin-like suku and Boubacar Dembélé on balafon link the music to the purest sounds of the continent. Still, the couple's easy, deeply soulful rapport on vocals, Bagayoko's stinging leads and their indelible melodies make the record work. In this fashion they haven't changed since they first started making albums nearly two decades ago.

—Peter Margasak

**Welcome To Mali.** Sabali; Ce N'est Pas Bon; Magossa; Djama; Djuru; Je Te Kiffe; Masiteladi; Africa; Compagnon De La Vie; Unissons Nous; Bozos; I Follow You (Nia Na Fin); Welcome To Mali; Batoma; Sekebe. (57:39)

**Personnel:** Mariam Doumbia, voice; Amadou Bagayoko, guitar, voice; more.

» Ordering info: [nonesuch.com](http://nonesuch.com)

## Tony DeSare

### Radio Show

TELARC 83689

★★★★½

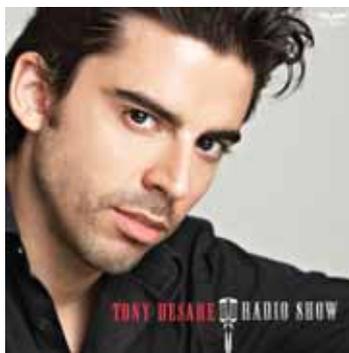
Crooner Tony DeSare's virtual post-Korean War on-air broadcast goes down smoother if you're riding in a vintage Chevy, or tuning in on a Zenith console. But the zesty sequence of a dozen juicy tracks takes on air life floating on a cloud of AM pop 'n' fizz. DeSare's good at evoking young Frank Sinatra, sincere and never pensive, and his spin on Hoagy Carmichael's "Up A Lazy River" interpolates Sinatra's "I ain't goin' your way."

Is this a memory lane cruise? No. The set's a three-way split between '30s standards, pop covers and DeSare's seamless, timeless originals. Enriching the mix are a little pepper (trumpet solos by Dominick Farinacci), honey (a high-point duet with Jane Monheit on a cover of New Order's "Bizarre Love Triangle" gone Brazilian), and dabs of cheese (Joe Piscopo's adenoidal DJ squibs). Excepting a late-hour taper-off into a dreamsville whim and cocktail piano, it's a deft and effective concept date.

—Fred Bouchard

**Radio Show.** Get Happy; A Little Bit Closer; Bizarre Love Triangle; All Or Nothing At All; Lazy River; Easy Lover; To Touch A Woman; Johnny B Goode; The Times They Are A-Changin'; A Stranger's Eyes; Hallelujah, I Love Her So; Dreaming My Life Away; Prelude. (50:49)

» Ordering info: [telarc.com](http://telarc.com)



## Fly

### Sky And Country

ECM 2067

★★★★½

Mark Turner, Larry Grenadier and Jeff Ballard have shared stage and studio in different configurations for years, with *Sky And Country* serving as their second album as Fly. Formed as Ballard's trio in 2000, Fly contributed to Chick Corea's *Originations*. A cohesiveness and willingness to explore deep water set the group apart. At times animating still-life canvasses as in "Transfigured," other times mining cerebral patterns that dance close to the flame without letting a fire fully take hold, Fly is consistently of one spirit, but occasionally cautious.

When embracing an unbridled straightahead groove, as midway through "Transfigured," the trio is set free and the music leaps. Sometimes the group stalls in analytical examinations at the expense of full-hearted banter. With no lack of exploratory terrain, Fly fires drum-and-bass excursions ("Super Sister"), balances a pensive Latin pulse with virtuosic improvisation ("Lady B") and dances over a simmering, ethereal funk groove ("Elena Berenjena"). Ultimately, Fly conquers the challenge presented to all trios in its ability to think as one, telepathically adjusting as each member prods or pulls back, making space for a gorgeous tenor comment or a perfectly chosen rim shot then undulating into another collective form and shape. Fly's ability to probe each member's mind is its greatest asset. The results often prove revelatory.

—Ken Micallef

**Sky And Country.** Lady B; Sky And Country; Elena Berenjena; CJ; Dharm Days; Anandananda; Perla Morena; Transfigured; Super Sister. (67:43)

**Personnel:** Mark Turner, tenor and soprano saxophone; Larry Grenadier, bass; Jeff Ballard, drums.

» Ordering info: [ecmrecords.com](http://ecmrecords.com)

## White Rocket

DIATRIBE 007

★★★★½

White Rocket has served up a dazzling and promising debut. This young trans-Atlantic trio first met and bonded over a shared love for Indian Carnatic music, Nick Drake and Meshuggah while attending Banff Centre for Jazz and Creative Music in 2005. Irish pianist Greg Felton and drummer Sean Carpio create dense, full-formed rhythmic-harmonic figurations—the lack of a bassist hardly matters—and New York-based trumpeter Jacob Wick, who's one of the most exciting and curious hommen I've heard in the last few years, goes to town blowing over them. But there's much more going on than muscular improvisation.

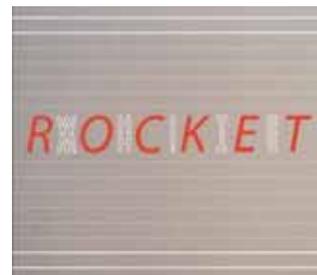
This trio relishes using rhythm as its primary building blocks. Felton never surrenders the insistent twitching pulse he establishes at the start of his tune "His Story," which establishes the group's penchant for rigorous narrative qualities, through its title and the rising and falling dramatic arc of the tune. Wick's turbulent "Recent Events" makes this tact more plain, with a dark, episodic density inspired by a shuffle of short, depressing and death-obsessed items from a cable news channel. A piece like "Hone" ratchets up the intensity by building some freer sections into the imper-turbable structure, allowing Felton to unload some dazzling post-Cecil Taylor banging. Considering that these guys are still in their 20s, I can only imagine where they go from this auspicious beginning.

—Peter Margasak

**White Rocket.** Mutatis Mutandis; His Story; Recent Events; Hone; Lonely Toad; Susan Styra; Symptoms; Sung Once; The Fisherman's Song. (65:41)

**Personnel:** Greg Felton, piano; Sean Carpio, drums; Jacob Wick, trumpet.

» Ordering info: [bottlenotemusic.com](http://bottlenotemusic.com)



## Ali Jackson

### *Wheelz Keep Rollin'*

BIGWENZEE MUSIC

★★★

Ali Jackson's first studio release as a leader is a stylish hodgepodge—Latin here, straightahead swing there—loosely bound together by a refreshing, buoyant spirit. The slow, bluesy strut of the title track kicks off the album with flair. Jennifer Sannon's punchy vocals and Jonathan Batiste's dissonant Monk chunks, along with Jackson's cogent second-line time, project a cool confidence. With a melody urgent and playful, the number lingers in the memory long past tuba man Vincent Gardner's solo march into the distance.

Jackson generally plays it simple on *Wheelz*. His musical personality is more restrained, humbler than on previous recordings. While his clear, declarative statements and straightforward grooves serve the music well much of the time, several moments cry out for more activity from the drums. For example, the uplifting "Spiritual," ostensibly the album's emotional climax, falls flat for want of more rhythmic energy.

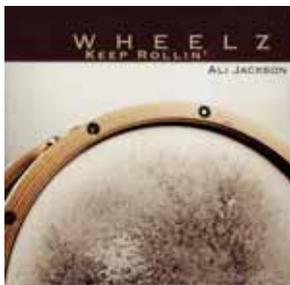
The recording is most engaging at its least predictable. The angular, Latin-tinged "I Gotchu" takes a striking turn after the final go-around of the head, modulating a central motif into a swinging coda, with trombone and muted trumpet floating on air. Accordingly, a musical high point for the New Orleans shake "Shimmy Pop" comes on an abrupt two-beat silence in the middle of the head, a moment at which Jackson's abstinence is welcomed.

—Eric Bishop

**Wheelz Keep Rollin':** Wheelz Keep Rollin'; Luscious; I Gotchu; Shimmy Pop; Especiala; I Got Got; Spiritual. (34:47)

**Personnel:** Mike Rodriguez, trumpet; Vincent Gardner, trombone, tube (1, 4); Reginald Veal, bass, violin; Jonathan Batiste, piano; Ali Jackson, drums, tambourine, percussion; Jennifer Sannon, vocals (1, 5).

» Ordering info: [alidrums.com](http://alidrums.com)



## Al Di Meola World Sinfonia

### *La Melodia: Live In Milano*

VALIANA

★★★

Guitarist Al Di Meola's heart lays with World Sinfonia, the all-acoustic group that serves as a connection to his ethnic heritage and the various Spanish folk styles he loves. With Fausto Beccalossi on accordion and vocals, Peo Alfonsi on acoustic guitar and Gumbi Ortiz on cajon, this quartet plays with fire, passion and grace.

A wonderful recording from a purely sonic angle, *La Melodia* is resonant and romantic. You can practically envision the group on stage and the audience's closed eyes in meditation. The repertoire is imaginative, with material by Ennio Morricone and Di Meola coupled to New Tango mis-sives from Astor Piazzolla and Italian vocalist Andrea Parodi. At times recalling a soundtrack to some foreign language film set in Sardinia, the music unfurls in lush, breathy cadences, with no one musician hogging the spotlight or outshining the others.

Di Meola's "Misterio," "Infinite Desire" and "Mediterranean Sundance/Rio Ancho" feature his spicy, soaring fretboard work, and the group keeps easy pace, nailing the arrangements with flair. Ultimately, Di Meola is one cog in World Sinfonia. A team player, he disproves rumors of ego overload that have dogged the guitarist for years.

—Ken Micallef

**La Melodia:** Infinite Desire; Cafe; Cinema Paradiso; Misterio; Double Concerto; Turquoise; Umbras; Mediterranean Sundance/Rio Ancho; No Potho Reposare. (71:18)

**Personnel:** Al Di Meola, Peo Alfonsi, guitar; Fausto Beccalossi, accordion, vocals; Gumbi Ortiz, cajon.

» Ordering info: [aldimeola.com](http://aldimeola.com)



## BOOKS

by Eric Fine

## Academic Tries to Contextualize Zorn's Downtown Noise

John Zorn has received the MacArthur Fellowship of \$500,000, while also being disparaged by critics and lampooned on national television. For someone who works on the fringe, that's an awful lot of noise. John Brackett's *John Zorn: Tradition And Transgression* (Indiana University Press) digs deeply into the enigma of the avant-garde composer, concentrating on the elements that inspire Zorn apart from music.



The section titled "From The Fantastic To The Dangerously Real: Reading John Zorn's Artwork" looks at the sado-masochistic images of Japanese women that accompany Zorn's albums with his bands Naked City and Painkiller. Brackett's study of Japanese culture moves beyond Zorn and his music. It returns to draw parallels, but only after traversing much ground.

Brackett, a music professor at the University of Utah, allocates considerable space to critics. These include feminists Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon, whose writings about the impact of pornography on women received attention in the 1980s.

French philosopher and novelist Georges Bataille provides the underpinning for *Tradition And Transgression*. Brackett's dense style, however, badly articulates the relationship between Bataille's concept of "base materialism" and Zorn's interest in sadomasochism. Brackett also attributes the origins of compositions like "Osaka Bondage" from Naked City's *Torture Garden* (1989) to "the sense of alienation and rejection [Zorn] experienced during his stays in Japan." Had Brackett incorporated biographical information—such as the reason behind Zorn's visits to Japan—or included an anecdote or quote, it would have made the commentary stronger and clearer.

The chapter "Magick And Mysticism In Zorn's Recent Work" discusses Zorn's Gnostic-inspired music in the context of the Jewish Kabbalah tradition and British occultist Aleister Crowley. "Tradition, Gifts, And Zorn's Musical Homages" establishes Zorn's place in a broad "maverick tradition" of iconoclastic composers, musicians, filmmakers, artists and writers. Brackett creates an artistic niche for these folks ("the tradition of transgression").

"In this sense," he writes, "the tradition of transgression is founded upon an apparent paradox: a tradition of practices and thought that zeroes in on and exploits the spaces or 'blind spots' deemed impermissible, unacceptable, and unrecognizable (yet ultimately created) by traditional institutions of art."

Such passages show how much the book's depth and density sacrifice narrative flow, and how Brackett's analysis too often follows long digressions. Consequently, payoffs become anticlimactic. Brackett should have balanced his examination of Zorn's ideas with more apt aspects of Zorn's life. Art, after all, does not exist entirely in a vacuum.

DB

Ordering info: [iupress.indiana.edu](http://iupress.indiana.edu)

## Dee Alexander

**Wild Is The Wind** »

BLUJAZZ 3369

★★★★★

## Ernestine Anderson

**This Can't Be Love**

HIGHNOTE 7187

★★★½



Dee Alexander is a chameleon. She mimics her surroundings and influences, which include Nina Simone, Dinah Washington and Sarah Vaughan, but less obviously Susaye Greene and Curtis Mayfield. However, the most profound influence on her development was AACM saxophonist “Light” Henry Huff, who died young but taught her the value of taking risks.

This kamikaze experimentalism has perhaps slowed Alexander’s development into full-blown diva, but she’s there now, without a whit of compromise. The carpe diem of Huff’s “Live” swings with demonstrative jazziness and some conventional scat (Alexander has her own arsenal of abstract vocalization to add later). “CU On The Other Side” is overtly autobiographical, with uncut statements of respect for departed ones and naked manifestos an AACM hallmark. When Alexander returns after Miguel de la Cerna’s insistent piano solo on “Surrender Your Love,” it sounds like an entirely different singer as she stops you in your tracks by opening

in a new range, then flexes her tensile tonsils on the long notes. On the Washington vehicle “This Bitter Earth,” flashes of Nancy Wilson’s sense of stage melodrama emerge, complemented by Mike Logan’s pithy set-ups. It’s nice to hear Leon Joyce flip to hand drums on “You And I,” on which Alexander’s voice heads skyward, ultimately pleading “speak to God on my behalf.”

“Feeling Good” begins with an ominous bass solo from Harrison Bankhead, who arranged the track. It’s an example why this disc is so successful, as everyone is invested in making the arrangements tell the story. James Sanders’ violin on “Rossignol” is another stunning incidence of this. The slow-build title track vies with “Feeling Good” and “Four Women” for the bravest Simone covers I’ve ever heard. Simone’s legacy is not to be tampered with lightly, and the note with which Alexander ends the record should haunt you for the rest of your day.

One benefit of aging is the increased profundity of storytelling. Ernestine Anderson has long been one of the most convincing storytellers in song, someone who can handle lengthy narratives. There aren’t many who could pull off “A Song For You,” Leon Russell’s focused apology—ironic if projected for public broadcast—but you are utterly convinced by every word Anderson offers here.

Anderson’s core reputation came fronting big

bands, such as those of Johnny Otis, Lionel Hampton and the Clayton–Hamilton Jazz Orchestra. But this is a fireside affair, a night in on the couch with an old flame. “Make Someone Happy,” “A Lovely Way To Spend An Evening” and “Candy” reveal her generous spirit. “Candy” is a little overwrought, and there is gravel in her voice in places.

Sometimes it sounds like the long notes she lifts weigh heavy, but this adds to the impact of her emotions. She regularly nails the kiss-off pitches on all these tunes, notably on “A Lovely Way To Spend An Evening” and the title cut. A stroll through “Skylark” features a nice bass solo from Chip Jackson and a closing phrase from Anderson that carries some of the knowing paths of Abbey Lincoln. Saxophonist Houston Person’s rich tone matches the singer’s unhurried contralto to a tee. —Michael Jackson

**Wild Is The Wind.** Live; Surrender Your Love; This Bitter Earth; You And I; CU On The Other Side; Wild Is The Wind; Rossignol; Long Road Ahead; Butterfly; Feeling Good; Four Women. (65:01)  
**Personnel:** Dee Alexander, vocals; Miguel de la Cerna (1, 2, 7–9, 11), Mike Logan (3–6), piano; James Sanders, violin (7, 8); Harrison Bankhead, bass; Leon Joyce, Jr., drums, percussion.

» Ordering info: [blujazz.com](http://blujazz.com)

**A Song For You.** This Can't Be Love; A Song For You; Make Someone Happy; Skylark; A Lovely Way To Spend An Evening; Candy; Day By Day; For All We Know. (45:02)

**Personnel:** Ernestine Anderson, vocals; Houston Person, tenor saxophone; Lafayette Harris, Jr., piano; Chip Jackson, bass; Willie Jones III, drums.

» Ordering info: [jazzdepot.com](http://jazzdepot.com)

## Booker T.

**Potato Hole** »

ANTI- 10413

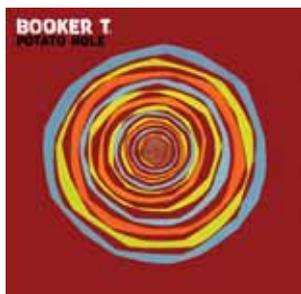
★★★½

## The City Champs

**The Safecracker**

ELECTRAPHONIC 103

★★★



Booker T. Jones used to play organ in the most amazing soul band in history, with Otis Redding, the Mar-Keys horns and the MGs. He also packed fun in the grooves of the made-in-Memphis hit band Booker T. and the MGs, at least until label pressures soured things in 1967. In the ensuing decades, he has surfaced for MGs reunions and various projects, but he’s rarely recorded a solo album.

Along comes *Potato Hole*, with Booker sounding as soulful as ever. The big switch is he’s not in a spare, deceptively languorous Stax funk environment. Instead, this enduring patriarch of the Hammond is smack dab in the middle of riotous hard rock—and he’s having a great time. The album reunites him with Neil Young (in 1994, he and the reconstituted MGs backed Young on a world tour) and places him alongside the Drive-By Truckers, an exceptional

Southern rock band that recently served another old-timer still in fine shape, Bettye LaVette.

Something of a relative to Young’s old rave-up “Hurricane,” opener “Pound It Out” lives up to its title with tremendous guitar explosions and organ swells—Booker is like Slim Pickens happily straddling a nuclear bomb in Stanley Kubrick’s *Dr. Strangelove*. Booker’s playful rhythm sensibility is

pointed out by his staccato notes in the turbulence of “Hey Ya” (an Outkast tune, of all things) and on “Warped Sister” he cuts through the guitar phantasmagoria to spin out a melody with the control and concentration of a great communicator. The trademarked sweet organ on the Nashville-bluesy tune “Reunion Time” is a shower of glittering diamonds for the listener to marvel over. Crank the volume for all 10 tracks.

The City Champs, in Memphis, show fealty to Booker T. and the MGs, but if they’re old-fashioned at all it’s due to their predilection for soul jazz. The bank safe-deposit box these three “safecrackers” bust into is the one labeled “Blue Note: Grant Green, with Jack McDuff or John Patton.”

Guitarist Joe Restivo, whose musical personality has the spark of integrity, and whose skill set includes an ability to pace himself purposely,

is the primary soloist, and generally a good one. He’s quick-witted on the group composition “Poppin’” and nurturing of melody on Amy Winehouse’s “Love Is A Losing Game.” However, he quickly shows signs of imaginative exhaustion when probing “Pretty Girl.” Organist Al Gamble, who earned his stripes on the soul front with the likes of Rufus Thomas, brings spirit and musicianship to all seven songs. His standout solo on Bob Dorough and Ben Tucker’s “Comin’ Home Baby,” perfect for Pink Panther sleuthing, has an easy-flowing grace to it. Mixed-meter sharpie George Sluppick, whose background includes work with Ruthie Foster and JJ Grey, shows plenty of muscled strength without drawing attention away from his fellow Champs. —Frank-John Hadley

**Potato Hole.** Pound It Out; She Breaks; Hey Ya; Native New Yorker; Nan; Warped Sister; Get Behind The Mule; Reunion Time; Potato Hole; Space City. (43:43)

**Personnel:** Booker T., organ, acoustic guitar (5, 8); electric guitar (5, 9); Neil Young, guitar (1–9); Mike Cooley, Patterson Hood, John Neff, guitars; Shonna Tucker, bass; Brad Morgan, drums; Lenny Castro, percussion.

» Ordering info: [anti.com](http://anti.com)

**The Safecracker.** The Safecracker; Takin’ State; Love Is A Losing Game; Poppin’; The Whap-A-Dang; Pretty Girl; Comin’ Home Baby. (37:41)

**Personnel:** Joe Restivo, guitar; Al Gamble, organ; George Sluppick, drums.

» Ordering info: [electraphonicrecording.com](http://electraphonicrecording.com)

## Diana Krall

### Quiet Nights

VERVE B0012433

★★★½

You either love Diana Krall's special gifts or you don't. If you relish her small, dry voice and tiny range, you can hear the entire world in a word from her. Jazz singing

has never been defined by the size of the vessel (Billie Holiday and Blossom Dearie defied that yardstick), or exhibitionism (which Lee Wiley and Etta Jones always skirted) of any kind. Krall isn't a blues-based artist, but that's never disqualified a singer, either.

Krall has dialed all of her virtues down in this program of bossas and bossa treatments. She's singing just above a whisper throughout. A word at the end of a phrase will be drawn out or staccato phrase will be leavened by a legato turn. On "I've Grown Accustomed To His Face," she phrases it, "like breathing ouuuuuu or breathing in." This is where Krall channels her improvisation. It's subtle and requires attentive listening. She falls into the trap of gender transposition on "The Boy From Ipanema," which diminishes the song.

Krall's celebrated piano—so musical and right for her that even her harshest critics can't carp about it—is sublimated, or doled out in par-



simonious measures. A chorus of single-note filigree in "Too Marvelous For Words" is as much as Krall indulges in. A barely insistent set of chords underpins "You're My Thrill," which practically require a stethoscope to discern.

Her great rhythm section is stalwart throughout. Anthony Wilson's discreet guitar will periodically step forward and tastefully raise the ante. Jeff

Hamilton, even at a low dynamic, can add a hint of kick on a ride cymbal, as on "Walk On By."

Claus Ogerman has provided luxurious orchestral arrangements that never call attention to themselves. They're like large bodies of water: no beginning or end, just different degrees of rising and falling. Krall seems to be turned this way and that by the silky backgrounds, and if she can be faulted, it's for a lack of authority as a singer and player. As nice as it is for an artist to be swaddled by surroundings, if your name is on the product, self-assertion is required.

—Kirk Silsbee

**Quiet Nights:** Where Or When; Too Marvelous For Words; I've Grown Accustomed To His Face; The Boy From Ipanema; Walk On By; You're My Thrill; Este See Olhar; So Nice; Quiet Nights; Guess I'll Hang My Tears Out To Dry; How Can You Mend A Broken Heart; Every Time We Say Goodbye. (55:02)

**Personnel:** Diana Krall, piano, vocals; Anthony Wilson, guitar; John Clayton, bass; Jeff Hamilton, drums; Paulinho Da Costa, percussion; Claus Ogerman, arranger; orchestra.

» Ordering info: [ververecords.com](http://ververecords.com)

## Jazzmob

### Flashback

JAZZAWAY 042

★★★

This high-energy combo led by Norwegian alto saxophonist Jon Klette cuts against the grain of much of the country's jazz scene by making its allegiance to American post-bop clear. In his liner notes, Klette insists that album title refers to the group revisiting some of its own tunes from the past, but it's hard not to see its application to the band's affinity for unabashed, hard-charging bop. Still, the frontline improvisations usually ditch any temporal fidelity to the '50s and '60s, nonchalantly making use of musical developments from the subsequent decades.

Jazzmob's fourth album was cut live at the Molde Jazz Festival in 2006, and the variation of the original material—most penned by Klette and tenor saxophonist Gisle Johansen—nicely represents the sextet's stylistic focus. The title track blasts off at breakneck speed, palpably in thrall of classic bebop progressions and fearless displays of dexterity. But the



album improves when the combo allows some air into the performances.

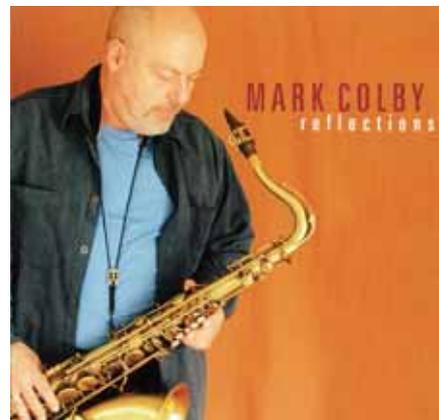
The brief "Major Walk," which opens with a muscular bass solo by Per Zanussi, leaps from a sequence that had me thinking Weather Report into wild and woolly collective improvisation. It sets the stage for the intense "Crossbreed," where electronics distort Klette's ferocious alto solo and pianist Anders Aarum moves over to synthesizer, stoking the free-jazz momentum with pointillistic abstractions. "Segments Of Bird" provides some respite with its more moderate tempo, but Johansen's intensity is unflinching. The final cuts reflect a '70s fusion bent, but never at the expense of the swing groove meted out by drummer Andreas Bye.

—Peter Margasak

**Flashback:** Pathfinder; Don't Mess With Miss 1; Flashback; Bass Interlude/Major Walk; Crossbreed; Segments Of Bird; Fifth Horizon; Just Like That. (47:11)

**Personnel:** Jon Klette, alto saxophone, electronics; Gisle Johansen, tenor saxophone; Anders Aarum, keyboards; Kåre Nymark, trumpet; Per Zanussi, bass; Andreas Bye, drums.

» Ordering info: [jazzaway.com](http://jazzaway.com)



## Mark Colby

### Reflections

ORIGIN 82520

★★★½

Any jazzman who sees fit to record "Somewhere Over The Rainbow" is clearly of a romantic persuasion. But this track, though a nice trio feature, is less arresting than Chicago tenor saxophonist Mark Colby's own "Reflections." The title track alludes to David Raksin's "Laura," and elsewhere there are sprinklings culled from jazzlore of yore. "Myth Mary's Blues" suggests a conflation of Sonny Rollins' "Tenor Madness" and "Blue Seven," and "Caroline's Romp" has flavors from Joe Henderson's "Recorda-Me." Then there is Colby's unabashed tribute to Stan Getz, "Desafinado," a brave, or foolish, choice akin to exhuming "Take Five," which the core group boosted by guitarist Mike Pinto give a springy retreat, the shadow of Henderson beating out Getz during Colby's outro.

An unexpected inclusion, Ornette Coleman's "Blues Connotation" gives notice that Colby can be more than the consummate craftsman; listen to his fearless final notes.

The leader has fine support here. Jeremy Kahn kicks the CD off with a Bill Evans-like intro to "Close Enough For Love," and his piano architecture is poised and reliable throughout. Colby's larger ensemble experience is marked with a closing sextet cut with Phil Woods and Bob Lark, and props should go to Steve Weeder for a nice mixing job. No question Colby puts it all together with ears, technique, tone (nice vibrato) and timing, but the emotional pool he enters at the beginning of "Reflections" and Cole Porter's "So In Love" hint at deeper reserves of feeling.

—Michael Jackson

**Reflections:** Close Enough For Love; Myth Mary's Blues; Reflections; Desafinado; Like Someone In Love; Blues Connotation; So In Love; Caroline's Romp; Somewhere Over The Rainbow; Squires Parlor. (56:32)

**Personnel:** Mark Colby, tenor saxophone; Eric Hochberg, bass; Bob Rummage, drums; Jeremy Kahn (1, 3, 7, 8), Ron Perillo (10), piano; Mike Pinto, guitar (4, 6); Bob Lark, flugelhorn (10); Phil Woods, alto saxophone (10).

» Ordering info: [origin-records.com](http://origin-records.com)

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# Don't Just Call Them Students

Grace Kelly's resumé already reads like a seasoned professional's. Just 16 years old, the alto saxophonist and vocalist finished high school in 2008 and has completed her second semester at Berklee College of Music in Boston. She has released five CDs as a leader (including one featuring alto sax hero Lee Konitz), played at the Kennedy Center with Wynton Marsalis, traveled around the world with her own quintet and appeared on NPR's "Piano Jazz" with Marian McPartland.

In addition to the Berklee curriculum, Kelly has been studying with alto saxophonist Greg Osby, with whom she's working on improvisational concepts. "He's been giving me barriers to work with and having me take a solo without the roots, or with just a motive of a rhythm or an interval," she said. "I've also been working with different numbers of note groupings—playing with groups of fives or sevens and coming up with rhythms to play over the barline has been a challenge."

Max Seiden plays tenor sax in the Jazz Ensemble and Jazz Combo at Westlake High School (Austin, Texas), where he gets numerous opportunities to improvise. His experience in the school's wind ensemble, and his band program's insistence on learning to "listen across an ensemble," have also been instrumental in developing his ear for jazz.

In his solos, Seiden focuses on finding common melodic, harmonic, rhythmic or dynamic ideas that exist within the music. "I'll try to fit myself into the group in a way that isn't always conventional but attracts the interests of the other members, and causes them to respond with their own adjustments," he said. "What ideally ends up occurring is a gradual shifting that leads to an interesting new location." A graduating senior, Seiden will start college as a music/engineering student this fall; he has already been accepted by the University of Michigan and Northwestern University.

Luke Marantz, a senior at Booker T. Washington HSPVA in Dallas, has won more than a dozen DB awards since he was first recognized for his fresh-sounding jazz vocal chops. Now focusing on piano, Marantz plays in the performing arts high school's jazz combo as well as the MIDI ensemble.



Max Seiden



Dave Chisholm



Matthew Sheens

Like Seiden, Marantz likes to think that when he takes a solo, it's a collective ensemble effort. It's a mind-set that he has picked up from such influences as Keith Jarrett, Oscar Peterson and Brad Mehldau, as well as European pianist John Taylor. "Listening to Taylor, it's apparent that it's never just one person soloing," Marantz said. "He has such a giving and beautiful vibe. I would like to have that kind of thing in my music."

Marantz also plans to pursue his musical education at the college level. He is currently considering the New England Conservatory of Music, the New School and the University of Miami, among other institutions.

Ivan Rosenberg plays lead trumpet in the senior jazz band and symphonic band at LaGuardia (N.Y.) High School for the Performing Arts, where he will graduate this spring. But he gets most of his jazz blowing done after school in the LaGuardia Thelonious Monk Institute Sextet and on weekends with the big band and top combo at the Manhattan School of Music Pre-College.

"We work a lot on developing ideas, playing changes, transcribing solos, everything you need to become fluent in improvisation," Rosenberg said. "I always try to give my solos a good arc from beginning to end. I'm very interested in motivic development and interaction. I'm always looking for new harmonic, rhythmic and melodic approaches."

Among his main trumpet influences, Rosenberg lists Clifford Brown, Freddie Hubbard, Lee Morgan, Nicholas Payton, Sean Jones, Terence Blanchard and Terrell Stafford.

Trumpeter Dave Chisholm, a graduate student and teaching assistant at University of Utah, performs in Jazz Ensemble I as well as the original-music combo John Henry. His focus has always centered on composition, and his sense of improvisation has stemmed

from that.

"The best challenge is writing music that is beyond my capabilities as an improviser, and then forcing myself to improvise over it," he said. "I also try to practice some interesting systematic techniques like Coltrane changes and augmented scale exercises."

After he finishes his master's degree this spring, Chisholm plans to pursue his doctorate in music. "Great music can be made anywhere, and I intend to write, perform, teach and elevate my peers wherever I end up," he said. "In this digital age, especially, geography doesn't present much of a problem in pursuing cutting-edge music."

Pianist Matthew Sheens has completed his honors in jazz performance degree at the Elder Conservatorium, University of Adelaide, Australia. He is the first student from Down Under to win a DB—not surprising since his teacher, American-born tenor player Dustan Cox, won a handful of DBs himself back in the 1990s.

Sheens has tried to diversify his influences and his study so as not to become a replica of another musician. He believes that transcribing musicians not of your instrument can offer fantastic insights into improvisation. In that spirit, Sheens recently took a course studying the music of guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel.

"Creating a solo based on a single idea is the most difficult thing ever," he said. "But musicians such as Thelonious Monk, Brad Mehldau and Jason Moran have a way of creating beauty out of little thematic material. As an improviser, it's easy to think only about the bar you are playing, as opposed to the solo as a structurally sound whole."

Sheens will come to the States this fall, as he recently accepted an offer to pursue a master's in jazz performance at Boston's New England Conservatory. —Ed Enright

# Manhattan School of Music

Justin DiCioccio, Assistant Dean, Chair, Jazz Arts Program



## Congratulations to the Winners of the 32nd Annual *DownBeat* Student Music Awards!

### COLLEGE DIVISION

Manhattan School of Music Jazz Arts Program  
Justin DiCioccio, *Assistant Dean and Chair*

#### Outstanding Performances

Big Band: Danny Rivera Big Band

Blues Pop Rock Soloist: Jonathan Ragonese,  
*Electronic Wind Instrument*

Blues Pop Rock Group: iPascal vs. rPod

Blues Pop Rock Group: Orange Democracy

Jazz Soloist: Remy LeBoeuf, *Alto Saxophone*

Jazz Soloist: Billy Norris, *Bass*

#### Original Extended Composition

Remy LeBoeuf for "Morning Song"

#### Original Song

Pascal LeBoeuf for "House Without a Door"

### PRECOLLEGE DIVISION

Manhattan School of Music Precollege Jazz Arts Program  
Christopher Rosenberg, *Chair*  
Jeremy Manasia, *Coach and Conductor*

#### Original Extended Composition, High School

Elijah Shiffer for "Megapode"

#### Original Song, High School

Elijah Shiffer for "Thought Waves"

#### Outstanding Performance, High School

Luke Celenza, *Piano*

#### Winner, Performing Arts High School

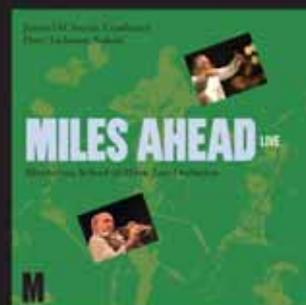
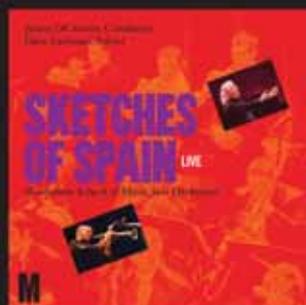
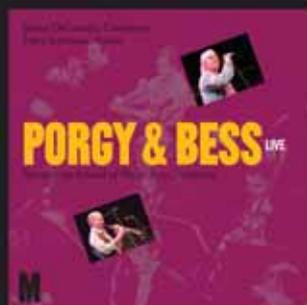
Ivan Rosenberg, *Trumpet*

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MUSIC AWARDS

### Performing Arts High School Winners

#### Jazzschool Advanced Jazz Workshop

The Jazzschool  
Michael Zilber  
Berkeley, Calif.

#### LACHSA Combo G

Los Angeles County  
High School for the Arts  
Jason Goldman  
Los Angeles

### College Winners

#### Brubeck Institute Jazz Quintet

Brubeck Institute  
Joe Gilman  
Stockton, Calif.

#### Spiro Sinigos Quartet

Western Michigan University  
Keith Hall  
Kalamazoo, Mich.

## Big Band

### Junior High School Winner

#### Sutter Middle School Jazz Band

Sutter Middle School  
John Zimny  
Folsom, Calif.

### Junior High School Outstanding Performances

#### Folsom Middle School Jazz Band

Folsom Middle School  
John Zimny  
Folsom, Calif.

#### Memorial Park's Big Noise

Memorial Park Middle School  
Donna Sevcovic  
Fort Wayne, Ind.

### High School Winners

#### Folsom High School Jazz Band A

Folsom High School  
Curtis Gaesser  
Folsom, Calif.

#### New Trier High School Jazz Ensemble I

New Trier High School  
Jim Warrick  
Winnetka, Ill.

High School Outstanding Performances

**Buchanan High School Jazz Band A**

Buchanan High School  
Paul Lucckesi  
Clovis, Calif.

**Decatur MacArthur Jazz Ensemble**

Decatur MacArthur High School  
Jim Culbertson  
Decatur, Ill.

**Shorewood High School Jazz Band**

Shorewood High School  
Paul Harshman  
Shoreline, Wash.

Performing Arts High School Winner

**LACHSA Jazz Ensemble**

Los Angeles County  
High School for the Arts  
Jason Goldman  
Los Angeles

Performing Arts High School  
Outstanding Performance

**Hamilton Academy of Music Jazz Ensemble**

Hamilton Academy of Music  
Dan Taguchi  
Los Angeles

College Winner

**Eastman New Jazz Ensemble**

Eastman School of Music  
Dave Rivello  
Rochester, N.Y.

College Outstanding Performances

**Danny Rivera Big Band**

Manhattan School of Music  
New York

**University of Adelaide Big Band I**

University of Adelaide  
Dustan Cox  
Adelaide, Australia

**University of Northern Colorado Jazz Lab Band I**

University of Northern Colorado  
Dana Landry  
Greeley, Colo.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 86

# NOT FROST



## CONGRATULATIONS!

*The Frost School of Music at the University of Miami is proud to recognize its DownBeat's 32nd Annual Student Music Awards winners!*

**BLUES/POP/ROCK GROUP**

*College Winner*

**Funk/Fusion Ensemble**

**LATIN GROUP**

*College Winner*

**Salsa Orchestra**

**JAZZ SOLOIST**

*Outstanding Performance*

**Matthew White, trumpet**

**ENGINEERED LIVE RECORDING**

*Outstanding Performance*

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**ENGINEERED STUDIO RECORDING**

*College Winner*

**Brian Gerstle**

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## Collective Alchemy

Playing jazz together can create some tight friendships. Take trumpeter Nick Frenay and pianist Noah Kellman, who make up the Manlius Pebble Hill Duo at Manlius Pebble Hill School in DeWitt, N.Y. The pair—both of them graduating seniors this spring—share a long history together and play a wide range of repertoire from traditional jazz to contemporary. They also write and perform their own compositions.

Both performed in the 2009 edition of the Grammy Jazz Ensembles, and they have both been to the Dave Brubeck Institute, the Vail Jazz Workshop, Berklee Summer Camp, Skidmore Jazz Camp and the Central New York Summer Jazz Camp.

“Nick and Noah do a lot of listening and emulating of great jazz musicians,” said their teacher, Joe Colombo. “In doing that, they have developed an ear for the music.”

The two friends initiated the duo on their own. “My goal is to teach the students to become independent learners, to take charge of their own learning,” Colombo said. “As my students progress musically and gain the proper skills to function as musicians, I take on the role as a mentor.”

The Jazzschool (Berkeley, Calif.) Advanced Jazz Workshop has won consistent DB accolades in recent years. This year’s group, under the direction of Michael Zilber, included a lineup of trumpet, alto sax, vibes, guitar, piano, bass and drums. Zilber said the group easily plays at the level of a fine college ensemble, tackling original compositions, modern jazz arrangements and reworked standards.

“The fundamental concepts I try to impart can be boiled down to four things: listening, consciousness, reacting in the moment and understanding,” Zilber said. “Rather than telling them to learn a bunch of cool licks in all 12 keys and then plug them in over the appropriate chords, I have them look at and examine why that Coltrane line works, what is the underlying principle behind it. How can we connect our ideas across harmonies, rather than just mindlessly sequencing a line up a minor third because the chord goes up a minor third? Let’s make sure we understand what we are playing and how it fits in, how it works.”

Zilber tries to get workshop students to achieve a balance between reacting to everything that happens and completely disregarding what is going on around them. “I try hard to encourage them to find the golden mean between that, which is modeled so wonderfully by the Bill Evans Trio, Miles Davis’ mid-’60s quintet and current groups led by Jean-Michel Pilc, Keith Jarrett and Wayne Shorter,” he said.

Jason Goldman directs the LACHSA Combo G, an advanced sextet of tenor sax, trombone, guitar, piano, bass and drums that plays student compositions as well as jazz standards arranged by band members. For the past three years, the band has performed short tours with alto saxophonist Bobby Watson.

“One of our main goals is achieving a cohesive group sound,” Goldman said. “We are always discussing the concept of doing things for the right reasons, always serving the music and not the individual. It’s a mature and professional concept, but these students are beyond your average high school musician. I know these guys will play a big part in the future of jazz. They play hard, swing hard, and give their heart and soul to this music.”

This year at the Berklee College of Music High School Jazz Festival in Boston, LACHSA Combo G members won all four individual solo awards in their combo class.

The most recent incarnation of the Dave Brubeck Institute Jazz Quintet under the direction of Joe Gilman features two saxes (two



Nick Frenay (trumpet)  
 and Noah Kellman:  
 Manlius Pebble Hill Duo

tenors or alto/tenor), piano, bass and drums.

“I try to get the fellows to compose their own material,” Gilman said. “We also spend a lot of time learning standards and classic tunes from the repertoire, about 50 tunes each year. We also study various artists and their styles—students are required to learn several tunes and solos by a handful of artist/composers.”

This year, the quintet studied Thelonious Monk, Wayne Shorter and Jarrett, and took direction and inspiration from acclaimed guest artists like Christian McBride, Marvin Stamm, Geoffrey Keezer, Ray Drummond and Jeff Ballard.

Drummer and composer Spiro Sinigos assembled his quartet for his senior recital last year, prior to graduating from Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. With a little guidance from faculty member Keith Hall, the group (sax, piano, bass and drums) worked up five original tunes by Sinigos and one new arrangement of a standard.

“Spiro composed his tunes around new styles including West African grooves that he explored over the course of the last two years,” Hall said. “Spiro also had the opportunity to spend time with visiting professor Billy Hart, who helped him develop as a drummer and composer. During the semester of his recital, Spiro worked every week with Scott Cowan on the melodic and harmonic maps of his tunes.”

Sinigos is currently pursuing a master’s degree in jazz performance at Queens College. He teaches at the New World Music Center School of Music in Long Island, N.Y.

—Ed Enright

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## Jazz Vocal Soloist

College Winner

**Sarah Pumphrey**  
Azusa Pacific University  
David Beatty  
Azusa, Calif.

Junior High School Winner

**Laila Smith**  
Valley Christian  
Junior High School  
Dave Gregoric  
San Jose, Calif.

Junior High School  
Outstanding Performance

**Jenna Renae Scandalios**  
Corte Madera School  
Juliet Green  
Portola Valley, Calif.

High School Winners

**Siobhan Brugger**  
Meadowdale High School  
Jeff Horenstein  
Lynnwood, Wash.

**Kate Davis**  
West Linn High School  
Barb Fontana  
West Linn, Ore.

High School Outstanding Performances

**Carrie Furniss**  
New Trier High School  
Winnetka, Ill.  
Derek Fawcett

**Grace Kelly**  
Brookline High School  
Carolyn Castellano  
Brookline, Mass.

**Alex Perraud**  
New Trier High School  
Winnetka, Ill.  
Derek Fawcett

Performing Arts High School Winner

**Olivia Harris**  
Booker T. Washington HSPVA  
Kent Ellingson  
Dallas

Performing Arts High School  
Outstanding Performance

**Jazzmeia Horn**  
Booker T. Washington HSPVA  
Bart Marantz  
Dallas

College Outstanding Performance

**Tatiana Mayfield**  
University of North Texas  
Stefan Karlsson  
Denton, Texas

## Jazz Vocal Group

Junior High School Winner

**King's Junior High Celebration**  
King's Junior High  
Jordana Halkett  
Seattle

Junior High School Outstanding Performance

**Memorial Park Vocal Jazz**  
Memorial Park Middle School  
Jana Root  
Fort Wayne, Ind.

High School Winners

**Folsom High School Jazz Choir A**  
Folsom High School  
Curtis Gaesser  
Folsom, Calif.

**Room 107**  
Valley Christian High School  
David Hook  
San Jose, Calif.

High School Outstanding Performance

**Midnight Voices**  
Rochelle Township High School  
Cory Jones  
Rochelle, Ill.

College Winner

**Farwest Jazz**  
Pierce College  
Kelly Kunz  
Lakewood, Wash.



Conrad Jones:  
College Classical Soloist Winner

## Classical Soloist

Junior High School Winner

**Alice Zhou** » piano  
Folsom Middle School  
John Zimny  
Folsom, Calif.

High School Winner

**YooJin Aum** » piano  
The Masters School  
Nancy Theeman  
Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.

David Gilson  
Cleveland

**Jose Valentino Ruiz**  
» C flute  
University of South Florida  
Kim McCormick  
Tampa, Fla.

Performing Arts High School Winner

**Booker T. Washington HSPVA Symphony Orchestra**  
Booker T. Washington HSPVA  
Luis Martinez/David Large  
Dallas

College Winner

**Lawrence University Wind Ensemble**  
Lawrence University  
Andrew Mast  
Appleton, Wis.

## Classical Group

Junior High School Winner

**Folsom Middle School Wind Ensemble**  
Folsom Middle School  
John Zimny  
Folsom, Calif.

High School Winner

**Cobahshi Trio**  
Ann Arbor  
Pioneer High School  
David Leach  
Ann Arbor, Mich.

## Blues/Pop/Rock Soloist

High School Winners

**Grace Kelly** » alto saxophone  
Brookline High School  
Carolyn Castellano  
Brookline, Mass.

College Outstanding Performances

**Afro Blue**  
Howard University  
Connaitre Miller  
Washington, D.C.

**Sacramento State Jazz Singers**  
Sacramento State University  
Kerry Marsh  
Sacramento, Calif.

Performing Arts High School Winner

**Lauren Williams** » oboe  
Chicago Academy for the Arts  
Jason Patera  
Chicago

College Winners

**Conrad Jones**  
» trumpet  
Cleveland Institute Of Music

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**Gene Knific** » piano/Rhodes

Portage Northern High School  
Tad Weed  
Portage, Mich.

High School Outstanding Performance

**Gabriella Martini** » voice

Brearley School  
Karyn Joaquinio  
New York

Performing Arts High School Winner

**Annie Dingwall** » piano/voice

Booker T. Washington HSPVA  
Bart Marantz  
Dallas

Performing Arts High School Outstanding Performances

**Asher Kurtz** » guitar

Booker T. Washington HSPVA  
Kent Ellingson  
Dallas

**Michael Wharton** » guitar

Booker T. Washington HSPVA  
Kent Ellingson  
Dallas

College Winner

**Jose Valentino Ruiz** »

flute/saxophone/EWI/bass  
University of South Florida  
Kim McCormick  
Tampa, Fla.

College Outstanding Performances

**Ulrich Ellison** » guitar

University of Texas, Austin  
John Fremgen  
Austin, Texas

**Jonathan Ragonese** » EWI

Manhattan School of Music  
Justin DiCioccio  
New York



Justin Lee:  
Junior High  
School Jazz  
Soloist  
Winner

# Lasting Impressions

The vocal jazz soloist winners in this year's Student Music Awards have shown the ability to tackle music in a wide variety of genres. Take Siobhan Brugger, who has performed for the past two years with Impressions, the award-winning vocal jazz ensemble at Meadowdale High School in Lynnwood, Wash. A graduating senior, she is comfortable soloing on all styles, from bop to ballads to blues, according to band director Jeff Horenstein. Last year, Brugger won the Seattle-Kobe Female Jazz Vocalist Competition, which allowed her to tour Japan.

Brugger studies privately with Seattle-area jazz vocalist Greta Matassa, who has helped her with repertoire, rhythm, scat, phrasing, breath support and range. "Greta has taught me how to explore the chord changes in a song, and has introduced me to many techniques and ideas," Brugger said. "When I solo, I start simple and build my ideas and dynamics to finish with more complex rhythms and licks. I have learned to embrace pauses in my solos instead of packing ideas into one long run."

When she begins college next fall, Brugger wants to pursue a dual degree in vocal jazz and a social science. "Reaching people through my music would provide me the opportunity to use my other gifts and passions to help people and make a difference in the world," she said.

Before Kate Davis ever got into jazz vocals, she was the bass player in the jazz ensemble at West Linn (Oregon) High School. "It was in this band that I found a love for jazz singing," Davis said. "One rehearsal in preparation for a gig, my band director, Jeff Cumpston, asked me to sing through a vocal chart with the band so the other musicians could get a feel for it. I ended up digging into jazz beyond the bass."

Influenced strongly by instrumentalists, Davis cites pianist Bill Evans, bassist Scott LaFaro and trumpeter Freddie Hubbard as inspirations, along with quintessential jazz vocalists like Frank Sinatra, Carmen McRae, Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughan.

In her solos, Davis tries to stay away from practice patterns and resists the temptation to overdo it. "While being structural and making sense is important, I like to vary things, stretch my own boundaries and never sing or play the same things every



Sarah Pumphrey

time," she said. After graduation, Davis plans to attend a New York conservatory and hopes to pursue a career as a professional vocalist/bassist.

Olivia Harris is another student with vocal as well as instrumental chops. A graduating senior at Booker T. Washington HSPVA in Dallas, Harris has become well-rounded through her performing arts high school's wide curriculum, performing with the Lab Singers (jazz), the Entertainers (musical theater) and the MIDI ensemble (a crossover group).

"She's one of the few who can do both things," said Bart Marantz, director of jazz studies at BTWHSPVA. "If a student can play piano and accompany themselves, they can reharmonize or pick a texture that they're hearing."

Sarah Pumphrey participated in the vocal jazz ensemble and was featured as a soloist in the big band at Azusa Pacific University last semester. She studies privately with Kathleen Grace, a vocal jazz teacher at University of Southern California. Her jazz vocal influences range from classic artists like Rosemary Clooney, Fitzgerald, Sinatra, and Lambert, Hendricks & Ross to more modern performers such as Kurt Elling, Sara Gazarek, Karrin Allyson and Diana Krall.

"I am focusing on learning how to solo from an instrumental approach," Pumphrey said. "Instead of the typical singer's approach of embellishing the melody, I'm starting from scratch and learning how to improvise solely based on the chord structures. As a result, I've gained a much better understanding of chord progressions and melodic patterns." —Ed Enright



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## Blues/Pop/ Rock Group

Junior High School Outstanding Performance

### Sinaloa Middle School

Sinaloa Middle School  
Jason Edel  
Novato, Calif.

High School Winner

### Kind of Blue

Portage Northern High School  
Tom Knific  
Portage, Mich.

High School Outstanding Performances

### Cary-Grove Jazz Choir

Cary-Grove High School  
Patrick Whalen  
Cary, Ill.

### Kent Denver R&B Ensemble

Kent Denver  
Stephen Holley  
Englewood, Colo.

### SBA Soul Band

St. Benedict  
At Auburndale  
Thomas Link  
Memphis, Tenn.

Performing Arts  
High School Winner

### MIDI Ensemble

Booker T. Washington  
HSPVA  
Kent Ellingson  
Dallas

Performing Arts High School  
Outstanding Performance

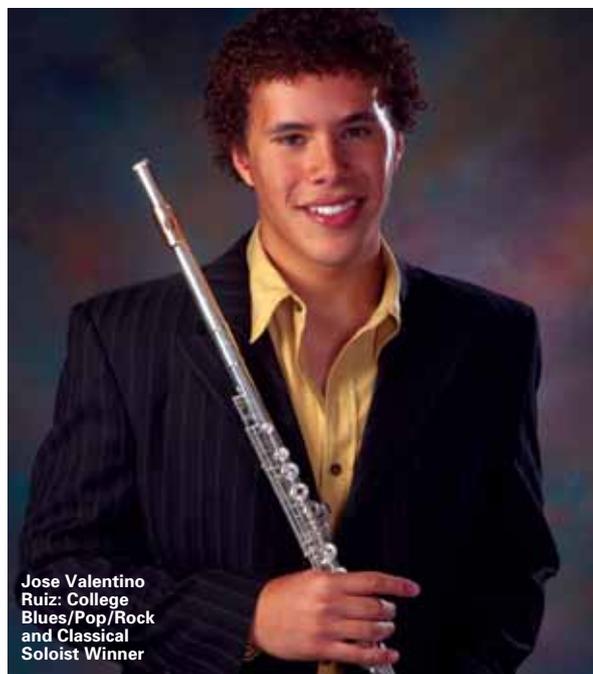
### Crossover I

Booker T. Washington  
HSPVA  
Bart Marantz  
Dallas

College Winners

### Fatbook

Lawrence University  
Fred Sturm  
Appleton, Wis.



Jose Valentino  
Ruiz: College  
Blues/Pop/Rock  
and Classical  
Soloist Winner

### University of Miami Funk/Fusion Ensemble

University of Miami  
Steve Rucker  
Coral Gables, Fla.

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**Orange Democracy**

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Justin DiCioccio  
New York

**Latin Group**

High School Outstanding Performance

**The Latin Connection**

Canyon Crest Academy  
Amy Villanova  
San Diego

Performing Arts High School Winner

**BTW Latin American Ensemble**

Booker T. Washington HSPVA  
Dulio Dobrin/Ramon Rodriguez  
Dallas

College Winner

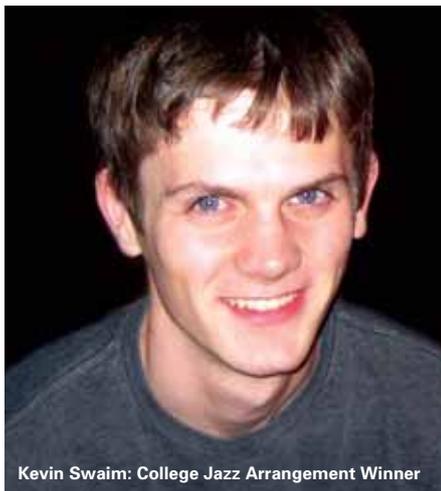
**Salsa Orchestra**

University of Miami  
Alberto De La Reguera  
Coral Gables, Fla.

College Outstanding Performance

**Latin Jazz Ensemble**

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Steve Roach  
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**Brubeck Research Travel Grant**

The University of the Pacific Library's Holt-Atherton Department of Special Collections houses the papers of composer and jazz legend **Dave Brubeck**. The collection has research potential in a variety of areas such as West Coast jazz, the civil rights movement, and the State Department's cultural ambassador programs of the 1950s. More information on the Brubeck Collection can be found at: [library.pacific.edu/ha/brubeck](http://library.pacific.edu/ha/brubeck).

The University of the Pacific Library is offering a **\$1,500 research travel grant**. The grant is open to students, professors, and independent researchers. **To apply** send a 1-2 page vitae and a 1-2 page proposal describing the research project and how it will involve the Brubeck Collection. Applications will be accepted until **July 31, 2009**; research must be completed by September 2010. **Mail to:** Brubeck Collection, University of the Pacific Library Special Collections, 3601 Pacific Ave, Stockton, CA 95211.

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 Jeremy Manasia  
 Manhattan School of Music Pre-College  
 New York

College Winner

### Remy LeBoeuf

"Morning Song"  
 Manhattan School of Music  
 Justin DiCioccio  
 New York

## Original Song

High School Winner

### Elijah Shiffer

"Thought Waves"  
 Manhattan School of Music Pre-College  
 Jeremy Manasia  
 New York

High School Outstanding Performances

### Phillip Golub

"Kanona"  
 Crossroads School for  
 Arts and Sciences  
 Evan Avery  
 Santa Monica, Calif.

### Sharar Levari

"Lost Time"  
 Meadowdale High School  
 Michael Stegner  
 Lynnwood, Wash.

### Ben Porter

"The Longshot"  
 Clayton High School  
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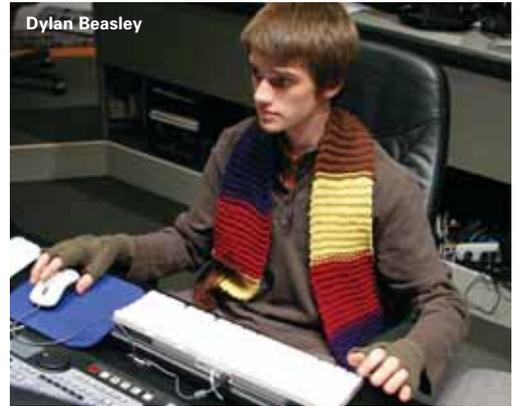
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**D**aniel Blanck, a senior at Manlius Pebble Hill School in DeWitt, N.Y., has been studying studio engineering and design for two years at Syracuse University under the tutelage of James Abbott. He has recorded professional independent projects in addition to his own school's orchestra, wind ensemble, jazz groups and soloists. He has even founded his own recording engineering company, Basement Recording Corporation.

Blanck, who plays guitar, included in his SMA entry a studio recording of "Body And Soul" that featured him with a trio of piano, drums and bass. Another standout selection from his submission was "Come Rain Or Come Shine," sung by a female vocalist with a trio. "I hoped to achieve a Blue Note, smoky-bar-room 1950s feel," he said. "This recording was influenced by the work of Rudy Van Gelder. The vocals are upfront in the mix and spot-miked. The stereo pair-recorded piano provides a wide foundation for the vocals. The bass is also spot-miked, providing a solid, clear, low resonance. Finally, the drums were spot-miked with an overhead stereo pair. The sweeping of the brushes on the snare can be felt from the snare's spot mic."

Blanck has been working with another of his teachers, Joe Colombo, on recording a live big band once a month in a club in downtown Syracuse, N.Y. "This project allowed Dan to experiment over time with mic placement and mixing of a live 17-piece band," Colombo said. "We are in the final stages of mastering the recordings."

Dylan Beasley has completed three years at the New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts (NOCCA), where his official discipline is media arts, including audio and video classes. He focuses his energy on audio engineering under the instruction of Steve Reynolds. Previously, he was under the jazz discipline at NOCCA, practicing trumpet and gathering connections that have since become major recording sources. "My goal as a recording engineer is to record things I believe to be worth recording," Beasley said. "With so much talent around my school, I focus on that." Beasley has become the requested engineer of NOCCA's jazz students for college audition recordings and personal demos.



"Dylan is particular about microphone choice, placement and room acoustics," Reynolds said. "Advanced stereo techniques were used on some recordings. Mixing techniques such as parallel compression, EQ, reverb and/or appropriate use of natural room ambience were used depending upon the musical genre."

Brian Gerstle's recording experiences range from course work and independent projects to an internship with one of his professors at University of Miami, Paul Griffith. A jazz trombonist and music engineering major, Gerstle has taken the university's recording services and sound reinforcement class every semester, which has allowed him to progress from setting up gear and wrapping cables to being chief recording engineer on campus for the past two semesters.

Gerstle has also gained recording knowledge in his studies with professor Joe Abbati, which have focused on the studio environment in particular.

Gerstle's SMA submission was a jazz quartet session originally recorded for a friend, graduate student drummer Daniel Susnjar, who was applying to the Betty Carter Jazz Ahead program last year. "I miked the drums with two overheads, two kick drum mics (beater and head on the opposite side), and two snare mics (top and bottom), as well as tom mics (one high and one low)," Gerstle said. "Every time I mic drums, I always measure and apply the appropriate sample delays to each spot mic, with reference to the overheads. This prevents comb filtering and cancellation, which allows for a fuller, more natural sound. On piano, I added a shotgun mic below the piano to add more body and low end. I chose to use only one mic each for bass and sax."

At press time, Gerstle was about to be named the University of Miami Outstanding Senior for the Music Engineering Program for the past academic year, according to one of his instructors.

—Ed Enright



Room 107:  
High School Jazz  
Vocal Group Winner

College Outstanding Performances

**Pascal LeBoeuf**  
"House Without A Door"  
Manhattan School of Music  
Justin DiCioccio  
New York

**Jeremy Siskind**  
"Little Love Song"  
Eastman School of Music  
Harold Danko  
Rochester, N.Y.

**Jazz  
Arrangement**

High School Winner

**Phillip Golub**  
Untitled  
Crossroads School for  
Arts and Sciences  
Evan Avery  
Santa Monica, Calif.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 98

Performing Arts High School Outstanding Performance

College Winner

**Luke Marantz**  
"Looking Up"  
Booker T. Washington HSPVA  
Bart Marantz  
Dallas

**Kurt Reeder**  
"Waltz For A Woman"  
Brigham Young University-Idaho  
Aaron Miller  
Rexburg, Idaho

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## Jim Widner

Jim Widner sees his jazz camps as opportunities to provide talented young jazz musicians one-on-one interactions with professionals.

“As Stan Kenton used to say, you take a bath in jazz for a week,” Widner said.

The bassist/educator referenced Kenton for a reason. He toured with the Kenton Orchestra, started a clinicians service while working in Kenton’s office in the early 1970s and worked at Kenton’s innovative summer jazz camps for 10 years.

When Kenton died, he expressed in his will that there would be no Kenton ghost band, and his camps would not continue under his name. However, in 1988, Widner stepped forward to start a jazz camp in “Kenton’s manner, not his name.”



“This is a necessary component of jazz education,” said Widner, who for the past six years has also served as director of jazz studies at the University of Missouri, St. Louis. “Stan’s dedication to jazz education was the main influence for the camps, watching students get involved and passionate about the music.”

Widner held his first camp at the University of

Missouri, Columbia. This lasted only one year, so he moved it to Drury University, the school at which he helped start a Kenton camp. “It lasted at Drury,” he said. “We picked up where we left off from the Kenton camp.”

This summer, Widner will host four camps: big band camps at the University of Nebraska, Omaha and California State University, Sacramento; and combo camps at University of Missouri, Kansas City (with Bobby Watson) and University of Missouri, St. Louis. He used to run camps for seven or eight weeks every summer, but turning 63 in June, Widner has cut back his workload a bit. But this does not mean that the vigor behind his mission to spread jazz to young people has subsided.

“We expose up-and-coming musicians to a higher level of musicianship,” he said. “I feel obliged to do this.”

## Rob Klevan

On a Tuesday morning in early April, Rob Klevan had a chance to catch his breath. The Monterey Jazz Festival’s Fifth Next Generation Festival had taken place the previous weekend. It was a success once again, as about 60 high school and college instrumental and vocal jazz bands from around the world converged on Monterey, Calif., for a weekend of jazz competition and camaraderie.

“We had nice weather, so a lot of tourists got to see the bands perform on the outdoor stages,” Klevan said. “These are all the top groups. They sit and listen to the other groups. Then they play on other stages for fun, at Cannery Row, Fisherman’s Wharf, Monterey Live! The vibe is great.”

With the demise of IAJE, the Next Generation Festival has become perhaps the premier annual gathering of the world’s top student jazz bands. Klevan has played a primary role in this expansion of what started as the National High School Jazz Competition almost 40 years ago. A native of the Monterey area, Klevan, 56, had taught music at Stevenson School in Pebble Beach for 27 years before coming on board as the Monterey Jazz Festival’s director of jazz education in 2002. He has used his experiences as a teacher taking his bands to the National High School Jazz Competition to guide his work with the festival. “It’s morphed,” he said. “I wondered why when we got to the fairgrounds, there was an old warped table, someone would check your name off, and then you’re on your own—find the building, warm-up room. At the festival, the grounds are nice. But they weren’t that nice in April. We’d have auditions for the Next Generation Orchestra in closets and bathrooms. When I came on board, I said this had to change.”

In addition to the Next Generation Festival, which now takes place in downtown Monterey, Klevan has overseen the expansion of the all-star Next Generation Orchestra, launched the Digital Music Education Project and expanded the festival’s Traveling Clinicians Program. He approaches all of these activities with an attitude that the more enthusiastic he is about the music, the kids will see it and become more enthusiastic.

“They’re savvy,” he said. “There’s a reason why we call it playing.”



## Jim Culbertson

Thirty-five DownBeat Student Music Awards are just a part of the numerous accolades that Jim Culbertson has garnered with the jazz program at Douglas MacArthur High School in Decatur, Ill. Over the course of 31 years at the school, he has built one of the premier jazz programs in the state. At the roots of the program is a solid concert band.

“The jazz program feeds off of the concert band program,” Culbertson said. “I make sure that the students play their horns right. The after-school jazz program falls in line. Without a strong concert program, you don’t have a good footing for jazz.”

MacArthur’s jazz program has won such Illinois high school jazz competitions as the Oak Lawn, Rolling Meadows, North Shore and Eastern Illinois jazz festivals. He has taken his groups to the Montreux, Umbria and North Sea festivals in five European tours, and taken his band to Japan. Not bad for a small school of about 1,000 students in central Illinois, in a blue-collar town that’s suffering economically. “Our enrollment is dwindling every day,” Culbertson said.

With fewer students, Culbertson has seen a strain on his program. But when he sees a talented student coming to his high school, he knows how to nurture their talent and build their enthusiasm for the music.

“For a long time I taught fifth and sixth grade,” said Culbertson, 58. “I look for talent at this age—who should be a bass player, who can improvise. Then, I can teach them in middle school and high school.”

Culbertson has familial experience grooming a burgeoning jazz talent. His son, Brian Culbertson, is a popular touring smooth jazz multi-instrumentalist. For five summers, Jim, who plays trumpet, toured with his son, hitting the road for gigs such as opening for Barry Manilow for three days and then returning to Decatur to direct the town’s municipal band. It may have been a lot of work, but it’s all been part of a fulfilling career.

“I wouldn’t change a thing,” he said. “Where else can you go into work every day and do what you love, try to make music and strive for excellence?”

—Stories by Jason Koransky



## William Fielder

Terrell Stafford owes his career to William Fielder. "If it wasn't for Prof, I wouldn't be playing trumpet," he said.

Terence Blanchard said that his lessons with "Prof" (Fielder's nickname) went beyond learning how to play the horn. "He was more than a trumpet teacher," Blanchard said. "He was family."

Fielder's on leave from his post at Rutgers' Mason Gross School of the Arts in New Brunswick, N.J., where he joined the faculty in 1979. But during his time instructing the likes of Stafford, Blanchard, Wynton Marsalis and Sean Jones, Fielder revolutionized teaching methods on how to play jazz trumpet. Having earned degrees from the American Conservatory of Music, Fielder's imprint comes from his fluency in the jazz and classical worlds. "Prof is a visionary in the African-American community, one of the first to study the trumpet in the European classical tradition," Jones said.



ANJA CHRISTENSEN

Fielder was born July 2, 1938, in Meridian, Miss. As a performer, Fielder has worked with the Ellington and Basie orchestras, Sun Ra's Arkestra, B.B. King, Slide Hampton and Ray Charles. Classical performances include the Chicago Civic Symphony and American Conservatory Symphony and Brass Ensemble.

Fielder's teaching career—which started at Alabama State in 1965—has earned him his greatest distinction. His studies with Chicago Symphony Orchestra classical trumpet legends Vincent Cichowicz and Adolph Herseth have had a lasting impact on his teaching methods.

"My father wanted me to be a doctor," Fielder recalled, "and I said I was going to leave. So [in 1957] I went to Chicago. I heard about Adolph Herseth. I thought, 'This man has something!' I studied with Cichowicz as well. He was stern. One time, at a lesson he took his trumpet and played Bartók's 'Concerto For Orchestra' in my ear. Then he asked me, 'Can you play that?' 'Well, no sir, I can't.' 'Why not?' 'Sir, you haven't assigned it to me.' 'You wait for people to assign you things?'"

Jones said that Fielder's dedication to the Chicago methodology of brass playing makes his lessons attractive to emerging trumpeters who need to learn how to produce a good sound on their horn. "He was

introduced to the airflow and breathing principles that have become such a big part of his playing and teaching," Jones said.

The emphasis on breathing resonated with Stafford. "Prof said, 'You have a lot to learn, but if you use wind, it doesn't matter where you put the mouthpiece,'" Stafford said. "Air is stagnant, turning air into wind gives you sound, a singing quality; the trumpet should be like singing."

Saxophonist Ralph Bowen, a colleague of Fielder's on the faculty at Rutgers, said that Fielder's influence has extended beyond brass players. "He's influenced all wind players who

have had the opportunity to have a discussion or lesson with him," he said.

Blanchard emphasized that Prof's lessons extend far beyond teaching technique. "The thing that struck me was when I first met him and had a lesson, he called later about two hours later to see if I was practicing," Blanchard said. "For the

first lesson, he asked, 'What is the trumpet?' He said it was the mirror of the mind, the means by which you express artistic thought. We talked about painting, art, world views."

"He doesn't just have a passion for music, but a passion for people, too," Stafford said. "I learned how to be a good person, how to treat people with respect. My first lesson, he asked me, 'What is the function and structure of the brain?' For him it was about sound, how the mind works along with the body.'"

Jones had a similar story about an initial encounter with Fielder. "When I came to Rutgers," Jones recalled, "Prof said to call him. We hung out all day and night. We would go out to dinner, and he would pay; my first lesson was three or four hours."

When asked what he would tell 10 young trumpet players sitting with him, Fielder said that he would first address the basics of making a good sound on the horn. "I would guide them on their problems," he said. "Basic attack and release. They're going to have to get down to the basic note attacks, release and air flow in a horizontal way. If a young player wants to play jazz they need to study and get the horn down. Learn to produce a beautiful sound. On passages that are too fast, you have to resort to multiple tonguing.

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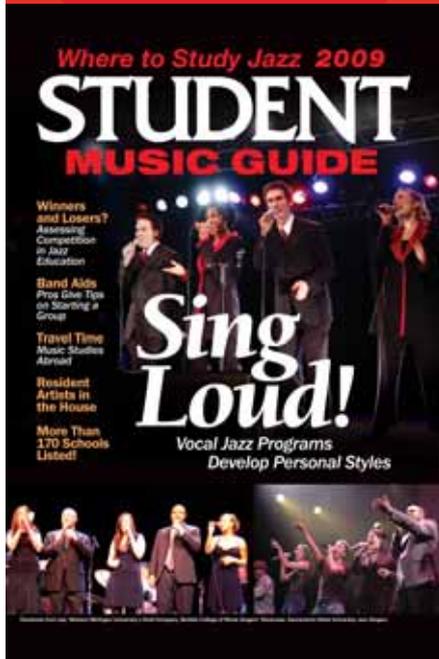
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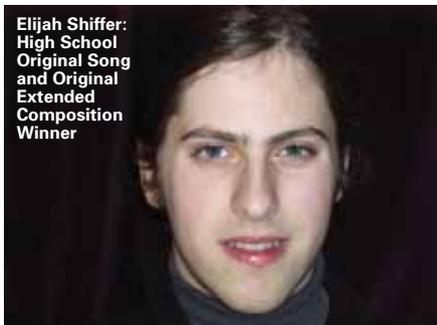
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DePaul University  
Bob Lark  
Chicago

#### **Sara Jacovino**

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Steve Wiest  
Denton, Texas

#### **Kate Janzen**

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Performing Arts High School Winner

#### **Dylan Beasley**

New Orleans Center for Creative Arts  
Steve Reynolds  
New Orleans

College Winner

#### **Kensuke Irie**

McGill University  
William Martens  
Montreal

College Outstanding Performance

#### **Brian Gerstle**

University of Miami  
Paul Griffith  
Coral Gables, Fla.

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High School Outstanding Performance

#### **Travis Hendrix**

Santa Rosa High School  
Mark Wardlaw  
Santa Rosa, Calif.

Performing Arts  
High School Winner

#### **Dylan Beasley**

New Orleans Center  
for Creative Arts  
Steve Reynolds  
New Orleans

College Winner

#### **Brian Gerstle**

University of Miami  
Joe Abbati  
Coral Gables, Fla.

College Outstanding Performance

#### **Gordon van Gent**

Western Michigan University  
John Campos  
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- 3) Proper interpretation of idiom
- 4) Improvisation or creativity
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- 3) Transparency and apparent transient response.
- 4) Special effects: are they appropriate? do they add or detract?
- 5) Extraneous noises, clicks, hum, etc. (for a non-live performance, any non-musical sound).
- 6) Professional etiquette: labeling of box for tape speed and format, labeling of cuts, leadering.

### Awards & Prizes

**DB Award Plaque** is awarded to the music department of each winning high school and college.

**DB Award Certificate** is awarded to each individual winner and director of winning ensembles.

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**New School University Scholarships** (up to \$100,000 total) are awarded in the high school and performing arts high school divisions only and are applicable toward tuition.

### Judges

**Jim Anderson:** Recording engineer and producer. Chair of the Clive Davis Department of Recorded Music at New York University.

**David Baker:** Professor of Music and Chairman of the Jazz Department, Indiana U., Bloomington; author/composer/arranger/multi-instrumentalist.

**Jennifer Barnes:** Vocalist, touring clinician, director of college vocal jazz ensembles.

**Bob Belden:** Saxophonist, composer, bandleader and producer of new albums and reissues.

**Janice Borla:** Vocalist; Director of Vocal Jazz at North Central College; vocal jazz camp founder.

**Orbert Davis:** Trumpeter/clinician; professor at University of Illinois, Chicago.

**David Demsey:** Saxophonist; William Paterson University Coordinator of Jazz Studies.

**Bunky Green:** Alto saxophonist; Director of Jazz Studies at the University of North Florida.

**Les Hooper:** Composer/arranger for films, TV, commercials, orchestras and records; clinician.

**Kevin Mahogany:** Vocalist, record label owner and educator.

**Miles Osland:** Saxophonists; University of Kentucky Director of Jazz Studies.

**Jimmy Owens:** Trumpeter; member of New School University faculty.

**Loren Schoenberg:** Author, educator and saxophonist; director of The Jazz Museum in Harlem.

**David Weiss:** Trumpeter, leader of the New Jazz Composers Octet, winner of Chamber Music America composition grant.

**Phil Wilson:** Trombonist; member of Berklee College faculty.

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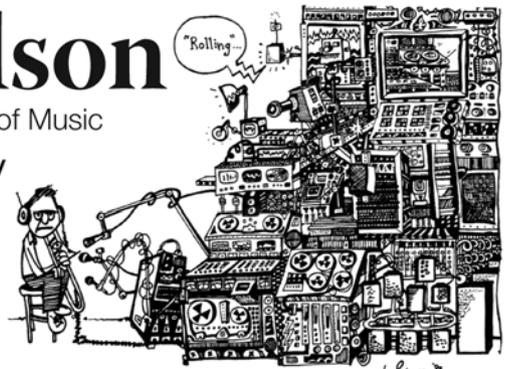
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# Phil Wilson

Professor, Berklee College of Music

**Trombonist/Composer/  
Arranger/Educator/  
Communicator**

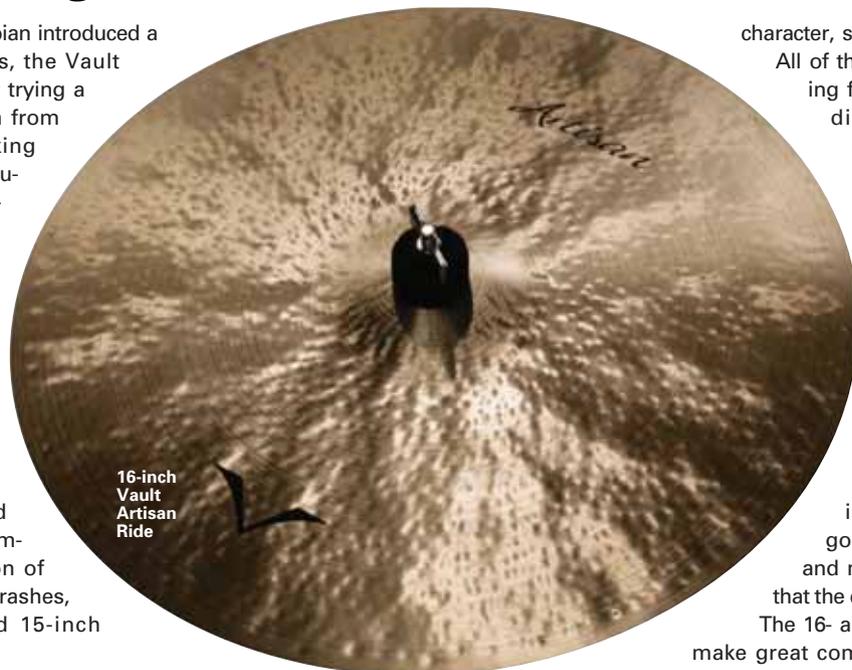
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To learn more about Phil Wilson, visit [www.PhilWilsonMusic.com](http://www.PhilWilsonMusic.com)

## Sabian Artisan Crash and Hi-Hat Cymbals: Filling Out the High-End Vault Line

A couple of years ago, Sabian introduced a new line of ride cymbals, the Vault Artisan rides. I remember trying a bunch of them out, fresh from the "The Vault," and liking them so much I added a couple to my A-list cymbal collection. I definitely wasn't the only one to put these cymbals into heavy rotation. According to Sabian, Artisan crashes have been the single-most requested Sabian model since the introduction of the Artisan ride. Sabian has fulfilled those requests and filled out the Artisan line of cymbals with the introduction of 16- and 18-inch Artisan crashes, as well as 13-, 14- and 15-inch Artisan hi-hats.



character, similar to the Artisan rides.

All of the hi-hats had a nice sticking feel, offering the ability to dig, yet keep the pattern moving and dancing. The 13- and 14-inch hi-hats have a strong, pronounced "chick," with the 15-inch chick being more understated. Several of my students thought the 15-inch pair would make good jazz hi-hats because of this subtlety, while the 13- and 14-inch models would be ideal for rock, fusion, gospel, hip-hop, r&b, Latin and more. The consensus was that the cymbals are versatile.

The 16- and 18-inch Artisan crashes make great complements to the Artisan rides I've been playing on for a couple of years. They have dramatic, warm and intricate qualities. Due to their thinness, the crashes have soft attacks, yet a full projection. When using them as a crash/ride, one of my students observed they had a "warm cushion." Due to their thinness, they have an expected washiness when used this way. Overall, the Artisan crashes, as well as the hi-hats, reflect the highest end of the cymbal market today.

—Doug Brush

» Ordering info: [sabian.com](http://sabian.com)

The concept behind the Artisan line is a blending of high-quality traditional cymbal sounds with modern innovations and desires. All of the Artisans are heavily hand hammered, which gives the cymbals a rich complexity. The cymbals are also dimpler with a large peen hammer, which according to Sabian adds to the tone and increases the projection. The crashes are thin to extra thin, while the hi-hats have medium tops and heavy bottoms. The Artisan cymbals reflect the highest-end craftsmanship and quality. They have strong, full-bodied sounds and rich

tonal qualities with a darkness, which come from the hammering.

When trying out the new Artisans, I took them to the Merit School of Music, where I have some talented young students, many of whom play in various professional situations in the Chicago area. All of the new Artisans were an instant hit. The 13-inch hi-hats were the most popular, with students using adjectives like "bold, unique and crispy" to describe their sound.

I found the cymbals to have a nice complex

## Yamaha Black Phoenix Trombone: Eye Catcher

A black trombone is like the Spanish Inquisition: Nobody expects it. So any trombonist is bound to be intrigued by the Yamaha Black Phoenix as soon as they open the case. Something about the smooth, uninterrupted darkness of its finish says it's a horn to be reckoned with. Like

a black limousine, its finish exudes power and class.

Along with Black Phoenix trumpet and saxophone models, Yamaha introduced this trombone, model YSL-697ZBP, to commemo-



rate the company's 50th anniversary of manufacturing instruments in the United States. Only 50 have been made, available for a limited time, and the black-lacquered bell is graced with a golden custom engraving.

Looks are one thing, but how does it feel and play? Picking it up for the first time, I was struck by the lightness of the whole horn, and the slide in particular. The outer slide is fit with close tolerances, making it airtight. The specially designed inner slide stockings offer perfect alignment, even in the extended positions. The result is a smooth, responsive slide.

Yamaha boasts that the trombone offers a

## Godin 5th Avenue Kingpin Archtop Guitar: Modern Spin on a Classic Axe

Godin Guitars has introduced the 5th Avenue model, the company's first entry into the archtop guitar world. Combining classic design and tone with modern manufacturing technology, Godin has produced a surprisingly nice instrument at an incredibly attractive price.

According to Godin, the 5th Avenue has been in development for some time. Two models are available: the original all-acoustic model and the new Kingpin, which features a P-90 pickup mounted into the top. In designing the guitar, Godin was determined to create something with a vintage vibe, and the 5th Avenue Kingpin is reminiscent of the great hollow-body electrics of the 1950s.

The guitar is attractive, using a simple yet functional design. The body is made of molded laminated Canadian wild cherry wood and the neck is Silverleaf maple. Godin has used cherry on several other guitar models, and found it to be responsive as a tone wood. The Kingpin has a standard trapeze-style tailpiece and floating adjustable rosewood bridge. The single-coil P-90 is mounted onto the top just below the end of the fingerboard, and controlled with a volume and tone knob. A floating pickguard completes the picture.

The 5th Avenue is comfortable to play. The 16-inch bout and 3-inch body depth are perfect for sitting and standing. The neck has a rosewood fingerboard with a 24.84-inch scale and 16-inch radius. The guitar arrived well-adjusted and played great, with good intonation up and down the neck. Acoustically, the



Kingpin delivers a fair amount of volume, but I found the tone to be a little thin, which is not surprising for a pressed-laminate guitar. The real strength of this guitar is its amplified capabilities. The P-90 is a great choice here, and produced a range of colorful sounds from thick creamy jazz to growling blues and rockabilly.

The Godin 5th Avenue Kingpin is definitely worth a look. At a street price of \$699, it is a solid value for those purchasing their first archtop, or for players looking to expand their arsenal without breaking the bank.

—Keith Baumann

» Ordering info: [godinguitars.com](http://godinguitars.com)

compact, well-centered tone, along with a quick response suitable for all types of trombone performance. Tone-wise, I agree. Initially I was struck by its crisp, bright sound across all ranges. The horn has a dual bore of 0.484–0.490 inches, with a 7.5-inch one-piece bell. That makes it a pretty small bore in my book, but not noticeably smaller than my regular axe. However, the way the high notes popped out so easily, it felt like an even smaller bore.

It seemed like a fun, free-blowing horn that required little effort to play, and I couldn't wait to show it off at some gigs and rehearsals. Luckily, I had the opportunity to play it with four different bands, including a funky jazz combo, a couple of pop and r&b bands, and a Latin jazz band. Visually, it drew the kind of responses I expected, like,

"Whoa! What the hell is that thing?" and, "I see you're playing a black trombone. Cool."

In terms of playability, unfortunately, I didn't enjoy the Black Phoenix onstage as much as I did alone in the practice room. I struggled a bit with the intonation, and that delicate, crispy tone was missing some of the fatness I'm accustomed to. I play in some loud bands, and I had a hard time pushing enough air through this baby; it wasn't cutting through.

I have a feeling this horn would be better-suited for a small, quiet jazz combo, where its distinctive tone could shine through naturally, without forcing it. In that kind of situation, it could be a real attention-getter—and not just for the looks.

—John Janowiak

» Ordering info: [yamaha.com](http://yamaha.com)

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## 1» Selmer on Fire

Conn-Selmer has released its new Firebird series of saxophones. The Firebird/Europe Reference 54 Collector alto saxophone will be available in a dark gold lacquer with or without F-sharp, whereas the Reference 54 Collector tenor will be produced in a honey gold lacquer without F-sharp. Both instruments come with a Selmer Paris ligature and a Collector's "Bird" formed case. The Firebird/Europe Super Action 80, Series II and Series III Limited models will feature a honey gold lacquer finish, a Pro-Light backpack case and will be engraved with a Firebird design different than that of the Collector models.

More info: [conn-selmer.com](http://conn-selmer.com)



« 1

## 2» DW Goes Exotic

Drum Workshop has added five new vertical grain exotic (VGE) woods to its Collector's Series Exotic line. These drums offer a half dozen hand-selected woods from around the world. The available finishes are Macassar Ebony, Red Gum, Movingue, Koa and Cocobolo (shown). They are available over DW's custom all-maple or all-birch shell, which can be combined with DW's custom or specialty lacquer finishes and drum hardware colors.

More info: [dwdrums.com](http://dwdrums.com)



« 2

## 3» New AKG Flagship

AKG has introduced the Perception 820 tube to its Perception series of microphones. The Perception 820 tube features a dual 1-inch true condenser large diaphragm, ECC 83 dual-triode tube circuitry and a remote control unit that allows for nine different pickup patterns. A ground lift switch prevents unwanted hum if necessary. The mic comes with a metal carrying case, spider-shock mount and cable.

More info: [akg.com](http://akg.com)



« 3

4»



## 4» Handheld Power

Tascam's DR-07 portable digital recorder records to SD or SDHC card media. A pair of electret condenser microphones capture performances as 24-bit .WAV or MP3 files that can be transferred to a computer. The DR-07 can loop and slow down playback without changing the pitch. It also features a mic stand mounting hole and a windscreen. MSRP: \$199.

More info: [tascam.com](http://tascam.com)

## 5» Rising Education Software

Superscope's new Elevation practice and recording software provides musicians, students and educators with tools to learn, practice and teach. The software features a music library that allows a user to import music downloaded onto a PC or Mac. Elevation can play any file in a different key while preserving the tempo of the original recording, as well as allowing the user to record using any file in the library as an accompaniment.

More info: [superscope-technologies.com](http://superscope-technologies.com)



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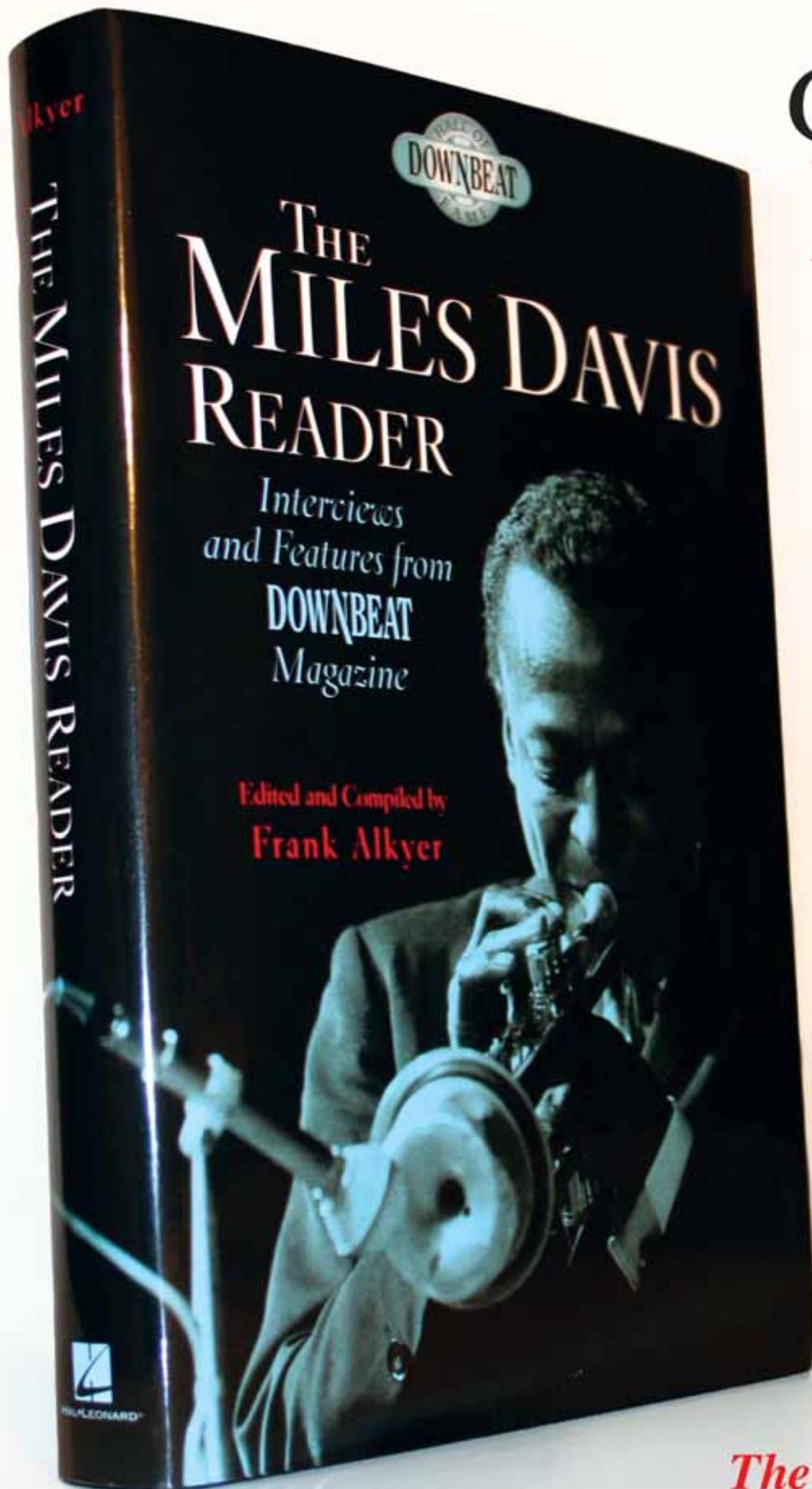


## 6» Portable POD

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More info: [line6.com](http://line6.com)





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# Tritones, Voice Leading Connect French Classical Music and Jazz

Classical music and jazz are often thought of as two vastly different approaches to composition and performance. Yet most musical masters know that improvisation takes place over structure, while structure opens doors to heightened improvisation. I once read that John Coltrane was instructed by one of his mentors to listen to classical music for inspiration. Coltrane’s “Giant Steps” incorporated a version of a similar chord progression as the one in the first movement of “Gaspard De La Nuit” by Maurice Ravel. Coltrane used major chords where Ravel used minor chords, and the melodic lines are different. But it still could be argued that Coltrane studied and possibly used techniques by the French composer.

My own musical training also combined classical music and jazz. Leo Budway, my father, played classical Arabic music laced with quarter tones and improvised melodic lines. Growing up in Pittsburgh, I used to sneak out of the house late at night to hear the Carl Arter Trio, the jazz pianist who taught saxophone to Stanley Turrentine. After I was mesmerized by Michael “Dodo” Marmarosa’s playing, he agreed to give me a private lesson. Marmarosa had me do what I always thought impossible, sight-read Ravel and Charles Griffes scores. I wish to return the favor of Marmarosa’s generosity with his time by showing how jazz musicians can analyze and extract lessons from French composer Olivier Messiaen’s techniques.

**Tritone Movement in Upper Registers**

The movement of the tritone has been a technique used frequently in jazz. Tritone means three whole tones. For example, a bass player may substitute a tritone before the root of a chord in a ii, V7, I progression (Example 1). Use this technique with simple minor triads in the right hand (treble), against consonant-sounding chords in the left hand based on I, VI, ii7, V7, I. The second inversion minor triad is used against the ii and V7 chords. Notice that the relationship between the root (bass) and treble (right hand) is also a tritone. For example, E-flat minor is played over A major.

The right hand also moves in tritones. This incredible dissonance is frequently found in Messiaen’s piano music. Follow pedal markings to achieve full sonority. The magnificence and beauty of nuance and sonority will be lost if played on an electric keyboard, as the overtone series does not exist on keyboards. So, to ensure that all sonorities and nuances are heard in their

**Example 1**

**Example 2**

**Example 3**

entirety, use an acoustic piano.

The chord of resolution contains an augmented 9th, flatted 9th and augmented 11th. Example 2 is the same progression using major triads. It also features a tritone relationship from the tonic and tritone movement in the right hand. The

major triads are in root position except against the ii and V7 chords, where the triads are in second inversion (Example 3). Try to alternate between major triads and minor triads in the right hand. Example 4 shows minor then major but you may also try major, then minor.

Example 4

Alternating minor and major triads in right hand

Example 5

Example 6

**Smooth Voice Leading Based on Diminished Scales**

The above examples are beautiful in sound and color, but notice the difference when alternating major and minor triads (root position and second inversion) with smoother voice leading. Example 5 offers a preparatory exercise. It may seem too frightening to play. Notice, however, that each separate voice descends in the diminished scale (half step, whole step, half step, whole step), a scale jazz artists frequently use. This exercise alternates between second inversion major and minor triads descending over the chord progression. Practice each hand separately. Notice that each second inversion triad in the left hand

proceeds the same inversion in the right hand. The right hand will play A major one beat after the left hand (Example 6).

Incorporating these classical music techniques with jazz has deepened my musical experience and allowed my personal voice to emerge. It has enhanced my playing in ways that I never imagined, and added new depths of color to my sound. **DB**



New York-based pianist David Budway has worked with Stanley Turrentine, Jeff "Tain" Watts and Hubert Laws. He can be contacted through his web site, davidbudway.com.

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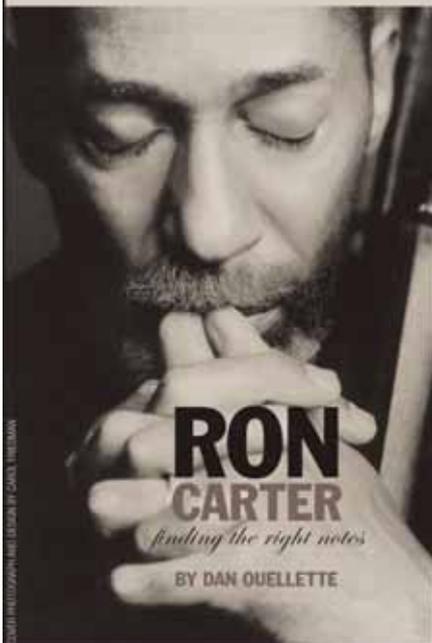
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**SOLO**  
by Jimi Durso

### Bill Frisell's Blues-Inflected Guitar Solo on 'Strange Meeting'

Guitarist Bill Frisell has recorded his composition "Strange Meeting" numerous times, starting with his *Rambler* album in 1984. This version, taken from 1994's *This Land*, features a horn section and a solo that draws heavily on Frisell's blues influences. It also showcases some of Frisell's other idiosyncrasies, including his highly individual use of the volume pedal to give the guitar a "breathy" sound. His first two choruses are transcribed here.

The chord progression is in C minor, with minor IV and dominant V chords, plus the major VI, all fitting cleanly in C minor. But two chords—D7 and A $\flat$ m13—include a prominent G $\flat$  (F#), the tritone of the key. Frisell incorpo-

rates this tone throughout his solo, against the D7/F# in measures 10 and 34, against the A $\flat$ m in measures 38, 61 and 62, and against the D7/G in measures 26 and 58. However, he also uses this note in other places, as in measure 11, where it makes the A $\flat$ maj7 sound like A $\flat$ 7.

At times, Frisell plays the flatted fifth within C-minor pentatonic licks, creating more of a Chicago blues sound, as in measures 16, 35–38 and 64. The high C held on top of these licks, in a "chicken picking" manner, makes this lick reminiscent of blues guitarist Buddy Guy. In measures 40–43, the high F is bent up, though not quite to an F#, a gesture that is also evocative of the blues.

Pentatonic licks also emerge in measures 14 and 62, but Frisell plays the A $\flat$  minor pentatonic to match the A $\flat$  minor chord, juxtaposing it against the C minor pentatonic that he used throughout so much of this improvisation. It's also effective when he plays the C minor pentatonic with the flatted fifth in measure 61, against the A $\flat$  minor harmony, and then switches to A $\flat$  minor pentatonic in the next measure, changing the scale he is using while the chord remains the same.

Another distinctive aspect of Frisell's sound is his use of harmonic seconds. He allows notes a half or whole step apart to ring simultaneously. Examples can be heard in measures 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 23, 27, 45, 51, 52 and 63. Often this occurs over the Cm chord, where Frisell uses the second and third together, creating a dissonance that helps define the harmony.

In measure 63 he plays the root and second together. By this time the listener is familiar with the minor sound, so the lack of a third does not disrupt the harmony, but instead reveals a new angle on it. On the A $\flat$ m, he also plays second and third together, creating the same texture against this harmony (measures 5 and 45).

Frisell uses the same second and third against the Fm chord in measure 53 and 57, but here he inverts the interval, making it a major seventh. He used this same interval back in measure 24, but in a much more dissonant fashion against the V chord.



Bill Frisell

HYOUWIEZ

ion against the V chord.

More evidence of Frisell's multigenre leanings comes in bars 46–48. The sharp chord hits on the backbeat, while the low notes hit on the strong beats. This creates a powerful

reggae vibe.

DB

Jimi Durso is a guitarist and bassist in the New York area. He can be reached at jimidurso.com.

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## Publishing Conundrum: To Keep or Not to Keep Your Rights



*Do you have a legal question that you'd like Alan Bergman to answer in DownBeat? E-mail it to him at [legalsession@downbeat.com](mailto:legalsession@downbeat.com)!*

Music publishing is the best part of the business. Once you have established a copyright, income from recordings, performances, print sales, international exploitation, commercials, film uses and digital sales all flow in without going on the road or into the studio. Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter's compositions will generate significant income long after their records have stopped selling.

Despite low sales and radio airplay, jazz is everywhere—in films, TV background and theme music, commercials, and live performances. Jazz videos and DVDs are released every day, as are re-releases of classic records in all sorts of new packages and configurations. All this will be repeated and expanded via digital delivery, in video games and even cell phone ringtones. Billy Taylor, Hancock, Ron Carter and Bob James all have had major commercials using their music.

If publishing rights to original compositions can be such a substantial and continuing asset, why do composers assign publishing rights to traditional publishers?

First, there is a long history of successful exploitation of jazz by publishers. Although Thelonious Monk's family has for the most part been able to retain rights to this valuable catalog, perhaps the most famous Monk composition, "Round Midnight," has been published from the beginning by the Warner Publishing companies, which added a lyric that helped broaden the popularity of this classic. "Autumn Leaves" took on a whole new earnings life when the publisher convinced Johnny Mercer to write his memorable lyrics to what was then a French instrumental. And no one can fault the success major publishing companies have had with the catalogs of Duke Ellington and Fats

Waller. Ellington often acknowledged that the money he received from his publishers was essential in supporting his band.

Another consideration for an artist to assign his or her publishing rights to a publisher is that sometimes a publisher pays an advance to acquire a copyright. A story exists (probably not true) about Waller selling "Ain't Misbehavin'" to three different publishers in the same day.

Also, even if you assign the copyright to a publisher, the writer remains entitled to a 50 percent writer's share. At one point, the No. 1 earner at ASCAP was Mercer, who wrote almost exclusively for Hollywood and owned no publishing rights to his most successful songs. Recently, the publisher will even agree to a co-publishing arrangement so that not only does the writer get the 50 percent writer's share, but also 50 percent of the publisher's share, which means the writer gets 75 percent of total income. That's been the norm in the pop world for decades, but it can be done in other genres when the composer has enough bargaining power.

Sometimes a record company will demand publishing rights. Of course, throughout the sometimes sordid early history of jazz in the record business (and in other genres as well) many important copyrights wound up in publishing companies owned by labels. Record companies have received a "back door" interest in publishing through the Controlled Compositions Clause in a recording contract, which requires that the artist/composer license his compositions to the label for 75 percent of the otherwise applicable statutory copyright royalty. This in effect saves the label 25 percent of the mechanical royalty it would otherwise have to pay the publisher, thus making the label a de

facto co-publisher at least as far as that label's record sales are concerned.

This language continues in present-day contracts, and usually only major pop artists with tremendous bargaining power can avoid it. As onerous as this language appears, at least the record company doesn't acquire an interest in the copyright itself, as was done in the early days of the business. My feeling is that when it comes to jazz, considering the functions a traditional music publisher normally performs, a jazz composer should retain the rights to his or her compositions.

The primary job of a publisher—to get the first recording—is usually done by the composer, who as the artist records his original composition. Subsequent recordings usually are by other musicians who have heard and enjoyed an album. It's hard to imagine a song-plugger—a song salesman—pitching jazz standards such as "Solar" or "Straight, No Chaser." However, many mainstream jazz albums feature at least one Monk or Miles Davis tune, even though a song-plugger didn't pitch these compositions to artists or producers.

Publisher advocates might claim that one strength of multinational publishers is their affiliates outside the United States. But in recent years, attorneys and managers representing jazz composers with catalogs of recorded compositions have made subpublishing deals—contractual arrangements with publishers in other countries, which often are the foreign affiliates of a major U.S. publisher. Subpublishers acquire rights for a limited term, usually three to five years. They often pay advances and they get no ownership. They register the catalogs with their local societies, collect all income and remit 75 percent or 80 percent to the original publisher.

The percentage split is better for subpublishers if they can obtain a local recording of a composition, and they may retain that composition for a few extra years.

Subpublishers also can perform an important function with regard to performance income. Live performance income can be substantial. Unlike the U.S., where 100 percent of performance income is based on airplay, which results in little for jazz composers and publishers, live performance venues in Europe—like festivals—pay substantial fees to the local performance rights society. The key to maximizing this income is for the composer/performer to fill out the logs, which are usually made available backstage at the show. The artist should carefully indicate which compositions are performed. No one checks whether the original compositions dutifully listed by the composer are actually the ones performed.

These logs are filed with the local society. A local subpublisher can add the follow-up necessary to make sure that the logs are received and properly tabulated at the local performing rights society. The writer's share of this income is remitted by the local society to ASCAP or BMI in the U.S. This helps to offset the fact that few jazz compositions get significant U.S. airplay. Composers with substantial foreign income are sometimes able to get an advance from BMI or an award from ASCAP.

Whichever way a writer chooses to go, the successful composition will increase in value and generate income over many years. The copyright term in the United States now continues for the life of the author plus 70 years for a post-1978 composition and 95 years for many earlier works. In addition to the traditional sources of mechanical and performing rights, the Internet is also developing into an alternative outlet for performances and sales of copies.

A composer or his or her heirs may want to sell a catalog that has become valuable. The price for music publishing catalogs will be determined by calculating the net annual income and multiplying that by a factor, which could be as high as 10 or more.

I once asked Billy Taylor how long it took him in 1964 to write his successful "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free." The answer was 15 minutes, including three choruses of lyrics. That composition has been recorded more than 100 times, has been in three major motion pictures and in 2004 was used in a global Coca-Cola commercial that was shown on "American Idol" and 20 times a day during the Olympics. That represents some good income, for which he did not have to go on the road or into the studio to receive. **DB**

Alan Bergman is a practicing attorney—and jazz drummer—in New York who has represented the likes of Ron Carter, Jack DeJohnette, Joe Lovano, Dreyfus Records, Billy Taylor and the Thelonious Monk estate. To contact him, go to [alanbergman.com](http://alanbergman.com).

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## Manhattan School of Music Devotes Weekend to Mingus

New York's Manhattan School of Music took on Charles Mingus' imposing legend for a symposium in February. The college's programs to honor the bassist will only get bigger in the future.

Sue Mingus and Justin DiCioccio, the Manhattan School's chair of the jazz arts program, envision a yearly Charles Mingus summit. Its Feb. 20–22 inaugural event included hosting jazz combos and big bands from across the Northeast. The school plans for national participation beginning next year. The first summit also included a keynote address by composer Gunther Schuller, panel discussions, and performances by the Manhattan School's Charles Mingus Jazz Ensemble and Jazz Orchestra, and the Mingus Dynasty Band. The first Charles Mingus High School Jazz Band Competition offered prizes for bands, arrangements and soloists.

Though widely recognized as one of the most important figures in jazz, Mingus has only recently been embraced by the jazz community at large. This symposium was a long time coming, according to Sue Mingus.

"There was a perception of Charles' music being difficult," Sue Mingus said. "He had such a powerful personality. He knew first and foremost he was a composer, even though he was a virtuoso bassist and bandleader. He knew that his music would live on."

"The music is open, there's a lot of risk taking," she continued. "That is what keeps the music so modern, because musicians need to bring their own voices. Charles wouldn't have wanted the music to be repeated in stone."

Two young musicians who have embraced Mingus' music include bassist Matt Dwonszyk, 18, and tenor saxophonist Nick Lippa, 17. Both brought fervor and skill to the Manhattan School of Music stage. Dwonszyk's Greater Hartford (Connecticut) Academy of the Arts Jazz Ensemble 3, directed by Kris Allen and Jimmy Greene, performed "Duke Ellington's Sound Of Love," "Pithecanthropus Erectus" and "O.P." Lippa's 29-member Gates Chili High School Jazz Ensemble (of Rochester, N.Y., directed by Christopher Oldfield) also performed "Sound Of Love," and tackled "Moanin'" and "Nostalgia In Times Square."

"We didn't use charts, so there was a lot to remember," Dwonszyk said. "The Mingus band never had charts, they did it all from memory. The songs weren't easy, like 'Duke Ellington's Sound Of Love,' which has some hard chord



Sue Mingus and Justin DiCioccio

BRIAN HATTON

changes. And Mingus was one of the most innovative bass players. He is my idol."

Lippa was so enthralled during his solo at the end of "Nostalgia In Times Square" that he jumped up and ran around in circles, blowing all the while.

"When I listen to Mingus I feel it going right through my body," Lippa said. "So we had to look alive. It was about capturing his spirit. If we're feeling his music like this then the audience will feel it too. It just takes you. That was the first time I had ever done something like that."

DiCioccio wasn't surprised at the high level of combo and big band performance.

"The level of playing today is astonishing," DiCioccio said. "A few years back they were good, but they didn't understand the depth of the music. Now, they're understanding. The teaching is getting better and the importance of listening to the masters is hitting home. The level of improvisation, time feel, swing and groove—it's unheard of in American society."

Sue Mingus added that the students at the symposium would have impressed a particularly sharp critic.

"I always tell the musicians who play his music that Charles would have fired everyone," she said. "But he would have been delighted to hear these young musicians performing his music."

—Ken Micallef

## School Notes



**Jazzschool Win:** The Berkeley, Calif.-based Jazzschool's Studio Bands A and B, both under Keith Johnson's direction, took first and third place respectively in the conglomerate big band division on April 5 at the Next Generation Festival in Monterey, Calif. The American Music Program of Portland, Ore., under Thara Memory's direction, took second place in that category.

Details: [montereyjazzfestival.org](http://montereyjazzfestival.org)

**Enterprising Coursework:** The Academy of Contemporary Music at the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond will open in August. It will be geared toward students who want to work in music production. The school will offer associates of applied science degrees in guitar, bass, drums and vocal performance, as well as production. Expanded courses of study and a four-year degree program will be offered beginning in 2011.

Details: [acm-uco.com](http://acm-uco.com)

**UNT Musical Chairs:** The University of North Texas in Denton has named John Murphy chair of its jazz division, Steve Wiest director of the One O'Clock Lab Band and Tim Brent director of vocal jazz.

Details: [unt.edu](http://unt.edu)

**Moody Winner:** Pianist Andrew Latham has received this year's James Moody Scholarship. Latham is a jazz studies major at Purchase College in New York.

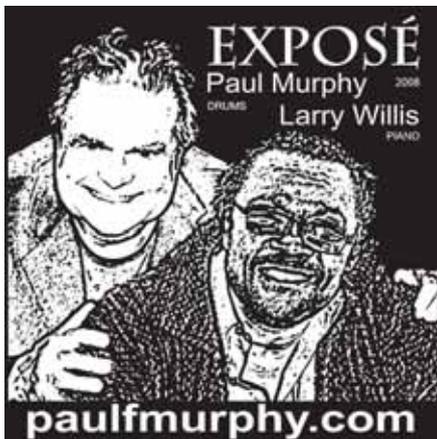
Details: [purchase.edu](http://purchase.edu)

**Crimson Beats:** Roy Haynes was honored as jazz master in residence at Harvard from April 15–19. Haynes attended rehearsals with students, appeared at an onstage interview and was the subject of a Harvard Jazz Band tribute concert.

Details: [harvard.edu](http://harvard.edu)

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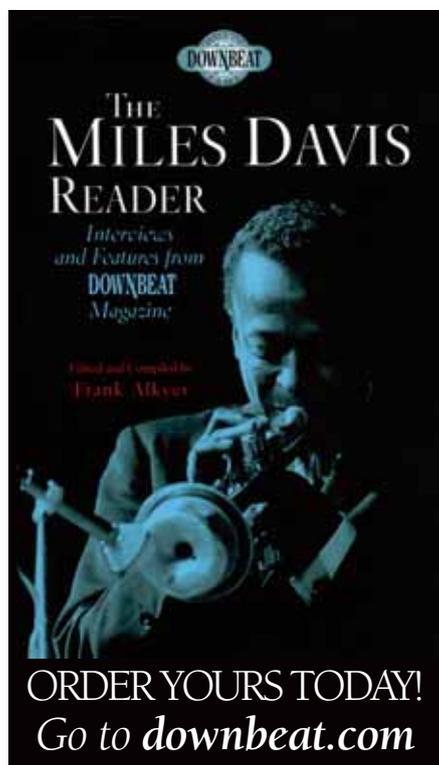
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Pianist Kenny Werner boasts more than two dozen leader dates, documenting his formidable skills on a series of solo, duo and trio recordings. His in-the-moment sensibility was on full display on his first “Blindfold Test.”

### Tigran Hamasyan

“Well, You Needn’t” (from *New Era*, Nocturne, 2008) Hamasyan, piano; François Moutin, bass; Louis Moutin, drums.

Ethan Iverson? Jason Moran? Danilo Pérez? Jason’s known for an impressive angularity and rhythm, so I thought of him. Ethan can play in any situation. Danilo doesn’t have to play like a player from a Latin country—at any time his interpretation can surprise you. Now that I’ve heard the blowing, I wouldn’t guess any of them. It’s well-played. I’d love to hear somebody do a Thelonious Monk record playing like Bill Evans, or do a Bill Evans record playing like Monk. 3 stars.

### Michael Weiss

“La Ventana” (from *Soul Journey*, Sintra, 2003) Weiss, piano; Steve Wilson, alto saxophone; Ryan Kisor, trumpet; Steve Davis, trombone; Paul Gill, bass; Joe Farnsworth, drums; Daniel Sadownick, percussion.

The writing is beautiful, a standard, Latin-influenced jazz front-line type of tune, what would often be the first tune on a CD. It’s number eight? I’m glad to be surprised. I think the pianist is American—he’s playing well, but I can’t identify him from the solo. The vocabulary crosses a bit of Chick Corea, a bit of bebop. It could be someone like Kenny Barron, who has all the different languages, and plays it seamlessly. I call this a good-soldier jazz tune—in the box, but a lovely tune in the box. 4 stars.

### Manuel Valera

“A La Interperie” (from *Vientos*, Anzic, 2007) Valera, piano; Joel Frahm, soprano saxophone; James Genus, bass; Ernesto Simpson, drums; Anat Cohen, clarinet; Anne Drummond, flute; Aaron Heick, oboe, English horn; Charles Pillow, bass clarinet; Michael Rabinowitz, bassoon.

A bit of piano soloing at the beginning, and the horns sound ghostly. That already has my attention. Five or six horns? Seven! I like the way the leader has them playing—a smooth sound. Let’s see if the composition holds the same interest. Sometimes the best part of a composition is the first 16 bars. (*during solo*) I’m afraid that I was right, the most interesting part was the first 16 bars or so. I can’t tell you anything distinctive about the soloing. The changes are pretty, vaguely modal. McCoy Tyner was what they called “modal” in the ’70s. This is coming out of a warmer modalism, with different chords, that came along in the ’80s. It’s doing what I thought it would do. 3 stars.

### Nik Bärtsch’s Ronin

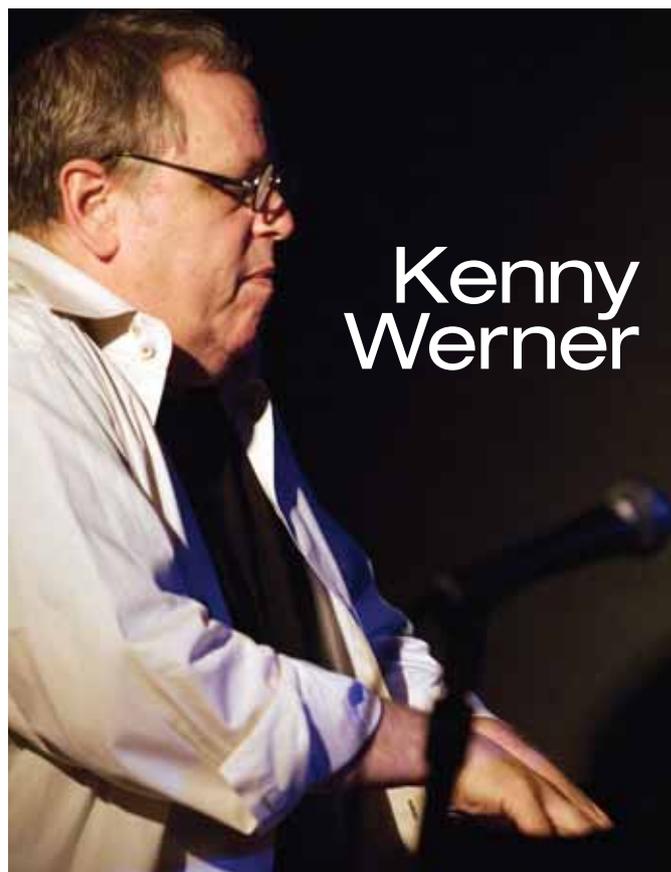
“Modul 42” (from *Holon*, ECM, 2008) Bärtsch, piano; Sha, alto saxophone; Björn Meyer, bass; Kaspar Rast, drums; Andi Pupato, percussion.

A dramatic start. I don’t know where this is going to go. It starts with a vacuum, which draws me in. We’re now two-and-a-half minutes into it, and it still hasn’t broken out of that mood and decayed into a jazz composition. Now the pianist is playing the same motif on the strings, but taking the sounds another level into, shall we say, the distempered clavier. The drummer has changed his approach. This isn’t a jazz trio. They’re playing music—it could be a movie soundtrack. There was no solo, which is profound in this period—solos are a myopic and narcissistic approach to jazz. 5 stars.

### Gonzalo Rubalcaba

“Looking In Retrospective” (from *Avatar*, Blue Note, 2008) Rubalcaba, piano; Yosvany Terry, alto saxophone; Michael Rodriguez, trumpet; Matt Brewer, bass; Marcus Gilmore, drums.

Paul Bley? It’s spacious. Again, this piece pays attention to dramatic



JACK VARTOGIAN/FROM TROWPHOTOS

effect. Oh, that was an intro—the drums just hit. I never would have expected that. It’s well played, still in the head. Now, it has that jazz tune feeling, but I need to listen a lot longer to figure out the rhythmic component. The composition is excellent. The intro is done, and now they’re playing out, which is a surprise. This solo now is far-out. There’s enough surprise that I haven’t figured it out and moved on. 5 stars.

### Taylor Eigsti

“Fever Pitch” (from *Let It Come To You*, Concord Jazz, 2008) Eigsti, piano; Edmar Castaneda, harp; Julian Lage, guitar; Reuben Rogers, bass; Eric Harland, drums.

There are a few astounding young Cuban players on the scene. I couldn’t tell you which one this is. Some guys have a Latin vernacular, but their harmony is more developed than it was back in the day. It’s not a Cuban? Well, so much for that. I cannot tell who this is. The playing is brilliant. The harp he’s playing with is a surprising sound. They’re improvising freely, but with a great rhythm. 5 stars.

### E.S.T.

“Tuesday Wonderland” (from *Tuesday Wonderland*, EmArcy, 2006) Esbjörn Svensson, piano, keyboards; Dan Berglund, bass; Magnus Öström, drums.

Geoff Keezer. No? It’s someone with beautiful technique, strong time. He’s playing a bass thing in the left hand and playing over it in the right hand, which is impressive. He introduced some electronics, which I wasn’t expecting. His attack made me think I was going to hear something chop-busting. It’s not quite that, but well-played. On a lot of jazz records, people go for some mystery in the intro, but don’t follow up. 3½ stars. **DB**

The “Blindfold Test” is a listening test that challenges the featured artist to discuss and identify the music and musicians who performed on selected recordings. The artist is then asked to rate each tune using a 5-star system. No information is given to the artist prior to the test.

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