

65TH ANNUAL CRITICS POLL

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Jazz, Blues & Beyond

HALL OF FAME

Don Cherry
Herbie Nichols
George Gershwin
Eubie Blake

4 WINS FOR MARY HALVORSON

RISING STARS

Kris Davis
Noah Preminger
Jen Shyu
Becca Stevens

WADADA LEO SMITH

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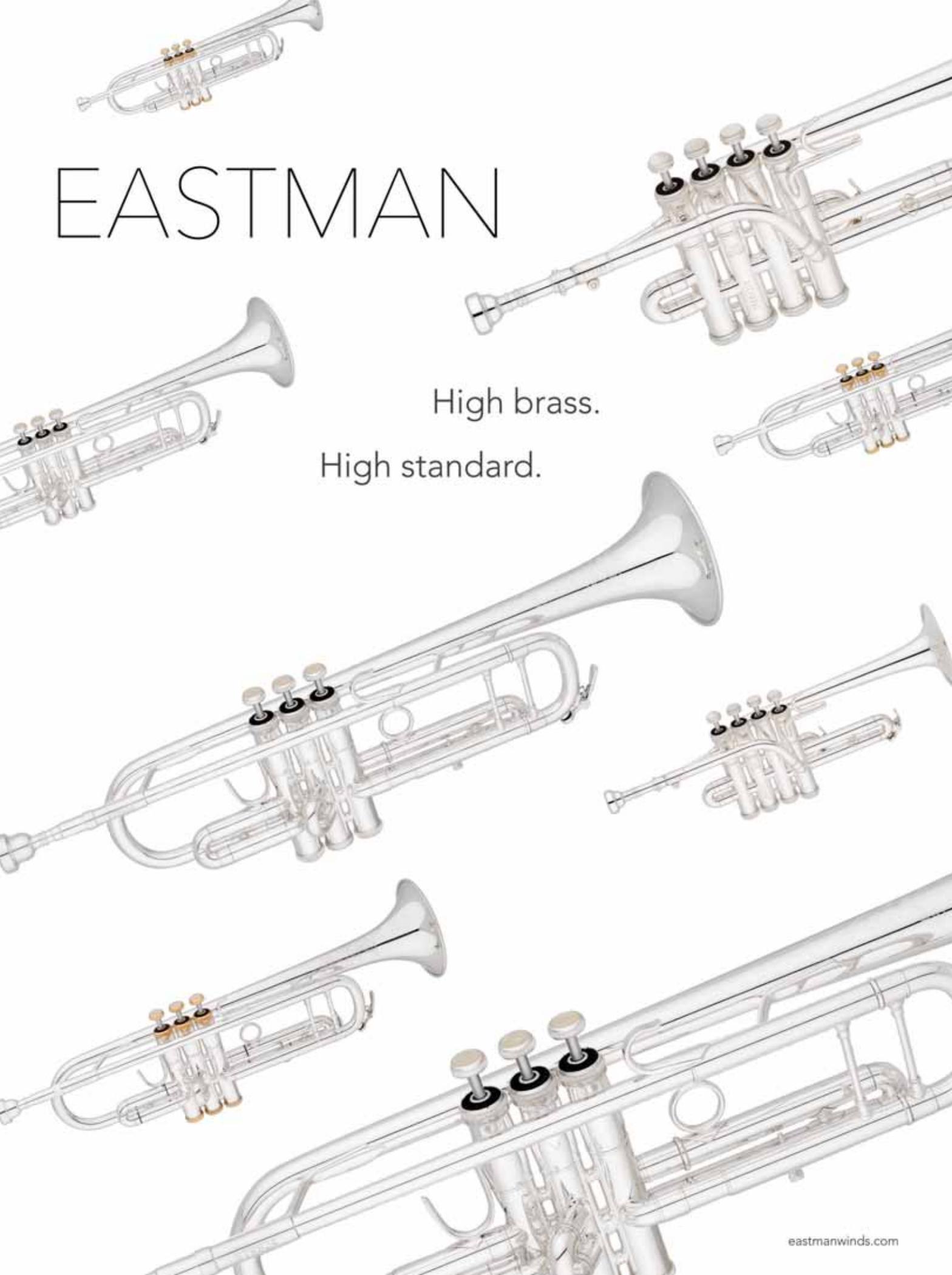
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AUGUST 2017

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Jazz Artist, Jazz Album, Trumpet

BY TED PANKEN

Smith has reached a new peak in his career, topping three categories in the DownBeat Critics Poll: Jazz Artist, Jazz Album (for *America's National Parks*) and Trumpet.



Maria Schneider (foreground, left) conducts her namesake orchestra, which topped the Big Band category in the 2017 DownBeat Critics Poll.

Cover photo of Wadada Leo Smith shot by Michael Jackson in Los Angeles.

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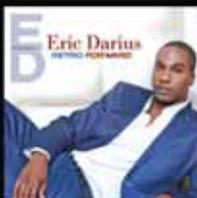
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DownBeat Hall of Famer Herbie Nichols in May 1955

Deserving Honorees

SOMETHING GREAT FINALLY HAPPENED TO Herbie Nichols. The pianist has been inducted into the DownBeat Hall of Fame, more than 50 years after his death from leukemia at the all-too-young age of 44.

Nichols' induction—which is all the more impressive when one considers his relatively scant discography—provides us with an opportunity to highlight the important work done by our Veterans Committee (see the names with asterisks on page 64). This esteemed group of journalists and scholars annually evaluates the careers of artists who, for a variety of reasons, are very unlikely to be voted into the DownBeat Hall of Fame via the Critics Poll or the Readers Poll. Artists who receive votes from at least 66 percent of the committee members gain induction.

This year, we welcome four fabulous inductees into the Hall of Fame: trumpeter and world-music pioneer Don Cherry (elected via the Critics Poll) and three towering figures elected by the Veterans Committee: composer George Gershwin, pianist Eubie Blake and Nichols, who recorded sessions for Blue Note and Bethlehem in the mid-1950s.

Many casual jazz fans nowadays are unfamiliar with Nichols. His entry in *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Jazz* (edited by Leonard Feather and Ira Gitler) contains this memorable sentence: "Nichols died after an erratic career, plagued by bad luck and obscure groups." In James Hale's essay on page 36, Mark Miller (Nichols' biographer) said, "It's almost like Herbie was always

the wrong person at the wrong time," and pianist Frank Kimbrough described Nichols as an artist who's "famous for being unknown."

Now Nichols is enshrined in the Hall of Fame alongside Art Blakey and Max Roach (with whom he recorded) and Thelonious Monk (to whom he is sometimes compared). We hope that his induction will encourage readers to check out his incredible music, which we will feature in our DownBeat playlists at Apple Music during the month of July.

It's always a thrill to announce the new inductees in the Hall of Fame, but the primary purpose of the Critics Poll is to shine a spotlight on the greatest musicians working today. According to our voters, a significant percentage of these elite musicians are women. We have 63 categories in the Critics Poll, and there were female winners in 21 categories this year, including Mary Halvorson, Jane Ira Bloom, Maria Schneider, Anat Cohen, Regina Carter, Kris Davis, Akua Dixon and Esperanza Spalding—all artists who are making some of the most exciting and challenging music of this century.

In this year's poll, we had a rare tie in the category Rising Star—Female Vocalist, with Jen Shyu and Becca Stevens receiving the same number of votes. We're proud to present profiles of Shyu and Stevens on pages 52–53.

Whether you're ecstatic or disappointed in our Critics Poll results, we want to hear from you. Email us at editor@downbeat.com or find us on Facebook and Twitter. Thanks. **DB**



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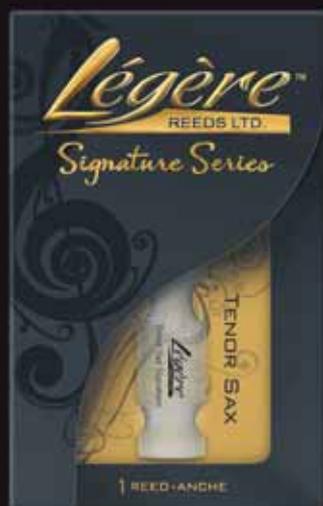
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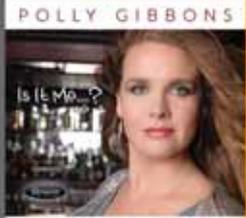


Historical Album of the Year!
65th Annual DownBeat Critics Poll



#1
BILL EVANS
*Some Other Time:
The Lost Session
from the Black Forest*

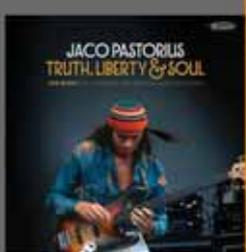
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(1966)*



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Chords & Discords

Vibrant Vibes

Thank you to DownBeat for publishing Kirk Silsbee's entertaining interview with vibraphonist Terry Gibbs in the July issue. As a fan, I admire Terry's candid comments about retiring. As with all great musicians, the urge to make one more album is inherent.

That was the case with *92 Years Young: Jammin' At The Gibbs House*. Gibbs is a stellar performer who has "been there, done that" with some of the biggest stars of the big band era but still has that "drive to strive."

The interview was short and sweet and that's what I really liked about Silsbee's approach. Welcome back, Terry Gibbs, if even for just "one more time!"

HERB STARK
MOORESVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

More Good Vibes

Thanks so much for the update on Terry Gibbs in the July issue ("Terry Gibbs Returns with Homemade Recording"). The vibraphonist is "92 Years Young," indeed. Now, how about an update on vocalist Jon Hendricks (who was born in 1921)?

DENNIS HENDLEY
MILWAUKEE



REBEKAH GIBBS

Terry Gibbs



Eddie Daniels

KURT BARCLAY

Anat, Eddie, Peps and Paquito were featured together at the 2015 Detroit Jazz Festival.

CHUCK CURRIE
VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Not To Mention Eddie

As a clarinetist and DownBeat reader, I want to thank you very much for your article celebrating Anat Cohen and the clarinet in jazz ("Perfect Accent," July). It was wonderful to see references to players Ken Peplowski, Don Byron, Marty Ehrlich and particularly Paquito D'Rivera, criminally overlooked for so long in readers' and critics' polls—not only on clarinet but especially on saxophone.

Speaking of "criminally overlooked," the article failed to mention Eddie Daniels, who defied Thad Jones and pulled out the black stick for a solo on the album *Live At The Village Vanguard* by the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra. Eddie subsequently topped the Clarinet category for Talent Deserving of Wider Recognition in the 1968 DownBeat Critics Poll. Decades later, his recording of "Thad Said No" with Gordon Goodwin's Big Phat Band (on its 2003 album *XXL*) is a delicious poke at Thad's disdain for the clarinet, the only blemish on our memory of this iconic composer/arranger.

It is even more ironic and maddening that Eddie wasn't mentioned in the article because

African Deity

While I enjoyed the profile of guitarist Miles Okazaki in the June issue, I want to point out an incorrect reference in it. Journalist Bill Milkowski refers to an African deity called "Esau." The correct deity is Esu. Esu is the trickster deity/Orisa (or owner of the crossroads) from the Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria. I think that is whom Mr. Milkowski meant to reference. (I am an avid jazz fan, a DownBeat reader and an African historian.)

OGUNBEMI WHITE
OGUN.IFA@YAHOO.COM

Correction

- In the July issue, the interview with Terry Gibbs misspelled the name of Whaling City Sound founder Neal Weiss.
- In the Beat section of the July issue, an article about the April 26 concert at Jazz at Lincoln Center incorrectly referred to the drummer Kenny Washington instead of the singer named Kenny Washington.

DOWNBEAT REGRETS THE ERRORS.

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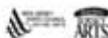


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Beat

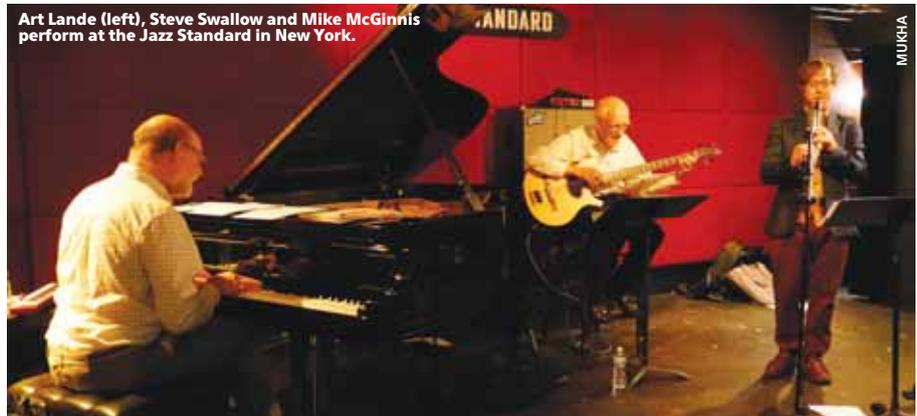
McGinnis Crafts 'Dream' Project

Dreams are funny things. Sometimes they drift away in surreal wisps of wistful thinking, but in other circumstances, their slender traces congeal into clarity and inform the future, so much so that they become a waking actuality.

The latter was the case with 44-year-old clarinetist/saxophonist Mike McGinnis, whose 10-year fantasy of recording a trio outing with two of his jazz heroes—pianist Art Lande and electric bassist Steve Swallow—became a striking reality. Based on a rehearsal, two days of gigging at Ibeam Brooklyn and a full day recording at Systems Two Recording Studios in Brooklyn, McGinnis and his crew came up with a lyrical, whimsical album with unexpected twists, appropriately titled *Recurring Dream* (Sunnyside). In addition to improvised pieces, there are originals by all three members.

Over a hot cup at Joe's Art of Coffee off Union Square, McGinnis marveled at "how easy it was" to craft brilliant music during the recording sessions. He laughed when recalling the magic he experienced with Swallow and Lande, both of whom he's had musical relationships with over the past decade-plus. "There I was, putting a lot on the line," he said. "And I was wondering, 'Am I going to be good enough to play with these two guys?' But from the first note, I realized that it was sounding like what I had been hearing in my head for 10 years."

The Maine-born and Brooklyn-based McGinnis talks like he plays: spirited, buoyant and tastefully billowing. His tale of linking up with the septuagenarians—the Boulder, Colorado-based Lande is 70, and the upstate New Yorker Swallow is 76—is a remarkable story of being in the right place at the right time with eager teachers. McGinnis said, "They were cheerleaders all the way through."



Art Lande (left), Steve Swallow and Mike McGinnis perform at the Jazz Standard in New York.

When he first came to New York in 1999 after a stint of studying classical saxophone at Eastman College of Music, McGinnis moved into a house in Astoria, Queens, where Ravi Coltrane was spreading his wings in a series of jams with the likes of Steve Coleman and Jason Moran, and starting his own label, RKM Music. McGinnis, with his group Between Green, recorded the imprint's first disc, *Tangents*, in 2000. From contacts at Eastman, McGinnis began to immerse himself in Lande's music. A few years later he got to meet him when they jammed together at a wedding. They later reconvened at an upstate New York artists' retreat.

Meanwhile, a friend at public radio station WNYC, program host David Garland, recommended that McGinnis explore clarinet through the lens of Jimmy Giuffre, whose classic early '60s trio featured Swallow. A few years later, he was playing alongside the bassist when saxophonist Ohad Talmor arranged Swallow compositions for a chamber ensemble that toured Europe for 10 days.

During the course of his budding friendships with Lande and Swallow, McGinnis came

to realize that the two musicians had played in a jazz-rock band in San Francisco in the 1970s. The chemistry proved to still be strong after four decades. "Mike was really the catalyst for us getting back together," Swallow explained. "It was a good idea. This trio works extremely well. Mike and Art are both completely at ease with the asymmetry of time signatures."

McGinnis picked the tunes for *Recurring Dream*, studying the compositions of Lande and Swallow. "I'm glad Mike chose 'Bend Over Backwards' because it's clarinet-friendly, so that he can do the interval leaps," said Swallow.

The trio, which drew a full house to the Jazz Standard in April, has a promising future, especially given that McGinnis still has music in the can. He has 30 minutes of free improvisation that opened the recording session and another album's worth of music not included on the eight-song disc. "The whole project taking place was like a marathon for me," he said. "I was in the best shape when we went into the studio and I had so much fun. In the studio we did 14 compositions, so we've got a lot more to reveal."

—Dan Ouellette



Robert Gasper

MATHIEU BITTON

Soulful Supergroup: The collaborative band The Pollyseeds will release its debut, *Sounds Of Crenshaw Vol. 1 (Ropeadope)*, on July 14. Terrace Martin founded the group, and his collaborators include Kamasi Washington, Robert "Sput" Searight, Rose Gold, Craig Brockman, Wyann Vaughn, Chachi, Adam Turchin, Trevor Lawrence, Marlon Williams and Robert Gasper, who topped the Keyboard category in the 2017 DownBeat Critics Poll. Describing the project, Gasper said, "To honestly express yourself at a high level while paying homage, yet being current and innovating ... is The Pollyseeds." **More info:** ropeadope.com

Unique Bird: Impulse/Verve has released *The Passion Of Charlie Parker*, an album for which producer Larry Klein partnered with lyricist David Baerwald to create a musical play that tells the story of Bird's life. Tracks include "Every Little Thing" (a vocal version of "Bloomdido") sung by Luciana Souza, "Los Angeles" (a version of "Moose The Mooche") sung by Kurt Elling and "The King Of 52nd Street" (a version of "Scrappple From The Apple") sung by Melody Gardot. Other contributors include Gregory Porter, Madeleine Peyroux, Kandace Springs, Camille Bertault, Barbara Hannigan, Donny McCaslin, Ben Monder, Mark Guiliana, Craig Taborn, Larry Grenadier, Scott Colley, Eric Harland and actor Jeffrey Wright, who portrays Parker on three tracks.

More info: larrykleinmusic.com

Final Bar: Drummer **Mickey Roker**, who was revered throughout the jazz world, especially in Philadelphia, died May 22. He was 84. Roker performed with Dizzy Gillespie, Duke Pearson, Sonny Rollins, Freddie Hubbard, Lee Morgan, the Modern Jazz Quartet and many others. ... Blues drummer **Casey Jones**, who worked with Muddy Waters, Willie Dixon, Albert Collins, Robert Cray and Otis Rush, died May 3 at age 77. He had suffered from prostate cancer. ... Vocalist, keyboardist and songwriter **Gregg Allman**, a founding member of The Allman Brothers Band, died May 27 of complications from liver cancer. He was 69.

FIMAV Covers Multiple Angles, with Solo Braxton on Top

FIMAV, THE MUCH-ADMIRED SPRING FESTIVAL in Victoriaville, Quebec, belongs squarely in the growing family of premier international jazz festivals. Having its 33rd festival in May, it also contends for the badge of veteran jazz festival. But jazz is just one of the ingredients on the menu of this fest, founded and still run by Michel Levesseur. This year's edition, which ran May 18–21, found some of us basking in the rough beauties and innovative edges of the music.

The jazz muse came crashing in on the final stretch of the fest, in the form of Nels Cline's fascinating new quartet, featuring guitar ally Julian Lage and the rhythm section of bassist Scott Colley and free-thinking drummer Tom Rainey. Cline's intriguing material—and covers by Paul Motian and Carla Bley—asserted an inviting new/old guitar jazz aesthetic.

Other highlights of the 2017 FIMAV (aka Festival International de Musique Actuelle de Victoriaville) included inspired sets in a new venue, Église Saint-Christophe D'Arthabaska, by inventive and genre-defying tenor saxophone quartet Battle Trance and French organist Jean-Luc Guionnet—reworking the pipe organ tradition and unearthing fresh sounds and functions from a glorious instrument of antiquity. Other moments to remember: the rough-hewn Quebecois guitar wonder René Lussier with his rocking Quintette, a pleasing father-son dialogue with Terry and Gyan Riley, and engaging field reports via the German/Mongolian partnership of Gunda Gottschalk, Ute Völker and a resplendent group of folkloric singers led by Badamkhorol Samdandamba.

In the well-represented field of large ensembles this year, the options ranged from guitarist-composer Tim Brady's rock-minimalist-chamber group Grand Ensemble to the debut appearance by Nate Wooley, whose "Seven Story Mountain V" showcased a musical aggregate including two vibraphones, strings, contrabass clarinet, tuba and two drummers.

Saxophonist Colin Stetson, one of the festival's unofficial artists-in-residence, appeared as a member of Wooley's band and with the rock band Ex Eye. On his own, Stetson, a recent and rising hero in experimental jazz, opened his own show with a hypnotic solo improvisation on his bass saxophone. But then he upped the ante and the stage population with a large ensemble, including his sister, mezzo-soprano Megan Stetson, performing "Sorrow," a surprisingly effective and poignant reworking of Henryk Górecki's Symphony No. 3.

And then there was one Anthony Braxton, with his massive presence and precedent. Braxton has matriculated through FIMAV's history,



Anthony Braxton performs at FIMAV in Victoriaville, Quebec, on May 21.

FIMAV 2017 © MARTIN MORISSETTE

releasing several titles on the festival's Victo label, being game for sometimes bizarre match-making. He has also worked in larger settings, as in his hyper-ambitious *Trillium* opera project, and his fondly remembered whirligigging retrospective project with a vast band of young players, *Echo Echo Mirror House* (released on Victo in 2013). Even in solo shows, he has often brought a generous contingent from the saxophone family to the stage with him.

In the case of his 2017 FIMAV visit, the more-than-vibrant elder statesman showed his might in the leanest of means, armed with only his alto saxophone and a head full of ideas, packed into a multi-module, 75-minute display. The bespectacled Braxton approached his performance with a delicate but assured balance of improvisatory abandon and self-guiding logic.

As if channeling spirits from his 50-plus years in music, he divided up the time between relatively short pieces honing in on specific musical concepts or gestures. A mellifluous opening piece was followed by a fast and feverish flurry with melodic asides. A piece based on rising and falling cascades of notes, yielding to impressionistic airs, was followed by "tunes" rooted in bouncing intervals, pure abstraction, a bona fide ballad and a brief encounter with the implied changes of "Body And Soul." Toward the end, a short, fast one, deftly interspersed with glowing long tones, recalled the fast-slow/bebop epiphany of "Cherokee."

In Victoriaville, Braxton unveiled a vast but measured and mature volley of musical content, clearly of the jazz variety in the specific and symbolic sense. He was right at home.

—Josef Woodard



Vocalist Seiko Matsuda is a major star in Japan.

Matsuda Embraces Challenge

IN FEBRUARY VOCALIST SEIKO MATSUDA visited her good friend Quincy Jones at the legendary musician/producer's home in Los Angeles. She wanted to share with him her new album. Matsuda's 24 consecutive No. 1 hit singles on Japan's all-important Oricon singles chart and record sales totaling 30 million make her an iconic figure in her country, where she is known as the "Eternal Idol." Now she has released *Seiko Jazz* (Verve), her first exploration of the genre.

"I didn't tell Quincy anything about it," recalled Matsuda, 55, during an interview at New York's Standard Grill. "I just said, 'I have a surprise for you.' I played him the music and he was very shocked that I wanted to sing jazz. He listened to the album. He sang along with my songs. Quincy said, 'This is great!' That was special for me."

Matsuda didn't cut her first track until she was 19, with the song "Hadashi no Kisetu" ("Season Of Bare Feet"). She went on to shatter many Japanese pop chart records: most chart-topping hits by a female singer, most Top 10 albums by a singer (44) and first vocalist to simultaneously debut an album and its single at No. 1. In addition, she has won numerous awards for her work as an actress on TV and in films.

"I have been singing pop songs for a long time," Matsuda said. "But I would like to do something different. I have been fascinated by jazz and knowing that, I wished to sing jazz music someday. That time is now."

Apart from performing with Jones at his 2011 "Quincy Jones and the Global Gumbo All-Stars" concert in Los Angeles and singing with Bob James at the Tokyo Jazz Festival, Matsuda had never sung standards in a club or improvised with jazz musicians before *Seiko Jazz*. But with David Matthews covering piano and arrangements for her New York recording sessions, which included members of Matthews' Manhattan Jazz Orchestra, Matsuda felt she was ready.

"Jazz is different from pop music," she said. "It's very free and comforting."

How did Matsuda master the swing feeling inherent in jazz?

"It's a very natural thing for me," she responded. "I just let it happen. The musicians played my tracks and they were wonderful. Listening to them makes it very easy to sing. And fun to swing."

While the instrumental tracks were cut in New York, Matsuda added her vocals back in Japan.

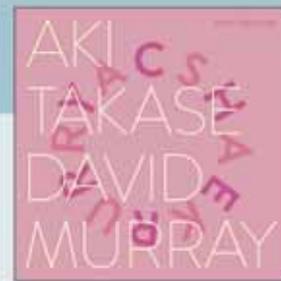
A heavily orchestrated version of "Smile" with a gutsy vocal performance opens *Seiko Jazz*. A saccharine take on "The Way We Were" is an early setback; the blissful bossa nova lilt of "The Girl From Ipanema" is a much better fit, with Matthews' exquisite arrangement circling Matsuda like Brazilian doves. "Close To You" exposes Matsuda's fragile English. That she would even attempt Jorge Ben Jor's mighty "Mas Que Nada" is surprising, but Matsuda absolutely nails it, recalling Bebel Gilberto (or perhaps Monday Michiru). "Corcovado" is another standout, as is a passionate reading of "The Look Of Love."

Though *Seiko Jazz* primarily consists of Great American Songbook and Brazilian repertoire, Matsuda's inclusion of such fodder as "The Way We Were" and "Close To You" highlights this versatile artist's pop roots.

"I love those songs!" Matsuda exclaimed. "It was hard to be happy with 'Close To You'; it's difficult to sing as a jazz song. David Matthews arranged it for jazz playing, and the tempo is very slow. That tempo is really hard to sing. It was a challenge. And 'Mas Que Nada' was hard, too. It's not in English—it's in Portuguese. But I love the song and the challenge."

Matsuda has no plans to play the Blue Note or the Village Vanguard any time soon. Still, she hopes that U.S. audiences will seek out *Seiko Jazz*.

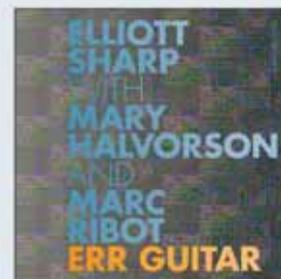
"People might think, 'How can a Japanese girl sing jazz music?' But I breathe music. Music is the universal language. So if it's a great song with a great vocal, great playing, it doesn't matter who I am—hopefully they will like it." —Ken Micallef



AKI TAKASE – DAVID MURRAY CHERRY – SAKURA
Aki Takase: Piano · David Murray: Tenor Saxophone, Bass Clarinet



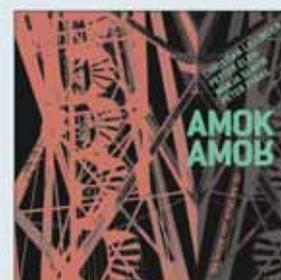
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Copeland Taps Cosmic Vibes for Aardvarks' Disc

BRYAN AND THE AARDVARKS' SECOND album, *Sounds From The Deep Field* (Biophilia Records), is a suite of calmly interconnected compositions that hover, quake and soar. Propelled by dreamy melodies often doubled by Camila Meza's wordless vocals, the music conveys a sense of tranquility and movement. The album is a prog-jazz travelogue for intellectual fantasists, a dream suite fired by immersive performances and glistening sounds.

Bassist and bandleader Bryan Copeland wrote the album's 10 compositions during a period of creative inspiration, utilizing Logic Pro X and Finale software, which upped his productive ante in spades.

"I am not a good keyboard player, but Logic Pro made it a lot easier to compose long pieces," Copeland said. "I got so into it, I was at the keyboard 16 hours a day for a month straight. The music lent itself to blending seamlessly, though it wasn't my intention to write a suite."

Ethereal yet riveting album tracks such as "Eagle Nebula," "Tiny Skull Sized Kingdom," "Soon I'll Be Leaving This World" and "To



Bassist Bryan Copeland unfolds the unique packaging he designed for his band's new album, *Sounds From The Deep Field*.

Gaze Out The Cupola Module" provide an ideal soundtrack for twilight stargazing.

"The album began when my wife and I saw the enormous sequoias in the redwood forest," Copeland recalled. "I was mesmerized. Our lives are a blink in time compared to a redwood's life span. After we got home I read an article about the Hubble Deep Field. They pointed the Hubble Telescope at the emptiest part of the Ursa Major constellation for 10 days.

When they opened the image they found over 3,000 galaxies. When you see them from a distance, the galaxies have a red, streaky quality. Based on the red [colors], they determined that some of the galaxies are 13 billion light years away from Earth. That tied back to the trees on an infinitely grander level. That gave me this burst of inspiration."

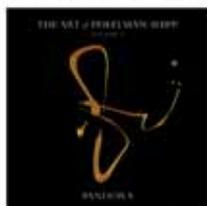
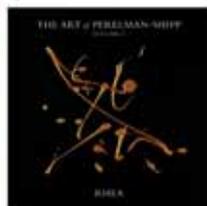
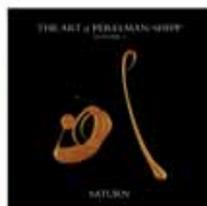
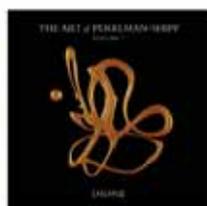
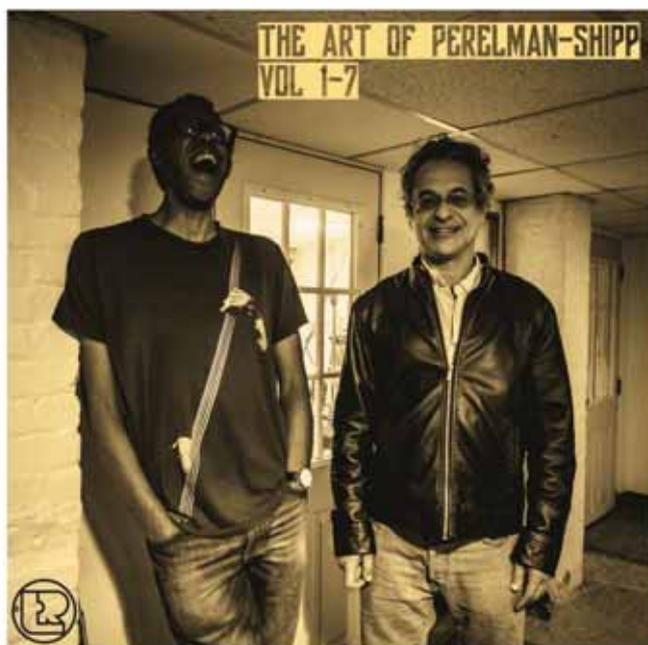
In addition to Meza, Copeland is joined on the album by the five other musicians in the current Aardvarks lineup: Dayna Stephens (electric wind instrument), Jesse Lewis (guitar), Fabian Almazan (piano), Chris Dingman (vibraphone) and Joe Nero (drums). When the group recently performed at New York's Jazz Gallery—with David Binney playing saxophone—the music took on a more exploratory, harder tone and reveled in a funkier, Headhunters-worthy vibe.

"I'm not a fusion head," Copeland said, "but I like Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew* and the Headhunters and Wayne Shorter's music. [Shorter's 1974 album] *Native Dancer* is a huge influence on my composing."

Pair those iconic albums to his fondness for Vangelis' score to *Blade Runner* and Jerry Goldsmith's soundtrack to the original *Alien* film, and Copeland's soaring space odysseys make perfect sense. But this 40-year-old Texas native is also a product of "big sky" country. You could say that his love of outer space is just as captivating as his amazement at the natural elements of our planet.

"I had this existential awakening after seeing the sequoias," Copeland said. "Some of the trees have lived over 3,000 years. I began thinking about our life span. At best we have 100. Our lives are like a day compared to theirs. But if you step back and put things in perspective, it can be very humbling. You realize we're a small part of this enormous universe."

—Ken Micallef



Russell 'Dazzles' in Denver

JAZZ VOCALIST CATHERINE RUSSELL recently helped Denver's premier jazz venue, Dazzle, celebrate the opening of its new location. At the end of May, the club concluded its performances at the old location, then moved two miles up the road to a spot in the heart of downtown, changing the venue's name to Dazzle at Baur's.

The first weekend of June, Dazzle at Baur's opened its doors and hosted performances by trance-blues master Otis Taylor as well as Russell. Over the past 11 years, Russell (who, in her career as a backup singer, spent the early 2000s with David Bowie) has released six leader albums, including her Grammy-nominated 2016 disc, *Harlem On My Mind* (Jazz Village). During her 75-minute set on June 3, Russell drew heavily from *Harlem* and offered tunes that appeared on three of her earlier discs.

After her gifted backing trio (pianist Mark Shane, bassist Tal Ronen and guitarist/musical director Matt Munisteri) played a straight-ahead version of "Love Me Or Leave Me" to open the set, Russell launched into "Let The Good Times Roll," and that's exactly what continued to occur. Russell used her acting training to draw her audience in, exuding a type of quietly coiled energy that was hard to resist.

The singer nodded to many of her influences, with a swinging tribute to Billie Holiday ("Swing! Brother, Swing!"), a blues-based bow to Dinah Washington ("Let Me Be The First To Know") and a bit of the Nat "King" Cole Trio ("I'm An Errand Boy For Rhythm"). Russell also injected some humor, offering a frisky, risqué romp through the 1924 tune "You've Got The Right Key, But The Wrong Keyhole."

All of the tunes ran in the three-to-five-minute range, and the solos were compact. The crowd responded with an enthusiastic, standing ovation. At this point in her career, Russell seems content not to push the envelope, but to deliver her music with honesty and authenticity.

Dazzle at Baur's is situated in a bustling area, one block from the multiple theaters in the Denver Center for the Performing Arts and two blocks from the city's Convention Center. The final reconfiguration of the performance space, which is considerably larger than that of the old club, was still in the works on opening weekend.

Dazzle owner Donald Rossa had been looking for a new spot for years. Musicians and audience members deeply appreciated the vibe at old location, but after almost 20 years, a move seemed almost inevitable. "The club needed extensive refurbishing," Rossa explained, "which meant that it would have to close down for a considerable period of time. And that meant it would probably go out of business."

For Rossa, the move to 1512 Curtis St., in the historic Baur's Building (named for the confectionary company that long occupied the space), is a way for the club to "take things to the next level."

During July, the venue will present shows by numerous world-class artists, including the Charles McPherson Quintet (July 11-12), the Manuel Valera Trio (July 13), the Pat Martino Trio (July 15-16) and the Christian Sands Trio (July 26).
—Norman Provizer



Tal Ronen (left), Catherine Russell and Matt Munisteri perform at Dazzle at Baur's on June 3.

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Michael Ehlers founded Eremite Records in 1995.

Eremite Preserves Past, Shapes Future of Free-Jazz

Michael Ehlers had spent more than a decade passionately supporting free-jazz—running a concert series, programming a festival, booking tours and heading a prolific record label—when he realized he was tired of the grind. His imprint, Eremite Records, had provided a valuable home for many veterans of spontaneous music-making, with a top-notch roster that included saxophonists like Fred Anderson, Jemeel Moondoc and Glenn Spearman, bassist William Parker, trumpeter Raphe Malik, drummers Sunny Murray and Denis Charles and many more. After stepping away from the business for a while, he quietly revamped the operation in 2008 when he reissued two overlooked free-jazz gems from the 1960s—*Big Chief* by Murray and *Red, Black And Green* by Solidarity Unit, Inc.—in vinyl editions.

"By the mid-2000s the viability of the CD was waning, but mostly I was just burnt," Ehlers said. As much as he loved the dozens of compact discs he released previously, he never cared much for the format, so after a pause he decided to run the business to satisfy his own interests and aesthetic principles. "It felt like as good a time as any to shift into projects that would better reflect my interests in 'arty' production and presentation methods, and to move it all into vinyl."

Ehlers, who has worked frequently with the German saxophonist Peter Brötzmann, had already been operating the reedist's own Brö imprint with vinyl releases, but in 2008 he went full bore. He continues to produce dazzling reissues—earlier this year he released a gorgeous edition of the impossibly rare 1969 private press album *Unity* by Byron

Morris and Gerald Wise—but Ehlers has invested most of his energy into working with a small coterie of living artists.

"I love a good reissue as much as the next guy, but I find the focus on reissues in indie and underground record circles rather problematic. Emerging artists need investment from labels. At the same time, artists need to view labels as something more than short-term funding and delivery systems for their latest project. Given the imperatives of the musician's life, it doesn't always happen, but I prefer working with artists who are cool taking it a bit slow."

One such artist is the Chicago band-leader Joshua Abrams, a veteran bassist who's released four albums on Eremite with his trance-inducing band Natural Information Society, including the new *Simultaneity*. Thanks to the input of Abrams and guitarist Jeff Parker, who released the stunning solo album *Slight Freedom* on Eremite last year, select titles have begun appearing on a Bandcamp page for the label.

When Ehlers first got involved with the music—producing a concert series in Amherst, Massachusetts, between 1995 and 2008—he was already a rabid fan and record collector. "My idea for Eremite was to create exposure for musicians who inspired me by making compelling recordings of their work. I followed the examples of independent labels I admired, such as Black Saint, FMP, India Navigation, Marge, Nessa, Ogun and Silkheart. Artist-run labels are a big inspiration, but I'm not a musician. I'm a dude who came out of listening, collecting and community radio."

DB

Mazzarella's Instrumental Voice Evolves

ALTO SAXOPHONIST NICK MAZZARELLA has been based in Chicago for his entire career, and he has taken full advantage of the city's resources. Since acquiring two degrees at DePaul University, he has performed regularly as a leader, as a sideman for saxophonist Cameron Pfiffner and drummer Dana Hall, and in collective ensembles, such as the Chicago Reed Quartet and his trio with bassist Ingebrigt Håker Flaten and AACM drummer Avreeayl Ra (in which he doubles on soprano).

"There are a lot of great, original-sounding musicians here, and this is where I have come up musically and developed my voice and my sound," Mazzarella said during an interview that took place in Chicago's Dvořák Park.

Mazzarella used that process to craft the deeply lived-in music heard on *Triangulum* (Clean Feed), the first album by Meridian Trio, which includes bassist Matt Ulery and drummer Jeremy Cunningham. His other new album, *Signaling*, with cellist Tomeka Reid, confirms his place in the city's enduring culture of avant-garde jazz; it is on the Nessa label, which issued some of the earliest recordings by the Art Ensemble of Chicago and is marking its 50th year in the business with this release.

Mazzarella has grown up in public. His early music with the Nick Mazzarella Trio—which made three albums before going on hiatus—reflected the influence of Ornette Coleman. But over time, his instrumental voice has evolved to the point where it can no longer be reduced to merely a set of influences.

"I've worked on cultivating a sound that's uniquely my own and that can work in different musical contexts," he said. "So I'm not changing what I do depending on what the music calls for, but [rather] bringing my voice to each situation."

The Meridian Trio first convened to play a monthly gig at the Chicago venue Honky Tonk BBQ, then shifted to The Whistler, a cocktail

bar, to record their book of originals during an extensive residency. The trio's repertoire ranges from catchy tunes enlivened by Cunningham's light hand on the cymbals to pensive dirges that showcase the rich blend of bowed bass.

By contrast, Mazzarella and Reid recorded *Signaling* in a studio without ever having played as a duo before. Instead they prepared by talking and trading recordings, especially those involving alto-cello pairings. "We both have an

admiration for the music of Julius Hemphill and Abdul Wadud," Mazzarella explained.

"When I discovered that he loved those records as much as I did, we definitely thought about doing something together—with that spirit and energy in mind," Reid recalled.

While the session was improvised, their common intent resulted in music that melds elegant chamber interplay with the emotional impact of down-home blues. —Bill Meyer



Nick Mazzarella

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Gibbons Adds Soul to Jazz Standards

IF YOU'RE A GREGORY PORTER FAN, YOU might long for a female counterpart who also combines the classic jazz of Billie Holiday with the old-school soul of Donny Hathaway into a savvy mix of originals and covers. If so, you're probably not imagining she'd hail from rural Suffolk in eastern England. But that's Polly Gibbons, who, having conquered the British jazz scene with a recipe similar to Porter's, is now winning fans in North America.

On *Is It Me...?*, her second album for the U.S. label Resonance, Gibbons sings such standards as "I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart" and "Basin Street Blues," but also tackles songs recorded by Hathaway and Aretha Franklin, as well as three originals. The standards get a welcome r&b push, while the soul numbers gain a new flexibility from the improvising vocals and horns.

"In a way," said Tamir Hendelman, Barbra Streisand's pianist and an arranger on the album, "Polly's horn-like voice together with a mini big-band is what makes this mixture of standards and r&b gel. She's fearless and has an



Vocalist Polly Gibbons

NIGEL COOKE

instrumental approach, but at the same time can really tap into the heart of a song."

"George Klabin, the producer, told me, 'Why not chuck everything in there that you love? Why limit yourself to a specific sound?'" Gibbons recalled. "Later in my career, I might make an album that's more specific, but this time I wanted to do *all* the things I feel, because I love them all. Donny's singing moves me in the same way that Billie's does. If Billie had

come up in the '60s, she probably would have been a soul singer."

It was hearing her older sister's vinyl recording of Holiday's "I'm A Fool To Want You" that turned Gibbons into a jazz listener. But it was her cousin's positive reaction to Gibbons singing along to the 1990 hit "It's A Shame (My Sister)" by British rapper Monie Love that convinced Gibbons that she could be a singer. When she was 15, she attended a vocal workshop led by Jacqui Dankworth, the daughter of Cleo Laine and John Dankworth. James Pearson was the pianist, and he immediately recognized the exceptional quality of Gibbons' voice.

"Her natural gift as a singer was apparent even then," Pearson said. "Polly has such a vast range, and she's more than happy to utilize it, but her choice of notes and her playful phrasing are just as important."

By the time Gibbons moved to London at age 20, Pearson was her pianist, bandleader and co-writer. Her breakthrough third album, 2014's *My Own Company* (Diving Duck), captured a live set with the James Pearson Trio at Ronnie Scott's. That attracted Klabin's attention, and he signed her to his Resonance label.

The 2015 album *Many Faces Of Love* was followed by this year's *Is It Me...?*, which features songs associated with Nina Simone, Frank Sinatra and Sarah Vaughan.

"The fact that Sarah, Aretha or whatever icon has already recorded a song doesn't matter if I really feel it," Gibbons said. "What I can add is me and my spirit. No one feels pain the same way; no one feels love the same way and no one sings a song the same way. If I give it just the right twist, maybe someone will hear it in a way they never did before."

Gibbons will perform at the Xerox Rochester Jazz Festival (June 28), the Montreal Jazz Festival (July 2) and Austria's Jazz Fest Wien (July 6).
—Geoffrey Himes

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Movers, Groovers & Shakers Prevail at New Orleans Jazz Fest

THE AUDIENCE HAD ALREADY ABSORBED a lot of music by the time they arrived at the Fais Do-Do Stage in New Orleans, where the wild guitar clusters of the New Orleans Klezmer All-Stars were getting people to spin like tops. The occasion: the final day of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, which ran April 28–May 7. It was hardly the only highlight. From the high-energy Cuban melodies coming from the Cultural Exchange Pavilion to the trad-jazz sounds of the Paulin Brothers, music lovers of all types got their ears turned out.

Cuba was in focus. The festival featured more than 150 Cuban musicians in one of the largest gatherings of Cuban culture in the States since the 1950s. Festivalgoers could watch cigars being rolled and murals being painted while listening to the *son* styles of Septeto Nacional Ignacio Piñero, or they could check out pianist Chucho Valdés, percussionist Pedrito Martinez or the soaring vocals of Daymé Arocena.

Great singing was the rule rather than the exception, as rockers Elle King and Britney Howard of Alabama Shakes moved from falsettos to growly rasps on the big stage at one end of the New Orleans Fairgrounds.

Jamison Ross, known more for his jazz drumming, sang a terrific take on Etta Jones' "Don't Go To Strangers" that demonstrated his versatility. When traveling from stage to stage around the fest, the idea of genre seemed to fall away. Nicholas Payton held true to his Afro-Caribbean Mixtape concept that combines jazz, soul, subtle hip-hop, spoken word and r&b in the WWOZ Jazztent, offering a chill yet passionate set of forward-looking grooves.

On the same stage, several days earlier, drummer Stanton Moore's trio of warriors—known best for modern jazz—ended their set with Neville Brother Cyril Neville singing the Lee Dorsey/Allen Toussaint funk anthem "Night People." It brought to mind the famous quote often attributed to Duke Ellington (who premiered his *New Orleans Suite* during the first New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival in 1970) about there being "only two kinds of music: good music and the other kind."

New Orleans musicians are more than adept at combining virtuoso chops with an entertaining presentation. Astral Project, which has been around nearly 40 years, incorporates knotty, complex lines into its playing, but the music still comes across with feeling and soul. Ashlin Parker's Trumpet Mafia, with its 20-plus trumpeters, has a similar quality, as does Jesse McBride's Next Generation Big Band, which played selections of New Orleans modern jazz by local composers.

As the festival came to a climax May 7,

Trombone Shorty blasted his trombone-fueled rock 'n' roll on one end while The Meters celebrated 50 years with their classics "People Say" and "Fiyo On The Bayou." Midway between that in terms of longevity and temperament, the New Orleans Klezmer All-Stars delivered their singular brand of musical ecstasy to finish off 10 days of great music. —David Kunian



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POLL

Jazz Artist
Jazz Album
Trumpet

WADADA

Leo Smith

RISING UP IN PURITY

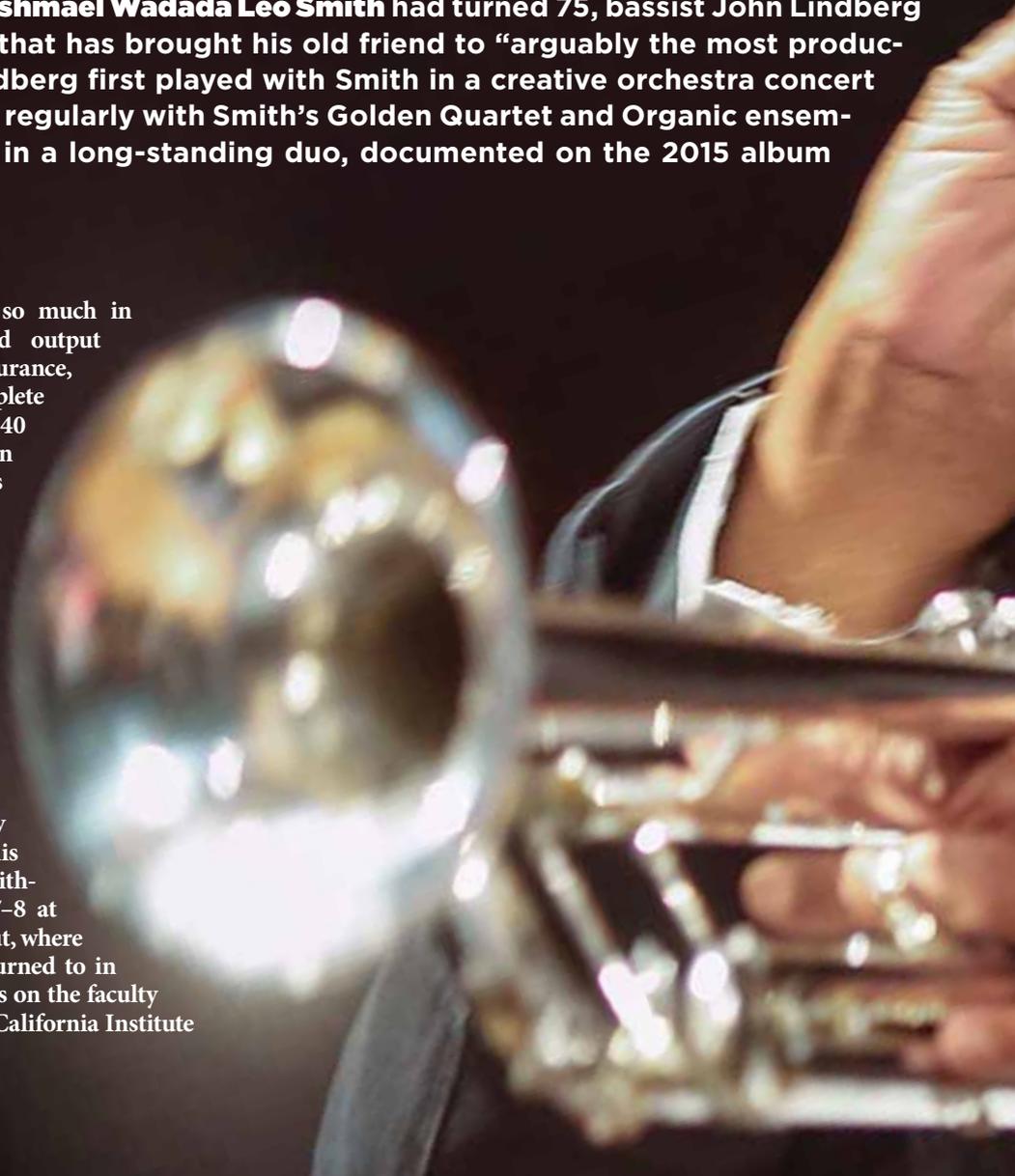
By Ted Panken | Photos by Michael Jackson

In late December, just after **Ishmael Wadada Leo Smith** had turned 75, bassist John Lindberg spoke about “the rare arc” that has brought his old friend to “arguably the most productive time of his career.” Lindberg first played with Smith in a creative orchestra concert in 1978, and has played bass regularly with Smith’s Golden Quartet and Organic ensembles since 2004, as well as in a long-standing duo, documented on the 2015 album *Celestial Weather* (TUM).

“**T**hat Wadada has elevated so much in notoriety, recognition and output of work speaks to his endurance, determination and sheer grit—his complete dedication and focus on his work for 40 years,” Lindberg said. “It’s a coronation of the idea that true art can rise up in its purity and be recognized.”

The critics certainly agree, anointing Smith with victories in three categories of the 2017 DownBeat Critics Poll: Jazz Artist, Trumpet and Jazz Album, for *America’s National Parks* (Cuneiform).

Smith detailed his work ethic at his Midtown Manhattan hotel on the morning of April 22, day five of a six-night, six-event residency at The Stone, John Zorn’s Lower East Side venue. Only two of the concerts overlapped with his CREATE Festival, an eight-set, Smith-curated event that transpired April 7–8 at Firehouse 12 in New Haven, Connecticut, where Smith lived during the 1970s and returned to in 2013, when he retired after two decades on the faculty of the Herb Alpert School of Music at California Institute of the Arts in Valencia.





“The practice of making art has been my lifestyle,” Smith said. “I work the same way I worked when I taught school. Every day I get up at sunrise. I do my morning prayer. I have food and coffee or tea. I work until 11, 12 or 1 o’clock—another hour or so if I have a deadline. After that, I may visit my granddaughters and daughters. Then I come home. I cook my dinner. I watch a movie. I go to bed. I have no distortions or intrusions.

“I’ve always written a lot of music, on a scale that if I’d stopped writing 10 years ago, I could still record for years. I’ve always been able to receive inspiration and transform it into scores, be they musical scores or literary scores. I read scores—opera scores, orchestral scores, string quartets—for my own satisfaction just like you’d read a novel. I’m looking for an intuitive, mystical connection with how those ideas came about—not with what they are. By doing that, you get a feeling for the decision as it was made, like when Shostakovich wrote that line where the strokes of the violin and various instruments in the quartet are only about dynamics.”

At the CREATE Festival, Smith celebrated his Connecticut experiences. He presented a new score for saxophonist-flutist Dwight Andrews and vibraphonist Bobby Naughton, both collaborators in New Delta Akhri, the ensemble that Smith organized during his first New Haven stay, and members of the Creative Musicians Improvisers Forum, which Smith founded there on the model of Chicago’s AACM, which he himself joined in 1967.

Pianist-composer Anthony Davis, who was a Yale freshman when he heard Smith play a duo concert with Marion Brown in 1970 (he first recorded with Smith on the self-released *Reflectativity* in 1974 with Wes Brown on bass, recontextualized for Tzadik in 2000 with Malachi Favors), joined the RedKoral String Quartet to play Smith’s “String Quartet No. 10.” Drummer Pheeroan akLaff, who recorded with Smith and Davis in 1976 on *Song Of Humanity*, performed with the trio Mbira, with extended-techniques flute master Robert Dick and pipa virtuoso Min Xiao-Fen.

Smith also applied his chops to a solo recital mirroring his 2017 release *Solo: Reflections And Meditations On Monk* (TUM), and, both evenings, to repertoire from *America’s National Parks*, on which cellist Ashley Waters, Smith’s one-time student at CalArts, joins Davis, Lindberg and akLaff, the core members of Smith’s Golden Quartet for the past decade.

DownBeat caught three concerts at The Stone, including an April 20 performance of “Pacifica” by the Crystal Sextet, on which four violists and electronicist Hardedge, prodded by Smith’s real-time instructions and exhortations, interpreted a graphic score depicting vertically stacked bands of color, progressively more opaque, representing how sunlight



Mike Reed (left), Wadada Leo Smith and Douglas Ewart perform at Constellation in Chicago on July 26, 2016.

‘It’s a coronation of the idea that true art can rise up in its purity and be recognized.’ —John Lindberg

refracts in water as it penetrates to its depths. On April 22, Smith presented the kinetic, blues-infused suite *Najwa* using two guitarists (Brandon Ross and Lamar Smith, his 21-year-old grandson) rather than the four who perform on a new Bill Laswell-produced release of that name (on TUM), along with akLaff, Hardedge and Laswell on electric bass.

On April 23, Smith concluded his run with “Lake Superior,” a 19-page score drawn from the six-part *Great Lakes Suites* (TUM), with Lindberg, reedist Henry Threadgill and drummer Jack DeJohnette. For this occasion, Smith convened alto saxophonist Jonathon Haffner, bassist Mark Helias and drummer Marcus Gilmore, who conjured a kaleidoscopic performance after a half-hour pre-concert run-through. Smith played throughout like a man possessed, leaving it “all on the field” on his final declamation, during which he roared through the trumpet with the power and heat of a twentysomething practitioner. At one particularly intense moment, he stood on one foot. After another, he leaned against the wall behind him. He took periodic pauses to mop his brow.

When they were done, Smith lifted the score for the audience to see. “I changed this—right here, right now—several times,” he said. “I create this magnificent gray zone where no one knows what’s going on except me. I’m exploring

the dimensions of creativity. It’s not written. It’s not thought about. Then they solve the equation. My heart feels pretty incredible.”

He moved to the center of the “bandstand.” “I played the hardest I can possibly play,” Smith said.

The comment mirrored Smith’s remarks the previous morning on the phenomenon of playing with such boldness and in-your-face presence. “I play as strong as I’ve ever played—in some contexts, much stronger,” Smith declared, noting a more than two-and-a-half-octave range, “starting from the bottom octave, around the G or the F-sharp, all the way up to the high F or E, and sometimes G.”

He continued: “That’s a physical and emotional artistic gift. It has nothing to do with the way I practice or conceptualize making music. There’s a lot of misconceptions about making art. One is that you have to practice every day, as hard as you can. Another is that you have to warm up for hours before you play. None of those myths exist for me. I’m not bound by the idea that something has to sound a certain way or be done a certain way. What’s important to me is that, when an inspiration comes, I allow myself to receive it and try to read it the best I can, without inhibition or blockage.”

Smith offered a recent example in New Haven. “I got cramps in both rib sides five minutes after I started playing with the Golden

music.

by TUM Records

Congratulations to Wadada Leo Smith

on receiving awards for Jazz Artist of the Year, Jazz Album of the Year and Trumpeter of the Year in DownBeat's 65th Annual Critics Poll as well as being named Musician of the Year by the Jazz Journalists Association!



coming soon



Wadada Leo Smith
NAJWA
Six new compositions with Michael Gregory Jackson, Henry Kaiser, Brandon Ross and Lamar Smith on guitars, Bill Laswell on electric bass, Pheeroan akLaff on drums and Adam Rudolph on percussion.



Wadada Leo Smith
SOLO: REFLECTIONS AND MEDITATIONS ON MONK
Solo trumpet on four classic Thelonious Monk compositions and on four new Wadada Leo Smith compositions inspired by the life and music of Thelonious Monk.

remember these



Wadada Leo Smith & John Lindberg
CELESTIAL WEATHER



Wadada Leo Smith
THE GREAT LAKES SUITES



Wadada Leo Smith & TUMO
OCCUPY THE WORLD



Wadada Leo Smith & Louis Moholo-Moholo
ANCESTORS



Wadada Leo Smith's Mbira
DARK LADY OF THE SONNETS



‘The trumpet came natural to my physique and my intelligence.’

Quintet,” he said. “I decided, ‘OK, we’re going to see who wins.’ I stretched, which relieved the sharpness, and when I started playing I bent a little lower and didn’t think about it until it was over. When I pick up the trumpet and step out to play, I’m oblivious to everything. Therefore, I play as hard as I can every moment. To make live music—to make art live—is one of the most heroic feelings in the world. You have the possibility and actuality of losing yourself inside that for an hour. It’s cleansing. It regenerates your body, your human condition, your mental and spiritual state.”

Apart from spiritual dimensions, Smith added, “The trumpet came natural to my physique and my intelligence” from almost the moment he started playing it at age 12 in Leland, Mississippi. “A few weeks later, before I knew all the notes, I wrote my first piece—for three trumpets,” he said. “I started playing live at 13. That got me out of having to go to the cotton field. In high school I played three nights a week, sometimes four. Even if we drove 150 miles from the gig, I still went to school every day. I learned how to do what I had to do. Trumpet is a tubular instrument, and to play it, you have to understand what happens when its

physicality doesn’t match yours. When there’s a breakdown, it becomes traumatic for most people, and they try to correct it. But when the trumpet denies me access, I accept whatever it gives me, play what’s possible at that moment, make something out of it. After I do that, I gain the greatest sense of confidence. I don’t ever worry about if my lips are sore. I’ve played probably four or five mouthpieces for as long as I’ve played the trumpet.

“My sound is authentically me, and it comes from here.” Smith touched his diaphragm and his heart. “It doesn’t come from a mouthpiece. It doesn’t even come from an instrument.”

Smith developed his mighty embouchure by playing and practicing outdoors, both in high school and during his 1962–66 tenure as a musician in the U.S. Army. “Your sound doesn’t bounce off columns or four walls,” Smith said. “The projection level is just after the bell.” He held his hands about 6 inches apart. “Once it gets past the horn that far, you can hear it almost anywhere, a half-mile or a mile away if there’s no trees.”

In a *Blindfold Test* published in the April 2016 issue of *DownBeat*, trumpeter Roy Hargrove, when presented with “Crossing

Sirat” from Smith’s 2009 album *Spiritual Dimensions* (Cuneiform), called the leader’s sound “majestic.” Similarly, trumpeter Jonathan Finlayson has described it as “regal.” A more granular, metaphysical appreciation came from Laswell, whose second duo recording with Smith, *Sacred Ceremonies*, comes out this summer on his M.O.D. label, along with a Smith-Laswell-Milford Graves trio titled *Ceremonies And Rituals* and a Smith-Graves duo titled *Baby Dodds In Congo Square*. In each instance, Smith weaves in and out of the rhythm, juxtaposing sound and space with fluid rigor, signifying on the cool, simmering Laswell-engineered ambience with a lustrous, blue-flame tone that contrasts to his white-heat declamations made during his last two evenings at The Stone.

“He doesn’t do much high-register stuff, which you also find in people like Miles Davis, Don Cherry and Olu Dara,” said Laswell, who documented his first encounter with Smith on the 2014 album *Akashic Meditations* (M.O.D.). “When he’s playing warmer tones in the mid-range and lower register, he catches this blues quality without the form. There’s some kind of force with a natural element, not just based on the music experience. Wadada’s been here long enough to accumulate these different feelings and elements and experiences about the human condition, and he’s pouring it back on the world. He plays rivers and lakes and mountains and fields. You don’t find that so much in music. That’s why people are responding.”

In akLaff’s view, Smith now plays with more sustained intensity than when he first entered his orbit. “I remember people writing about my playing the austere and spare music of Leo Smith, and it wasn’t necessarily laudatory,” akLaff said. “During his thirties and forties, Wadada had direct experience with the energy people were playing with during that period, which cannot be repeated. He chose not to get in the fray. You could say composition won out over braggadocio. Now, as a septuagenarian, Wadada has that in his pocket, and he’s chosen to be uniquely outstanding with it.”

“Wadada always had this inimitable, immediately recognizable, wide sound with this incredible concept of using space and texture and color,” Lindberg said. “But if someone asked me which trumpet player is going to blow the roof off the place every night, he wouldn’t have jumped to mind at the top of the list. But ever since 2004, when I joined the version of the Golden Quartet with Ronald Shannon Jackson and Vijay Iyer, I cannot recall a performance where he hasn’t played really hard. I don’t think he can help himself.”

Smith’s “gray zone” reference after the April 23 concert illuminated his penchant for deploying precise control of timbre to maneuver and shape the flow within the diverse instrumentations and contexts. “Wadada’s



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notation system seamlessly represents composed, fixed elements while allowing for the spontaneous innovation of the player to be embedded within it," Davis said. "His music was always developed and multifaceted, taking us as performers on a journey through different structures, moods, settings and techniques. You always have to be on your toes, because the structure can change on a dime. You look at the whole score, not just your part—according to what Wadada plays, you might have to go to a different section. That keeps the music fresh; the composition is a living, breathing thing."

Davis regards *America's National Parks* as "a natural progression" from Smith's epic *Ten Freedom Summers* (Cuneiform), recorded in late 2011 with the Golden Quartet and a nine-piece chamber ensemble. Smith took as his subject pivotal events, themes and protagonists in the African American struggle for civil rights over a 145-year timeline. "*Ten Freedom Summers* was more turbulent than this album, which emphasizes the more lyrical side of Wadada's music and playing, and has a beautiful flow," Davis said.

In 2015, Smith was looking for "another project that would make sense and give me the opportunity to showcase another aspect of my art," when he received a copy of Ken Burns' *American National Parks* documentary. "I wanted to expand the idea of national parks,

and also not make them into cathedrals, sacred ground for some kind of religious endeavor, as Burns did," Smith said. In his vision, New Orleans, which gestated "the first authentic music in America," is a national cultural park; Dr. Eileen Southern, author of the comprehensive, path-breaking *Black Music in America*, is a literary national park. "New Orleans and Dr. Southern are common property for everyone, just like Yellowstone, Sequoia and Yosemite, that should be held in trust for every generation of Americans coming forward to participate in, appreciate and understand," Smith said.

Lindberg related that in the process of conceptualizing and rehearsing *Ten Freedom Summers*, Smith engaged in "literal depictions and discussions about the events that inspired certain pieces." Conversely, when conceiving *America's National Parks*, Smith followed a process of metaphoric refraction. "I'm not trying to achieve musical portraits of a spot or a piece of land or a book," he said. "Through meditation, reflection, contemplation and research, I profile these entities psychologically and aesthetically."

Although he didn't say so explicitly, Smith follows that refractive m.o. in *Solo: Reflections And Meditations On Monk*, his fourth solo album, consisting of four songs by Monk and four by Smith, among them an original titled "Mystery: Monk And Bud Powell At Shea Stadium." "I'm challenging the notion that

Monk's music is purely harmonic, saying it can be performed in multiple languages in a way believable to the listener," Smith said. "I use melodic elements to evolve the solo passages. Some are composed as fragments, some as long extended lines. When I play through it, I spontaneously select from those composed melodic elements the portions that I need; what I select is based off what I played before, and also where I'm going from there."

Where is Smith going as he progresses through the second half of his eighth decade? Among other things, he anticipates releasing another dozen or so albums, including his complete string and viola quartets, and a trio date with Iyer and DeJohnette.

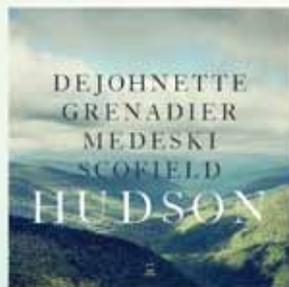
"When I was a young, developing artist, my friends and associates in the AACM, and other independent artists whose viewpoints I respect, all thought of DownBeat as the most major component for this music," Smith said. "DownBeat has covered this music for [more than] 80 years, and written about the major artists of our times. I've grown, of course, but I do the same thing I've done all along. I did it without wondering whether I'd ever get an award. So having DownBeat recognize in 2013 that I'm a composer of value with the Composer of the Year award for *Ten Freedom Summers*, and now Jazz Album of the Year, Artist Of the Year and Trumpeter of the Year—that's like a grand slam." **DB**



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JAZZ ALBUM OF THE YEAR



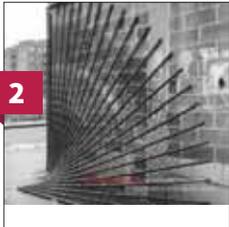
1

WADADA LEO SMITH

America's National Parks (CUNEIFORM)

66

With *America's National Parks*, trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith offers a six-movement suite inspired by the visual landscape, historic legacy and political significance of the country's most cherished environmental spaces. Writing for his Golden Quintet, Smith crafts six extended works that explore, confront and question the preserved natural resources that are considered hallowed ground in the United States.



2

HENRY THREADGILL

Old Locks And Irregular Verbs

(PI)

60

On this edifying new album, Henry Threadgill, a recipient of the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for music, pays heartfelt tribute to his close friend and collaborator, the composer-conductor Lawrence D. "Butch" Morris, who passed away in 2013. The album's four luminous tracks pass from knotty tangles to stark, elegiac passages before building to a fanfare that commingles celebration and sorrow.



7

GREGORY PORTER

Take Me To The Alley (BLUE NOTE)

43

As he's done on his previous three albums, Gregory Porter teamed with producer Kamau Kenyatta on *Take Me To The Alley* to craft a collection of stirring originals that juxtapose the personal and political. Porter's music has an elastic quality that allows him to reach across genres and social themes, though he's found a home at the intersection of jazz, soul, gospel and r&b.



3

FRED HERSCH TRIO

Sunday Night At The Vanguard

(PALMETTO)

51

Sunday Night At The Vanguard features pianist Fred Hersch with his trio of bassist John Hébert and drummer Eric McPherson performing live at the Village Vanguard—"the Carnegie Hall of jazz clubs," as Hersch calls it. He has a mind that loves to search out the small adventures hiding in the shadows of the mainstream piano tradition.



8

MATT WILSON'S BIG HAPPY FAMILY

Beginning Of A Memory (PALMETTO)

43

With *Beginning Of A Memory*, drummer Matt Wilson re-enters the recording studio for the first time since the passing of his wife, Felicia, who died of leukemia in 2014. Convening all the members of his best-known groups—the Matt Wilson Quartet, Arts & Crafts and Christmas Tree-O—Wilson creates new renditions of his older material that his wife loved most.



4

DEJOHNETTE/COLTRANE/GARRISON

In Movement (ECM)

50

Jazz history reverberates within drummer Jack DeJohnette's adventurous new trio album. Fifty years ago, as a guest with John Coltrane's group, DeJohnette played with the fathers of Ravi Coltrane and Matthew Garrison, two potent modern musicians who, with *In Movement*, make their ECM debut.



9

ANDREW CYRILLE QUARTET

Declaration of Musical Independence

(ECM)

41

The Declaration Of Musical Independence features drummer Andrew Cyrille's longtime collaborators Richard Teitelbaum on piano and synthesizer, Ben Street on bass and Bill Frisell on guitar. It's an uplifting, sprawling record. Throughout, atypical sounds and rambling rhythms swirl together, collide and are set free.



5

NELS CLINE

Lovers (BLUE NOTE)

45

Nels Cline makes his Blue Note debut with *Lovers*, an expansive double-album that the guitarist had dreamed about making for more than 25 years. Inspired by the cinematic music of Henry Mancini and others, Cline assembled an ambitious "mood music" project with an ensemble of 23 stellar musicians conducted and arranged by Michael Leonard.



10

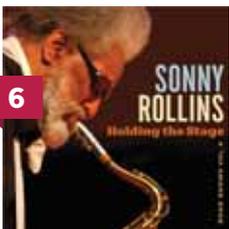
BRANFORD MARSALIS QUARTET

Upward Spiral

(MARSALIS MUSIC/OKEH)

40

The song choices on Branford Marsalis and Kurt Elling's collaborative album *Upward Spiral* are varied and smart, with many of the tracks tending toward art song—whether rooted in jazz, folk, popular song or just plain poetry. Pianist Joey Calderazzo, drummer Eric Revis and drummer Justin Faulkner add vital support.



6

SONNY ROLLINS

Holding The Stage: Road Shows, Vol. 4 (DOXY/OKEH)

45

The latest volume in Rollins' *Road Shows* series features more than 73 minutes of music, ranging from a 1979 recording of "Disco Monk" to the debut appearance of "Professor Paul," recorded in 2012 in Marseille, France. Also featured is a 22-minute medley from Rollins' Sept. 15, 2001, Boston concert that was not included in the saxophonist's powerful 9/11 album, *Without A Song*.

11. Charlie Haden Liberation Orchestra, <i>Time/Life: Song For The Whales And Other Beings</i> (IMPULSE!)	40
12. JD Allen, <i>Americana: Musings On Jazz And Blues</i> (SAVANT)	39
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For more of the year's top jazz albums, see page 54.

CUNEIFORM RECORDS

Cuneiform Records congratulates

WADADA LEO SMITH

on his well-deserved Triple-Hitter Win in the 65th Annual / 2017 DownBeat International Critics Poll

Jazz Artist of the Year and Trumpeter of the Year and Album of the Year

"Wadada Leo Smith – National Treasure."
– *DownBeat Magazine*

"Mr. Smith, a trumpeter of fiery purpose and intrepid imagination... 'America's National Parks,' as grand and egalitarian a statement as the title suggests."
– *New York Times*

"America's National Parks unites political engagement with a soul-deep connection to nature... Smith's 98-minute work, rich with ineffable majesty, fully engages with tensions at the heart of the American experience."
– *JazzTimes*



"consistently ravishing"
– *Pitchfork*

"Wadada Leo Smith...has created a body of work that qualifies him as one of America's artistic geniuses... A visionary America's National Parks, along with virtually every recording he has released in the new millennium, confirms it."
– *All About Jazz*

"Wadada Leo Smith calmly drops another monumental, mythopoetic of the great America outdoors with America's National Parks... It's never been more necessary."
– *The Wire*

America's National Parks (Cuneiform Records)

Cuneiform Records has been honored to work with Wadada Leo Smith for the past 14 years, releasing five high-profile albums by Smith and his Golden Quartet/Quintet or Organic, and two albums by his Yo Miles! group with Henry Kaiser. His previous release on Cuneiform, 2012's *Ten Freedom Summers*, a tribute to the American Civil Rights Movement, left us and the music world in awe. Now, we're honored to release another stunning Smith masterwork, *America's National Parks*, a tribute to our Nation's natural treasures, and for it to now receive the 2017 DownBeat International Critics Poll Award for Album of the Year. Wadada Leo Smith and his music have transformed our lives, and inspired countless music lovers who own his recordings and witness his live performances. This year, the spotlight is on Wadada Leo Smith, undisputedly a National Treasure, and we are grateful to have shared his musical journey over the years and to have explored with him - at a critical time in American history - the wonders of *America's National Parks*.

Cuneiform also congratulates the following individuals, all of whom have won places on the 2017 DownBeat International Critics Poll and who appear in various contexts in Cuneiform's catalog of music. We're honored for the opportunities we've had to share your work with jazz fans worldwide.

Rez Abbasi [from Rez Abbasi & Junction]; Joshua Abrams, Ingrid Laubrock, Mike Reed, Tomeka Reid [from Living By Lanterns]; Jason Adasiewicz, Josh Berman [from Jason Adasiewicz' Rolldown]; Raoul Björkenheim [from solo, Blixt, Krakatau, Ecstasy]; Taylor Ho Bynum, Jen Shyu [from Positive Catastrophe]; John Hollenbeck, Drew Gress, Chris Speed, Matt Moran [from The Claudia Quintet]; Nels Cline [from Wadada Leo Smith's Organic, Adam Rudolph / Go: Organic Guitar Orchestra]; Adam Rudolph, Liberty Ellman, David Gilmore [from Adam Rudolph / Go: Organic Guitar Orchestra]; Joe Fiedler [from Gary Lucas' Fleischerei, Fast & Bulbous, Ed Palermo Big Band]; Jeff Lederer [from Gary Lucas' Fleischerei]; Mary Halvorson, Michael Formanek, Tomas Fujiwara [from Thumbscrew]; Bill Frisell [from Michael Gibbs and the NDR Bigband]; Ingegright Håker Flaten [from I.P.A.]; Joel Harrison [from solo/Mother Stump & Holy Abyss]; Vijay Iyer [from Wadada Leo Smith's Golden Quartet]; Rob Mazurek, Nicole Mitchell, Jeff Parker [from Rob Mazurek/Exploding Star Orchestra]; Roswell Rudd [from Steve Lacy - Roswell Rudd 4tet]; Ches Smith [from Anthony Pirog Trio]; John Surman [from solo]



photo by Michael Jackson

Learn more about Wadada Leo Smith and how to easily purchase his Cuneiform recordings at:
www.CuneiformRecords.com/WLSmith

DOWN

WIELDING HIS CORNET WITH QUIET BUT UNMISTAKABLE ABANDON, DON CHERRY SEEMED THE IDEAL FRONT-LINE FOIL FOR ORNETTE COLEMAN WHEN, IN NOVEMBER 1959, THE SAXOPHONIST'S QUARTET BLEW INTO NEW YORK AND UPENDED THE JAZZ WORLD.

The occasion was a gig at the Five Spot that stretched from two weeks into 10. Coming only a month after the release of the quartet's subversive album on Atlantic, *The Shape Of Jazz To Come*, the engagement laid out a plausible challenge to conventions of form, phrasing and sound. In the process, it confirmed Coleman's status as the music's new figure to be reckoned with.

For Cherry, the impact was less dramatic. Despite the brilliance of the colloquy between the two men, Cherry, six years the saxophonist's junior, had, during his time with Coleman, "worked more or less in the leader's shadow," wrote the late poet and critic LeRoi Jones (aka Amiri Baraka) in the Nov. 21, 1963, issue of *DownBeat*.

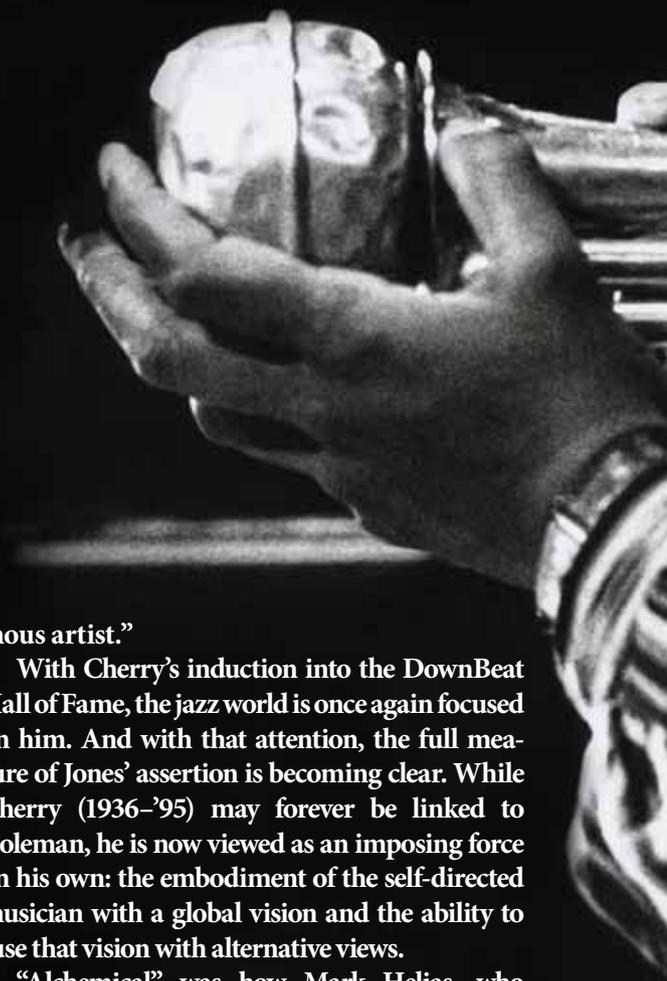
But by the time that article appeared, Cherry had begun emerging from Coleman's shadow. He had recorded a scintillating set of tracks with John Coltrane that Atlantic would release years later as the LP *The Avant-Garde*; moved on to employment with Sonny Rollins and Archie Shepp; organized a collaboration with Swedish musicians that pre-saged his trailblazing contributions to world music; and, through it all, retained—indeed, amplified—his voice.

"Cherry," Jones declared, "is an auto-

mous artist."

With Cherry's induction into the DownBeat Hall of Fame, the jazz world is once again focused on him. And with that attention, the full measure of Jones' assertion is becoming clear. While Cherry (1936-'95) may forever be linked to Coleman, he is now viewed as an imposing force on his own: the embodiment of the self-directed musician with a global vision and the ability to fuse that vision with alternative views.

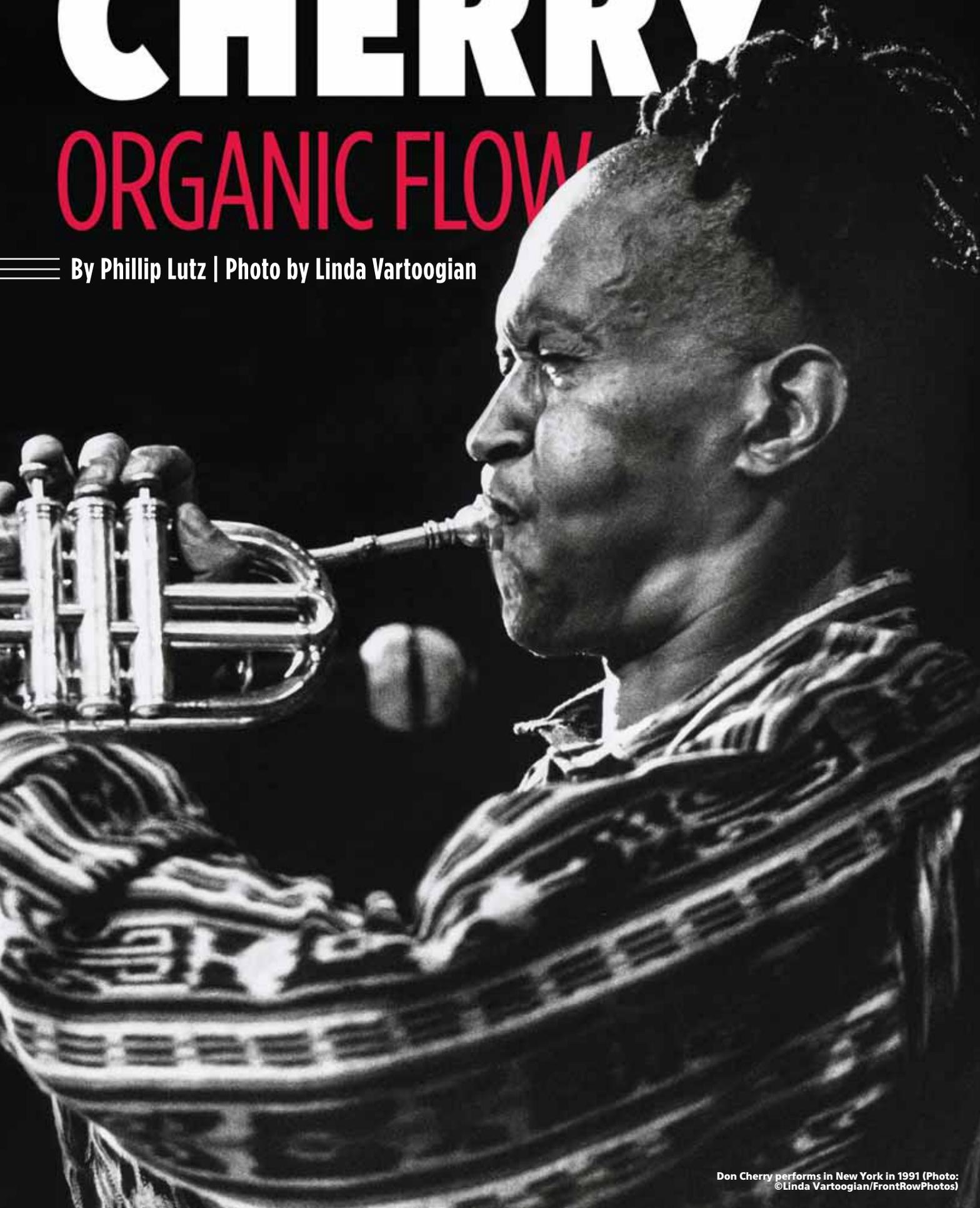
"Alchemical" was how Mark Helias, who played bass with Cherry on and off for more than a decade, described the process in an interview. "He was one of these incredibly natural musicians in the sense of *everything* he did was musical."



CHERRY

ORGANIC FLOW

By Phillip Lutz | Photo by Linda Vartoogian





Cherry, a pioneer of world music, frequently played the *doussn'gouni*.

Likening him to a Renaissance troubadour, Helias, 66, recalled that Cherry was one of the jazz artists—rare in his day—who sought out musicians of widely differing cultures on their own turf. He traversed the continents of South America, Africa and Asia—not to mention a few well-chosen corners in North America and Europe—collecting sonic bits and the instruments on which to play them: conch shells, bamboo flutes, finger cymbals, the berimbau of Brazil and the *doussn'gouni*—a six-string “hunter’s guitar” from Mali that became nearly as much a part of his musical arsenal as his famous pocket trumpet.

That trumpet—by turns fierce and fragile, vivid and, when the mood struck, intentionally vague—popped up in an extraordinary range of settings involving a diverse set of international musicians, among them Brazilian percussionist Naná Vasconcelos, Turkish drummer Okay Temiz, Swedish pianist Bobo Stenson and Panamanian reedist Carlos Ward. Cherry’s pan-cultural bent, which he termed “multi-kulti,” began to surface in the 1960s and, by the 1980s, was given voice in groups like Codona, his trio with Vasconcelos and sitar and tabla player Collin Walcott, as well as Nu, his quintet with Helias, Ward, Vasconcelos and drummer Ed Blackwell, an early Coleman sideman and 17-year bandmate of Helias’.

Cherry’s global explorations have proven a draw to a generation of musicians for whom a global mindset is second nature—none, perhaps, with a stronger sense of kinship to Cherry than cornetist Taylor Ho Bynum. Like Cherry, who won the Trumpet category for Talent Deserving of Wider Recognition in the 1963

DownBeat Critics Poll, Bynum has won the equivalent award: Rising Star–Trumpet in the 2017 Critics Poll.

Bynum, 42, said he was first exposed to Cherry’s playing when, as a teenager, he heard *The Shape Of Jazz To Come*. The music, he said, was far less scary and more melodic than he had been led to expect. But more than the Coleman collaborations, Cherry’s global explorations “opened me up to what he meant,” Bynum said.

“Because he was such an insightful thinker, he could find something in a tradition that maybe someone hadn’t noticed before that allowed him to make connections between what seemed like disparate traditions. In making those connections, he could find something that was incredibly universal and human.”

For Cherry, life as a globetrotting piper was not necessarily preordained. Born in Oklahoma, he grew up on the streets of Watts in Los Angeles. And while his father worked in jazz clubs in both Tulsa and Los Angeles, he discouraged Cherry from taking up that life.

But Cherry was drawn in by a local teacher who had mentored Art Farmer and Charles Lloyd. At school, he met a kindred soul in Billy Higgins, who would later play drums at the breakthrough Five Spot gig. By 1958, he was playing with Coleman at the Hillcrest Club in an engagement that foreshadowed the Five Spot gig, and playing on the saxophonist’s debut album, *Something Else!!!!* That led to *Tomorrow Is The Question* and *The Shape Of Jazz To Come*.

The simpatico that marked the interaction of Coleman and Cherry is difficult to overstate, their purposefully ragged phrasing synchro-

nized so artfully that the resulting cadences seemed literally to breathe. But it was Cherry’s ability to bring that organic flow to a variety of contexts that arguably most set him apart.

The flow is evident in his mid- to late-1960s Blue Note trilogy—*Complete Communion*, *Symphony For Improvisers* and *Where Is Brooklyn?*—a high point of his small-group work. Across the three albums—Henry Grimes on bass and Blackwell constitute the core personnel throughout—Cherry encouraged the listener to consider the tunes collectively.

Eternal Rhythm, recorded at the 1968 Berlin Jazz Festival, and *Actions For Free Jazz Orchestra*, recorded at the 1971 Donaueschingen Music Festival—both in Germany—are cascading orchestral efforts that loom large at the intersection of composition and large-scale collective improvisation. Cherry continued to write for large ensemble, though he refocused his efforts in the United States. There, in 1973, he released *Relativity Suite*, commissioned by Carla Bley’s Jazz Composers Orchestra Association. It was followed in short order by Cherry’s participation in Bley’s magnum opus *Escalator Over The Hill*.

Over the years, Cherry played with many distinguished ensembles—including George Russell’s big band and Charlie Haden’s Liberation Music Orchestra—and had an integral role in the development of Karl Berger’s renowned Creative Music Studio in Woodstock, New York. Last November, Berger returned the favor: Having appeared on *Symphony For Improvisers*, he brought the CMS Improvisers Octet to New York’s Greenwich House Music School in a 50th anniversary celebration of the Blue Note trilogy.

At the time that Cherry was making the trilogy, in the ‘60s, he probably would not have foreseen such a tribute. He was building a profile separate from that of Coleman, and did not always bathe in Coleman’s reflected glory. Work as a leader came slowly, Jones wrote in DownBeat, as “Club owners do not care especially for intelligent musicians.”

But even when work was scarce, Cherry rarely lacked for exposure: He would as readily set up shop in a park in New York or on a farm in Sweden as a festival stage in Berlin. And once a venue was secured, his commitment to the art was such that, whatever physical obstacles he encountered, he found musical solutions.

Eventually, Cherry’s health problems escalated. In 1994, on one of his last European tours—the band at that point consisted of Helias, Ward and drummer/percussionist Hamid Drake—he would, from time to time, repair to the piano bench and, with flashes of the abandon he showed with Coleman 35 years earlier, cook up fresh material.

“I had to learn it on the spot—which was challenging—but I kind of dug it,” Helias said. “He was just trying to put some music out there.” **DB**

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HERBIE NICHOLS
RIGHTFUL HONOR

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Hall of Fame inductee Herbie Nichols did not achieve widespread fame during his lifetime.

WHEN A MUSICIAN ENTERS THE DOWNBEAT HALL OF FAME SEVERAL DECADES AFTER HIS OR HER DEATH, IT'S NOT UNUSUAL FOR SUPPORTERS TO SAY, "I THOUGHT THEY'D NEVER MAKE IT."

Usually, it's just because the odds stack up against the honor as time passes. In the case of composer-pianist Herbie Nichols (1919-'63), who enters the Hall of Fame more than five decades after his death from leukemia, it's more a matter of chronic bad luck that makes people express surprise. During his life, which began in New York's San Juan Hill neighborhood, Nichols never seemed to catch a break. Despite impressing listeners with his advanced harmonic sense and distinctive compositions, he struggled throughout the 24 years he was active on the music scene, playing Dixieland music and only occasionally picking up a gig with someone like Charles Mingus or leading his own trio.

"It's almost like Herbie was always the wrong person at the wrong time," said Mark Miller, author of *Herbie Nichols: A Jazzist's Life* (The Mercury Press, 2009). "He saw himself as an intellectual, and I think a lot of people were confounded by his personality. They saw him as this big, lurking guy they didn't know what to do with."

In an autobiographical sketch he contributed to *Metronome* magazine in 1956, Nichols wrote: "Sometimes I find it hard to distinguish where my technique ends and inspiration begins. I get ideas from Modigliani, Rouault, Van Gogh and a lot of other painters and sculptors. Rhythms and patterns seem to be endless and I find them in boxing, architecture, literature, vaudeville and the dancing art . . ."

Years later, Nichols bemoaned his lack of recognition in biographical notes for music historian A.B. Spellman that formed the basis for a highly influential chapter of Spellman's 1966 book *Four Lives in the Bebop Business*. Indeed, Nichols' first profile-type article in *DownBeat* was his brief death notice in the May 23, 1963, issue, which lamented that his capabilities and promise were never fully realized. Today, he is best known as the composer of the jazz standard "Lady Sings The Blues," for which he wrote the melody and Billie Holiday contributed the lyrics.

"It's bizarre," said pianist Frank Kimbrough, who has become a leading expert on Nichols' music. "He wrote about twice as many tunes as Thelonious Monk, yet he's always been famous for being unknown."

It's not like he didn't have opportunities. In 1938, Nichols joined a band that was featured at Monroe's Uptown, which along with Minton's was one of the laboratories for the burgeoning bebop revolution. But while Monk, Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker stepped directly from the Harlem labs to the bustling clubs on 52nd Street and the recording sessions that would cement their careers, Nichols turned to a short-lived career as a music columnist for the New York publication *Age*, worked as a shipping clerk and then joined the U.S. Army for a two-year stint overseas.

When he landed back in New York in late 1943, the jazz world was on the cusp of cataclysmic change. Instead of being a part of it, Nichols was on the sidelines, writing about the scene for *The Music Dial* and playing in second- or third-tier establishments.

"He had already established his musical language by then," Miller said, "and it wasn't the language that was in vogue. He tends to get slotted in with Monk, and although I think they were equally creative, I don't see him as the iconoclastic pianist that Monk was."

Nichols scuffled along, playing in Dixieland bands, taking a stab at teaching jazz theory and recording only three songs under his own name in the tumultuous decade following the end of the war. Finally, in 1955, he was invited to record 29 of his compositions for Blue Note Records, and the result—including distinctive pieces like "The Gig" and "House Party Starting"—forms the bulk of his output.

But, again, despite having opportunity, not much materialized from the Blue Note recordings.

"He simply wasn't on the scene," Miller said. After a handful of trio gigs at the Cafe Bohemia in New York, it was back to playing for strippers and Dixieland fans.

One more recording session—a 1957 date for Bethlehem Records with the ironic title *Love, Gloom, Cash, Love*—was Nichols' final shot at breaking through to a larger audience. Instead, the breakthrough wouldn't come until Spellman's book generated interest and a younger generation of musicians like Kimbrough and bassist Ben Allison discovered Nichols' music.

Kimbrough first heard Nichols on a tribute broadcast on the late pianist's birthday in 1985, and he began transcribing the music the following day. It remains a vivid memory: "I heard music that was very modern yet very rooted in tradition. His forms are a little odd, and his left hand plays things that are ambiguous and dark. And it all swings like crazy."

—James Hale



Eubie Blake was a prodigy whose keyboard training began at age 5.

EUBIE BLAKE

‘NOTHING STAYS THE SAME’

THROUGHOUT HIS APPROXIMATELY 85-YEAR CAREER, WHICH ENDED ONLY WEEKS BEFORE HIS DEATH IN 1983, PIANIST-COMPOSER EUBIE BLAKE FOLLOWED A DICTUM THAT HE STATED TO AL ROSE, WHOSE AVUNCULAR BIOGRAPHY OF BLAKE APPEARED IN 1979: “ONE THING YOU’VE GOT TO KNOW IS THAT NOTHING STAYS THE SAME.”

Blake had empirical knowledge of this fact. Posthumously unearthed documents establish his birth year as 1887, although he claimed throughout his lifetime that he was born in 1883. Whether Blake lived to be 96 or 100, his hometown was Baltimore, Maryland, where his parents, both former slaves from Virginia, had laid down roots. As the 20th century unfolded, he rose from humble origins to assume a position “at the center of American music,” said Terry Waldo, the pianist-scholar who wrote the book *This Is Ragtime* and transcribed the music for *Sincerely Eubie Blake: 9 Original Compositions For Piano Solo*.

During the latter 1890s, Blake—a prodigy whose keyboard training began at age 5—emulated the technique of veteran ragtime practitioner Jesse Pickett, then based in Baltimore, on his piece “The Dream Rag.” Blake composed “The Charleston Rag” in 1899, the year Scott Joplin published “Maple Leaf Rag.” By 1906, he was steadily employed not only in Baltimore, but on an Atlantic City summer scene that included heavy-hitting ragtime titans like “One

Leg” Willie Joseph and Jack “The Bear” Wilson. There, over the years, future stride piano avatars like Luckey Roberts, Willie “The Lion” Smith and James P. Johnson heard Blake play showpieces like “Troublesome Ivories” featuring highly syncopated rolling 10ths that he executed with his enormous, spidery left hand.

Also in 1906, Blake launched a high-profile, multiyear engagement at Baltimore’s Goldfield Hotel, operated by Joe Gans, an African American boxer who was the World Lightweight Champion. In his biography, Rose noted that from then until 1915, when Blake began collaborating with singer-lyricist Noble Sissle, he had the opportunity—rare for an African American in the Jim Crow era—to encounter “sports and entertainment celebrities from the entire world,” among them Irving Berlin, John Phillip Sousa, Al Jolson and Bert Williams.

By 1916, Sissle and Blake were in New York, playing well-remunerated private parties for high society with the pioneering African American bandleader James Reese Europe, who gave Blake consequential opportunities to conduct. After Europe’s untimely death in 1919, Sissle and Blake formed the Dixie Duo, becoming the first black act to play for white audiences on the Keith vaudeville circuit without applying burnt cork to “black up.” In 1920 at an NAACP benefit, they met the comedy team of Flournoy Miller and Aubrey Lyles, with whom they conceived and produced *Shuffle Along*, Broadway’s first all-black show, a profitable hit that showcased future superstars Paul Robeson, Florence Mills and Josephine Baker. Blake contributed such iconic songs as “I’m Just Wild About Harry” and “Love Will Find A Way,” the latter number marking the first opportunity for many white audiences to hear a love song between black protagonists. In 1923, Sissle and

Blake repeated their success with *Chocolate Dandies*. These two musicals, in Waldo’s words, “literally brought in the Jazz Age.”

The Blake-Sissle partnership ended in 1925, but Blake continued to evolve. In 1930, he collaborated with Andy Razaf on *Blackbirds*, which introduced, among other numbers, “Memories Of You” and “You’re Lucky To Me.” In the 1950s, well into his sixties, Blake earned a degree in music at New York University, where he studied the Schillinger System, which he applied to his “thesis” piece “Dictys On Seventh Avenue,” constructed on whole tone chords and modern progressions. “He lived long enough to convey to later generations all of his knowledge about the whole history of American music, and the ways in which black music was entwined within it,” Waldo said.

The ragtime revival engendered by the 1973 film *The Sting*—along with the 1978 musical *Eubie!*—helped to elevate Blake’s profile during his final decade. Similarly, the superb 2016 musical *Shuffle Along, or the Making of the Musical Sensation of 1921 and All That Followed* has once again returned Blake to popular consciousness. And younger musicians imbued with an “all jazz is modern” aesthetic, such as vocalist Cécile McLorin Salvant and pianist Ehud Asherie, continue to find inspiration in his works. Asherie’s efflorescent solo recital, *Shuffle Along* (Blue Heron), recorded in 2014, comprises eight Blake pieces from the original production.

“The songs of *Shuffle Along*, and Blake’s other songs, are harmonically advanced,” Asherie said. “He wrote them before jazz forms had been codified, so he escaped a lot of clichés and generic patterns. You’re not stylistically locked-in; there’s a wide-open universe for interpretation.”

—Ted Panken

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GEORGE GERSHWIN HERE TO STAY



DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES/LETRA

George Gershwin (1898–1937)

IN 1958, MY DAD TOOK ME TO SEE A PERFORMANCE OF GEORGE GERSHWIN'S "RHAPSODY IN BLUE." IT WAS CONDUCTED BY PAUL WHITEMAN, WHO HAD INTRODUCED THE WORK IN 1924.

A few years later I saw Ethel Merman sing Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm," the song she had introduced in the original *Girl Crazy* in 1930. By then they were living legends of American musical history. I imagined one day boasting to my proverbial grandchildren that I had once seen them with my own eyes.

Years later, when the big moment arrived—what a let-down. The kids had no idea who Whiteman or Merman were. But they knew Gershwin and "I Got Rhythm" because The Happenings recorded a version that reached No. 3 on the pop charts in 1967. The lesson is, a performer lives in a space of time, but the composer travels across eternity. Whiteman and Merman may be mostly forgotten now. But George Gershwin (1898–1937) is here to stay. He is, in fact, the most important figure in the literature of the jazz repertoire.

The list of the 100 most performed songs in the history of the music (as ranked by the website jazzstandards.com) includes 11 Gershwin titles, starting with "Summertime" and ending with "'s Wonderful." The next closest ranked composer is Duke Ellington with seven, then Cole Porter with four, and so on.

But this is only the beginning, which brings me back to "I Got Rhythm." The structure and changes of this simple composition have, by all accounts, served as the harmonic support chassis for more original jazz titles—contrafacts, as they're called—than any song ever written. The standard jazz repertoire holds many Gershwin works, but the place of "I Got Rhythm" is unique among popular tunes: sophisticated enough to challenge and inspire, yet self-effacing enough not to get in the way. The rule is simple, said pianist Bill Charlap, jazz studies director at William Paterson University: "The less complex the song, the more complexity it can absorb."

So, what did Gershwin tap into with "I Got Rhythm" that made it such a touchstone through jazz history? "It's one of the most basic progressions of the modern era," Charlap explained. "So many elements of modern American music converge in 'I Got Rhythm,' including all the harmonic innovations that had occurred up through the 1900s, plus the swing of early jazz. It's all in there."

Among the great innovators of American song, Gershwin was the only one whose ambitions took him from Tin Pan Alley to the philharmonic, and in a leap that was as extraordinary in its range as its swiftness. Born in Brooklyn in 1898, he became famous in 1920 on the strength of an unlikely song called "Swanee," unlikely because it belonged to an old-fashioned, Stephen-Fosterish genre soaked in nostalgia for the Old South. Within four years Gershwin had shed his faux-Dixie alter-ego, teamed with Fred Astaire to create "Lady Be Good," "Fascinating Rhythm" and "The Man I Love," and stunned New York as a soloist in the first performance of his "Rhapsody In Blue." He was 25 years old.

Gershwin became the toast of New York, London and Paris in the '20s. Composer Maurice Ravel declined to take him as a student, not because he wasn't worthy but because Ravel didn't want to bend the arc of his natural genius. A string of Broadway scores in the '20s and early '30s produced "Someone To Watch Over Me," "Liza" and "I've Got A Crush On You," and climaxed with "Summertime" from *Porgy And Bess* in 1935. He moved to Hollywood in 1937, where he added "A Foggy Day" and "They Can't Take That Away From Me" for a pair of Astaire and Rogers films, and finally "Love Is Here To Stay" for *The Goldwyn Follies*, his last.

Oddly, jazz musicians seemed to distrust Gershwin's commercial intent at first. Many of the great Gershwin standards began in the theater and didn't take root in jazz until the swing era. The first important jazz recording of "Embraceable You," written in 1930, didn't come until 1938. "Lady Be Good" languished for more than a decade before Coleman Hawkins and Count Basie made their classic versions in the mid-'30s. "The Man I Love," "Somebody Love Me" and "But Not For Me" were latent for a decade until Teddy Wilson and Art Tatum rediscovered them. Since then, "The Man I Love" has been recorded more than 1,000 times. "Summertime" has topped 2,000 jazz recordings.

The George Gershwin songbook—which includes tunes written with his brother, Ira Gershwin (1896–1983)—has invited constant reinvention, generation after generation.

To the classical critics, Gershwin seemed at first a hyperactive culture climber trying to pass off hot licks as high art. They initially patronized his music as "fun," but Gershwin filled his popular work with a refinement and erudition informed by his classical studies, which led Arnold Schoenberg to pronounce him a true composer.

"The popular and classical Gershwin were one and the same," said Charlap. "Consider 'Summertime.' It's a minor blues. But there's more to it. What Gershwin did with it in terms of orchestration and counter-lines is closer to Bernstein and Sondheim, where it's completely through-composed. It's the first aria in *Porgy And Bess*, and what is it? A blues. Like 'I Got Rhythm,' it's at the center of what Gershwin called the American soul, which is jazz. These songs let you know who you are as a musician. You have to deal with such a simple form and reflect the past, present, future and yourself on that form. In the process Gershwin becomes a kind of Mt. Everest." —John McDonough

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HISTORICAL ALBUM OF THE YEAR



BILL EVANS

Some Other Time (RESONANCE) **192**

A previously unknown and extremely rare studio recording by the Bill Evans Trio, this album was recorded on June 20, 1968, by German jazz producers Hans Georg Brunner-Schwer and Joachim-Ernst Berendt. It constitutes the only existent studio recording of the Bill Evans Trio in the iteration that featured drummer Jack DeJohnette and bassist Eddie Gomez, a lineup that only existed for six months.

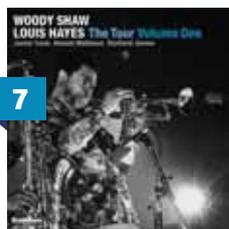


MILES DAVIS

Freedom Jazz Dance: The Bootleg Series Vol. 5

(COLUMBIA/LEGACY) **156**

This three-CD box set chronicles Miles Davis' musical evolution in the studio from 1966–'68, the period encompassing his work with his "Second Great Quintet" featuring Ron Carter, Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock and Tony Williams. The recordings provide an unprecedented look into the artist's creative process.



WOODY SHAW & LOUIS HAYES

The Tour Volume One (HIGHNOTE) **56**

The short-lived band that trumpeter Woody Shaw (1944–'89) co-piloted with drum vet Louis Hayes was a supercharged dynamo. Recorded with Junior Cook on tenor saxophone, Ronnie Matthews on piano and Stafford James on bass, *The Tour Volume One*, captured from a live set in 1976, burns and swings hard from beginning to end.



COUNT BASIE & LESTER YOUNG
Classic 1936–1947 Studio Sessions

(MOSAIC) **108**

This package of 173 tracks on eight CDs constitutes Mosaic's latest mega-exhibit, culled from the holdings of Universal Music and Sony Music, including all of Count Basie's recordings for Decca between Jan. 21, 1937, and Feb. 4, 1939. Mosaic's attention to sonic and discographical detail, contextual presentation and historical provenance make this collection a prize.



MAHALIA JACKSON

Moving On Up A Little Higher

(SHANACHIE) **45**

Moving On Up ... is the first Mahalia Jackson recording featuring new material in four decades. Produced by renowned gospel scholar and award-winning author Anthony Heilbut, this definitive collection reveals the iconic singer's voice in all its glory, capturing tones huge and small, stadium-filling and pianissimo.



KEITH JARRETT
A Multitude of Angels

(ECM) **91**

A Multitude of Angels is a four-CD set of recordings from a series of solo concerts in Italy in October 1996, documenting the conclusion of Keith Jarrett's experiments with long-form improvisation in performances from Modena, Ferrara, Turin and Genoa.



JOHN CAGE & SUN RA

John Cage Meets Sun Ra (MODERN HARMONIC) **44**

This historic recording of a June 1986 concert in Coney Island, New York, features the meeting of two musical renegades. Originally pressed in two editions of 1,000 records, this new complete edition features additional commentary by DownBeat contributor Howard Mandel, who penned the album's original liner notes.



SUN RA

Singles (STRUT) **86**

In addition to a prodigious discography of LPs, Sun Ra released numerous 45 r.p.m. singles. Working closely with the Sun Ra estate, the Strut label has compiled the definitive collection of rare singles released by Sun Ra across his career, which spanned 1952 to 1991. Some 45s have only been discovered in physical form in recent years; others appeared as one-off magazine singles and posthumous releases.



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Savory Collection, Vol. 2 (NATIONAL JAZZ MUSEUM IN HARLEM/APPLE MUSIC) **41**

This collection includes 22 rare tracks recorded between 1938 and 1940, further defining Count Basie's Swing Era legacy with tenor saxophonist Lester Young, along with many notable gems by other soloists. The material was collected by Bill Savory, who recorded commercials off the air for a transcription service by day, and compiled his own musical treasure chest at night.



JOHN COLTRANE

The Atlantic Years In Mono

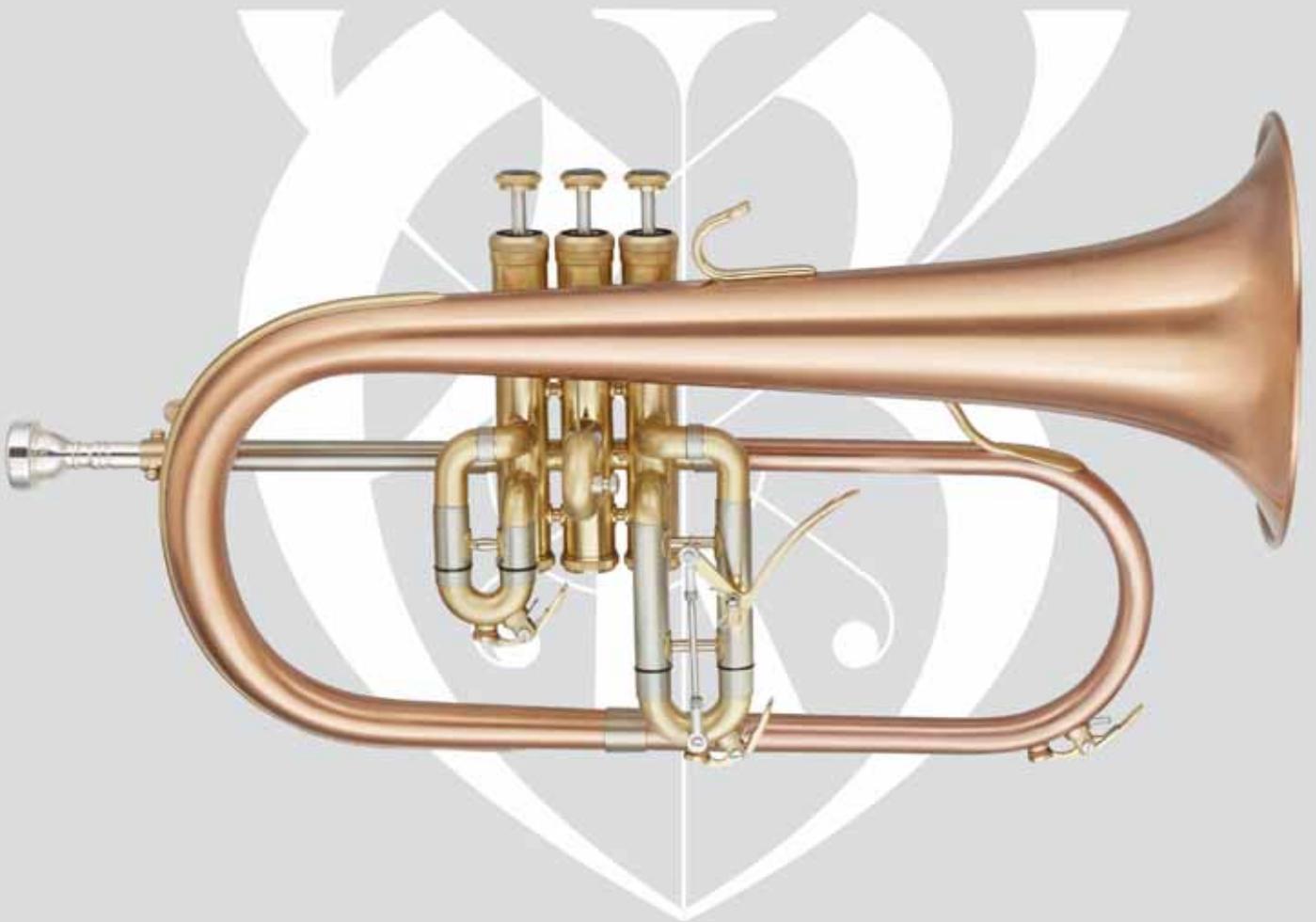
(ATLANTIC) **81**

This box set gathers Coltrane's mono recordings from the Atlantic vaults as a six-LP set with a 7-inch vinyl single. Included are mono versions of *Giant Steps*, *Bags & Trane* (with Milt Jackson), *Olé Coltrane*, *Coltrane Plays The Blues* and *The Avant Garde* (with Don Cherry). An accompanying 32-page bound booklet features photos by Lee Friedlander and liner notes by Grammy-winning author Ashley Kahn.

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12. Various Artists, *The Savory Collection, Vol. 1: Body And Soul: Coleman Hawkins & Friends* (NAT'L JAZZ MUSEUM/APPLE) 36
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MARY
HALVORSON

'MORE THAN I WOULD'VE HOPED FOR'

By Dan Ouellette | Photo by Jack Vartoogian

Over the past few years, unexpected surprises have been a bit of a rarity in the DownBeat Critics Poll. This year's winner in the Guitar category, Mary Halvorson, is indeed one of the more unpredictable honorees, as she outpaced perennial six-string victors such as Bill Frisell and John Scofield—without releasing a mega-selling album. Halvorson is riding a wave of critical accolades: She topped three Rising Star categories in this year's poll: Jazz Artist, Jazz Group and Composer.

A Massachusetts native now based in Brooklyn, Halvorson has steadily built her reputation as an avant-leaning artist for the new generation of jazz aficionados pining for something new and experimental. Her electric guitar style is characterized by a strong attack, dry sound, shape experiments, luscious lyricism and keen attention to the acoustic properties of her instrument, even though she uses effects. Halvorson, 36, has become a guitarist who demands attention regardless of the setting, whether she's leading one of her numerous bands, collaborating with guitarist Marc Ribot in his group The Young Philadelphians, playing in the collective trio Thumbscrew or delivering a duo project, such as *Crop Circles* (Relative Pitch), recorded with pianist Sylvie Courvoisier. Halvorson's extensive discography includes the beautiful-to-thrashing solo workout *Meltframe* (2015) and last year's brilliantly composed *Away With You* with her octet (both on the label Firehouse 12).

Though her personality isn't flashy, Halvorson is now in the jazz spotlight, a destination she reached through diligent work—and well-deserved critical acclaim.

"I don't feel like I'm the best guitarist, but it is an honor," said the lean, soft-spoken guitarist over espresso at Kos Kaffe coffeehouse in Brooklyn, shortly before heading to the "Y" for her thrice-weekly swim. "When I became a musician and started playing the kind of music that I do, I had very low





Mary Halvorson (left) performs with her octet, including Susan Alcorn, during the 2017 Winter Jazzfest in New York.

expectations for getting any kind of people to listen. I went into this thinking, ‘I believe in this and I really enjoy doing it, so I’m going to keep working on it.’ I didn’t do it with hopes for success. But when things like this happen, it blows my mind. I appreciate it. For me, it’s a chance for having my music be heard more than I would’ve hoped for.”

Halvorson has been scoring important octet bookings this year, including jazz festivals in Washington D.C. and Chicago. Perhaps her most significant engagement will take place July 18–23 at the famed Village Vanguard. The residency will be her first shows there as a bandleader. “For me, this is huge,” she said. “It’s not something I would have ever imagined.” She will perform with her exceptional octet—trumpeter Jonathan Finlayson, alto saxophonist Jon Irabagon, tenor saxophonist Ingrid Laubrock, trombonist Jacob Garchik, pedal steel guitarist Susan Alcorn, drummer Ches Smith and bassist Chris Lightcap (who’s subbing for John Hébert). The sets will feature music from *Away With You*, plus work she has composed recently.

Halvorson, a 2002 graduate of Wesleyan University who studied with reedist Anthony Braxton and guitarist Joe Morris, came up working in a duo with improvisational viola player Jessica Pavone. In 2008 Halvorson

began playing in a trio with Hébert and Smith. Although it has been years since she recorded with that trio, the bassist and drummer frequently play in her larger groups, including her genre-bending quintet, horn-charged septet and the uniquely angular octet.

Halvorson will wear many hats when she curates a week of her music next year (Jan. 30–Feb. 4) at The Stone, in one of the last runs of shows at the club’s current home before it moves to its new location at the New School. She’ll perform with her longtime trio; in her quartet Reverse Blue with reedist Chris Speed; in John Zorn’s bagatelles quartet; and in various settings with guitarists Ribot, Elliott Sharp and Miles Okazaki. (Sharp collaborated with Halvorson and Ribot on a new album, *Err Guitar*, out on Intakt; see review on page 83.)

“The way I compose for the octet is really different from the way I compose with my other groups,” she explained. “I’ll improvise on my guitar until I find some idea. It may be a melody fragment or chord changes or a bass line or rhythmic idea. I expand on it like a train of thought, filling in parts and revising and moving things around. It’s a quick process. I fine-tune it later. Bringing it to the octet is the most enjoyable part, fixing the little details like, ‘Should we play this part an octave higher or change the tempo?’”

She seeks out unique architectural forms, often eschewing the typical head-free-return-to-head structure. “I come up with structures that work best for the song,” she said.

Halvorson had not initially intended to record an octet album, but she expanded the ensemble after she was introduced to an instrument with which she had no previous history. “I began to work with Susan Alcorn, who hipped me to pedal steel guitar,” she said. “You don’t hear that sound so much in jazz, so when I heard Susan, I discovered how much she can bring to improvised music. In whatever context she plays—her ear and ability to improvise and the sounds she plays on the pedal steel—it always blows me away. I knew I had to add her to the group. I didn’t know how to write for pedal steel, but she showed me how it works, how it’s not tuned to standard tuning, how you have knee levers and the foot pedal.”

Halvorson quickly marveled at the sonic range of the pedal steel, which spans from lower than a bass to higher than a trumpet. “It can fit in anywhere,” she said. “Susan can play chords with me like two guitars, or harmonize with horns in a high register or double bass lines. That made her the glue for the band, and I composed accordingly. The new music I’m composing for the Vanguard is taking the group to the next level. The writing is dense, and then there

are the moments when the music opens up.”

While the octet has been Halvorson’s focus, she frequently has explored other settings. Her solo album *Meltframe*, which consists of covers of her favorite music, is a revelation of her prowess and unpredictability. “I always said that I wouldn’t record a solo album because I didn’t think I’d have any ideas related to solo improvising,” she said. “But because I play standards as a part of my practice routine, I realized that I could do my own arrangements of tunes I loved. Then I expanded it to tunes by contemporaries like Tomas Fujiwara and Chris Lightcap.”

Halvorson delivers a fierce, rambunctious take on Oliver Nelson’s “Cascades,” strums lyrically through Carla Bley’s “Ida Lupino,” gives a reverb-heavy reading of Duke Ellington’s “Solitude” and executes an astonishing run through McCoy Tyner’s “Aisha” that starts out normally enough, then slams into a heavy-metal interlude and ends with a stretch of distortion.

She also covers “Cheshire Hotel” by French guitarist Noël Akchoté. “That song is on a Sam Rivers album [*Configuration*] that I listened to in college—a strong melody that stuck in my head,” Halvorson said. Akchoté got in touch with her after hearing her rendition. The pair decided to record an adventurous improv duo concert, *Live In Strasbourg*, released last fall on

Akchoté’s namesake label.

Halvorson has performed in numerous duos, including *Secret Keeper* with bassist Stephan Crump. They’ve recorded two albums on the Intakt label: 2013’s *Super Eight* and 2015’s *Emerge*. She also has an avant-rock band called *People*, with bassist Kyle Forester and drummer Kevin Shea, in which all three members sing. The long list of guitarists with whom she has collaborated includes Frisell, Morris, Nels Cline, Liberty Ellman and Brandon Seabrook.

But it is in Ribot’s punk-funk band *The Young Philadelphians* that Halvorson enjoys perhaps her most audaciously fun role. Documented on *Live In Toyko* (Enja/Yellowbird), the music is a mix of Ornette Coleman’s *Prime Time* and ’70s Philly soul, performed with authenticity by two *Prime Time* alumni—bassist Jamaaladeen Tacuma and drummer G. Calvin Weston—as well as a three-piece string section. She has been playing with the band since 2014 and will perform with them at the Umbria Jazz winter fest in Orvieto, Italy, at the end of the year.

“Marc already had the band, and he asked me to be the second guitarist,” Halvorson recalled. “I thought it would be cool because I was a pretty unlikely candidate to be playing that type of music. But I love it. It’s great to be trying out different things. Marc’s only instruc-

tion to me was to play something different than what he was playing. Marc is absolutely one of my favorite guitarists on the planet. Any chance I get to play with him is exciting. I learn so much. His idea is to always be completely in the moment, which makes for music that is totally unexpected.”

In addition to writing music for her octet, Halvorson is focusing on a new band she has formed, *Code Girl*, for which she has composed music and lyrics. Joining her in the quintet are experimental vocalist Amirtha Kidambi, trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire and bassist Michael Formanek and drummer Tomas Fujiwara (both of whom are in *Thumbscrew*).

Halvorson said the *Code Girl* music has “a lyricism and a strange intensesness.” She added, “It’s a lot of improv. It’s not drastically different from how I compose for my other groups, but it is a little more stripped-down.”

While Halvorson spent much of last year composing, this year’s focus will be on practice. “I’m trying to get better,” she said. “I’ve always been a practitioner, and there’s still so much to improve on, like ear training, harmony, knowledge of harmony. This is enjoyable to me.”

Beyond that, she said she had no immediate goal in mind. “That, to me, is exciting: to not be working on something new,” she said. “Right now I need a little breather.”

DB



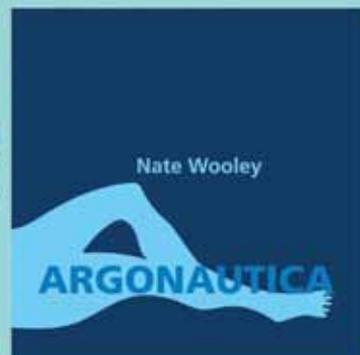
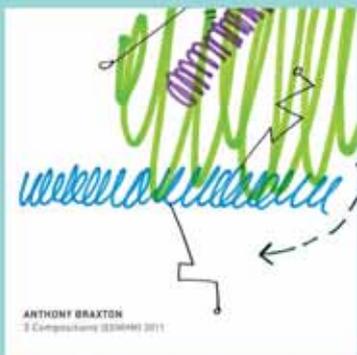
Firehouse 12 Records congratulates Mary Halvorson and Taylor Ho Bynum, winners in five categories of the 2017 *DownBeat* Critic’s Poll.

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Soprano
Saxophone

JANE BLOOM

By James Hale | Photo by Brigitte Lacombe

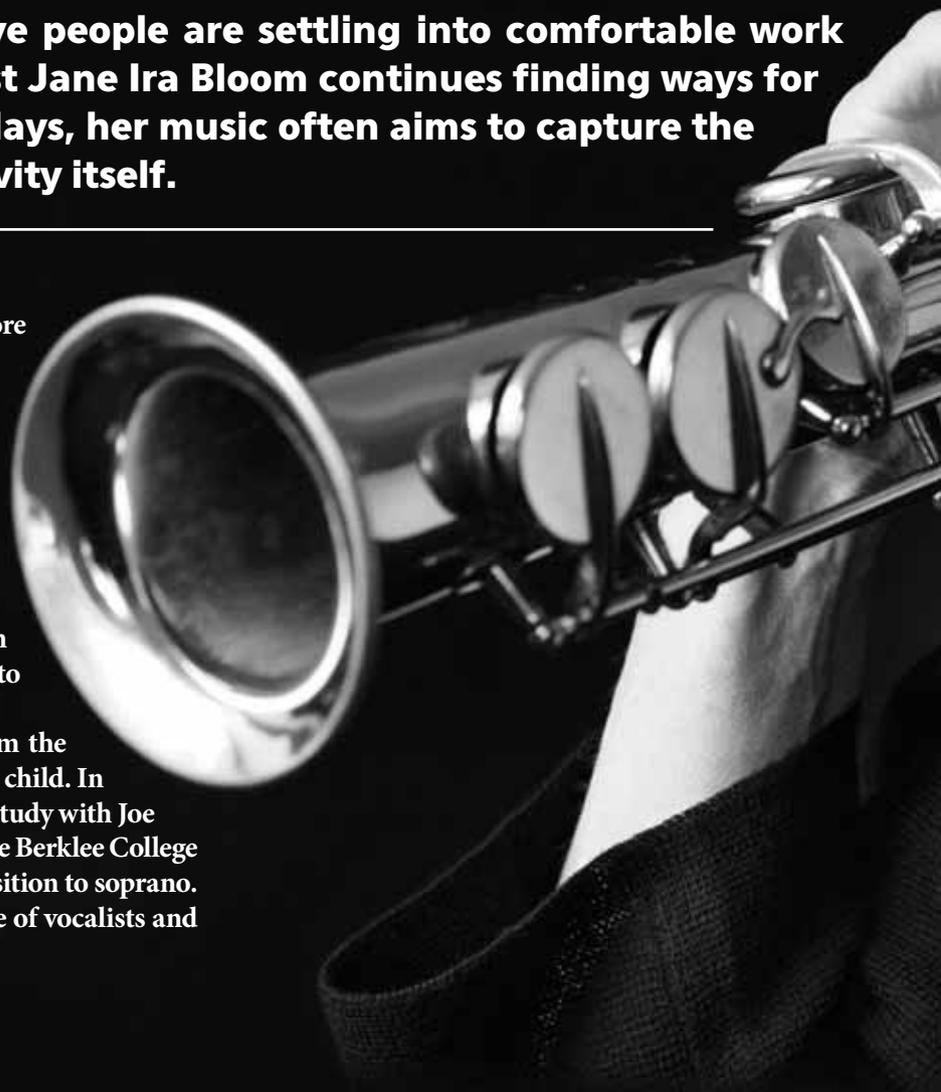
At an age when most creative people are settling into comfortable work patterns, soprano saxophonist Jane Ira Bloom continues finding ways for her artistry to evolve. These days, her music often aims to capture the spontaneous nature of creativity itself.

“I have noticed a trend to record more compositionally complex pieces,” Bloom, 62, said. “My music is going in the opposite direction. I’m trying to minimize and pare it down.”

That the Boston native continues to explore new ways of working in the studio and communicating with listeners is no surprise, given her restless spirit and inquisitive mind.

“I’ve always been interested in ideas,” Bloom said. “They inspire me. I like to keep trying to surprise myself.”

Her earliest experimentations took her from the piano to drums and then to alto saxophone as a child. In 1968, she began more than a decade of private study with Joe Viola, chair of the woodwinds department at the Berklee College of Music, a period that coincided with her transition to soprano. The switch, she said, was influenced by her love of vocalists and trumpeters.



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"There is something about the nuance of the phrasing of vocalists that always spoke to me, and the soprano seemed like the natural way to express that," said Bloom, a professor of jazz and contemporary music at The New School who has been on the faculty since 1989.

While most soprano players of Bloom's era fell under the influence of either John Coltrane or Steve Lacy, she developed a distinctive approach to the horn, which included moving its bell rapidly to create a Doppler effect and shifting her stance onstage. Influenced by early electronic music during her years at Yale University, she also began feeding her saxophone through effects processors, and eventually her acoustic and electronic approaches began to cross over.

After leaving Yale with a liberal arts undergraduate degree and a master's degree in music in 1977, Bloom moved to New York, but she found little work in the mid-1980s. One night, she and her husband, actor Joe Grifasi, were hanging out with fellow actor Brian Dennehy. When Bloom mentioned how slow things were, Dennehy asked her what else she was interested in besides music. When she told him about her lifelong fascination with space exploration, he suggested she write to NASA to inquire if she could contribute anything.

"I wrote a letter asking if anyone had ever done any research into sound in zero gravity," said Bloom. "It was a total message in a bottle, but several months went by and I got this letter from Robert Schulman of the NASA Art Program. Bob was fascinated that a musician was interested in space, and we developed a correspondence."

Her correspondence with Schulman eventually led to a commission to compose music influenced by the space program, a large ensemble piece that premiered at the Kennedy Space Center in 1989. "That was one of the peak experiences of my life," Bloom said.

In addition to *Art & Aviation* (Arabesque, 1992), a shimmering exploration of electro-acoustic sound with collaborators who included drummer Jerry Granelli and trumpeter Kenny Wheeler, she has made direct allusions to space travel and flight on *Wingwalker* (Outline, 2010) and *Sixteen Sunsets* (Outline, 2013), which takes its title from a quote by NASA astronaut Joseph Allen.

As much as Bloom has been influenced by space exploration, more earthbound movement also sparks her imagination. In 2003, she turned her attention to revolutionary action painter Jackson Pollock and produced one of her most evocative recordings, *Chasing Paint* (Arabesque). Again, it was a case of her channeling an early fascination through music.

"As a young person, whenever I saw Pollock's paintings, I just got it," she said. "But it wasn't until I was developing my own sonic vocabulary that I realized the natural corollary between what he was doing with drip painting, his sweeping arm movements, and the movement of sound."

Over 16 albums as a leader, she has chased that mercurial sound, usually in the company of a small cadre of like-minded improvisers who include drummers Granelli, Matt Wilson and Bobby Previte; bassists Mark Helias, Mark Dresser and Cameron Brown; and pianists Dawn Clement, Fred Hersch and Jamie Saft. Bloom has seldom stepped outside that circle to act as accompanist on other musicians' recordings or collaborator on special projects. The question of what has kept her so focused on her own work leaves her searching for a definitive answer.

"The early part of my career was so self-motivated that it just kind of stuck, or maybe it's just who I am. I tend to have found collaborators who I have connected with deeply, and I work with them for a long time. It's not from any lack of interest of working with others; it's just the way things turned out."

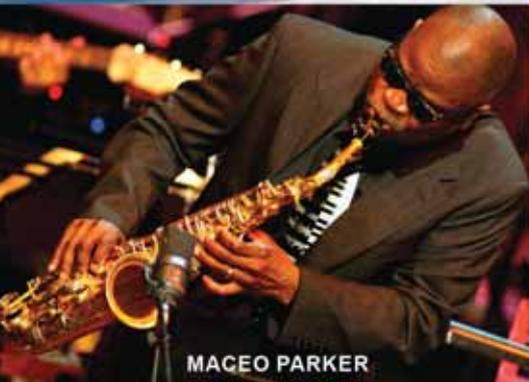
Now, she's closing the circle even tighter, using just Helias and Previte on her superb album *Early Americans* (Outline, 2016) and sticking with the trio for her latest project, music inspired by poet Emily Dickinson.

"When we were in the studio in April for that project, I realized how the music was freeing up—even with all the compositional cues. It's hard to record with complete spontaneity, but that's something I hope to become more comfortable with and share through the recorded medium." **DB**



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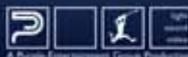


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ON HIS EIGHTH ALBUM, NOAH PREMINGER DEALS WITH BIG ISSUES: LIFE, DEATH AND CIVIL LIBERTIES. THE TENOR SAXOPHONIST'S SELF-RELEASED *MEDITATIONS ON FREEDOM* IS AN IMPASSIONED MUSICAL TREATISE ADDRESSING AMERICA'S NUMEROUS ILLS, BE THEY SOCIETAL, ECONOMIC OR POLITICAL.

“I wanted the album to be a conversation starter, something I could discuss onstage both verbally and musically,” Preminger said from his home near Boston. “I hoped it would create awareness, and maybe someone would send the record to a friend. It has nothing to do with Donald Trump, literally; it’s about what our country is turning into and why freedoms are at risk, and do people really understand that? Artists struggle, but this is one of the more fulfilling things I’ve been able to do as a musician.”

Preminger’s huge tenor tone and muscular rhythms fill his music with warmth and direction, but he’s more than this year’s model. Preminger surrounds himself with likeminded players on *Meditations On Freedom*, the album’s arrangements recalling storied jazz from John Coltrane to Sonny Rollins to Chico Hamilton’s various groups. Preminger and his band—Jason Palmer (trumpet), Kim Cass (bass) and Ian Froman (drums)—came to play, to improvise and to offer musical meditations on the theme of protest.

“The only reason we play is to be original,” Preminger said. “When I was a kid I practiced all day long, 10 hours a day. I sacrificed for the instrument to learn the tradition and to be a better technician on the horn. That starts to fade when you develop ideas and create your own personality and character.”

“I don’t touch my horn at home—ever,” Preminger continued. “It comes out when I get paid to play. I haven’t practiced the horn in over 10 years. But that’s because it’s in me at every moment. It’s in my fingers, in my head. I want to improvise freely and not play regurgitated crap.”

The album is unequivocal in intent. Preminger’s original material, bearing such titles as “We Have A Dream,” “Mother Earth,” “The 99 Percent” and “Broken Treaties,” balance the album’s cover songs, which include Sam Cooke’s “A Change Is Gonna Come,” Bob Dylan’s “Only A Pawn In Their Game” and Bruce Hornsby’s “The Way It Is.”

Though Preminger’s musical interests are contemporary, there’s no denying the influence of Ornette Coleman, Rollins and Coltrane on his saxophone playing, and the impact of those master musicians’ groups on his own.

“Everybody dips their feet in what came before them, whether you stick your toe in it or take a bath,” Preminger said. “I want to hear someone sound like themselves. Take what the masters did and put your own variation on it. Then learn what the variations are and how you can create your own arsenal of sounds.”

In addition to recording a solo saxophone album at New England Conservatory’s Jordan Hall, Preminger has made a trio album with Cass on bass and Dan Weiss on drums, as well as a duo album with pianist Frank Carlberg. He is currently recording *The Chopin Project*, a series of nocturnes set to music by himself and drummer Rob Garcia.

“I’d like people to hear my music and say that it’s very real and relatable, and that it grabs them,” Preminger said. “That is the most important thing to me—to be a distinctive character. All the greats were unique.”

—Ken Micallef



Rising Star—Piano

KRIS DAVIS

‘Open To Surprise’

THE WORD “OPENNESS” CROPS UP OFTEN IN A CONVERSATION WITH PIANIST KRIS DAVIS, WHO USES THE TERM WHILE REFERRING TO MUSIC, AND TO LIFE IN GENERAL. REFLECTING ON HER 2016 CD/DVD SET *DUOPOLY* (PYROCLASTIC)—WHICH FEATURES HER IN DUETS WITH EIGHT DIFFERENT PARTNERS—SHE SAID: “THE APPEAL OF DUO PLAYING IS THE OPENNESS OF IT, WHERE THE MUSIC FEELS LIKE IT CAN GO ANYWHERE. THEN THERE IS THE CONVERSATIONAL INTIMACY OF IT, LIKE TWO PEOPLE TALKING, WHERE THERE’S THIS SPACE FOR GIVE-AND-TAKE.”



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

For her interview with DownBeat, the Calgary native decided to meet us at a café in the Park Slope neighborhood of her former home borough of Brooklyn, just before giving a private lesson to a teenage student. Davis, 37, moved not long ago to the Hudson Valley community of Ossining, north of New York City, with her husband, guitarist Nate Radley, and their 4-year-old son, Benji.

“It was becoming impossible to sustain a life as a parent and a musician in New York,” she explained. “Our lives are so much easier in Ossining day-to-day, and there’s room for Benji to play outside. I feel lighter overall, with more mental and physical space and time to compose and experiment.”

Although her soft-spoken demeanor and appreciation for suburban gardening might belie the fact, Davis is every bit the driven, focused, prolific artist, very much a modernist. Prior to *Duopoly*, she released arresting albums as a leader in solo, trio, quartet, quintet and octet formats over a dozen years or so, not to mention adventurous discs with trio Paradoxical Frog (with saxophonist Ingrid Laubrock and drummer Tyshawn Sorey) and her contributions to albums by the likes of saxophonist Tony Malaby and bassist Eric Revis.

Duopoly captured Davis performing alongside a dizzying variety of partners: saxophonist Tim Berne, clarinetist Don Byron, guitarists

Bill Frisell and Julian Lage, pianists Angelica Sanchez and Craig Taborn, and drummers Marcus Gilmore and Billy Drummond.

“Everybody on the record is involved with different aspects of jazz—but with the common thread of each being a creative musician and a great listener,” Davis said about the *Duopoly* lineup. Although some interactions were trickier than she expected—it took 12 takes to find happy common ground with Bryon on “Prelude To A Kiss”—others clicked right away. “It was amazing how easy it was to play duo with Bill Frisell,” she said. “We did two takes of a tune, then three improvs—all in a half-hour.”

The session with Taborn went so well that the two embarked on a rare duo-piano tour. “With duo piano, there’s the basic challenge of staying out of each other’s way,” she said, laughing. “But we never discussed the music that much, just working it out on the gig. We talked instead about everything from microtonal death-metal to Geri Allen.” Davis is prepping a live album from the dozen shows with Taborn, for release on her Pyroclastic Records imprint.

Reflecting on Davis’ qualities, Taborn echoed what many DownBeat critics were surely thinking when they voted her the winner of the category Rising Star—Piano. “Kris has the mind of a composer but an improviser’s soul,” Taborn said. “Her music has so much order and design, even as her tempera-

ment is open to surprise and challenge. Also, her playing is much more responsive to context than it is to stylistic tendencies. Kris is really a fearless improviser—and the truth is that there aren’t as many of those these days as one might think.”

Davis recently composed a book of classical-style pieces for solo piano. Pianist Rory Cowal has recorded these for an album to be released by New World Records next year, and Davis will be publishing the pieces as sheet music via Pyroclastic. Like the ambitious ventures that resulted in her octet album *Save Your Breath* (Clean Feed) and the audiovisual release of *Duopoly*, this new project for piano was supported by the Shifting Foundation, whose David Breskin has become an “indispensable” catalyst for Davis as a producer.

Of late, Davis has been playing music from John Zorn’s book of bagatelles, with a quartet that also includes Sorey, guitarist Mary Halvorson and bassist Drew Gress. And, inspired by the example of Dave Douglas’s Greenleaf Music, Davis aims to offer a subscription series via Pyroclastic, releasing something monthly—whether it’s a studio album, live recording, video, scores or an interview. “I’m looking forward to opening up the format for releasing creative work. Openness creates room for more possibilities.”

—Bradley Bamberger

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BECCA STEVENS

Rising Star—
Female Vocalist

Regal Strength

IT'S AN ODD QUESTION FOR AN ARTIST WHO HAD JUST BEEN NAMED CO-WINNER OF THE CRITICS POLL CATEGORY RISING STAR—FEMALE VOCALIST: DOES BECCA STEVENS EVEN CONSIDER HERSELF A JAZZ SINGER? “IN SHORT, NO, BUT IN PART, YES,” SHE REPLIED.

Achieving this honor despite the absence of overt “jazz singing” in the albums released under her own name makes the accolade all the more impressive.

Stevens chatted with DownBeat from her Brooklyn home, having just returned from a tour of the East Coast and Midwest with her namesake group. The next day she would be leaving for a tour of Europe, where the Becca Stevens Band would be opening for the jazz-rock juggernaut Snarky Puppy, which featured her on its album *Family Dinner, Volume 2* (GroundUp).

In four albums, including her latest, *Regina* (GroundUp), the singer and guitarist from Winston-Salem, North Carolina, has created pop songs that show the imprint of her jazz education in their skillful handling of advanced harmony and unusual time signatures. (Stevens graduated from The New School, where she majored in vocal performance and composition.) But jazz is only one of her influences. Her multilayered songs—which often feature her playing the *charango*, a type of lute—incorporate elements of classical, folk, progressive rock and world music.

“Her music is an amalgam, an organic blend of many different elements,” pianist Billy Childs said. “It reminds me a lot of Joni Mitchell and Laura Nyro.” The comparison is apt; Childs featured Stevens on his award-winning 2015 album *Map To The Treasure: Reimagining Laura Nyro* (Sony Masterworks).

One night backstage at New York’s Blue Note, vocalist Lisa Fischer insisted that Childs take a listen to Stevens’ 2011 album, *Weightless* (Sunnyside). “When I first heard her voice,” Childs recalled, “I immediately fell in love, not only with the voice, but with her compositions. They’re very complex and contrapuntal, and the forms are really innovative. Her singing sounds beautiful and innocent, but underneath there’s real depth and soul, worldly experience and knowledge. She’s able to render stories believably because it feels like she’s experienced them.”

As a singer, Stevens has worked with jazz trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire and bassist/vocalist Esperanza Spalding. She’s also a member of Tillery, a trio of singers that includes Gretchen Parlato and Rebecca Martin. Lately Stevens has been collaborating with rock icon David Crosby and Grammy-winning vocalist/multi-instrumentalist Jacob Collier.

“I see jazz as a huge part of who I am,” Stevens said, “and the roots of my experience in New York. But if I were to just say, ‘I’m a jazz musician,’ I wouldn’t be telling the truth.” As a teenager, she was drawn to the genre; later her jazz studies enabled her to feel liberated enough to “go genre-less” in her own writing, she said. “More than colors in a palette, jazz has given me a different, welcoming approach to music—a feeling of no boundaries.”

—Allen Morrison



Becca Stevens is a co-winner of the category Rising Star—Female Vocalist.

SHERVIN LAINEZ

Rising Star—Female Vocalist

JEN SHYU

Perpetually Compelling



Jen Shyu is a co-winner of the category Rising Star—Female Vocalist.

THE MULTILINGUAL, MULTI-INSTRUMENTALIST, MULTI-DISCIPLINE COMPOSER JEN SHYU (PRONOUNCED “SHOE”) USES JAZZ’S CORE PRINCIPLES AND ITS TOP PURVEYORS TO CREATE PERPETUALLY COMPELLING, PAN-GLOBAL MUSIC. BECAUSE IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO REDUCE HER ARTISTRY TO MERE BUZZWORDS OR TRENDS, THE BEST WAY TO FULLY UNDERSTAND IT IS TO SEE HER PERFORM ONSTAGE.

Bassist John Hébert’s set at New York’s Cornelia Street Cafe last fall showcased Shyu’s beautifully stark vocals, her skillful playing of the Taiwanese moon lute, and her consistently riveting stage presence.

“Sometimes, I think I am channeling,” Shyu said recently at a New York teahouse. “One of my main purposes in learning these hidden vocal traditions, especially from women ... it’s almost like they’re speaking through me. If I can share their stories and introduce people to the beauty of this music, then I have accomplished something.”

A recipient of a Fulbright Scholarship and Doris Duke Artist and Impact Awards, Shyu’s field research has taken her into the jungles and mountains of Cuba, Taiwan, Brazil, China, South Korea, East Timor and Indonesia. She has composed works for piano, Taiwanese moon lute, violin, Japanese *biwa* and Korean *kayagum*. Shyu’s retellings of myths and legends, personal stories and dreams have constituted some of her work, including her upcoming Pi Records release, *Song Of Silver Geese*.

“[Typically,] I will research the music and record the elders in the mountains, in the bushes,” Shyu explained. “I sit down with the people who have taught me these traditions and spend days replaying the recordings for them. They tell me, line by line, what the words are. I go deep into the songs to learn the lyrics and the language.”

Known for her recordings as a vocalist with alto saxophonist Steve Coleman’s group, Shyu has also produced six comprehensive albums, which, when presented live, completely reinvent (or obliterate) jazz performance boundaries. Whether singing, dancing or playing her diverse arsenal of instruments, Shyu’s compositional content and performance/instrumental skill set is without parallel.

“As a jazz singer,” she noted, “I’ve wanted to get inspiration for impro-

visation and composition through going deep into other traditions, [some of which] are very improvisational, and technically Javanese, [such as] *sindhenan*. Everything I’ve learned stays with me. It’s cumulative. There’s no end to the learning. These traditions are ancient, and the people who practice them are still learning.”

Song Of Silver Geese was recorded with her ensemble Jade Tongue—Chris Dingman, vibraphone; Mat Maneri, viola; Thomas Morgan, bass; Satoshi Takeishi, percussion; Anna Webber, flutes; and Dan Weiss, drums—along with the Mivos Quartet. (The lineup for this project was Jennifer Choi, first violin; Erica Dicker, second violin; Victor Lowrie, viola; and Mariel Roberts, cello.)

Distilling cultural essences is natural for Shyu, but inspired by the loss of her friend and collaborator, Sri Joko Raharjo—who died with his wife and infant son in an automobile accident at age 30—*Song Of Silver Geese* tells the story of his 6-year-old daughter, who survived the crash.

“The music begins with Jade Tongue and the Mivos Quartet enacting the accident,” Shyu explained. “Then I see the girl as alone; her family has perished. I introduce guides who help her through the terror. One is moon lute virtuoso Chen Da from Taiwan; then Ho’ar Nahak Samane Oan from Wehali Kingdom mythology from Timor; and Baridegi from Korean folklore.”

Prior to presenting her new music to the musicians, Shyu rehearsed with dancer and co-director Satoshi Haga. “We improvised with the stories that I wanted to express through the piece,” she said. “I scored what we had improvised and wrote through-composed music with some improvisation for the Mivos Quartet. Then I explained to Jade Tongue where to improvise within the harmonic, rhythmic and melodic material.”

Shyu performed excerpts from *Song Of Silver Geese* with newer material at the Brooklyn venue National Sawdust in June, calling the work *Nine Doors*. Currently preparing for her upcoming “Songs of Our World Now/Songs Everyone Writes Now” (SOWN/SEWN) U.S. tour, Shyu elaborated on the source of her unique stage presence.

“I was a ballet dancer first,” she recalled. “At age 10, I was Clara in *The Nutcracker*. That was about the joy of being in character onstage. Practicing piano and violin was more of a chore. Now, I can’t just do a music gig. There is so much I want to communicate from the rituals and ceremonies I have seen across the world. Why just go up and announce the tune? There is so much more I want to express.” —Ken Micallef

ANNUAL 65TH CRITICS POLL

COMPLETE RESULTS

We are proud to present the results of the **65th Annual DownBeat International Critics Poll**, which includes **Jazz Album of the Year (page 30)** and **Historical Album of the Year (page 40)**.

Hall Of Fame

Don Cherry	75
Anthony Braxton	73
Charles Lloyd	71
Pharoah Sanders	69
Jack DeJohnette	65
Jimmy Heath	65
Benny Golson	64
Sam Rivers	52
Kenny Barron	51
Paul Bley	49
Bobby Hutcherson	48
John McLaughlin	48
Bob Brookmeyer	45
Jaki Byard	44
Kenny Burrell	43
Shirley Horn	43
Hank Mobley	41
Oliver Nelson	41

VETERANS COMMITTEE

Hall Of Fame

Herbie Nichols	71%
George Gershwin	69%
Eubie Blake	66%

(Artists must receive at least 66% of the Veterans Committee votes to gain entry in the Hall of Fame.)

Jazz Artist

Wadada Leo Smith	159
Charles Lloyd	89
Donny McCaslin	79
Henry Threadgill	74
Kamasi Washington	71
Maria Schneider	60
Chick Corea	57
Christian McBride	57
Wayne Shorter	51
Vijay Iyer	46
Jack DeJohnette	42
Fred Hersch	41
Dave Douglas	36
Robert Glasper	34
Brad Mehldau	33
Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah	33
Cécile McLorin Salvant	30
Esperanza Spalding	30
Jason Moran	28
Gregory Porter	28
Wynton Marsalis	26
Anthony Braxton	26

Jazz Album of the Year

Wadada Leo Smith, *America's National Parks (Cuneiform)* ..66



Charles Lloyd & The Marvels, winners of the Jazz Group category

Henry Threadgill, <i>Old Locks And Irregular Verbs (Pi)</i>	60
Fred Hersch Trio, <i>Sunday Night At The Vanguard (Palmetto)</i>	51
DeJohnette/Coltrane/Garrison, <i>In Movement (ECM)</i>	50
Nels Cline, <i>Lovers (Blue Note)</i> ..	45
Sonny Rollins, <i>Holding The Stage: Road Shows, Vol. 4 (Doxy/OKeh)</i>	45
Gregory Porter, <i>Take Me To The Alley (Blue Note)</i>	43
Matt Wilson's Big Happy Family, <i>Beginning Of A Memory (Palmetto)</i>	43
Andrew Cyrille Quartet, <i>Declaration Of Musical Independence (ECM)</i>	41
Branford Marsalis Quartet featuring Kurt Elling, <i>Upward Spiral (Marsalis Music/OKeh)</i> ..	40
Charlie Haden Liberation Orchestra, <i>Time/Life (Song For The Whales And Other Beings) (Impulse!)</i>	40
JD Allen, <i>Americana: Musings On Jazz And Blues (Savant)</i>	39
John Scofield, <i>Country For Old Men (Impulse!)</i>	38
Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis featuring Jon Batiste, <i>The Music Of John Lewis (Blue Engine)</i>	36
Craig Taborn, <i>Daylight Ghosts (ECM)</i>	36
Darcy James Argue's Secret Society, <i>Real Enemies (New Amsterdam)</i> ..	34
Donny McCaslin, <i>Beyond Now (Motéma)</i>	33
Mary Halvorson Octet, <i>Away With</i>	

<i>You (Firehouse 12)</i>	30
Randy Weston, <i>The African Nubian Suite (African Rhythms Records)</i>	28
Brad Mehldau Trio, <i>Blues And Ballads (Nonesuch)</i>	27
Ingrid & Christine Jensen, <i>Infinite (Whirlwind)</i>	24
Catherine Russell, <i>Harlem On My Mind (Jazz Village)</i>	24
Carla Bley/Andy Sheppard/Steve Swallow, <i>Andando El Tiempo (ECM)</i>	23
Bill Charlap, <i>Notes From New York (Verve)</i>	23
Jane Ira Bloom, <i>Early Americans (Outline)</i>	22
Tom Harrell, <i>Something Gold, Something Blue (HighNote)</i>	21
Brian Lynch, <i>Madera Latino: A Latin Perspective On The Music Of Woody Shaw (Holistic MusicWorks)</i>	21
Jeff Parker, <i>The New Breed (International Anthem)</i>	21
Joey Alexander, <i>Countdown (Motéma)</i>	20
Tyshawn Sorey, <i>The Inner Spectrum Of Variables (Pi)</i>	20
Houston Person & Ron Carter, <i>Chemistry (HighNote)</i>	19
Joshua Redman & Brad Mehldau, <i>Nearness (Nonesuch)</i>	19
Allison Miller's Boom Tic Boom, <i>Otis Was A Polar Bear (Royal Potato Family)</i>	18
David Murray/Geri Allen/Terri Lyne Carrington, <i>Perfection (Motéma)</i> ..	17
George Coleman, <i>A Master</i>	

<i>Speaks (Smoke Sessions)</i>	17
Greg Ward, <i>Touch My Beloved's Thoughts (Greenleaf)</i>	17
Nate Smith, <i>Kinfolk: Postcards From Everywhere (Ropeadope)</i> ..	16
Kris Davis, <i>Duopoly (Pyroclastic)</i>	15
Benny Golson, <i>Horizon Ahead (HighNote)</i>	15
The Cookers, <i>Call Of The Wild And Peaceful Heart (Smoke Sessions)</i>	15
Norah Jones, <i>Day Breaks (Blue Note)</i>	15
Jason Moran, <i>The Armory Concert (YES)</i>	15
Miguel Zenón, <i>Tipico (Miel Music)</i>	15

Historical Album

Bill Evans, <i>Some Other Time: The Lost Session From The Black Forest (Resonance)</i> ..	192
Miles Davis, <i>Freedom Jazz Dance: The Bootleg Series Vol. 5 (Sony Legacy)</i>	156
Count Basie & Lester Young, <i>Classic 1936-1947 Studio Sessions (Mosaic)</i>	108
Keith Jarrett, <i>A Multitude Of Angels (ECM)</i>	91
Sun Ra, <i>Singles: The Definitive 45s Collection Vol. 1, 1952-1961 (Strut)</i>	86
John Coltrane, <i>The Atlantic Years In Mono (Atlantic)</i>	81
Woody Shaw & Louis Hayes, <i>The Tour Volume One (HighNote)</i>	56

Mahalia Jackson, <i>Moving On Up A Little Higher</i> (Shanachie).....	45
John Cage & Sun Ra, <i>John Cage Meets Sun Ra: Complete Performance</i> (Modern Harmonic)	44
Various Artists, <i>The Savory Collection, Volume 2: Jumpin' At The Woodside: Count Basie & Lester Young</i> (National Jazz Museum In Harlem/Apple Music)	41
Various Artists, <i>Classic Savoy Be-Bop Sessions: 1945-1949</i> (Mosaic).....	38
Various Artists, <i>The Savory Collection, Volume 1: Body And Soul: Coleman Hawkins & Friends</i> (National Jazz Museum In Harlem/Apple Music)	36
Erroll Garner, <i>Ready Take One</i> (Legacy).....	35
Peter Erskine Trio, <i>As It Was</i> (ECM).....	33
Van Morrison, <i>It's Too Late To Stop Now... Vol. II, III, IV & DVD</i> (Warner Bros.)	26
Steve Reich, <i>The ECM Recordings</i> (ECM).....	26
Blue Mitchell & Sonny Red, <i>Baltimore 1966</i> (Uptown)	25
NRBQ, <i>High Noon: A 50-Year Retrospective</i> (Omnivore)	25
Professor Longhair, <i>Live In Chicago</i> (Orleans)	20
Colosseum, <i>Live</i> (Esoteric).....	19
Philip Glass, <i>The Complete Sony Recordings</i> (Sony Classical).....	18
David Bowie, <i>What Can I Be Now? 1947-1976</i> (Parlophone),	17
Paul Butterfield Blues Band, <i>Got A Mind To Give Up Living: Live 1966</i> (Real Gone).....	17
Shirley Horn, <i>Live At The 4 Queens</i> (Resonance)	17
Don Cherry/John Tchicai/Irène Schweizer/ Léon Francioli/Pierre Favre, <i>Musical Monsters (Willisau Concert)</i> (Intakt)	13
Betty Davis, <i>The Columbia Years: 1968-1969</i> (Light In The Attic) ..	13
Dennis Coffey, <i>Hot Coffey In The D: Burnin' At Morey Baker's Show-place Lounge</i> (Resonance)	11
Julius Eastman, <i>Feminine</i> (Frozen Reeds)	10

Jazz Group

Charles Lloyd & The Marvels.. 80	
Jack DeJohnette/Ravi Coltrane/ Matthew Garrison	72
The Cookers.....	70
Fred Hersch Trio.....	62
Wayne Shorter Quartet	56
Brian Blade & The Fellowship Band	55
Vijay Iyer Trio	55
Wadada Leo Smith Golden Quintet.....	55
Donny McCaslin Group	53
JD Allen Trio	44
Dave Douglas Quintet.....	42
John Scofield/Joe Lovano Quartet	39

Christian McBride Trio	36
Matthew Shipp Trio	36
Tom Harrell Quintet	33
Ambrose Akinmusire Quintet... 32	
Claudia Quintet	32
Snarky Puppy.....	32
Henry Threadgill Zoid.....	31
Miguel Zenón Quartet	29

Big Band

Maria Schneider Orchestra... 238	
Darcy James Argue's Secret Society	139
Carla Bley with Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra ...	105
Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra.....	97
Sun Ra Arkestra.....	62
Vanguard Jazz Orchestra.....	53
Arturo O'Farrill & The Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra	48
Mingus Big Band	46
Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra.....	45
Count Basie Orchestra	34
Christian McBride Big Band ...	33
Orrin Evans' Captain Black Big Band.....	31
Satoko Fujii Orchestra	31
Christine Jensen Jazz Orchestra.....	31
Rob Mazurek Exploding Star Orchestra.....	30
Roy Hargrove Big Band	28
Dave Holland Big Band.....	28
ICP Orchestra.....	27

Trumpet

Wadada Leo Smith..... 171	
Ambrose Akinmusire	139
Tom Harrell	100
Ingrid Jensen.....	85
Dave Douglas.....	82
Avishai Cohen	74
Terence Blanchard	70
Wynton Marsalis	69
Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah	62
Nicholas Payton.....	53
Steven Bernstein.....	48
Jeremy Pelt	48
Marquis Hill	42
Brian Lynch	40
Wallace Roney	40
Jonathan Finlayson	36
Sean Jones	36
Ralph Alessi	35
Randy Brecker	32
Terrell Stafford	32
Tomasz Stanko.....	30

Trombone

Steve Turre	120
Wycliffe Gordon	117
Trombone Shorty	92
Robin Eubanks.....	89
Steve Davis	65
Ray Anderson	64
Ryan Keberle.....	62
Roswell Rudd.....	58
Conrad Herwig.....	57
Michael Dease	55



Nicole Mitchell tops the Trumpet category

MICHAEL JACKSON

Curtis Fowlkes	54
Ku-umba Frank Lacy	51
Curtis Fuller	49
Vincent Gardner	49
Steve Swell.....	41
Delfeayo Marsalis.....	38
Marshall Gilkes.....	34
George Lewis.....	31
Wolter Wierbos.....	31
Jeb Bishop	29

Soprano Saxophone

Jane Ira Bloom	220
Wayne Shorter	164
Branford Marsalis.....	121
Dave Liebman	113
Anat Cohen	96
Ravi Coltrane.....	87
Jane Bunnett.....	83
Sam Newsome.....	70
Evan Parker	54
Steve Wilson	52
Chris Potter	48
Joshua Redman	41
Kenny Garrett	35
Roscoe Mitchell	35
Tia Fuller.....	30
Donny McCaslin.....	29
Christine Jensen	28
Joe Lovano	28
James Carter.....	26
Ted Nash	25

Alto Saxophone

Rudresh Mahanthappa	156
Miguel Zenón	119
Kenny Garrett	111
Steve Coleman.....	97
Steve Lehman	90
Gary Bartz	78
Donald Harrison	59
Henry Threadgill	59

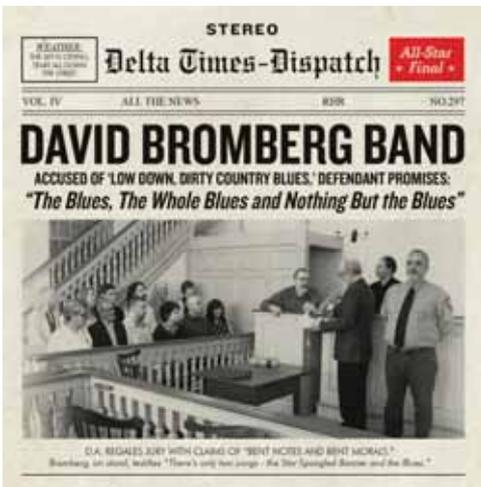
Lee Konitz	58
Jon Irabagon	55
David Binney	54
Tia Fuller	53
Paquito D'Rivera	44
Darius Jones	38
Anthony Braxton	34
Tim Berne.....	33
Oliver Lake	32
Grace Kelly	31
Steve Wilson	30
Steve Slagle	25
Bobby Watson	25
Jim Snidero	21
David Sanborn	20

Tenor Saxophone

Charles Lloyd.....	139
Joe Lovano	128
JD Allen 100	
Donny McCaslin.....	89
Wayne Shorter	83
Chris Potter	80
Kamasi Washington	74
Branford Marsalis.....	56
Joshua Redman	54
Melissa Aldana.....	50
Eric Alexander	49
Jon Irabagon	42
Jimmy Heath	40
David Murray	35
Jerry Bergonzi	33
James Carter.....	33
Kidd Jordan.....	31
Noah Preminger	30
Houston Person	28
Marcus Strickland	28
Pharoah Sanders	25

Baritone Saxophone

Gary Smulyan	196
James Carter.....	169



David Bromberg Band won for Blues Album.



Akua Dixon, winner of the Rising Star—Miscellaneous Instrument category

Mats Gustafsson.....	111
Hamiet Blueitt.....	96
Ronnie Cuber.....	96
Claire Daly.....	86
Colin Stetson.....	66
Ken Vandermark.....	64
Joe Temperley.....	61
Brian Landrus.....	57
Howard Johnson.....	54
Scott Robinson.....	51
Tim Berne.....	49
John Surman.....	37
Roger Lewis.....	30
Vinny Golia.....	27
Patience Higgins.....	26
Chris Cheek.....	20
Paula Henderson.....	16
Charles Evans.....	15

Clarinet

Anat Cohen.....	327
Paquito D'Rivera.....	130
Ken Peplowski.....	109
Don Byron.....	106
Ben Goldberg.....	101
Evan Christopher.....	73
Victor Goines.....	69
Marty Ehrlich.....	65
David Krakauer.....	62
Chris Speed.....	32
Louis Sclavis.....	31
Eddie Daniels.....	30
Ab Baars.....	29
Michael Moore.....	28
Ken Vandermark.....	22
Jeff Lederer.....	21
Michael White.....	21
Ned Rothenberg.....	18
Jason Stein.....	18
Aurora Nealand.....	17

Flute

Nicole Mitchell.....	245
Charles Lloyd.....	128
Henry Threadgill.....	118
Jane Bunnett.....	105
Hubert Laws.....	103
Jamie Baum.....	90
Lew Tabackin.....	65
Elena Pinderhughes.....	62

Dave Valentin.....	45
Dave Liebman.....	43
Robert Dick.....	41
Marty Ehrlich.....	41
Holly Hofmann.....	40
James Newton.....	38
Roscoe Mitchell.....	33
Tia Fuller.....	32
Vinny Golia.....	30
Ali Ryerson.....	30
Anne Drummond.....	29
Kent Jordan.....	18

Piano

Kenny Barron.....	128
Fred Hersch.....	100
Brad Mehldau.....	96
Craig Taborn.....	90
Vijay Iyer.....	75
Herbie Hancock.....	69
Matthew Shipp.....	61
Jason Moran.....	57
Chick Corea.....	56
Bill Charlap.....	53
Keith Jarrett.....	52
Robert Glasper.....	43
Geri Allen.....	40
Cecil Taylor.....	39
Myra Melford.....	38
Randy Weston.....	38
George Cables.....	30
Joey Alexander.....	29
Gerald Clayton.....	29
Frank Kimbrough.....	28

Keyboard

Robert Glasper.....	164
Craig Taborn.....	149
Chick Corea.....	130
Herbie Hancock.....	127
Larry Goldings.....	87
Jason Lindner.....	72
John Medeski.....	66
Jamie Saft.....	54
Uri Caine.....	48
Gary Versace.....	48
Marc Cary.....	45
Nik Bärtsch.....	42
Bernie Worrell.....	37
Gary Husband.....	31

George Colligan.....	29
Hiroshi.....	29
Eddie Palmieri.....	29
Henry Butler.....	28
Jim Baker.....	27
Matthew Shipp.....	27
Patrice Rushen.....	27

Organ

Joey DeFrancesco.....	289
Dr. Lonnie Smith.....	237
Larry Goldings.....	130
John Medeski.....	97
Mike LeDonne.....	56
Brian Charette.....	50
Carla Bley.....	49
Amina Claudine Myers.....	46
Gary Versace.....	45
Jamie Saft.....	44
Craig Taborn.....	43
Barbara Dennerlein.....	35
Wayne Horvitz.....	34
Pat Bianchi.....	32
Jared Gold.....	32
Booker T. Jones.....	32
Tony Monaco.....	26
Brian Auger.....	21
Matthew Shipp.....	21
Chris Foreman.....	19

Guitar

Mary Halvorson.....	153
Bill Frisell.....	140
Nels Cline.....	107
John Scofield.....	89
Julian Lage.....	72
Larry Coryell.....	70
John Abercrombie.....	62
Marc Ribot.....	61
Pat Metheny.....	59
Lionel Loueke.....	53
Russell Malone.....	52
John McLaughlin.....	50
Kurt Rosenwinkel.....	49
Rez Abbasi.....	48
Dave Stryker.....	45
Ben Monder.....	34
Peter Bernstein.....	27
Liberty Ellman.....	25
Bobby Broom.....	23

Kevin Eubanks.....	23
Charlie Hunter.....	23

Bass

Christian McBride.....	190
Dave Holland.....	146
Ron Carter.....	136
Linda May Han Oh.....	95
Esperanza Spalding.....	87
William Parker.....	58
Stephan Crump.....	49
Michael Formanek.....	49
Stanley Clarke.....	46
John Clayton.....	43
John Patitucci.....	41
Mark Dresser.....	40
Scott Colley.....	39
Drew Gress.....	38
Ben Williams.....	38
Avishai Cohen.....	33
Ben Allison.....	32
Larry Grenadier.....	30
Reggie Workman.....	26
Victor Wooten.....	25

Electric Bass

Stanley Clarke.....	146
Esperanza Spalding.....	114
Steve Swallow.....	105
Marcus Miller.....	89
Matthew Garrison.....	82
Derrick Hodge.....	74
Richard Bona.....	63
Victor Wooten.....	59
Bob Cranshaw.....	58
Tim Lefebvre.....	58
Christian McBride.....	54
John Patitucci.....	54
Ingebrigt Håker Flaten.....	49
Tarus Mateen.....	44
Jamaaladeen Tacuma.....	43
Meshell Ndegeocello.....	41
Linda May Han Oh.....	39
James Genus.....	30
Tony Levin.....	30
George Porter.....	23

Violin

Regina Carter.....	346
Jenny Scheinman.....	184

Mark Feldman	119
Jean-Luc Ponty	73
Zach Brock	71
Mat Maneri	57
Christian Howes	47
Jason Kao Hwang	40
Eyvind Kang	32
Charles Burnham	31
Jeff Gauthier	31
Mark O'Connor	30
Didier Lockwood	24
Mads Tolling	23
Sara Caswell	22
Carla Kihlstedt	21
John Blake	20
Carlos Zingaro	19
Jerry Goodman	18
Miri Ben-Ari	15

Drums

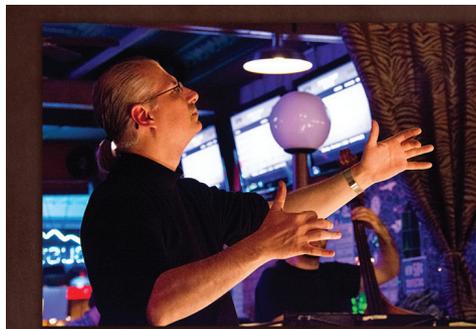
Jack DeJohnette	188
Brian Blade	135
Andrew Cyrille	76
Matt Wilson	74
Billy Hart	69
Eric Harland	65
Terri Lyne Carrington	63
Nasheet Waits	53
Tyshawn Sorey	49
Hamid Drake	48
Roy Haynes	45
Jeff "Tain" Watts	41
Antonio Sanchez	39
John Hollenbeck	38
Marcus Gilmore	37
Gerald Cleaver	36
Lewis Nash	32
Herlin Riley	30
Kendrick Scott	30
Albert "Tootie" Heath	28
Rudy Royston	28

Percussion

Hamid Drake	113
Cyro Baptista	104
Zakir Hussain	97
Pedrito Martinez	87
Sheila E	72
Kahil El'Zabar	68
Poncho Sanchez	65
Mino Cinelu	63
Giovanni Hidalgo	62
Bobby Sanabria	58
Adam Rudolph	52
Sammy Figueroa	47
Han Bennink	45
Susie Ibarra	39
Dan Weiss	37
Trilok Gurtu	34
Jerry Gonzalez	30
Ches Smith	30
Warren Smith	27
Michael Zerang	27

Vibraphone

Stefon Harris	176
Gary Burton	170
Bobby Hutcherson	167
Warren Wolf	157
Jason Adasiewicz	122
Joe Locke	119



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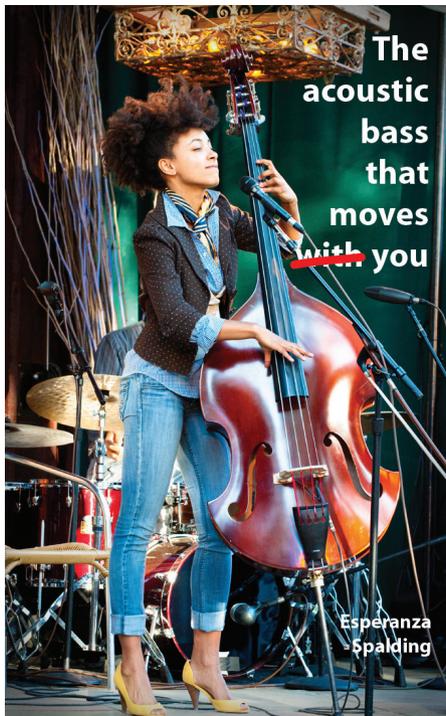
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Taylor Ho Bynum, winner of Rising Star—Trumpet

PETER GANNUSHKIN



Sara Caswell topped the Rising Star—Violin category.

EMMA MEAD

Steve Nelson	78
Chris Dingman	48
Jason Marsalis	42
Kenny Wollesen	30
Matt Moran	26
Joe Chambers	24
Mike Mainieri	23
Karl Berger	21
Warren Smith	21
Dave Samuels	13
Gunter Hampel	12
Hendrik Meurkens	12
Joe Dyson	11

Miscellaneous Instrument

Béla Fleck (banjo)	92
Erik Friedlander (cello)	85
Edmar Castaneda (Colombian harp)	77
Grégoire Maret (harmonica)	72
Gary Versace (accordion)	59
Chris Thile (mandolin)	55
Toots Thielemans (harmonica)	50
Jon Batiste (melodica/harmonboard)	47
Chris Potter (bass clarinet)	47
Richard Galliano (accordion)	46
Howard Johnson (tuba)	46
David Murray (bass clarinet)	43
James Carter (bass saxophone)	42
Scott Robinson (bass saxophone)	41
Anouar Brahem (oud)	36
Wycliffe Gordon (tuba)	35
Fred Lonberg-Holm (cello)	34
Myra Melford (harmonium)	30
Pat Metheny (orchestron)	29
Howard Levy (harmonica)	28

Female Vocalist

Cécile McLorin Salvant	247
Catherine Russell	90
Cyrille Aimée	81
Dee Dee Bridgewater	79
Cassandra Wilson	78
Dianne Reeves	65
René Marie	61
Tierney Sutton	61
Esperanza Spalding	60
Sheila Jordan	54
Lizz Wright	46

Diamanda Galas	45
Luciana Souza	43
Roberta Gambarini	40
Gretchen Parlato	38
Carmen Lundy	37
Diana Krall	32
Karrin Allyson	29
Stacey Kent	27
Fay Victor	27
Kate McGarry	26

Male Vocalist

Gregory Porter	270
Kurt Elling	224
Theo Bleckmann	149
José James	102
Tony Bennett	90
Mose Allison	87
Bobby McFerrin	73
Andy Bey	59
Freddy Cole	48
Giacomo Gates	40
Kenny Washington	38
Allan Harris	29
Jamie Cullum	24
Jaap Blonk	23
John Pizzarelli	23
Ernie Andrews	22
Ed Reed	21
Bob Dorough	17
Jon Hendricks	14
Sachal Vasandani	14

Composer

Maria Schneider	154
Wadada Leo Smith	122
Henry Threadgill	106
Carla Bley	93
Darcy James Argue	65
Terence Blanchard	63
Wayne Shorter	52
Wynton Marsalis	45
Jimmy Heath	43
Vijay Iyer	42
Chick Corea	41
Benny Golson	41
Steve Coleman	40
Michael Formanek	40
Tom Harrell	32
Pat Metheny	32
Muhai Richard Abrams	29

John Zorn	29
Anthony Braxton	28
Jason Moran	28
Dave Douglas	26
Robert Glasper	26
Randy Weston	26

Arranger

Maria Schneider	170
Carla Bley	128
Darcy James Argue	127
Steven Bernstein	65
John Hollenbeck	50
Robert Glasper	43
Billy Childs	40
John Clayton	39
Christian McBride	35
Ted Nash	34
Vince Mendoza	34
Ryan Truesdell	34
Wynton Marsalis	31
John Beasley	30
Gil Goldstein	28
Bill Holman	28
Dave Holland	27
Gordon Goodwin	26
Muhai Richard Abrams	25
Terri Lyne Carrington	24
Christine Jensen	24
Myra Melford	24

Record Label

ECM	218
Pi Recordings	110
Mack Avenue	92
Clean Feed	90
Blue Note	81
Resonance	74
Motéma	73
Sunnyside	61
HighNote	48
Mosaic	48
Nonesuch	44
Intakt	39
Smoke Sessions Records	39
Cuneiform	34
Concord	30
Greenleaf Music	29
Posi-Tone	29
Ropeadope	23
Criss Cross Jazz	22

Impulse!	18
ACT	17
ArtistShare	17
International Anthem Recording Co.	16
Firehouse 12	15
Savant	15
Verve	15

Producer

Manfred Eicher	194
Michael Cuscuna	92
Robert Glasper	92
Dave Douglas	83
Don Was	75
Zev Feldman	73
Terri Lyne Carrington	66
Tommy LiPuma	64
John Zorn	64
Joe Fields	51
Todd Barkan	45
Brian Bacchus	43
Bill Laswell	41
Marc Free	34
Larry Klein	33
Branford Marsalis	32
Al Pryor	29
François Zalacain	27
Matt Pierson	25
Siegfried Loch	16

Blues Artist or Group

Buddy Guy	98
Gary Clark Jr.	95
James Cotton	89
Shemekia Copeland	78
Otis Taylor	76
Taj Mahal	53
Bettye LaVette	45
James Blood Ulmer	43
Marcia Ball	30
Ronnie Earl & The Broadcasters	30
Joe Bonamassa	25
Duke Robillard	23
Joe Louis Walker	23
Lurrie Bell	20
Robert Cray	20
John Mayall	20
Bobby Rush	19
Eric Clapton	18
Lil' Ed & The Blues Imperials	18

Eric Bibb	17
Corey Harris	17
Luther Dickinson	17

Blues Album

David Bromberg Band, <i>The Blues, The Whole Blues And Nothing But The Blues (Red House)</i>	70
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Radiohead, <i>A Moon Shaped Pool</i> (XL)	35
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Rising Star—Arranger winner Esperanza Spalding



JORGE MORENO

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Jon Raskin 43
Herwig Gradischnig 42
Lauren Sevian 41
Glenn Wilson 38
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Adam Schroeder..... 32
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Ben Ellman 29
Linda Fredriksson 26
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James Falzone 61
Aurora Nealand 50
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Sam Sadigursky 41
Chris Byars..... 38
Mort Weiss 36
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Rudi Mahall 33
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Harvey Wainapel 31
Joachim Badenhorst..... 30
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Avram Fefer..... 22
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Rhonda Larson..... 59
Sylvain Leroux..... 56
Magic Malik..... 53
Bart Platteau..... 52
Steve Adams..... 50
Ben Kono..... 36
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Geni Skendo 17
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Gilad Hekselman is the winner of the Rising Star—Guitar category.

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Evan Francis	10	Oscar Perez	13
Michel Gentile	10		

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Aaron Diehl	66
Orrin Evans	64
Matt Mitchell	54
Christian Sands	53
Ehud Asherie	49
Nik Bärtsch	47
Jonathan Batiste	47
Emmet Cohen	45
Arúan Ortiz	45
Tigran Hamasyan	44
Sullivan Fortner	41
Stefano Bollani	38
Aaron Parks	37
Kris Bowers	35
Dan Tepfer	35
Taylor Eigsti	34
Luis Perdomo	34
Aaron Goldberg	31
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Rob Mazurek	88
Elio Villafranca	78
Zaccai Curtis	72
Jim Beard	57
Henry Hey	53
Lawrence Fields	53
Bugge Wesseltoft	44
Adam Benjamin	33
Russ Lossing	32
Morton Subotnick	29
Kit Downes	28
Matthew Bourne	27
Scott Kinsey	22
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Jacob Anderskov	15

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Gerald Gibbs	65
Greg Lewis	60
Erik Deutsch	48
Alexander Hawkins	46
Kit Downes	43
Joe Bagg	38
Raphael Wressnig	34
Kyle Koehler	33
Wayne Peet	29
Radam Schwartz	29
Atsuko Hashimoto	27
Bill Heid	27
Bobby Sparks	21
Dan Fogel	20
Chris Hazelton	20
Ben Patterson	20
Pete Benson	18
Brian Coogan	14

Rising Star Guitar

Gilad Hekselman	110
Jeff Parker	91
David Gilmore	85
Lage Lund	66
Joel Harrison	63
Jakob Bro	51
Paul Bollenback	47
Matthew Stevens	47
Fareed Haque	44
Camila Meza	40
Mike Moreno	38
Ava Mendoza	37
Yotam Silberstein	36
Brandon Seabrook	34
Jonathan Kreisberg	30
Sheryl Bailey	28
Will Bernard	28
Eric Hofbauer	26

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Reuben Rogers 40
Harrison Bankhead 39
Kyle Eastwood 37
Rodney Whitaker 37
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Greg Cohen 36
Carlos Henriquez 36
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Kermit Driscoll..... 26
Gregg August..... 26
David Wong..... 26

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Melvin Gibbs 51
Nate McBride 44
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Kai Eckhardt..... 33
James Cammack 29
Mike Pope 28
Lisa Dowling..... 25
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Casey Abrams..... 19
Matt Perrine..... 19
Kaveh Rastegar..... 19
John Lee 16
Al McDowell 15
Matt Lux 15

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Jason Anick 66
Nils Økland..... 54
Ben Powell 52
Aaron Weinstein 45
Jesse Zubot 45
Karen Briggs 36
Szilárd Mezei 30
Majid Khaliq 28
Sarah Bernstein 26
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Scott Robinson (theremin) 38
Ben Wendel (bassoon) 38
Vincent Peirani (accordion) 37
Fred Lonberg-Holm (cello) 36
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Casey Benjamin (vocoder)..... 34
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Dena DeRose 45
Sara Serpa 45
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Dominique Eade..... 36
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João Bosco 32
Alan Hampton 32
John Proulx 26
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Dean Bowman 24
Vincent Gardner 23
Saalik Ahmad Ziyad 20
Clint Maedgen..... 20
Jeremy Davenport..... 17
Grzegorz Karnas 12



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Wil Blades won the Rising Star—Organ category.

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Christine Jensen	75
Jaimeo Brown	65
Tyshawn Sorey	63
Moppa Elliott	56
Steve Lehman	51
JD Allen	49
Amina Figarova	39
Nik Bärtsch	35
Laurence Hobgood	35
Frank Kimbrough	34
Miho Hazama	31
Tord Gustavsen	28
Satoko Fujii	27
Jenny Scheinman	25
Yosvany Terry	25
Ben Goldberg	24
Mike Reed	24
Matt Ulery	24

Rising Star Arranger

Esperanza Spalding	108
Nels Cline	79
Ben Allison	76
Miguel Zenón	75
Uri Caine	62
Peter Apfelbaum	62
Amir ElSaffar	58
Moppa Elliott	56
Harris Eisenstadt	47
David Weiss	40
Marcus Shelby	35
Guillermo Klein	35
Miho Hazama	33
Jacob Collier	32
Chris Crenshaw	30
Edward Simon	28
Mark Masters	25
Warren Wolf	23

Ben Goldberg	22	John Hollenbeck	39
JC Sanford	22	Spike Wilner & Ben Rubin	39
Rising Star Producer			
Christian McBride	87	JD Allen	38
Ambrose Akinmusire	78	Taylor Ho Bynum	38
Flying Lotus	68	Jaimeo Brown/Chris Sholar	37
Pedro Costa	55	Terrace Martin	34
Delfeayo Marsalis	51	Allison Miller	33
Ben Allison	47	Oded Lev-Ari	33
Brad Mehldau	47	Willie Jones III	30
Seth Rosner & Yulun Wang	42	Jana Herzen	29
		Ryan Truesdell	29
		John Corbett	28

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ANNUAL 65TH CRITICS POLL

THE CRITICS

Below are the 155 critics who voted in DownBeat's 65th Annual International Critics Poll and some of the publications to which they have contributed. In the poll, critics distributed up to 10 points among up to three choices (but no more than 5 points per choice) in each of two groups of categories: Established Talent and Rising Stars. (Note: The asterisk [] denotes a Veterans Committee voter.)*

David R. Adler: Stereophile, JazzTimes, The New York City Jazz Record

* **Don Albert:** Artslink

* **Frank Alkyer:** DB

Larry Appelbaum: JazzTimes, WPFW-FM

Bridget Arnwine: Beets and Bebop Media

Glenn Astarita: All About Jazz

Mark R. Bacon: Real Westway, MainEvent

Chris J. Bahnsen: DB, Mayo Clinic, Smithsonian Air & Space

Bradley Bamberger: DB, Listen

Michael Barris: DB

Peter Bastian: Jazzthetik

Angelika Beener: DB, Huffington Post, Kultured Child, Alternate Takes

Bill Beuttler: DB, JazzTimes, The Boston Globe

Edward Blanco: All About Jazz, WDNA

Ross Boissoneau: Progression, Local Spins, MyNorth, Jazziz

* **Fred Bouchard:** DB, The New York City Jazz Record, The Boston Musical Intelligencer

* **Michael Bourne:** DB, WBGO

* **Herb Boyd:** Cineaste, New York Amsterdam News, The Network Journal

Marcela Breton: *Hot and Cool: Jazz Short Stories*

Nelson Brill: DB, bostonconcertreviews.com

Pawel Brodowski: Jazz Forum

Stuart Broomer: The New York City Jazz Record, Point of Departure, WholeNote, Musicworks

Robert Bush: San Diego Reader, The New York City Jazz Record

Andrea Canter: jazzpolice.com

Henry L. Carrigan Jr.: DB, Blues Blast, No Depression

* **Aaron Cohen:** DB

Thomas Conrad: Stereophile, The New York City Jazz Record, JazzTimes, All About Jazz

J.D. Considine: DB, Revolver, The Globe and Mail

* **John Corbett:** DB

Owen Cordle: JazzTimes, The News & Observer

Michael Cote: Blues Music Monthly, New Hampshire Union Leader

Andrew Dansby: Rolling Stone, Houston Chronicle

* **Paul de Barros:** DB, The Seattle Times

Coen de Jonge: JazzBulletin NJA, Jazzism

Anthony Dean-Harris: DB, nextbop.com, KRTU

R.J. DeLuke: All About Jazz, Albany Times Union

Matthew Dicker: JazzTimes

Bob Doerschuk: DB, Drum!, Keyboard, Acoustic Guitar, Rolling Stone Country

Laurence Donohue-Greene: The New York City Jazz Record

Alain Drouot: DB, WNUR

Ken Dryden: The New York City Jazz Record, Hot House

José Duarte: RTP Radio

Shannon J. Effinger: DB, Ebony, NPR, JazzTimes, Caribbean Beat

* **Ed Enright:** DB

* **John Ephland:** DB, All About Jazz

Steve Feeney: Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram

David Franklin: Cadence

Philip Freeman: DB, The Wire, Burning Ambulance

Jon Garelick: DB, The Boston Globe, The Arts Fuse, Jazziz

Dustin Garlitz: jazztalent.com

Richard Gehr: Village Voice, Rolling Stone, Relix

Bob Gendron: Chicago Tribune, TONE

Andrew Gilbert: San Francisco Chronicle, Bay Area News Group

* **Ted Gioia:** *The History of Jazz*

Kurt Gottschalk: DB, Time Out, The Wire

Steve Greenlee: JazzTimes

George Grella: The Brooklyn Rail, NewMusicBox

* **Frank-John Hadley:** DB, X5 Music Group

* **James Hale:** DB, soundstageexperience.com

Robert Miller Ham: Paste

Eric Harabadian: DB, Music Connection, Progression

George W. Harris: Jazz Weekly

Dave Helland: grammy.com

Andrey Henkin: The New York City Jazz Record

Lee Hildebrand: San Francisco Chronicle, Living Blues

Geoffrey Himes: DB, The Washington Post, JazzTimes, Paste

Rob Hoff: WQLN, JazzErie
Eugene Holley Jr.: DB, Hot House, Publishers Weekly, Chamber Music magazine

C. Andrew Hovan: All About Jazz

Tom Hull: tomhull.com

Peter Hum: The Ottawa Citizen

Tom Ineck: Lincoln Journal Star

Eric Jackson: WGBH

Michael Jackson: DB, Chicago Sun-Times, Jazzwise

Robin James: DB, Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder

* **Willard Jenkins:** DB, Independent Ear, JazzTimes

Jeff Johnson: DB, Chicago Sun-Times, BloodHorse

* **Ashley Kahn:** NPR, Mojo, The New York Times

Richard Kamins: steptempest.blogspot.com

George Kanzler: Hot House, The New York City Jazz Record

Martin Kasdan Jr.: DB, LEO Weekly, Louisville Music News

Yoshi Kato: DB, San Francisco Chronicle, The Christian Science Monitor

Larry Kelp: KPFA

Elzy Kolb: Hot House, salon.com

Jason Koransky: DB

* **Kiyoshi Koyama:** NHK-FM (Japan Tonight), Jazz Japan

Jeff Krow: Audiophile Audition

David Kunian: DB, Oxford American, Offbeat

Will Layman: popmatters.com

Angelo Leonardi: All About Jazz Italia

Bruce Lindsay: All About Jazz, Jazz Journal

John Litweiler: Point Of Departure, britannica.com

Martin Longley: DB, Jazzwise, The Guardian, All About Jazz

Christopher Loudon: JazzTimes

Phillip Lutz: DB, The New York

Times

* **Jim Macnie:** DB, VEVO

* **Howard Mandel:** DB, The Wire, NPR

Peter Margasak: DB, Chicago Reader

* **John McDonough:** DB, NPR

Kerilie McDowall: DB, Bethlehem Centre

Peter McElhinney: Style Weekly

Michelle Mercer: NPR, Chamber Music America

Bill Meyer: DB, The Wire, Chicago Reader, Dusted, Magnet

* **Ken Micallef:** DB, Stereophile, Modern Drummer, musicaficionado.com

Virgil Mihaiu: DB, Steaua/Jazz Context, JAM (Jazz Montenegro)

* **Bill Milkowski:** DB, Jazziz, concertvault.com

Ralph A. Miriello: Huffington Post, Notes on Jazz blog, Hot House

* **Dan Morgenstern:** Jersey Jazz, Journal of Jazz Studies

Allen Morrison: DB, JazzTimes, The Guardian

Cyril Moshkow: Jazz.RU magazine

* **John Murph:** DB, NPR, JazzTimes, Jazzwise, AARP

Russ Musto: DB, The New York City Jazz Record

Michael G. Nastos: Hot House, WCBN

Ron Netsky: City Newspaper (Rochester, NY)

Jon Newey: Jazzwise

Tim Nilard: Music & More

Sean J. O'Connell: DB, KPCC, LA Weekly

* **Jennifer Odell:** DB, Offbeat, Gambit, JazzTimes

* **Dan Ouellette:** DB, ZEALnyc

* **Ted Panken:** DB

Thierry Peremarti: M&C magazine (France)

Terry Perkins: DB

j. poet: DB, Magnet, Relix

Jeff Potter: DB, Modern Drummer, TDF Stages

Norman Provizor: DB, KUVO/KVJS

* **Bobby Reed:** DB

* **Howard Reich:** Chicago Tribune

Tom Reney: New England Public Radio

Guy Reynard: JazzHot

Derk Richardson: The Absolute Sound, KPFA, Deep Roots, Peghead Nation, Acoustic Guitar

Alex Rodriguez: Oregon JazzScene

* **Gene Santoro:** DB

Phil Schaap: DB, philschaapjazz.com, WKCR

Areif Sless-Kitain: DB

Mark Small: DB, Classical Guitar, Berklee Today

* **Thomas Staudter:** DB, Croton Gazette

W. Royal Stokes: JJA News, wroyalstokes.com

Laurence Svirchev: misterioso.org

Otakar Svoboda: Czech Radio

John Swenson: Oxford American, Stereophile, Offbeat, tourworthy.com

* **Jean Szlamowicz:** DB, Spirit of Jazz

Chris Tart: DB

Larry Reni Thomas: Jazz Corner, JazzTimes, eJazzNews, All About Jazz

Robin Tolleson: DB, Modern Drummer

Mark F. Turner: All About Jazz

Chris Walker: DB, LA Jazz Scene, California Tour & Travel, JazzTimes

Ken Weiss: Jazz Inside, Cadence

Michael J. West: DB, The Washington Post, Washington City Paper, JazzTimes

* **Kevin Whitehead:** Fresh Air

Carlo Wolff: DB, Cleveland Jewish News

* **Josef Woodard:** DB, Los Angeles Times, The Santa Barbara Independent

* **Scott Yanow:** DB, The New York City Jazz Record, Jazziz, Los Angeles Jazz Scene

Izzy Yellen: DB, The Lawrentian

Zoe Young: DB, Oakland Tribune

* **Brian Zimmerman:** DB



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Dawn Thomson, Ron Miles, Matt Wilson, Jeff Lederer and Martin Wind are Honey and Salt.

Matt Wilson's Honey and Salt

Music Inspired By The Poetry Of Carl Sandburg

PALMETTO
★★★★★

You knew Matt Wilson was headed somewhere when his first album dropped a snatch of stoic philosophy from Carl Sandburg and got Dewey Redman to play “Sweet Betsy From Pike” (which was part of *The American Songbag* anthology Sandburg published in 1927). The bandleader has inventive ideas about the way the arts can intermingle. Spoken word and song have flecked his largely instrumental work ever since, and he’s actively harked back to his Midwestern roots.

Wilson’s Honey and Salt group deals exclusively with Sandburg’s verse, and this new disc not only reminds us how whimsical a poet the master truly was, but also how gifted a drummer and arranger Wilson is. The program shifts and shifts, but each turn introduces a genuinely discrete approach to the verse at hand. Guest narrator Christian McBride intones the social strata thesis “Anywhere And Everywhere People” while cornetist Ron Miles and reedist Jeff Lederer fly expressively around him. Vocalist Dawn Thomson coos a campfire lament that manages to synopsise heartbreak with the line “love is a fool star” while bringing some twang to the party.

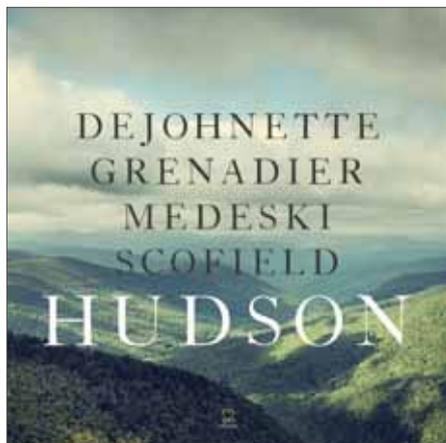
The core ensemble (bassist Martin Wind rounds out the quintet) is versatile enough to cover this variety. As actor Jack Black (husband

of Charlie Haden’s daughter Petra) echoes voice-over artist Ken Nordine on “Snatch Of Sliphorn Jazz,” Lederer and Wilson freebop their retorts. And when Wilson, who grew up a stone’s throw from Sandburg’s birthplace, eerily mallets his toms as a recording of Sandburg repeats the lines of “Fog,” the performance cuts to the essence of this irresistible record: The connections are deep. —Jim Macnie

Music Inspired By The Poetry Of Carl Sandburg: Soup; Anywhere And Everywhere People; As Wave Follows Wave; Night Stuff; We Must Be Polite; Fog; Choose; Prairie Barn; Offering And Rebuff; Stars, Songs, Faces; Bringers; Snatch Of Sliphorn Jazz; Paper 2; I Sang; To Know Silence Perfectly; Daybreak. (64:10)

Personnel: Matt Wilson, drums, vocals; Dawn Thomson, guitar, vocals; Ron Miles, cornet; Jeff Lederer, reeds; Martin Wind, bass; Christian McBride, John Scofield, Bill Frisell, Carla Bley, Joe Lovano, Rufus Reid, Jack Black, spoken word.

Ordering info: palmetto-records.com



DeJohnette/Grenadier/ Medeski/Scofield

Hudson

MOTÉMA 228

★★★★

It would be easy to dismiss the supergroup Hudson as mere boomer nostalgia, but that would overlook just how vigorous, original, engaged and downright pleasurable this welcome debut is. Taking their common experience of the life in the Hudson Valley as a backbone, drummer Jack DeJohnette, bassist Larry Grenadier, keyboardist John Medeski and guitarist John Scofield explore the music of

Bob Dylan, The Band, Joni Mitchell and Jimi Hendrix as well as other takes on a cultural moment when jazz and rock made love.

Though everyone contributes equally, Scofield is key, because his succinct, lyrical guitar melodies really sing. Try chiming in on “Lay Lady Lay,” which DeJohnette invests with a reggae feel, or “Up On Cripple Creek,” to experience just how nuanced Sco’s delivery is. He’s is even more thrilling when he leaps outside the chords on “A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall” and Medeski answers with dark burbling that recalls the boiling freedom of *Bitches Brew*.

The band jumps deep into free territory on the title-track opener, an archeo-futuristic jam that spins raunchy, fuzzed guitar and skronky keyboard clanks around a throbbing, ceremonial beat. The only tracks that feel somewhat less engaging are DeJohnette’s originals, “Song For World Forgiveness,” which shimmers with an East Indian, Alice Coltrane kind of vibe, and “Great Spirit Peace Chant,” a traditional-sounding tune with chattering wooden flutes that closes the album. —Paul de Barros

Hudson: Hudson; El Swing; Lay Lady Lay; Woodstock; A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall; Wait Until Tomorrow; Song For World Forgiveness; Dirty Ground; Tony Then Jack; Up On Cripple Creek; Great Spirit Peace Chant. (70:52)

Personnel: Jack DeJohnette, drums, tom-tom, wooden flute (11) vocals (11); Larry Grenadier, bass, vocals (11); John Medeski, piano, Rhodes, Hammond B-3 organ, wooden flute (11), vocals (11); John Scofield, guitar, wooden flute (11).

Ordering info: motema.com

Sean Jones

Live From Jazz At The Bistro

MACK AVENUE 1111

★★★★

The first song on *Live From Jazz At The Bistro*, the latest roller coaster ride from trumpeter Sean Jones and his now 12-year-old quartet—pianist Orrin Evans, drummer Obed Calvaire and bassist Luques Curtis—feels like a microcosm of the entire album. Titled “Art’s Variable,” it’s an up-and-down adventure that boasts thrilling, heady highs and warm, full-bodied figures in nearly equal doses.

Written with Art Blakey and John Coltrane in mind, the tune shifts repeatedly from mellow to fiery as Jones and Evans take turns executing galvanic assaults that propel the energy through repeated modes of tension and release. It took me more than one spin to get inside those stratospheric leaps, constructed as they are with insistent piano refrains that border on strident and high-register wails from Jones. But as the album unfolds, my ear came to relish the pattern of challenge and reward.

Highlights include the relaxed and woozy “Doc’s Holiday,” one of four tracks featuring saxophonist Brian Hogans, which teases out a playful melody through hide-and-seek horn lines. Jones and Evans toy with rhythm and reg-



ister on “The Ungentrified Blues,” which ends shortly after a coy-sounding Jones unleashes a sustained warm purr. By the time he gets to his soaring New Orleans- and gospel-inspired “BJ’s Tune,” a new kind of intensity has taken over. The track is all grace and soul until Calvaire’s hummingbird-like drum work urges a return to the top of the roller coaster. —Jennifer Odell

Live From Jazz At The Bistro: Art’s Variable; Lost, Then Found; Piscean Dichotomy; Doc’s Holiday; The Ungentrified Blues; Prof; BJ’s Tune. (64:02)

Personnel: Sean Jones, trumpet, flugelhorn; Obed Calvaire, drums (2, 3, 6); Luques Curtis, bass; Orrin Evans, piano; Brian Hogans, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone (2, 3, 4, 6); Mark Whitfield Jr., drums (1, 4, 5, 7).

Ordering info: mackavenue.com



Rotem Sivan Trio

Antidote

AIMA RECORDS

★★★★½

Israeli-born guitarist and composer Rotem Sivan specializes in elusive beauty. Through his ruddy guitar tone, supple phrasing, billowing melodies and spacious compositions, Sivan’s music rarely announces itself. Instead, its lo-fi sensibilities lure listeners to lean forward as if he’s confessing personal revelations.

Such is the case for *Antidote*, which is pretty much a breakup record. An unexpected end to a seven-year romantic relationship provides the impetus for the disc, as does Sivan’s emotional recovery. The album is his second release after his leader debut, *Enchanted Sun* (SteepleChase), a trio recording released in 2013.

His latest album maintains a careful emotional balance. While songs such as the halting ballad “Aloof,” the dreamy yet jarring “For Emotional Use Only” (the title track of his sophomore 2014 disc) and the splendid reading of Bob Dylan’s “Make You Feel My Love” carry an unalloyed emotional poignancy, *Antidote* doesn’t tip into treacle.

Even when the New York-based Sivan strums tear-jerking melodies, his trio mates—American drummer Colin Stranahan and Israeli bassist Haggai Cohen Milo—engage the guitarist with sublime rhythmic interjections and intriguing harmonic cushions.

The disc’s only drawback is the epigrammatic nature of most tunes. They tend to end sounding unresolved, oftentimes leaving you begging for certain melodic themes to be more pronounced and expanded upon.

Then again, perhaps that opaque nature was a well-played strategy to better convey healing from a broken heart. —John Murph

Antidote: Shahar; Antidote; Over The Rainbow; Reconstruction; Aloof; Sun Song; Rustic Heart; Make You Feel My Love; Knives; For Emotional Use Only; Outro/Brochim Ha Nimitzaim. (37:54)

Personnel: Rotem Sivan, guitar; Haggai Cohen Milo, bass; Colin Stranahan, drums; Gracie Terzian, vocals (3).

Ordering info: rotemsivan.com

The Hot Box

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NEW FOR 2017

Critics	Jim Macie	De Barros	Jen Odell	John Murph
Matt Wilson's Honey and Salt <i>Poetry Of Carl Sandburg</i>	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★½	★★★★
DeJohette/Grenadier ... <i>Hudson</i>	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★½	★★★★
Sean Jones <i>Live From Jazz At The Bistro</i>	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★½
Rotem Sivan Trio <i>Antidote</i>	★★★½	★★½	★★★	★★★½

Critics' Comments

Matt Wilson's Honey and Salt, *Music Inspired By The Poetry of Carl Sandburg*

Though the rugged folk poetry of Carl Sandburg and beatnik-era jazz-and-verse are both out of fashion, Matt Wilson freshens them up with crisp, thoughtful arrangements and recitation help from friends like Carla Bley, Joe Lovano and Christian McBride. However, the titles sung by Dawn Thomson lack precision and definition. —Paul de Barros

Wilson tackles his ambitious jazz-to-poetry concept with fearlessness, style and plenty of quirk, exploring and riffing on multiple layers of Carl Sandburg's verse. At times, overwrought vocals detract from the band's playing, but with a three-chapter, 18-track selection, those moments are easy to overlook. —Jennifer Odell

Scattered throughout Wilson's multifaceted if madcap excursion through Carl Sandburg's poetry lies a stunning, melodically enriched, jazz-inflected avant-country album. Wilson's cohorts break free from the disc's heady conceit and pierce the listener's heart and imagination without losing sight of the leader's artistic pursuit. —John Murph

DeJohette/Grenadier/Medeski/Scofield, *Hudson*

The chemistry is killin' and the grooves are seductive—a star band that sounds as tight as a bar band. Though I dig the covers, they shouldn't be shy about adding originals. —Jim Macnie

It's a vibe that shines when iconic songs of the region get filtered through echoes of the musicians' past connections—note the matching dark shimmer on "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall." Newer material burns with a quiet, balanced complexity. —Jennifer Odell

Connecting at multiple points where pop cognizance meets jazz clairvoyance, this formidable foursome avoids the usual traps associated with supergroups by eschewing bombast in favor of bright melodicism, gripping rhythms and frisky interplay. —John Murph

Sean Jones, *Live From Jazz At The Bistro*

It's refreshing to come across a live album that makes you wish you'd been at the gig, or impresses you regarding the intrinsic mandate of a jazz performance: to stretch a bit. —Jim Macnie

This throbbing, thrusting, in-your-face live set showcases Jones' commanding chops and soulful spirit, but apart from "Piscean Dichotomy" the tunes are not memorable. —Paul de Barros

The trumpeter brings all the virtuosic heat and compositional heft that separate magnificent live dates from the ordinary. Part vintage sophistication, part modern-day "get down." —John Murph

Rotem Sivan Trio, *Antidote*

An ongoing conversation, a session where everyone pulls on each other's coats just to tell the others one last thing. But restraint is in the air, too. This is judicious music. —Jim Macnie

Sivan can glow with a warm, flowing touch and choppy lines à la Pat Metheny, and his occasionally dry, dampened strings are also attractive, but save for the track "For Emotional Use Only," his solos don't tell much of a story. —Paul de Barros

Sivan's guitar voice seems to glow and flutter through phrases thanks to some almost intangible element of depth and movement. Unfortunately, most of these pieces feel abbreviated to me. Apropos when the subject is love lost, but I craved more development. —Jennifer Odell



STEVE DAVIS trombone
STEVE WILSON saxophones & flute
JIMMY GREENE tenor saxophone
LARRY WILLIS piano
PETER WASHINGTON bass
LEWIS NASH drums



PETER BERNSTEIN guitar
BRAD MEHLDAU piano
CHRISTIAN McBRIDE bass
GREG HUTCHINSON drums

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Charnett Moffett *Music From Our Soul*

MOTÉMA 227

★★★★★

Born and bred in jazz, Charnett Moffett is a bass wonderman. Having supported everyone from Wynton Marsalis to Ornette Coleman, issuing 13 albums under his own name in the past 30 years—including solo bass works and rare feats of overdubbing—Moffett here plays hard, easily and with longtime friends. It sounds as if there's little they'd rather do.

Stanley Jordan fingerpicks like a harpist and adds piano strokes to create the title track's

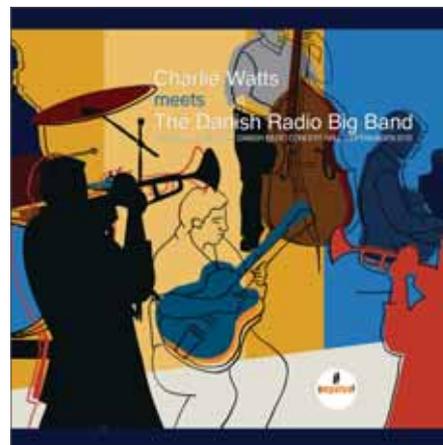
folksy bed, getting a soft push from Jeff "Tain" Watts and fluidity from Moffett's throbbing fretless electric bass; Pharoah Sanders presides over all in benediction. As on "Freedom," with a pop-reggae feel that Watts shifts into swing before Moffett's climactic electric solo, the instrument's sound is low and rich and buttery. Using it dynamically, Moffett leads from the lowest register.

On upright, he and pianist Cyrus Chestnut dive deep into "Mood Indigo," graced by drummer Victor Lewis on brushes. Then the album's prevailing mode arrives: the mid- to uptempo, somewhat scrappy jamming exemplified by "So What" and "Love In The Galaxies," on which drummer Mike Clark bonds with Moffett and guitarist Stanley Jordan. "Mediterranean" and "Just Need Love" are fretless electric features, but "Sound World Suite" is Moffett's most expansive improvised fretless statement. "Celestial Dimensions" demonstrates his solo pizzicato and arco mastery. The music flows—it's fun, in the moment and soulful. —Howard Mandel

Music From Our Soul: Music From Our Soul; Freedom; Mood Indigo; So What; Come And Play; Love In The Galaxies; We Are Here To Play; Mediterranean; For Those Who Know; Just Need Love; Celestial Dimensions; Sound World Suite; Freedom Swing; Love For The People Encore. (60:46)

Personnel: Charnett Moffett, acoustic bass, fretless electric bass; Pharoah Sanders, tenor saxophone (1, 7, 13); Stanley Jordan, guitar (1, 2, 4, 5–10, 12, 13); Cyrus Chestnut, piano, keyboards (2, 3, 5, 8, 10); Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums (1, 2, 7–10, 12, 13); Victor Lewis (3, 5), Mike Clark, drums (4, 6).

Ordering info: motema.com



Charlie Watts *Meets The Danish Radio Big Band*

IMPULSE! 0026547

★★★★★

Charlie Watts is, of course, the drummer for the Grand Elders of rock, The Rolling Stones. He's the "quiet one," sitting in the back with excellent posture, quite content to lay down solid time with great feel, all tastefully uncluttered. And he carries that song-serving sensibility to his jazz drumming as well, as heard on this live 2010 set from Copenhagen.

Watts recurrently uses his rock star downtime to embrace his jazz obsession, gracefully swinging with ensembles both large and small. Teaming the drummer with the marvelous Danish Radio Big Band is a brilliant stroke; the unit surrounds his groove with vibrant ensemble work and a raft of great soloists.

Special praise is due to flugelhorn player Gerard Presencer, who also conducts and penned the exciting arrangements. Tunes from the Stones canon are included, made fresh and intriguing by Presencer's re-imaginings, including "Satis(Faction)," smartly recast in a Latin groove. "Paint It Black" gets a ballad treatment, while retaining its dark mystery, albeit with a warmer heart. And "You Can't Always Get What You Want" delivers strutting medium-tempo funk.

The disc's highlight is the two-part "Elvin Suite," demonstrating just how gloriously orchestral and dramatic this ensemble can be. Watts steps forward here, attacking his toms throughout a feverishly mounting 6/8 finale.

—Jeff Potter

Charlie Watts Meets The Danish Radio Big Band: Elvin Suite—Part 1, Elvin Suite—Part 2; (Satis)Faction; I Should Care; You Can't Always Get What You Want; Paint It Black; Molasses. (51:49)

Personnel: Charlie Watts, drums; David Green, bass; Gerard Presencer, conductor, flugelhorn; Per Gade, guitar; Anders Gustafsson, Christer Gustafsson, Thomas Kjaergaard, Mads La Cour, trumpets, flugelhorns; Vincent Nilsson, Steen Nikolaj Hansen, Peter Jensen, Annette Saxe, Jakob Munck Mortensen, trombones; Nicolai Schultz, alto saxophone, flute; Pernille Bevort, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone, flute; Uffe Markussen, Lars Møller, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Pelle Fridell, baritone sax, bass clarinet; Steen Rasmussen, keyboards; Søren Frost, percussion, drums (7); Kaspar Vadsholt, bass (7).

Ordering info: impulse-label.com

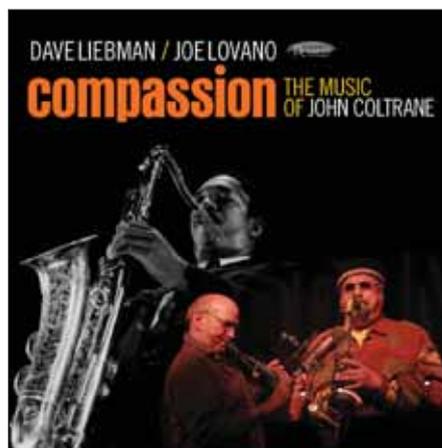
Liebman/Lovano *Compassion: The Music Of John Coltrane*

RESONANCE

★★★★★

Recorded a decade ago for a BBC broadcast commemorating the 40th anniversary of John Coltrane's death—and released commercially in time to mark the 50th—*Compassion* is a major gift for Coltrane enthusiasts. Dave Liebman, who put the session together, is a long-time Coltrane acolyte who, in addition to having recorded solo tributes, had assembled the Coltrane-focussed ensemble Saxophone Summit, whose membership included not only reedman Joe Lovano but also this album's pianist and drummer, Phil Markowitz and Billy Hart. Even better, the all-Coltrane set list runs the gamut of Coltrane's output, from early work like "Locomotion" to transcendent later fare like the title track.

But as much as these five draw from the Coltrane legacy, what emerges here is less a collection of licks learned than a lesson in how to take Trane's compositional and improvisational approaches and use them to create something utterly fresh and personal. Take "Olé," for example. Coltrane's recording was sprawling, exotic and adventurous, with a rhythmic



intensity that makes this version seem a bit tame. Listen closely, though, and you'll notice that there's more variety in Hart's pulse, just as the Ravelian harmony Markowitz slips into his piano solo suggests broader harmonic possibilities than the original's fierce modality. It's work like this that reaffirms Coltrane's enduring influence. —J.D. Considine

Compassion: The Music Of John Coltrane: Locomotion; Central Park West/Dear Lord; Olé; Reverend King; Equinox; Compassion. (52:23)

Personnel: Dave Liebman, tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone, wooden recorder, C flute; Joe Lovano, tenor saxophone, aulochrome, alto clarinet, Scottish flute; Phil Markowitz, piano; Ron McClure bass; Billy Hart, drums.

Ordering info: resonancerecords.org



Chick Corea *The Musician*

CONCORD JAZZ

★★★★★

Chick Corea is a pianist virtually without peer. From all evidence on *The Musician*, his 2011 month-long stand at New York's Blue Note club for his 70th birthday—during which he played in 10 settings reflecting collaborations and interests threading through his 55-year career—was a creative revelry every night.

This deluxe documentation of Corea's historic stand—three-and-a-half hours of music over three CDs, an essay by Thelonious Monk

biographer Robin D.G. Kelley, a gallery of Ernest Gregory photos and a 96-minute Blue Ray documentary film—is paradoxically a substantive feast that may leave listeners wishing it were just a little less, and craving more.

“Captain Marvel,” Corea’s melodic title track for Stan Getz’s 1974 album, is a welcome opener here on which the pianist stretches with the expansive buoyancy and organic flow of his finest acoustic work. Continuing with “Light As A Feather,” bassist Stanley Clarke and drummer Lenny White sound up-to-date and hard-hitting, with Frank Gambale (from the ElektriK Band on CD three) fitting well into this “Return To Forever Unplugged.”

Corea’s trio with drummer Brian Blade (using brushes) and perfectly propulsive bassist Gary Peacock is under-represented by the lovely “I Hear A Rhapsody,” but the rangy Five Peace Band, co-led by Corea’s longtime friend John McLaughlin, gets almost half an hour for two pieces, and Bobby McFerrin, warmly spontaneous (if intonationally casual), sings for a full 15 minutes. Each of the three CDs is a concert in itself.

On CD two, Corea’s “Overture” for himself, Gary Burton and string quartet is deftly drawn and played. Gayle Moran’s paean of wifely devotion is heartfelt, and the two Miles Davis covers are tart and taut, thanks to the excellent Wallace Roney, Gary Bartz, Eddie Gomez

and Jack DeJohnette. The surprise is Corea’s Flamenco Heart ensemble—he solos magnificently on “Zyryab,” unspooling a solo that wants to never end.

On CD three, Corea’s piano mastery is not topped, but matched. Herbie Hancock and Marcus Roberts have skills and sensibilities comparable to Corea’s (we have today an astonishing array of dazzling pianists, many influenced by him). Fourhanded with Roberts, Corea assays some classic blues (Wynton Marsalis tips his hat) and with Hancock flirts with funk while sustaining sophistication.

If all this feels like an appetizer, take heart: In 2016 Corea enjoyed an eight-week-long, 75th-birthday residency at the Blue Note, with even more star collaborators. Can an album be far behind?
—Howard Mandel

The Musician: Disc One: Captain Marvel; Light As A Feather; I Hear A Rhapsody; Spirit Ride; Special Beings; I’ve Got The World On A String; Spain. Disc Two: Overture; Your Eyes Speak Only To Me; If I Were A Bell; Nefertiti; Zyryab; Mi Niña Lola; Disc Three: CC’s Birthday Blues; Caravan; Hot House; Dolphin Dance; Cantaloupe Island; Ritual; Silver Temple. (3:36:36)

Personnel: Corea, piano and keyboards.

Disc One: Frank Gambale, guitar; Stanley Clarke, bass; Lenny White, drums (1-2); Gary Peacock, bass; Brian Blade, drums (3); John McLaughlin, guitar; Kenny Garrett, saxophone; John Patitucci, bass; Blade, drums (4-5); Bobby McFerrin, vocals (6-7). Disc Two: Gary Burton, vibes; the Harlem String Quartet (1-2); Gayle Moran Corea, vocal (2); Wallace Roney, trumpet; Gary Bartz, saxophone; Eddie Gomez, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums (3-4); Carles Benavent, bass; Jorge Pardo, saxophone, flute; Niño Josele, guitar; Jeff Ballard, drums (5-6); Concha Buika, vocals (6). Disc Three: Wynton Marsalis, trumpet (1); Marcus Roberts, piano (1-2); Herbie Hancock, piano (3-5); Gambale, guitar; Patitucci, bass; Eric Marienthal, saxophone; Dave Weckl, drums (6-8).

Ordering info: concordmusicgroup.com

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Avishai Cohen *Cross My Palm With Silver*

ECM 2548

★★★★½

Although it is barely the length of an LP, trumpeter Avishai Cohen's *Cross My Palm With Silver* is filled with space—long, dramatic pauses in music that reflects violence and injustice. Written in Israel following the release of his previous ECM recording, *Into The Silence*, which was focused on his father's death, this album ponders current affairs. Whether spurred by Middle East terrorism or the psychic pain felt by saxophonist Jimmy Greene, who lost his daughter in the Sandy Hook school shooting, the five pieces are filled with carefully placed notes and tightly wound gestures.

Cohen is a rare trumpeter who combines highly impressionistic phrasing with a clarity of tone. His pure sound is conveyed with the kind of ethereal romanticism that recalls Kenny Wheeler's balletic leaps and turns. That is particularly evident on "Shoot Me In The Leg," but that type of wounded lyricism is present in much of his soloing. Though the music is composed, the spaciousness of the phrasing and open-ended lines make it all sound improvised. A large part of the credit goes to the empathy between Cohen and drummer Nasheet Waits, who sound compelling on their tension-filled dialogue on "340 Down." —James Hale

Cross My Palm With Silver: Will I Die, Miss? Will I Die?; Theme For Jimmy Greene; 340 Down; Shoot Me In The Leg; 50 Years And Counting. (38:39)

Personnel: Avishai Cohen, trumpet; Yonathan Avishai, piano; Barak Mori, bass; Nasheet Waits, drums.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com



Ryan Keberle & Catharsis *Find The Common, Shine A Light*

GREENLEAF

★★★★★

Find The Common, Shine A Light is the latest compositional victory to spring from the mind of trombonist Ryan Keberle and his restlessly ambitious ensemble Carthasis. The leader formulated the idea in response to the 2016 presidential election, envisioning a project that could speak both to the current state of political unrest and to music's ability to overcome it. Suite-like in its scope and unity of purpose, the album is a mix of barbed yet beautiful originals and covers of enduring protest songs by Bob Dylan ("The Times They Are A-Changin'") and The Beatles ("Fool On The Hill").

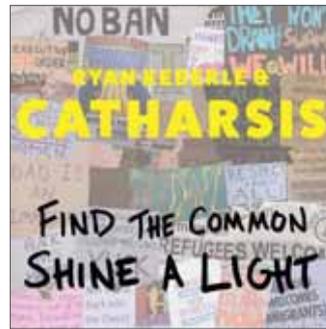
Harnessing sonic breadth and thematic focus, the album begins with "Become The Water," which features singer-guitarist Camila Meza rendering lyrics by poet Manca Weeks with lithe yet determined sensitivity. The ensuing songs develop that theme through pointed references and oblique gestures. "Al Otro Lado Del Rio" grapples directly with themes of immigration and national origin, while songs like "Strength," "Mindfulness" and "Empathy" offer reflections on human character.

—Brian Zimmerman

Find The Common, Shine A Light: Become The Water; Al Otro Lado Del Rio; Empathy; Ancient Theory; Fool On The Hill; Mindfulness; The Times They Are A-Changin'; Strength; I Am A Stranger. (41:00).

Personnel: Ryan Keberle, trombone, keyboards, vocals; Camila Meza, vocals, guitar; Mike Rodriguez, trumpet; Jorge Roeder, bass; Eric Doob, drums.

Ordering info: greenleafmusic.com



Sexmob *Cultural Capital*

REX RECORDS 001

★★★★★

After two decades of reconfiguring all sorts of material by other artists, from the briefly humongous dance hit "Macarena" to timeless Duke Ellington tunes, Sexmob decided to try something different with *Cultural Capital* by stocking it entirely with original material.

How'd it turn out? Well ... different. Their overall sound, a woozy stew of avant-jazz, wordless Tom Waits and Salvation Army band, can't be mistaken. It's the same for their defining characteristic: the absence of any harmony instrument except for a couple of discreet electric guitar jangles courtesy of Briggan Krauss, which flavor the groove rather than impose actual chords.

Some of these tracks are obviously based on compositions, though these tend to be fragmentary rather than coherent flows of verse, chorus and bridge. Instead, they might be harmonized or unison lines played by Steven Bernstein and Krauss. On their own, these can speak powerfully. "Helmland," for example, begins with bassist Tony Scherr playing the mournful theme, while Kenny Wollesen's brushes scuttle across snare and cymbals. The effect is quite moving—and, like all of this successful experiment, irony-free. —Bob Doerschuk

Cultural Capital: Street; Step Apache; Bari Si; Helmland; 4 Cents; Syrup; Giant Minds; Valentino; Golden House; Lacy; Hear You; SF; Briggan. (53:43)

Personnel: Steven Bernstein, slide trumpet; Briggan Krauss, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone, electric guitar; Tony Scherr, bass; Kenny Wollesen, drums.

Ordering info: stevenbernstein.net



Gerry Gibbs & Thrasher People *Weather Or Not*

WHALING CITY SOUND 091

★★★★★

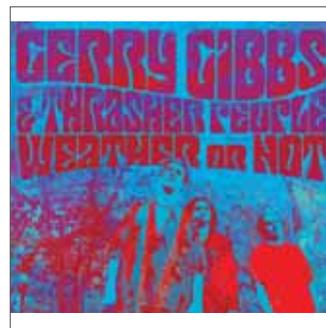
Gerry Gibbs pairs Weather Report tunes with 16 of his originals to deliver more than two hours of passionate, daring music. This two-disc set bursts with virtuosity and power, and while the Weather Report tunes are more familiar, drummer Gibbs, keyboardist Alex Collins and bassist Hans Glawischnig bring fresh perspective to them.

Unusual touches abound, like Collins' falsetto vocals on Weather Report's sensual "Black Market" and Gibbs' romantic "I'm Simply Waiting," as well as Collins' ambidextrous soloing. The first CD ends with Joe Zawinul's devilish "Directions," a thrilling contest between Collins, on percussive piano and swirly Hammond B-3, and Gibbs, who offers a punchy solo; Glawischnig's walking bass keeps the fever down.

The originals touch on various styles, including a driving Ron Carter homage, a synthesizer nod to soft-funk star Patrice Rushen, a bow to Telly Savalas' "Kojak," and "Paul And Sid's Blues," which sets Collins' breakneck comping against Gibbs' goosing drums. —Carlo Wolff

Weather Or Not: Disc One: Teen Town; Palladium; Mr. Gone; Young And Fine; A Remark You Made; Black Market; Sightseeing; Punk Jazz; Scarlett Woman/Boogie Woogie Waltz; Elegant People; Birdland; Directions. (58:19) Disc Two: Maestro Ron; Just Glad To Be Anywhere; Kojak; Road Trip; Joaquin And Pinky; We Are So Free; The 70s Song/aka Patrice Rushen; Only In Dreams; Paul & Sid's Blues; I'm Simply Waiting; When I Close My Eyes (Part 1); St. Marteen; The Caribbean Song; Her Last Words (R.I.P.); It's A Good Day; When I Close My Eyes (Part 2). (61:52)

Ordering info: whalingcitysound.com



6-String Sidestream

Veteran guitarist **Steve Khan**, a first-call session man during the '70s and a potent figure on the fusion scene, once again explores an Afro-Cuban vibe on **Backlog (Tone Center 4100; 70:37 ★★★★★)**. As he had done successfully on 2011's *Parting Shot* and 2014's *Subtext*, Khan puts a Latin spin on familiar tunes by Thelonious Monk, Ornette Coleman and various composers of the Great American Songbook. Backed by a grooving quintet of keyboardist Rob Mounsey, bassist Ruben Rodriguez, drummer Mark Walker and percussionists Marc Quinones and Bobby Allende, Khan plays with rhythmic confidence and verve on his warm-toned Gibson 335, carrying the melody, articulating intricate heads and improvising on infectious, clave-fueled renditions of Monk's "Criss Cross," Coleman's buoyant "Latin Genetics" and "Invisible," Andrew Hill's "Catta" and the gorgeous Johnny Mandel/Johnny Mercer standard "Emily."

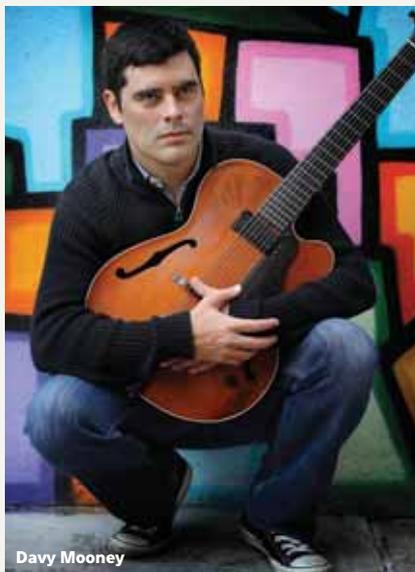
Ordering info: shrapnelrecords.com/label/tone-center

Sting's longtime right-hand man, guitarist **Dominic Miller**, settles into gentle, introspective mode with his nylon string acoustic guitar on the intimate **Silent Light (ECM 2518; 40:17 ★★★★★)**. From the sparse opener "What You Didn't Say," which bears Manfred Eicher's signature love of ambient echo, to serene offerings like "Angel" and "Tisane," Miller puts forth the notion of letting a single note hang in the air to dramatic effect. Even on more lively fare like "Baden" (his tribute to Baden Powell) and "Chaos Theory," the guitarist embraces space and melody. The one non-original on Miller's soothing ECM debut is his instrumental take on Sting's "Fields Of Gold."

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

Paris-born guitarist **Nguyễn Lê** explores his Vietnamese musical heritage with Vietnamese fiddler and throat singer **Ngo Hong Quang** on **Hà Nội Duo (ACT 9828; 58:12 ★★★★★)**, their sixth recording together for the German label. A remarkable electric guitarist with a singular voice, Lê has previously expressed his love of Jimi Hendrix (2012's *Purple*) and flaunted his lightning licks on 16 other albums as a leader. And while he delves into the non-tempered zone in his exchanges with Quang on folkloric flavored tunes like "Five Senses," underscored by Prabhu Edouard's tablas and Mieko Miyazaki's koto, and "Like Mountain Birds," he also unleashes distortion-laced fusillades on "Cloud Chamber" and "The Graceful Seal," both of which also feature the evocative muted trumpet of Paolo Fresu. An exotic East-meets-West outing.

Ordering info: actmusic.com



Davy Mooney

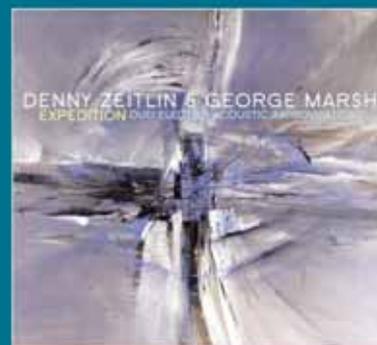
New Orleans seven-string guitarist-composer **Davy Mooney** continues the promise he showed on 2011's *Perrier Street* with his second Sunnyside release, **Hope Of Home (Sunnyside 1463; 63:22 ★★★★★½)**. Accompanied by pianist Jon Cowherd, reedist John Ellis, bassist Matt Clohesy and drummer Brian Blade—all, except Australian Clohesy, with New Orleans ties—Mooney features all original compositions while showcasing his warm, inviting tone and fluid post-bop chops. The guitarist also showcases his intimate Michael Franks-style vocals and evocative lyrics on the bossa nova flavored "Cold, Sober," the funky N'awlins groover "Stutter Step" and the stirring piano-guitar duet "Like Before." Mooney, a real triple threat, is one of the most refreshing talents to come out of the Crescent City in recent years.

Ordering info: sunnysidezone.com

Danish guitarist **Torben Waldorff** assembled a stellar crew for his **Holiday On Fire (ArtistShare AS0151; 51:08 ★★★★★)**. Drummer Johnathan Blake fuels the session with his whirlwind approach to the kit on Waldorff originals like "Thyst" (with its allusions to Wayne Shorter's "Fall"), "Ironic Tonic" and the surging "Belligerent Beauty," while bassist Drew Gress grounds the proceedings with deep, fundamental tones. Waldorff's post-Rosenwinkel effected guitar tone serves him well on blowing vehicles like "Off To Far," "Ironic Tonic" and the groove-oriented "Combust," all of which have pianist Maggi Olin switching to Fender Rhodes. Waldorff's fifth for ArtistShare is his best to date.

DB

Ordering info: waldorff.com



DENNY ZEITLIN & GEORGE MARSH EXPEDITION

DENNY ZEITLIN piano, keyboard, synthesizers
GEORGE MARSH drums, percussion
SSC 1487 - IN STORES July 21

In the two years since the release of *Riding The Moment*, George and I have continued our expedition into new territories of free improvisation, and have found the journey to be very enriching and exciting. *Expedition*, like *Riding the Moment*, has roots going back to the late sixties, when I began a decade of exploring the electro-acoustic integration of jazz, classical, funk, rock, and free-form music. Concluding that period was my electro-acoustic-symphonic score for the 1978 remake of *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers*.—D.Z.



STEPS AHEAD & WDR BIG BAND COLOGNE STEPPIN' OUT

1479 - IN STORES JULY 14

With *Steppin' Out*, the group's collaboration with the WDR Big Band of Cologne, Mainieri is able to realize some classic Steps Ahead compositions in new surroundings, courtesy of the WDR's Brooklyn-born conductor and arranger Michael Abene. The band of all-stars featured with Mainieri on this stellar encounter with the WDR Big Band includes tenor saxophonist and former Miles Davis sideman Bill Evans, drummer Steve Smith, guitarist Chuck Loeb and bassist Tom Kennedy.



itunes.com/DennyZeitlin
itunes.com/StepsAhead
www.sunnysiderecords.com



Bria Skonberg *With A Twist*

OKEH 88985 40602

★★★★

With her fifth release, *With A Twist*, Canadian trumpeter-vocalist Bria Skonberg expands her field of investigation with a strong focus on jazz's Golden Age, when the genre enjoyed more popularity and musicians were also performers.

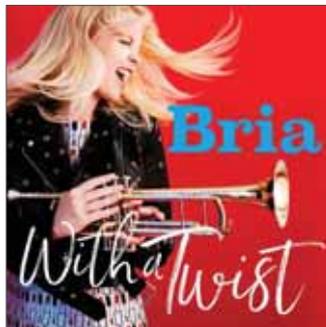
Skonberg picked pianist Gil Goldstein to arrange nearly half the tunes. His astute blending of "Alright, Okay, You Win" with Quincy Jones' "Soul Bossa Nova" and the irresistible "Whatever Lola Wants" are evidence that it was a wise decision. She tips her hat to Valaida Snow with a take on "High Hat, Trumpet, and Rhythm." The multi-instrumentalist who enjoyed great popularity in the 1920s and 1930s before her star began to fade away looks like a model for Skonberg. That's not to say the album is trapped in amber. She ventures outside the jazz realm with a tribute to fellow Canadian Leonard Cohen, covering his tender "Dance Me To The End Of Love." And she infuses a bluesy flavor into "Thinking Out Loud," by singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran.

—Alain Drouot

With A Twist: My Baby Just Cares For Me; Sway; Alright, Okay, You Win/Soul Bossa Nova; Cocktails For Two; Whatever Lola Wants; Dance Me To The End Of Love; It's Oh So Quiet; How I Know; High Hat, Trumpet, And Rhythm; Back In Your Own Back Yard; Same Kind Of Crazy; Thinking Out Loud; Time To Go. (50:21)

Personnel: Bria Skonberg, vocal, trumpet; Kathleen Nester, piccolo (1, 3), flute (2, 5, 6, 7); Sheryl Henze, alto flute (1, 3), bass flute (2, 5–7); Michael Davis, trombone (1, 3, 5, 7); George Flynn, bass trombone (1, 3, 5); Evan Arntzen, tenor saxophone (4, 11–13), clarinet (9); Joyce Hammann, viola (1–3, 5–6); Erik Chariston, marimba (1, 2), vibraphone (3, 5–7); Sullivan Fortner, piano (4, 9–13), Fender Rhodes (6); Gil Goldstein, Fender Rhodes (1), accordion (2, 5, 6, 11), keyboards (3, 7, 8, 11, 12); Steve Cardenas, electric guitar (1, 3, 5–8, 11, 12), acoustic guitar (2); Scott Colley, bass (1–9, 11–13); Matt Wilson, drums (1–9, 11–13); Bashiri Johnson, percussion (1–9, 11, 12).

Ordering info: okeh-records.com



Mike Reed *Flesh & Bone*

482 MUSIC 1100

★★★★

The saying goes that whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger, but for drummer Mike Reed, the events of April 4, 2009, got a bit too close to mortality for comfort. That's the day he and the other musicians of the band People, Places & Things were delivered into Prešov, Czech Republic, while a neo-Nazi rally was scheduled to take place. The rally turned into a riot, but the racially integrated combo managed to escape harm, and Reed was inspired by the experience to compose an album-length suite.

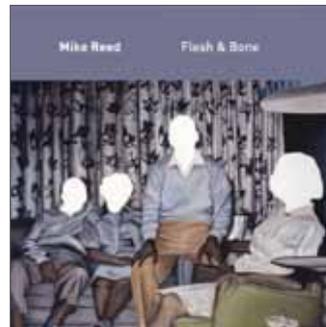
Flesh & Bone isn't a straight narration of what happened that day, but rather a meditation upon the cultural heritage that Reed cherishes. The music honors the examples of Duke Ellington, painter Archibald Motley and a host of Chicago-rooted free-jazz drummers without overtly replicating their diverse examples. Reed added Tate and guests Ben Lamar Gay (cornet) and Jason Stein (bass clarinet) to his original quartet, which includes bassist Jason Roebke and saxophonists Greg Ward and Tim Haldeman. With its historical depth and vigorous performance, the music satisfies on its own terms; by exemplifying those qualities it defies the hateful sentiments of the rioters and their ilk.

—Bill Meyer

Flesh & Bone: Voyagers; First Reading; SF Sky; Conversation Music; A Separatist Party; The Magic Drum; My Imaginary Friend; I Want To Be Small—For Archibald Motley; Second Reading: Me Day; Watching The Boats; Call Of Tomorrow; Scenes From The Next Life. (41:23)

Personnel: Mike Reed, drums; Greg Ward, alto saxophone; Tim Haldeman, tenor saxophone; Jason Roebke, bass; Ben Lamar Gay, cornet; Jason Stein, bass clarinet; Marvin Tate, vocals.

Ordering info: 482music.com



Martin/Klein *The Upstate Project*

SUNNYSIDE

★★★★

Jazz-folk singer, songwriter and guitarist Rebecca Martin has known Argentinian pianist, vocalist and composer Guillermo Klein since they met at New York's Smalls Jazz Club in the early 1990s. She admired his work with his band, Los Guachos, a group that blended jazz with the folk music of South America, while pursuing her own career as a solo artist on six beautiful albums.

After years of playing abroad, Klein settled in upstate New York, close to Martin. They began writing together and, with the help of bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Jeff Ballard, put together *The Upstate Project*. The band rides quiet, slow-moving grooves into despondent landscapes, full of people that seem haunted by their shattered pasts and fearful of a future that may never arrive.

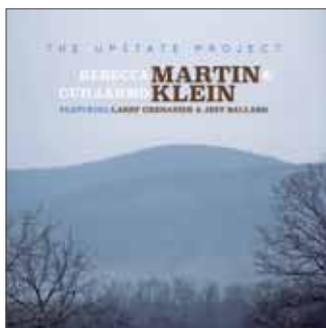
Martin's discreet vocal style brims with compassionate resignation. It's the perfect vehicle for conveying the profound sadness that pervades most of the songs on the record. Klein's keyboard work is just as subtle. And the stellar support of Grenadier's shadowy, apprehensive bass lines and Ballard's subliminal, off-kilter accents add a glimmer of light to these emotionally distressing tunes.

—j. poet

The Upstate Project: Just As In Spring; To Make The Most Of Today; On A Sunday Morning; Thrones And Believers; Later On They'll Know; When Things Like These Go Wrong; Freedom Run; Like Every Other Day; Outside It Rains For Them; In The Nick Of Time; Hold On; To Up And Go. (49:48)

Personnel: Rebecca Martin, guitar, vocals; Guillermo Klein, piano, keyboards, vocals; Larry Grenadier, bass; Jeff Ballard, drums, percussion.

Ordering info: sunnysidezone.com



John Yao Quintet *Presence*

SEE TAO RECORDINGS

★★★★½

John Yao makes it clear he's not content to stand still. The trombonist/composer's second outing with his quintet follows on the heels of *Flip-Flop*, featuring his other working unit, John Yao and His 17-Piece Instrument. That big band release showcased Yao's unpredictable compositions and inventive arrangements, which spring from tradition while pointing toward future portals. *Presence* treads that same water. Yao's most searching release to date, the album is marked by a greater openness and ensemble elasticity.

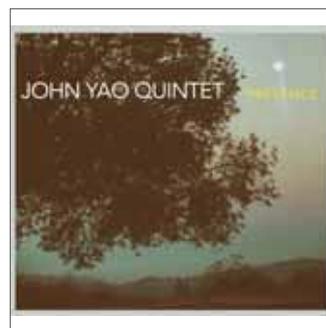
The album was inspired by the sudden death of Yao's closest friend. But the disc is certainly not a somber affair. Grief is a multi-part journey, and this set is likewise far-reaching in tone and texture. The quintet dives in with the edgy opener, "Tight Rope," a skewed odd-metered funk laced with a jagged melody. In contrast, the title track is a model vehicle for Yao's lyrical soloing and expressive round tone. And "Over The Line" is a shadowy, unsettling funk framed against a skittering backing that gradually escalates via crashing piano chords. There's a heartening upbeat finale with the swinging, straight-ahead "Bouncy's Bounce." Irabagon's spirited soprano solo here includes a hint of the melody from "Joy Spring"—perhaps a suggestion that life goes on.

—Jeff Potter

Presence: Tight Rope; Presence; M. Howard; Over The Line; Fuzzy Logic; Nightfall; 1247 Chestnut; Bouncy's Bounce. (52:09)

Personnel: John Yao, trombone; Jon Irabagon, soprano saxophone, soprano saxophone; Randy Ingram, piano, Fender Rhodes (1); Peter Brendler, bass; Shawn Baltazor, drums.

Ordering info: johnyao.com



Sweeter Than Honey

Eric Bibb, *Migration Blues* (Stony Plain 1395; 48:12 ★★★★★) Connecting on his 18th feature album, Eric Bibb's songs about refugees (1920s African Americans moving northward, as well as those in today's news) and the importance of altruism merge the bluesy warmth of his gentle flights of invention with the formal beauty of composition. In the company of subtle harmonica player JJ Milteau and strings specialist Michael Jerome Browne, the traveling singer-songwriter-guitarist achieves poetry in his lyrics. Through smoldering embers of emotion, Bibb makes Bob Dylan's old "Masters Of War" pertinent to our time.

Ordering info: stonyplainrecords.com

Chris Belleau, *Swamp Fever* (Proud Dog; 41:17 ★★★) Chris Belleau is one of the leading exponents of Louisiana roots music. Classy and unhurried, this Baton Rouge resident confidently brings his singing and playing of blues harmonica and Cajun accordion to his sophomore solo album's six original songs. Long known as the leader of the Zydeco Hounds band, Belleau contributes jazz trombone to a parading update of the Louis Armstrong-identified "When You're Smiling" and a quietly soulful version of "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat." Among the sidemen is respected saxophonist Jon Smith, who's worked with folks like Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown and Dr. John.

Ordering info: chrisbelleaumusic.com

Champion Jack Dupree, *Live At Rockpalast* (MIG-Music 90742; 57:10/62:35; DVD: 120:16; ★★★½) Long ensconced in Europe, New Orleans native Champion Jack Dupree shows largeness of spirit at this solicitously filmed and recorded concert in Cologne, Germany, in 1980. Despite a penchant for idle talk, the esteemed barrelhouse-and-blues pianist entertains royally a few days before his 71st birthday. Of 16 numbers, "Bad Luck" and "Baby, (Please) Don't Go" are the standouts. Danish guitarist Kenn Lending serves as his accompanist, and American folkie Ramblin' Jack Elliott stops by for one song. Caveat: a two-hour visit with Dupree may be long and tiresome for novitiates or casual fans.

Ordering info: mig-music.de

Melvin Sparks, *Live At Nectar's* (One Note 021; 45:03 ★★★★★) Over the course of a career lasting four-plus decades, Melvin Sparks proved important to the soul-jazz, acid-jazz and jam-band movements. His cred as a top-rank bluesman was vetted by the likes of Jimmy McGriff and Hubert Sumlin. Here on his lucky 13th solo album—a Burlington, Vermont, club date taped not



Eric Bibb

long before his death in early 2011—the guitarist emotes long narrative solos that engage his own distinctive identity as well as his life experiences. He evidences piercing blues-immersed feeling and bebop facility of doubtless conviction. Beau Sasser on Hammond B-3 and three more acolytes bask in the soulful, intense vibe of Bobby Womack's "Breezin'" and five more stretched-out winners.

Ordering info: kudosrecords.co.uk

Pamela Rose Presents *Blues Is A Woman* (Three Handed 008; 24:15 ★★★½) Spryly expressive singer Pamela Rose at once celebrates historic blues women (starting with Bessie Smith) and gladdens a listener's spirit with her sparkling theatrical concert production called *Wild Women Of Song: Great Gal Composers of the Jazz Era*. (It debuts this August at San Francisco's Custom Made Theatre.) Buoyed by an all-female ensemble, Rose's mashup of Alberta Hunter's "Remember My Name" and her own "Blues Is A Mighty River" highlights the six-track "original cast recording."

Ordering info: bluesisawoman.com

Southside Johnny & The Asbury Jukes, *The Fever: The Remastered Epic Recordings* (Real Gone Music/Epic 0554; 79:47/78:48 ★★★★★) The rightly acclaimed Jersey Shore r&b group of the 1970s sounds strong even now. Their first three studio albums and the *Bottom Line* concert EP (time constraints apparently excluded the superior live *Havin' A Party* LP) reveal their enthusiasm for drawing inspiration from heroes such as Ray Charles, Jimmy Reed and Jackie Wilson. The Jukes reach up and touch the sky except when tangled in sentimentality during parts of *This Time It's For Real*. **DB**

Ordering info: realgonemusic.com

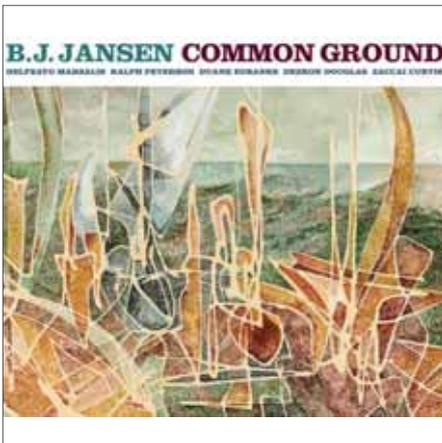
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B.J. Jansen *Common Ground*

RONIN JAZZ 20170501

★★★★

For his 10th recording as a leader, baritone saxophonist B.J. Jansen is joined on the front line by trombonist Delfeayo Marsalis and trumpeter Duane Eubanks. (The Cincinnati native was introduced to both veterans when he was in school—the former while an undergraduate at the University of Louisville’s School of Music and the latter during his time earning his MBA in Music Management at William Paterson University.) Pianist Zaccai Curtis (of the Curtis Brothers), bassist Dezron Douglas and drummer Ralph Peterson round out the impressive lineup.

Aside from the pedigree of the band, what stands out after repeated listening is the discernable camaraderie among the six musicians and the engaging repertoire. In addition to five of the session leader’s own composi-

tions, *Common Ground* features a pair by pianist Frank Stagnitta (Jansen’s mentor), one by Jansen and the rhythm section (the *A Love Supreme*-inspired title track) and a take on Philadelphia keyboardist Trudy Pitts’ “Bucket Full Of Soul,” from her 1968 Prestige album of the same name.

As explained in the liner notes, many of Jansen’s pieces are inspired by or dedicated to specific individuals: Written for a friend, the blues workout “Stacey’s Pace” opens the album; brief solos by Douglas and Eubanks precede the bandleader’s extended exploration.

“Soul Loss,” dedicated to recently passed love ones, sounds at once like an elegy and a long-lost standard with the quartet track showcasing Jansen’s reflective playing. “Relaxin’ With Jessica” is a group romp that Jansen says was inspired by the musical styles emanating out of Philadelphia in the 1950s and ’60s.

A practice typically reserved for reissues, *Common Ground* offers three alternative takes at the end of the album. Second spins through “Angela’s Aggravation” and “Stacey’s Pace” are exciting, but the sextet’s approach to “Bucket Full Of Soul” is so smile-inducing (with Marsalis’ unbuttoned shirt/loosened necktie-style solos particular highlights) that it definitely supports the “more is more” philosophy when it come to multiple versions.

—Yoshi Kato

Common Ground: Stacey’s Pace; Carol’s Dream; Street Walk; Brandon’s Blues; Soul Loss; Angela’s Aggravation; Bucket Full Of Soul; Relaxin’ With Jessica; Common Ground; Angela’s Aggravation (Alt Take); Bucket Full of Soul (Alt Take); Stacey’s Pace (Alt Take). (64:42)

Personnel: B.J. Jansen, baritone sax; Delfeayo Marsalis, trombone; Duane Eubanks, trumpet; Zaccai Curtis, piano; Dezron Douglas, bass; Ralph Peterson, drums.

Ordering info: bjjansen.com



Chuck Berry *Chuck*

DUALTONE

★★★★

There are few moments in music more exhilarating than Chuck Berry’s searing lead riff on “Johnny B. Goode” and “Sweet Little Sixteen.” Probably no song in the history of rock blends lyrics and music more deftly and cannily than “Maybellene” and “Memphis.” Berry followed his peripatetic musical spirit almost up until the day he died on March 18, 2017, at age 90. The 10 songs on *Chuck*—the album he was working on with family and friends before he died—showcase his wide-ranging guitar versatility, his still-powerful vocals and his nimble way with a crafty song lyric.

Chuck is Berry’s first studio album since 1979’s *Rock It*. Since that release, Berry has garnered numerous honors, including a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 1984. On this album, his Blueberry Hill band backs him: daughter Ingrid Berry-Clay (harmonica), Charles Berry Jr. (guitar), Jimmy Marsala (bass), Robert Lohr (piano) and Keith Robinson (drums).

The jaunty, choogling “Wonderful Woman” launches *Chuck* with the steady driving rhythm of Berry’s guitar; his son and grandson, along with bluesman Gary Clark Jr., join Berry on guitar. Berry opens the song with his blues growl, and the guitars then take off at lightning speed on a jam that celebrates the beauty of women and the heartache of loving them. “Big Boys,” which features Nathaniel Rateliff on vocals and Tom Morello on guitar, rockets off with a typical Berry guitar riff and never slows down.

Chuck fittingly celebrates and preserves the legacy of the father of rock ‘n’ roll.

—Henry L. Carrigan Jr.

Chuck: Wonderful Woman; Big Boys; You Go To My Head; 3/4 Time (Enchiladas); Darlin’; Lady B. Goode; She Still Loves You; Jamaica Moon; Dutchman; Eyes Of Man. (34:31)

Personnel: Chuck Berry, vocals, guitar; Charles Berry Jr., guitar; Ingrid Berry-Clay, vocals, harmonica; Robert Lohr, piano; Jimmy Marsala, bass; Keith Robinson, drums; Gary Clark Jr. (1), Charles Berry III (1, 6); Tom Morello (2), guitar; Nathaniel Rateliff, vocals (2); Debra Dobkin, drums, percussion (8); The New Respect, background vocals (5); Jeremy Lutito, percussion.

Ordering info: dualtone.com

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Get Up, Stand Up for Reggae

Reggae was the first music from Jamaica to gain international success, thanks in large part to Bob Marley, Jimmy Cliff's *The Harder They Fall* soundtrack and the studio experiments of producer Lee "Scratch" Perry. Reggae caught on in Britain in the late '60s. The Mod subculture adopted the proto-reggae styles of ska and rocksteady, setting the stage for worldwide embrace of the music's off-beat guitar accents, melodic bass lines and syncopated drumming.

Ozomatli, *Non-Stop: Mexico To Jamaica* (Cleopatra; 46:47 ★★★★★) Ozomatli honors the cultural diversity of their Los Angeles home with an infectious combination of reggae, hip-hop, salsa, funk, ska, Afro-Cuban jazz and rock. The band captures the essence of roots music with tracks full of dub effects and solid, pounding rhythms. Selena's "Como La Flor" gets an uplifting ska treatment; "Andar Conmigo" blends banda with a gentle reggae swing that accentuates the similarities between the two rhythms.

Ordering info: cleorecs.com

Nattali Rize, *Rebel Frequency* (Rootfire Cooperative/Baco; 44:15 ★★★★★) Rize moved to Jamaica from her native Australia three years ago. Her desire to reshape the global political system is at the root of her art, making her lyrics as fiery as her music. She recorded this album at Bob Marley's Tuff Gong Studio, backed by a band of Jamaican session heavies. The title track is an anthem to revolutionary change, driven by a one-drop rhythm and her fierce vocals. Julian Marley joins Rize for "Natty Rides Again," a tribute to Marley's father and fighters for change.

Ordering info: nattalirize.com

Flavia Coelho, *Sonho Real* (Le Label; 50:01 ★★★) This singer from Rio de Janeiro mixes baile funk, faro and frevo with ragga, reggae, ska and dub to create a hybrid of Brazilian and Jamaican styles.

She tosses baile funk, rap and dub effects together on "Se Ligue," the album's opener. "Bom Bom" is a light, swinging reggae tune with a killer hook.

Ordering info: flaviacoelho.com

Jah Ova Evil Collective, *Forever Judah* (Batelier; 55:03 ★★★) Jah Ova Evil was the nom de musique of Alty George Nunes III. After his passing in 2011, his brothers Selah and The Gideon assembled a group of artists to carry on in his name. The members of the collective expanded the music by adding jazz, hip-hop and electro to their roots-reggae sound. The result is a deep, smoky album, full of impressive performances. "Your King Is On The Way" is electro-reggae at its subtle best.

Ordering info: soundcloud.com/batellerrecords

Collie Buddz, *Good Life* (Harper Digital; 30:00 ★★★) Born in New Orleans, raised in Bermuda and addicted to reggae, Colin Harper, aka Collie Buddz, has an approach that ranges freely through Caribbean genres, while staying true to his love of dancehall reggae. The album is driven by multi-layered drum loops and Harper's vocals, delivered in a rhythmic patois. The title track is an ode to the soothing qualities of rum, weed and women. Snoop Dogg makes a brief guest appearance on "Yesterday."

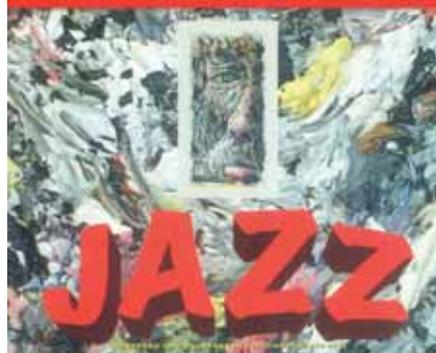
Ordering info: colliebuddz.com

Passafire, *Longshot* (Easy Star; 45:54 ★★★) *Longshot* is the sixth album release from this Savannah, Georgia-based groove ensemble, which draws upon elements of hip-hop, alt-rock, Afrobeat and electronica to concoct their deep reggae rhythms. Standouts include "Blow," a political jolt of electro-funk featuring Boston rapper Mr. Lif from The Perceptionists; "Fireside," a folksy meditation on love and mortality; and "One Blink," a hip-hop-flavored rocker.

Ordering info: passafiretheband.com

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Theo Hill *Promethean*

POSI-TONE

★★★★½

The piano trio is a well-trodden format that is also quintessential to jazz. Young pianist Theo Hill gives it a shot on his debut. He delves into it with boundless energy, and whatever one may think of Hill's music, it definitely does not sound dull. Hill also conceived this first statement as a tribute to key musical influences, a group that includes both pianists and, interestingly enough, drummers. The program features compositions by Bobby Timmons, Herbie Hancock, Kenny Kirkland, Duke Pearson and Chick Corea, as well as Victor Lewis and Tony Williams. Moreover, the pianist's only original tune, "The Phoenix," is a romping dedication to Jeff "Tain" Watts.

Energetic and dynamic, Hill flirts with bombast, but has enough restraint to keep his enthusiasm under control and let his musicality and melodicism bloom. His composure gives plenty of vitality to the more subdued moments, such as Williams' ballad "Pee Wee" or the introductions to Kirkland's "Blasphemy" and Pearson's "Is That So" before the pieces gain velocity. Kirkland's "Chance" is a solo piano effort performed with empathy and soul. The only disappointment resides with the version of Hale Smith's "I Love Music." Delivered on a rock beat, it is a poor diversion and fails to actually expand Hill's horizon. —Alain Drouot



Sclavis/ Pifarély/ Courtois *Asian Fields Variations*

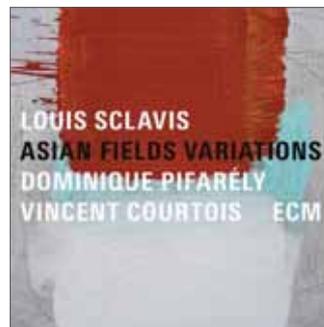
ECM 2054

★★★★★

The first formal recording of a trio whose members have worked in various duo formats for years, *Asian Fields Variations* beds Louis Sclavis' plangent clarinets in the rhapsodic twine of Dominique Pifarély's violin and Vincent Courtois' violoncello.

This modern classical music should be absorbed slowly. It does not swing; it invites and embraces. It does not bludgeon; it persuades. It can be spectral, as in Courtois' patient and haunting "Les Nuits." It can be frantic, as in Sclavis' "Cèdre," a track featuring the clarinetist in overdrive, along with a stunning Pifarély solo to bring the tune home. It can be mysterious, as in Pifarély's "Sous Le Masque," a mini-symphony ripe with alluring countermelodies. This rich album was produced with characteristic respect and clarity by Manfred Eicher. Masters of tone, timbre and dynamics, the performers know precisely when to recede into blend and when to shine up front. Their patience and empathy keep them on a luminous and ego-free course.

Such qualities also make demands of the listener, for this is not easy listening. It speaks of the collective and sophisticated sensibility governing a recording of unusually lovely arc and roundness. —Carlo Wolff



Promethean: This Here; Hey, It's Me You're Talking To; Finger Painting; I Love Music; Pee Wee; The Phoenix; Blasphemy; Is That So; Litha; Chance; Citadel. (54:39)

Personnel: Theo Hill, piano; Yasushi Nakamura, bass; Mark Whitfield Jr., drums.

Ordering info: posi-tone.com

Asian Fields Variations: Mont Myon; Done And Done; Pensée Furtive; Figure Absente; Asian Fields; Digression; Fifteen Weeks; Les Nuits; Cèdre; Sous Le Masque; La Carrière. (45:34)

Personnel: Louis Sclavis, clarinets; Vincent Courtois, violoncello; Dominique Pifarély, violin.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

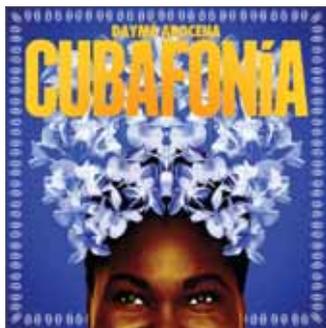
Daymé Arocena *Cubafonia*

BROWNSWOOD

★★★★

Daymé Arocena is one of Cuba's best-known young vocalists. The singer has an amazing sense of dynamics and has often been compared to Aretha Franklin in emotional range. On this album, she works her way through an 11-song collection that delves into Cuba's folkloric roots. She's supported by a cast of A-list players from Havana's jazz community, with pianist Jorge Luis Lagarza and acoustic bass player Gastón Joya as particular standouts.

When Arocena's voice drifts to the front of the mix, she projects a bubbling joy and a profound sense of stirring spirituality. The r&b ballad "Cómo" opens with Lagarza's dramatic piano supporting Arocena's forlorn phrasing. The band comes in with a relaxed funk groove, reminiscent of early Earth, Wind & Fire, giving Arocena plenty of sonic space to improvise and croon her heart out. Arocena's scatted improvisations on "It's Not Gonna Be Forever" dart around the backing singers like a hummingbird teasing the nectar out of a flower. —j. poet



Cubafonia: Elegua; La Rumba me llamo yo; Lo que fue; Maybe Tomorrow; Negra Caridad; Mambo Na' Mía; Cómo; Todo por Amor; Ángel; It's Not Gonna Be Forever; Valentine. (40:35)

Personnel: Daymé Arocena, vocals; Jorge Luis Lagarza, piano, vocals; Gastón Joya, bass, marimbula; Rafael Aldama, bass (3, 4, 6, 10); Ruly Herrera, drums; Yaroldy Abreu, Marcos Yosvany Diaz (1); percussion; Mayquel González, trumpet, vocals; Emir Santacruz, tenor saxophone, clarinet (11); Yuniel Lombida, baritone saxophone; Heikel Fabian Trimiño, trombone; Robert Luis Gómez, guitar; Lino Lores, tré (11); Barbara Llanes (1), Dreyser Durruti (1); Leonel Ernesto Lastres Daniela J Barreto, Loreta Zerquera, Dexter Story, backing vocals.

Ordering info: brownswoodrecordings.bandcamp.com

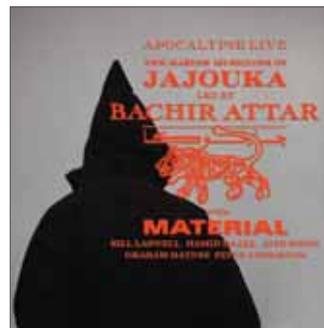
Master Musicians of Jajouka & Material *Apocalypse Live*

M.O.D. TECHNOLOGIES ON

★★★★★

Produced by Bachir Attar and Bill Laswell, *Apocalypse Live* has the overall feel of a jam session, with the usual array of worldly overtones. Led by Attar, Morocco's Master Musicians of Jajouka are joined by Laswell's Material band as they inject a synthesis of Western funk and incessant modal vibes. That the Master Musicians aggregate pre-dates most of us—at least according to the late William Burroughs, who referred to them as "the 4,000 year old rock 'n' roll band"—is certainly a stimulating element.

This is trance music, by way of North Africa, with jazz-infused playing courtesy of cornetist Graham Haynes and reed player Peter Apfelbaum. "The New And The Ancient" signals this, as Haynes' horn is given lots of leeway to stretch within the group's rangy, folksy backbeats. It's a sound that puts Haynes and Apfelbaum (along with Ahmed Bakhat on violin) on the front lines. Bakhat is featured on the waltzing "Dancing From The Heart," his bow surrounded by grinding percussion, and "The Bird's Prayer" presents even more variations, Laswell's bass moving with a sound both ancient and modern. —John Ephland



Apocalypse Live: Dancing From The Heart; The Bird's Prayer; The New And The Ancient; HLallia. (68:04)

Personnel: Bachir Attar, ghaita, lira, guinbri; Mustapha Attar, ghaita, lira, drums; Ahmed Bakhat, drums, violin; Abdellah Bohkzar, Mohamed el Attar, Hamid Drake, drums; Bill Laswell, bass; Aiyb Dieng, percussion; Graham Haynes, cornet; Peter Apfelbaum, saxophones, flute; Oz Fritz, live sound; James Dellatacoma, backline.

Ordering info: mod-technologies.com

Sinatra Keeps on Ticking

Want to know a quirk of the music business? A hot band can sell 10 million albums, pack stadiums and grow wealthy. Yet 90 percent of the general public may never know its name or hear its music. Smart phones and algorithms have transformed us from one demographic of millions into a million demographics of one.

It was different in the 1950s. Popular music was narrowly tuned to be widely shared. Almost any singer with a few hit records would host a weekly show. With only three networks to watch, everybody knew everybody.

The preferred format was the variety show—something for everybody. Had you stumbled on Elvis Presley's 1956 debut on *Stage Show*, you would have seen Sarah Vaughan on the same program. "Variety" meant just that.

A few stars were too big or expensive to bother with weekly TV. For them there was the periodic "special," which brings us to **Frank Sinatra**, whose four ABC variety hours from the 1959-'60 season come together again (after a VHS issue in the '80s) in ***The Frank Sinatra Collection: The Timex Shows, Vol. 1 and 2*** (Eagle Rock Entertainment 119:00/118:00 ★★½).

Sinatra was at the summit of his career for his first special in October 1959. *Only The Lonely* and *No One Cares* had recently come out, *Nice 'N' Easy* was just ahead and "High Hopes" was topping the charts. As a guest on the show, his only real peer was Bing Crosby, still the grand master of suave understatement. Dean Martin provided the subversive mischief. They play off one another like the old companions they are, trading repartee on a smartly structured medley of "old" songs. Sinatra solos on "Day In, Day Out," "Talk To Me" and a forlorn "Angel Eyes." Mitzi Gaynor is sensational in the midst of this boys' club and blows up a dance storm on "Hurricane."

The rousing finale previews a medley of Jimmy Durante songs that Sinatra, Crosby and Martin were to sing in a Durante film bio that sadly never got made. Durante himself makes a surprise cameo on "Baby, Won't You Please Come Home," though the excitement may be lost on those now unfamiliar with the Great Schnozzola.

On Dec. 13, Ella Fitzgerald joined Sinatra for their first joint appearance. That alone makes this a very "special" special. The party atmosphere isn't there, mainly because Hermione Gingold and Peter Lawford can't pull their weight against Sinatra's imperial



Frank Sinatra (left), Bing Crosby and Dean Martin on the set of *The Frank Sinatra Timex Show*, broadcasted by ABC on Oct. 19, 1959.

COURTESY FRANK SINATRA ENTERPRISES

authority. But Ella can. She solos on "Lull In My Life" and "Just You, Just Me," leads off a Gershwin medley and joins Sinatra on a witty "Can't We Be Friends." Sinatra does a wonderful saloon set with Red Norvo, Jerry Dodgion, Jim Wyble and Red Wooten and a luscious look back to the Dorsey days with the Hi-Lo's on "I'll Never Smile Again."

The theme of the third special, Vol. 2's *Here's to the Ladies*, gives Sinatra little to work with. Mary Costa is a mezzo soprano; Barbara Heller, a minor comedienne; Juliet Prowse is a lovely dancer, but on her own. The main chemistry is with Lena Horne, who is radioactive with an almost weaponized allure. They duet delightfully in a Harold Arlen medley.

Sinatra's transfiguring moment comes with "Lonely Town." He considered this Leonard Bernstein song from his *Where Are You* album the best recording he ever made. It's the highlight of the show.

Except that it pales before the meeting three months later with Elvis Presley, whom Sinatra welcomed back from the Army on his final Timex special. For the first 40 minutes he parties with Lawford, Sammy Davis Jr., Joey Bishop and daughter Nancy. But the irony is that the most publicized show of his career is not about him at all. It is a national event of generational succession—like Sinatra's challenge to Crosby 15 years before. Except that, in 1945, succession meant continuity. In 1960 it meant the end of the line. "What would you say if I was gonna sing another song," Sinatra asks, knowing the answer. Presley then appears looking embarrassed by it all.

Aside from the convergence of sheer celebrity, few artistic dividends were expected and none were paid. The reviews were as awful as the ratings were titanic, and Presley was off TV for the next nine years. But history isn't always pretty. **DB**

Ordering info: eagle-rock.com

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Jason Anick & Jason Yeager

United

INNER CIRCLE MUSIC

★★★★½

These two lifelong friends—and now Berklee College of Music faculty colleagues—challenge and complement each other throughout these 10 tracks. Their music appeals as much to the mind as the spirit, not because it's impossibly intricate (it isn't) but because it avoids excess. Both Jasons and their guests improvise eloquently, but it's the content of their inventions, not any showiness or exploitation of clichés, that moves the listener.

"Well Red," for example, opens with a plucked string motif in 7/8, which unfolds through several composed passages into a "blowing session" of sorts. With drummer Mike Connors left free to nudge things along, trumpeter Jason Palmer stretches out with an understated but wonderfully constructed solo.

They approach simpler settings with intelligence and understatement. If one must point to a single track as the finest among *United's* many gems, that might be "Sweet Pea." Written as a tribute to Billy Strayhorn, it begins with Yeager alone, making the intention of his tune clear with delicate, arpeggiated chords played in a sighing rubato.

—Bob Doerschuk

United: Achi; Bird's Eye View; Well Red; Stillness; Harlem Hoedown; Something; Turbulent Plover; Sweet Pea; La Segunda; All Blues. (53:43)

Personnel: Jason Anick, violin, mandolin; Jason Yeager, piano; Greg Loughman, bass (1–3, 6–8); Mike Connors, drums (1–3, 6–8); John Lockwood, bass (5, 9); Jerry Leake, percussion (5–9); Jason Palmer, trumpet (3, 5); Clay Lyons, alto saxophone (2); George Garzone, tenor saxophone (7).

Ordering info: innercirclemusic.com



Ariel Pocock

Living In Twilight

JUSTIN TIME

★★★★½

Singer, songwriter and pianist Ariel Pocock has made a name for herself by taking a unique approach to the repertoire of the Great American Songbook. Songs by Cole Porter and Ray Noble are joined by interpretations of tunes by Kate McGarrigle, Adele and The Weepies, as well as her own compositions. The resulting album celebrates the art of songwriting, with tunes seasoned by Pocock's distinct piano playing and the fine work of her rhythm section—drummer Jim Doxas and bassist Adrian Vedady.

"500 Miles High," the Chick Corea/Flora Purim hit from Return to Forever's *Light As A Feather*, is taken as a slow bossa nova. Pocock toys with her phrasing, stretching out syllables or chopping them into clipped fragments before slipping into an extended scat interlude, and she brings a bitter, almost stalker-like edge to her rendition of Adele's "Someone Like You."

Pocock closes the album alone, with a bittersweet rendition of McGarrigle's "Go, Leave." She does justice to the song's asymmetrical structure, with an understated vocal that breaks words into tearful fragments, while her tonal variations suggest a glimmer of hope, despite the hopelessness of the lyric.

—j. poet

Living In Twilight: The Very Thought Of You; 500 Miles High; Living In Twilight; So In Love; Someone Like You; Saudações; So Long; I Love You; To Be Alone With You; Gonzalo's Melody; When You Wish Upon A Star; Hymn; Go, Leave. (62:26)

Personnel: Ariel Pocock, vocals, piano; Jim Doxas, drums; Adrian Vedady, bass; Chico Pinheiro, guitar.

Ordering info: justin-time.com



Taj Mahal & Keb' Mo'

TajMo

CONCORD 00431

★★★★½

Taj Mahal, in his mid-seventies, and Keb' Mo', 65, are playing through the long winter of their careers. Longevity and past successes accord them hyperbolic status as "iconic blues legends." Despite the praise bestowed on them by well-wishers, they do need to dodge the pejorative "has-beens" tag that suits many elders tilling now-depleted blues farrows.

Fortunately, Mahal and Mo' have enough gas left in their tanks to make their first collaborative album, recorded in Mo's home studio over two-and-a-half years. They bid for universal peace on "All Around The World," establishing a sparkling melodic connection. More good vibes come with their spare treatment of John Mayer's "Waiting On The World To Change." And with singer Lizz Wright adding star power, Mahal and Mo' romanticize the pop-blues "Om Sweet Om."

—Frank-John Hadley

TajMo: Don't Leave Me Here; She Knows How To Rock Me; All Around The World; Om Sweet Om; Shake Me In Your Arms; That's Who I Am; Diving Duck Blues; Squeeze Box; Ain't Nobody Talkin'; Soul; Waiting On The World To Change. (45:27)

Personnel: Taj Mahal, vocals, guitars; Keb' Mo', guitars, vocals; Colin Linden, mandolin (3, 6, 8), guitar (8); Phillip Hughley, Joe Walsh (4, 5, 8), electric guitar; Billy Branch (1), Lee Oskar (4), harmonica; Michael B. Hicks, Phil Madeira, keyboards; Phillip Moore, Tommy Sims, bass; Eric Ramey, bass, electric piano; Jeff Taylor, lead accordion (8); Shiela E. (3, 8), Crystal Taliefero, percussion; Jeff Taylor, Thaddeus Witherspoon, Chester Thompson, Marcus Finnie, Keio Stroud, drums; Sam Levine, saxophone, flute; Jovan Quallo, saxophone; Nestor Torres, flute (10); Keith Everette, Quentin Ware, trumpet; Roger Bissell, Roland Barber, trombone; Lizz Wright, lead vocal (4); Bonnie Raitt, backing vocal (11); Sharon Cho, Raphael Nduka Onwuzurigo, Sidney Rudder, Dain Ussery, Robbie Brooks Moore, Stephanie Bentley, Meg Manning, backing vocals.

Ordering info: concordmusicgroup.com



Gerald Cannon

Combinations

WOODNECK

★★★★

Bassist Gerald Cannon makes his long-awaited return with *Combinations*, his second effort as leader. He has hardly been elusive or idle in the 14 years since his eponymous debut in 2003. With a career spanning well over 30 years, Cannon has held a steady bass for the likes of Elvin Jones, Roy Hargrove and McCoy Tyner, among others.

The bassist has also enjoyed a career as a celebrated visual artist and, until recently, has kept both pursuits entirely separate from one another. Armed with 10 of his closest collaborators on *Combinations*, Cannon shows that he's not afraid to color outside of the lines, exploring seemingly infinite tonal textures.

"Every Man Is A King" immediately grabs your attention. Penned by trombonist Slide Hampton, the audacious title is matched by equally bold choices throughout—from Cannon's punctuated bass solo to the declarative phrasing of Jeremy Pelt and Gary Bartz. The mood shifts with the original "A Thought." Imbued by Cannon's years in Hargrove's group, it harks back to an era in jazz when less was more.

—Shannon J. Effinger

Combinations: Every Man Is A King; A Thought; Prelude To A Kiss; Columbus Circle Stop; Amanda's Bossa; One For Amos; Gary's Tune; How Great Thou Art; How My Heart Sings; Combinations; Darn That Dream. (66:27)

Personnel: Gerald Cannon, bass; Gary Bartz (1, 7, 10), Sherman Irby (2, 4, 5, 6), Steve Slagle (3), alto saxophone; Jeremy Pelt (1, 2, 4, 5), Duane Eubanks (10), trumpet; Rick Germanson (1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9), Kenny Barron (2, 5, 10), piano; Russell Malone, guitar (3, 7, 8); Willie Jones III (1–5, 6, 9, 10), Will Calhoun (7), drums.

Ordering info: cannonmusicart.com



Randy Ingram feat. Drew Gress *The Wandering*

SUNNYSIDE 1470

★★★

From Duke Ellington and Jimmy Blanton to Charlie Haden and Keith Jarrett, there's a rich history of piano-bass duo recordings. Perhaps best known for his compositional work, pianist Randy Ingram's third album showcases this elegant yet sometime feisty instrumentation with Drew Gress as a simpatico musical partner.

What's readily apparent is how well the two instrumentalists complement one another in such an exposed setting. Ingram's long legato lines play off Gress' round tone and well-chosen notes, paired for a series of originals (three by Ingram, one by Gress) and some fairly atypical song choices by well-known musicians.

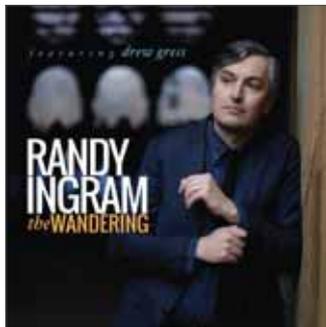
Gress' wistful "Away" opens the nine-track album and showcases Ingram's delicate treble range playing, recalling George Shearing, who also excelled in the art of piano and double bass conversation. Likely the most recognizable selection on the album, Jimmy Rowles' "The Peacocks" receives a reflective interpretation that's punctuated by Ingram's glistening arpeggios. And a deep dive into Kenny Wheeler's "Three For D'Reen" closes the recording with a thoughtful sense of intellectual curiosity.

—Yoshi Kato

The Wandering: Away; Guimarães; Large Father; The Peacocks; Dream Dancing; The Wandering; Chief Crazy Horse; Show-Type Tune; Three For D'Reen. (61:35)

Personnel: Randy Ingram, piano; Drew Gress, bass.

Ordering info: sunnysidezone.com



Calabria Foti *In The Still Of The Night*

MOCO 23-05

★★½

Calabria Foti has an attractive voice and sings perfectly in tune. This is fortunate, because with just a couple of exceptions, her interpretations of Cole Porter songs on *In The Still Of The Night* are taken at very slow tempos.

While Foti's voice is pleasant, she does not bother to improvise much or develop anything but very straight readings of the lyrics; humor, irony and new revelations are absent. Pianist Michael Patterson arranged the 11 standards, so perhaps he is to be held accountable for the dirge-like tempos. These versions of songs such as "Miss Otis Regrets," "Anything Goes," "What Is This Thing Called Love," "Get Out Of Town" and the title track would not be out of place at a funeral.

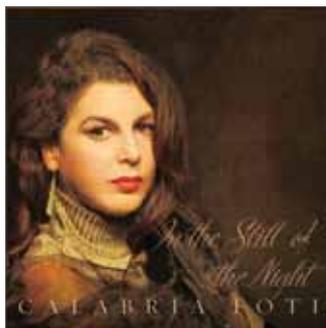
Clarinetist Eddie Daniels makes six appearances and, with his double-time runs, tries his best to wake up the music. But his solos are too brief. Trombonist Bob McChesney (the singer's husband) pops up twice, but does not stick around long enough to make an impression. Only a medium-tempo "It's Alright With Me" has any life to it.

—Scott Yanow

In The Still Of The Night: Just One Of Those Things; Miss Otis Regrets; Anything Goes; What Is This Thing Called Love; Night And Day; I Concentrate On You; Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye; Get Out Of Town; It's Alright With Me; So In Love; In The Still Of The Night. (49:26)

Personnel: Calabria Foti, vocals; Eddie Daniels, clarinet; Gene Bertoncini, guitar; Michael Patterson, piano; Richard Locker, cello; Ike Sturm, bass; Jared Schonig, drums; Bob McChesney, trombone.

Ordering info: calabriefoti.com



**Noah Kaplan
Quartet**
Cluster Swerve
HATOLOGY 716
★★★★

Saxophonist Noah Kaplan studied under the microtonal improviser Joe Maneri at the New England Conservatory of Music, and on Kaplan's latest quartet album, he extends the legacy of his mentor.

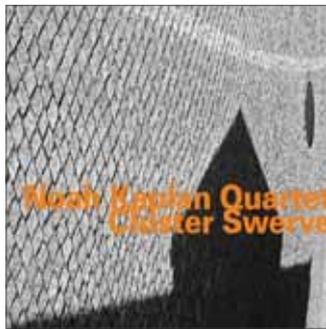
From track to track there is a consistent sense of rumination, where every intervallic brushstroke feels like the work of a painter meticulously applying and manipulating his medium to the canvas. But that movement comes within a matrix of lines sculpted by his ensemble, which achieves a sublime level of interaction. Guitarist Joe Morris—another of Kaplan's early teachers and a collaborator of Maneri—is an excellent partner on the frontline, his considered lines and clear tones forming ornate contrapuntal constellations with the saxophonist's grainy patterns.

At times, such as on the opening tune "Clinamen," the agile rhythm section of electric bassist Giacomina Meregna and drummer Jason Nazary feels almost weightless, a slowly rippling organism of liquid tones and delicate cymbal patter, but on "Entzauberung" they exert a much stronger presence, with Meregna unspooling ropey yet elastic lines of palpable physicality.

—Peter Margasak

Cluster Swerve: Clinamen; Entzauberung; Body And Soul; Sphex; Virago (blues); Exheaval. (57:59)
Personnel: Noah Kaplan, tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone; Joe Morris, guitar; Giacomina Meregna, bass; Jason Nazary, drums, electronics.

Ordering info: hathut.com



Tal Cohen
Gentle Giants
INNER CIRCLE MUSIC 071
★★★★

Pianist Tal Cohen grew up in Israel, moved to Australia when he was 16 and began to travel extensively in 2010. He made his recording debut as a leader in 2011 with *Yellow Sticker* and gained experience working with saxophonists George Garzone and Joe Lovano. While Cohen's music reflects his classical background and his roots in Jewish folk, it mostly falls into the modern jazz mainstream.

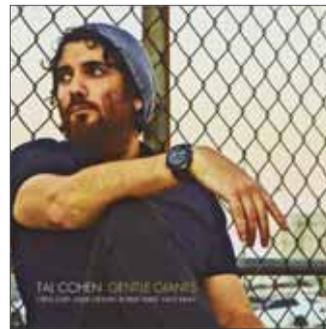
Gentle Giants begins with "Nardis," which is given a subtle bass groove by Hurst. This quiet version, taken at a slower tempo, builds up gradually. "Great PK (For Shuli)," which is named after a dog, has a playful theme and is highlighted by a particularly strong solo from Cohen. The ballad "Ducks" evolves through several moods during its nine minutes, from dramatic to childlike, and including both freer moments and straightahead swing. Of the other pieces, "The Gentle Giant" is a ballad for the trio, "Legacy" is a moody outing with tenor saxophonist Jamie Oehlers, "Gavetsch" heads in several directions at once and "Chopin Meets Abach" is quietly brooding. Throughout *Gentle Giants*, the musicians uplift this post-bop material, creating music that is always stimulating.

—Scott Yanow

Gentle Giants: Nardis; Great PK (For Shuli); Ducks; Lo Haya Part 1; Lo Haya Part 2; Hazil Magil (Gavetsch Reprise); The Gentle Giant; Legacy; Gavetsch; Chopin Meets Abach. (63:04)

Personnel: Tal Cohen, piano; Greg Osby, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone; Jamie Oehlers, tenor saxophone; Robert Hurst, bass; Nate Winn, drums.

Ordering info: innercirclemusic.com



Nicki Parrott
Dear Blossom
ARBORS JAZZ
★★★★

Australian bassist-vocalist Nicki Parrott is no stranger to performing with jazz giants. As an up-and-coming artist on the scene, she studied with trailblazers of her instrument such as Ray Brown and John Clayton. An apprenticeship with bass stalwart Rufus Reid soon followed. Then, with her career surging, she was tapped by none other than Les Paul to perform in his regular Monday-night session at Iridium.

For her latest album, Parrott engages with a vocal legend of jazz past: Blossom Dearie. It's a tribute of sparkling endearment and somber reverence, with moods that alternate between smoke and sunshine. A sprightly, bossa-infused "I Wish You Love" launches the disc with levity and grace, while "Devil And The Deep Blue Sea," "Rhode Island Is Famous For You" and "I'm Hip" (with modern references to Twitter and Instagram) entrench it firmly in swing. Meanwhile, "I Walk A Little Faster" and "Dear Blossom" are elegant turns through balladry, and render Parrott's sweet, amiable voice with pronounced clarity and splendor.

—Brian Zimmerman

Dear Blossom: I Wish You Love; Everything I've Got Belongs To You; I Walk A Little Easier; Peel Me A Grape; Devil And The Deep Blue Sea; Dear Blossom; I'm Hip; Tout Doucement; Try Your Wings; Surrely With The Fringe On Top; Rhode Island Is Famous For You; It Amazes Me; It Might As Well Be Spring. (58:00)

Personnel: Nicki Parrott, vocals, bass; Chris Grasso, piano; Chuck Redd, vibes; Lenny Robinson, drums; Warren Vache, cornet; Engelbert Wrobel, clarinet, tenor saxophone; Vince Cherico, percussion.

Ordering info: arborsrecords.com



**Irvin Mayfield &
The New Orleans
Jazz Orchestra**
Live At Newport
BASIN STREET
★★★★

Irvin Mayfield leads his veteran jazz orchestra through a high-energy musical charge on his latest disc, a live set from the Newport Jazz Festival recorded in August 2015.

Raw, honest and emotional, it's the second live album from Mayfield and his orchestra in two years, following the release of *New Orleans Jazz Playhouse* in 2015. That album, which featured several small ensembles, painted the trumpeter in mellow, intimate tones. In contrast, *Live At Newport* is all about outsized presence and sound.

Festive as this album is—"We're making history!" Mayfield exclaims at the beginning of the set—it's not without moments of great import and seriousness. "Angola," with its chest-thumping minor shuffle, is a song about prison reform, and "May His Soul Rest In Peace" was written by Mayfield in tribute to his father, who was a victim of Hurricane Katrina. It is a solemn, personal testament to the strength of New Orleans' black community in the wake of great tragedy.

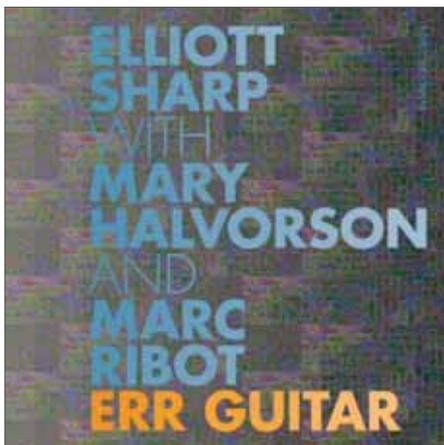
—Brian Zimmerman

Live At Newport: Tune Up (Rising Tide); The Elder Negro Speaks; Angola; Yesterday; I've Got The World On A String; Sweet Bread On The Levees; Overjoyed; Indians; May His Soul Rest In Peace; We Will Rock You/ Joe Avery Blues. (67:58)

Personnel: Irvin Mayfield, trumpet, director; Barney Floyd, Leon "Kid Chocolate" Brown, Ashlin Parker, Glenn Hall, trumpets; Victor "Red" Atkins, piano; Jason Weaver, bass; Carl LeBlanc, guitar, banjo; Adonis Rose, drums; Khari Allen Lee, Jeronne Amari Ansari, Ricardo Pascal, Edward Petersen, Jason Marshall, saxophones; Michael Watson, David L. Harris, Emily Fredrickson, trombones.

Ordering info: basinstreetrecords.com





Sharp/Halvorson/Ribot *Err Guitar*

INTAKT CD 281

★★★★½

No note is a mistake if the next one redeems it, right? This gets especially challenging in a setting where you don't know what the other players are playing; the best you can do is guess what the next good note should be. This two-day session hosted by Elliott Sharp, who invited fellow string-slingers Mary Halvorson and Marc Ribot to his studio, was originally envisioned as a series of duets culminating in a trio. It became a next-level music-plus-one situation when scheduling mandated that Sharp and Ribot play without Halvorson, forcing them to imagine what he she might play and requiring her to respond without seeing the players she was playing "with." Never mind jamming, such a setting is more of a test of a player's ability to think their way out of a jam—ergo, *Err Guitar*.

The outcome is a series of tense tangles, some fully acoustic, some subject to the influence of circuitous circuit chains. Each player gets one baseline-establishing solo. Halvorson's delay-enabled passage points out that even solos can be conversations between what the soloist thought and what the soloist is thinking. Ribot signals that he finds the situation a bit comic by opening his solo selection, "I'm Gonna Party Like It's 1988," with a snippet of "Three Blind Mice." Sharp flies between processed and pure tonal options like a caffeinated gibbon swinging through the rainforest canopy; it's undeniably skilled and quite spectacular, but a bit exhausting to follow. The most densely knotted duets compound this experience, but there are also moments where the players ease back and let the music breathe.

Credit is due to Sharp for his engineering, which captures the session in radiant, three-dimensional detail. —Bill Meyer

Err Guitar: Blindspot; The Ship I Am On; Wobbly; Shredding Light; Sinistre; I'm Gonna Party Like It's 1988; Sequola Pt. 1; Sequola Pt. 2; Oronym; Sea Buzz; Nektone; Kernel Panic. (65:55)

Personnel: Elliott Sharp, Mary Halvorson, Marc Ribot, guitar.

Ordering info: intaktrec.ch

Books / BY EUGENE HOLLEY JR.

Transformers

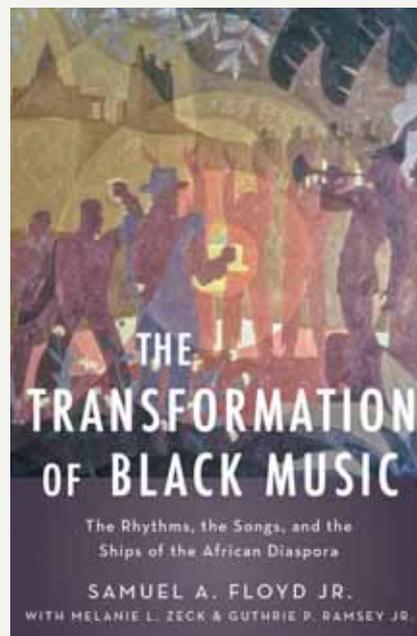
Musicologist Samuel A. Floyd Jr. (1937–2016), founder and director emeritus of the Center for Black Music Research at Columbia College Chicago, authored and edited five books, including *The International Dictionary of Black Composers* and *The Power of Black Music*, and launched the center's periodical series, the Black Music Research Journal. His posthumous achievement is ***The Transformation of Black Music: The Rhythms, the Songs and the Ships of the African Diaspora* (Oxford University Press)**, written with co-authors Guthrie Ramsey, author of *The Amazing Bud Powell: Black Genius, Jazz History* and *The Challenge of Bebop*, and Melanie L. Zeck, managing editor of BMRJ.

Utilizing a "Call/Response" methodology where "...[T]he call refers to African musics (and musical traits) on the continent, while the response refers to the Diaspora's transformation of these musics and musical traits into new entities," Floyd employs an interdisciplinary approach that encompasses musicology, archaeology, history, linguistics and philosophy by a constellation of scholars from Cheikh Anta Diop, J.H. Kwabena Nketia and John Dewey to Robert Farris Thompson, Eileen Southern and Ivan Van Sertima.

The book surveys Africa's ancient cultural and musical landscape from the Yorubas in the West to the Swahilis in the East, and through the infamous Middle Passage, which accounted for the largest exportation of black people to the Americas and Europe, as evidenced by the profiles of several Afro-European musicians like the African-Arab polymath Ziryab, who played oud in service of the 12th-century Moorish Court in Cordoba; Angelo Soliman, an African-Viennese composer; Vicente Lusitano, the Portuguese Mulatto writer of motets and madrigals; and English composers Ignatius Sancho and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor.

"Toussaint's Beat"—named for the legendary Haitian Revolution leader Toussaint L'Ouverture—is Floyd's name for the "cinquillo-tresillo" rhythmic pattern that spans the music of the Caribbean and the Americas: as merengue/meringue in the Dominican Republic and Haiti, mento in Jamaica, calypso in Trinidad, beguine in Martinique, rumba in Cuba, bomba y plena in Puerto Rico and samba in Brazil.

The chapter "The Movement: Black Identities and their Paths Forward" details the cultural movements that overlapped in the early 20th century: the Harlem Renaissance, the Afro-Francophile Negritude Movement and Cuba's Minoristas and Afrocanismo,



movements which, Ramsey writes, "came about, because of the successes of jazz and other black musical entertainments in the United States and France."

Another chapter investigates the musical environment of the Civil Rights Era, where musicians "could explore new tonalities, invent new styles, and take advantage of new opportunities—including those afforded by international travel, higher education, and the rising tide of black music research." On the subject of jazz, Ramsey notes how bebop musicians employed harmonic structures that featured "a sophisticated approach that exploited the upper partials—ninths, elevenths and thirteenths—and a strong emphasis on the tritone relationships and flatted fifths" His analysis of Ornette Coleman, Mary Lou Williams, John Coltrane and their post-bop contributions are concise yet comprehensive. But Ramsey's treatise of composer-arranger George Russell, the originator of the *Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization*, is especially illuminating, providing insight on how Russell believed his harmonic theory would "serve as a model for blacks generally" to uplift and free themselves.

Given the highly pluralistic and syncretic properties of jazz, one would have hoped the book could have explored that music further. But, that small quibble aside, Professor Floyd's last major work stands with Amiri Baraka's *Blues People*, Albert Murray's *Stomping the Blues* and Thompson's *Flash of the Spirit* as one of the most elucidating studies of African music and its legacy. **DB**

Ordering info: global.oup.com

Closing the Book, Opening the Ears

So often when we think of great jazz players, we think about their technical abilities. However, what truly makes an artist is their ability to internalize music. As instrumentalists, we need to not only play well, but we need to be able to hear others around us and react as we play. We need to know the melody and the chord changes so well that we could write a lead sheet for a tune on a blank piece of staff paper. The way for us to connect with music on the deepest level is to play with the ears instead of the eyes.

Reading musical notation is obviously a very important skill and an enormous time-saver because lead sheets allow us to play tunes without really intimately knowing the music. Many musicians agree that reading music can also distract musicians from hearing one another well. This is not specific to jazz—many classical musicians memorize their repertoire because they are also striving to hear music more deeply.

One of the difficulties that many musicians face stems from the fact that we have been trained to learn music in a more traditional environment, such as a band class or in traditional private lessons, and musical notation has been the focus of our training. In a traditional setting, playing by ear, memorizing music and improvising are often perceived as skills that are acquired later in our development. It is for this reason that I urge all students at any level of instruction to continue building their reading skills, but immediately start closing the Real Book, start putting away the lead sheet and start memorizing repertoire.

Also, do everything you can to begin weaning yourself from the smartphone app that has the chord changes and start playing by ear at your jam sessions.

Keep Your Focus: Standard Repertoire

My jazz curriculum and pedagogy focuses heavily on developing a body of memorized standard repertoire. For a beginning jazz student, learning and memorizing hundreds of jazz standards might seem like an overwhelming goal, but bear in mind that the first 20 (or so) pieces are likely the most difficult to memorize. After several tunes are in the ear and under the fingers, additional tunes are easier to remember based on defining characteristics. For instance, the tunes “Solar,” “Recordame,” the bridge of “Cherokee” and many other tunes have similar descending ii-V-I chord patterns,



JOSH YOUNG (WVU TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMONS)

Jared Sims

so this progression can be easily committed to memory.

I often tell students that there are five stages of knowing a tune:

- 1) I don't know the tune and have to read it.
- 2) I know the melody and have the form memorized but I do not know the chord changes; or, similarly, I have the chord changes and form memorized but I do not know the melody of the tune.
- 3) I have most of the melody and/or most of the chord changes memorized.
- 4) I have the entire tune memorized. All of the melody and each chord is memorized.

5) I know the melody and chord changes in all 12 keys.

The best way to go from “Stage 1” to “Stage 5” is to listen to recordings. It seems obvious to tell musicians to listen, but often musicians are conditioned to think that our practice sessions should be alone in a room. Everyone knows to use a metronome and/or tuner when practicing, but jazz players need to additionally have recordings and play-along tracks. Improvisers will in fact have more productive practice sessions if we are playing with recordings, transcribing from recordings and practicing with other musicians.

How To Listen

There are two types of listening: active and passive. Passive listening takes place when music is in the background. We cannot mistake this for active listening, which is a much more intensive process that involves repeated listening of short segments and allows us to ask ourselves questions like:

- What is the form and key of the piece?
- How many choruses is each solo?
- How is the soloist interacting with the rhythm section?
- How does the content of the solo relate to the structure of the tune?

We learn jazz standards by playing a recording over and over on “repeat.” Make a playlist of at least five versions of the tune and be able to sing along. If you are a horn player, listen to singers and/or people who do not play your instrument. Notice the various keys, tempos and instrumentations that are characteristic to the individual versions of the piece.

Know the Melody Before Improvising

First off, do not solo on a set of chord changes of a tune if you do not know the head of the tune. The head of the tune gives you the form and the basic overall key areas. Even if you are learning an improvised solo to perform with a big band, if it is a standard you should learn the melody outside of rehearsal—you need to be aware of how your solo changes relate to the tune. It seems rather impossible to be able to play a meaningful solo over a tune if the melody is unknown.

Practice & Play the Piano

The piano is a valuable tool for hearing tunes. Even if you do not know “fancy” voicings, root voicings will suffice. It is possible to play a basic voicing with the left hand and play the melody with the right hand. One could also play chords with one or both hands and sing the melody concurrently. Most of my students strongly agree that the piano is a tremendous asset to learning tunes, and many of my students discover that they can more quickly and efficiently learn tunes using the piano.

Practicing Melody

One fun thing to practice is taking a melody and playing it in 12 keys. Simple examples of melodies to play could be “All Of Me,” “There Is No Greater Love” or “Solar.” This is not only a fun exercise, but it reinforces how well we can hear melodies. More advanced players can work on transposing more chromatic tunes such as Charlie Parker’s “Chi Chi” or “Anthropology.”

Isolate Difficult Sections

It is important to isolate difficult parts of a melody or chord changes in order to save time and increase efficiency of practice. The most

common mistake that students make when learning tunes is not isolating sections of the tune. For instance, the tune “Have You Met Miss Jones?” is an AABA form, and the “B” section is much more chromatic and difficult than the “A” section. The “B” section needs to be isolated instead of playing cycles of the form.

Memorizing Chord Changes

Many musicians—especially horn players—can easily memorize the melody but have difficulty learning the chord changes for a jazz standard. The repetition of instrumental practice and listening is important, but we can also commit the following to memory:

- Form: Know whether the form of the piece is AABA, ABAC, etc.
- Bridge: If the tune has a bridge, what is the first chord of the bridge, or what is the shift of tonality?
- Key Relationships: Are there unique key relationships? One good example would be “All The Things You Are,” which is generally played in the key of A-flat but has a ii-V-I in the key of E in the middle of the form.

Melodic Rhythm

Everyone knows that running arpeggios through a tune is a way to learn to hear a tune. However, one of my favorite exercises is to practice improvisation by using the rhythm of the melody but substituting the notes of the original melody with your own notes that correspond with the chord changes.

Trade Fours with the Melody

Sometimes students have a hard time relating the melody with the chord changes, and

the solution is to trade fours with the melody. Alternate four bars of melody with four bars of improvisation through a tune.

Time Signature

If you find yourself playing the same melodic patterns or playing by finger memory, change the time signature. Most standards are in 4/4 time, so reinvent the tunes using time signatures such as 3/4, 5/4 or 7/4.

Tempo & Feel

Play a ballad as a swing tune, or slow down a bebop tune to hear the tune in a new way. Play a tune with a straight-eighth feel instead of swinging it.

Notice Chords in Context

Notice groups of ii-V’s or iii-VI-ii-V patterns in the music. Practice these basic iii-VI-ii-V progressions in 12 keys to hear them well and have them under the fingers.

It is easy to plateau as a jazz artist, so keep challenging yourself in order to expand your playing ability. I recommend listening deeply to music each day and working on internalizing great tunes. One might argue that in jazz, “virtuosity” is not just our ability to play with precision, but our ability to connect with other musicians, to tell a story and to connect our musical intuition with our musical instrument. **DB**

Jared Sims performs on all of the saxophones as well as clarinet and flute. He has toured throughout the United States and in Europe, South America and Asia. Sims has released four studio recordings under his own name and has appeared on more than 40 other recordings. His most recent release, *Change Of Address*, is on Ropeadope Records. He is currently the director of jazz studies at West Virginia University. For more information, visit jaredsims.com or email jared.sims@mail.wvu.edu.

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Listen To Learn the Jazz Language

I can't count the number of times I have encountered student musicians who are attempting to play a musical style that they have either never listened to or have little exposure to hearing. The result is music that sounds as if it has no stylistic or historical context, or sounds as if it were taught to them via a textbook—and we know jazz is an aural art form.

I often find myself talking to students about playing jazz as being similar to learning a foreign language. We don't learn to speak languages just by studying books; there is just a massive amount of passive and focused listening that goes on until one starts to imitate what they have been exposed to. Then, the "formal learning" starts. Students who have had the wherewithal to be able to study foreign languages abroad claim they learn far more from spending a semester living with a family that speaks little to no English than they do from school classes and books. Similar to that ideology, I believe you must immerse yourself in focused and passive listening in order to truly start to grasp jazz music.

I guess it didn't hurt that I had a father who was a jazz drummer and would take me to the occasional rehearsals and performances he was involved in. This made for lots of passive listening since the music was so readily available for consumption. That was great for my development: hearing jazz often even though I was not formally listening or studying it at the time.

Today, the striking difference one can hear between players of different levels is their conception of style and nuance, and I am convinced that this mainly comes from one's exposure to the music, both recorded and live. This means listening. But the average student today doesn't have the same listening environment as prior generations. Digital media such as iTunes, file sharing, YouTube and other net-related advances have made the music more easily accessible, but they do not foster good listening habits. Listeners can now purchase one song or watch a single video without having to invest in an entire recording, and there is often no added info such as liner notes to give the listener any insight into the artist's concept or history. Still, listening passively is better than not listening at all.

Growing up, it wasn't that I was the best technical player or the most diligent student, but I had spent a great deal of time absorbing the music through lots of passive listening. Some of the greatest gifts I ever received from my private saxophone teacher were 90-minute cassette tapes that he would record for me of great jazz records. We hardly utilized them in lessons, but I just listened to them at home and occasionally in my Walkman as I rode my bike. There was no greater teacher than hearing Hank Mobley's classic album *Soul Station* or Horace Silver's tunes "Sister Sadie" and "Song For My father." The music sunk into my subconscious, and I found myself learning to sing along with the solos. When it came time for me to improvise, I attempted to imitate stylistically what I heard on those recordings.

Both passive and focused listening are important to the growth of musicians. Passive listening involves focusing on any ordinary task while music happens in the background. This can be listening while walking from one destination to the next, driving, cleaning the house, cooking, grading papers or while relaxing outside. While I may not be able to focus on the harmonic intricacies of a solo or the rhythmic interplay between members of the rhythm section, it does allow me to hear important, often neglected elements of the music like melodic interpre-



Jarrard Harris

tation and the sound produced on the instrument. I will listen passively to some artists for weeks at a time.

Focused listening is just that—time when the mind has no other obligations or tasks but to listen to selected recordings. I find that I have to put on headphones or be close to the sound source, close my eyes and turn off everything electronic (including the lights) so that there is nothing to distract my focus on the music. It is at this time that one can focus on specifics in the music. At first, one may want to spend part of this time focused on individual aspects like isolating individual instruments. Focused time can also be spent playing along with recordings and during routine practice (which hopefully happens daily).

While time is a luxury many do not have, in order to grow a greater appreciation for the music and its many facets, one has to *make* time. This may mean keeping a set of headphones and a music-playing device on at all times, like I do. As with practice, focused listening should preferably be done when the mind is awake and alert, and the more consistent you are, the more your brain will be ready to absorb new information. It is important that students in particular don't get caught up in only listening to one style or music from certain eras, as there is pertinent stylistic, rhythmic and harmonic information that can be ascertained from varying artists. Young players tend to be attracted to the popular, their peers and technical virtuosity, which is a small part of the bigger musical picture.

A great deal of the information I use in my teaching comes directly from what I have learned from actively listening to recordings and keeping detailed notes for teaching and sharing with others. Open your ears and let the journey begin.

DB

Jarrard Harris is a Chicago-based saxophonist and educator. He currently on the jazz faculty at Northwestern University and Columbia College Chicago in addition to directing the Chicago Public Schools Advanced Arts Jazz Studies Program. Visit him online at jarrardharris.com.

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BY JIMI DURSO



Howard Levy

Howard Levy's Harmonica Solo on 'Seresta'

In time I'm certain Howard Levy's innovations with the diatonic harmonica will be appreciated with the same awe as Jimi Hendrix with the electric guitar, or Jaco Pastorius with the bass guitar. Though the diatonic harmonica is designed to play in a single key, Levy has pioneered a method of producing chromatic notes that allows him to play over changes just like any other instrument. Case in point is "Seresta," a song he co-wrote with Brazilian pianist Manfredo Fest and recorded with Bela Fleck and the Flecktones on their 1992 album *UFO Tofu* (Warner Bros.).

The piece is in E minor (I assume Levy uses a G harmonica, being the relative major to E

minor), and though many of the chords exist in E minor (e.g., F#m7 \flat 5, Am7, D7, Gmaj7 and Cmaj7), there are many that have notes outside of this scale. Levy will go outside the scale to play notes in these chords, like the G# on the E7 in measure 6. G natural would not have sounded wrong, being the minor third "blue" note on the dominant chord, but the G# helps bring out the character of the harmony.

Similarly, we hear a D# on the second bar, the third of the B7. Levy preceded this with a D natural, which could be thought of as both the #9 (giving the chord an altered dominant sound) and as a chromatic approach note to the D#. Since the D is at home in the key of E

minor, it wouldn't sound out of place even without the D#, but as with the G# on the E7, this D# brings out the dominant character of the B7.

We also hear the C# root note on the C#m7(b5) in bars 13 and 29. And he puts an A# in these bars. In measure 29 this makes sense as the chord changes to F#7 halfway through the bar (A# being the third of this chord), but in the earlier example the F#7 doesn't occur until the next measure. Since A# is the natural sixth of C# (and not in the corresponding C# locrian scale, if Levy were to be playing the mode most fitting for the chord), it appears that Levy is hearing an F# altered dominant scale over both chords.

We hear some other uses of chromaticism, such as approach notes. In addition to the already mentioned second bar, in bar 18 Levy plays an E# to lead up to the fifth of B7 (F#) and uses the same idea in the next measure playing an A# and resolving this note up to B, the fifth of the Em. Then there's the C# leading to the D, the third of the Bm7(b5) in bar 21. This motif gets repurposed two measures later, but here the chromatic note resolves to the ninth, a non-chord tone. In fact, there aren't any chord tones in this bar, making the resolution at the beginning of measure 24 that much stronger.

We also have the flat-fifth "blue note" in bar 24. For this and the next bar, Levy is basically playing A minor pentatonic over the A minor chord. Adding the Eb gives us the blues scale, a very hip choice here. It being the only blues lick we get in this solo makes it stand out even more.

There are also passing tones, such as the A# at the end of measure 16 connecting the A to the B. This is a typical use of passing tones, but Levy doesn't always travel in such a straight line. The D-D# pointed out in measure 2 could have resolved up to an E. And it does, but Levy puts an F# in before the E, so the ear hears the resolution of the line, but it's delayed by an extra inserted note. Levy uses the exact same line with a different rhythm in measure 14. Toward the end of this bar Levy moves down from E-D#-D-C#, but then drops down to B before resolving to C. Also, in measure 12 we hear a D# used as an approach note to the E (third of the underlying chord) but Levy jumps up to F# before resolving to the E.

A more extended version of this mode of thinking happens in bars 27-28. After descending from G to F# (not only part of the E minor scale but also of the Gmaj7 chord that occupies this measure) Levy plays F natural and Eb, neither of which are in the key or the chord. These could resolve to E natural, which would be perfect since it's the third of the Cmaj7 in the next bar. But instead Levy jumps up to F# (part of the E minor scale but not part of the Cmaj7) and then resolves to the E.

Levy's ability to play chromatic notes on the diatonic harmonica enables him to play lines over chord changes that are more typical of the jazz language and use various approaches to chromatic notes. **DB**

Jim Durso is a guitarist and bassist based in the New York area. Visit him online at jimdurso.com.

Blessing BFH-1541 Flugelhorn

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E.K. Blessing brass instruments have a long history in jazz. In the 1940s, the company's trumpets graced countless recordings, most notably by such greats as Red Rodney, Muggsy Spanier and Clifford Brown. In the decades since, the company has made considerable inroads into the student market, but in recent years, Blessing has undergone a major renaissance, rolling out intermediate and professional models that have been winning over musicians with their superb sense of balance, ease of play, solid construction and clean design.

The BFH-1541, an upgrade to the company's best-selling flugelhorn model, is the latest addition to Blessing's Artist Series, and while it maintains the signature sound of its predecessor, it offers a host of new features that improve playability and visual appeal. And at a retail price of \$1,949, it's a superb value. With its stunning rose-gold satin finish and precious stone valve-button inlays, the horn certainly makes for a head-turner on the bandstand, but its smooth hand-feel and evenness of tone are what distinguish it from others within its price range.

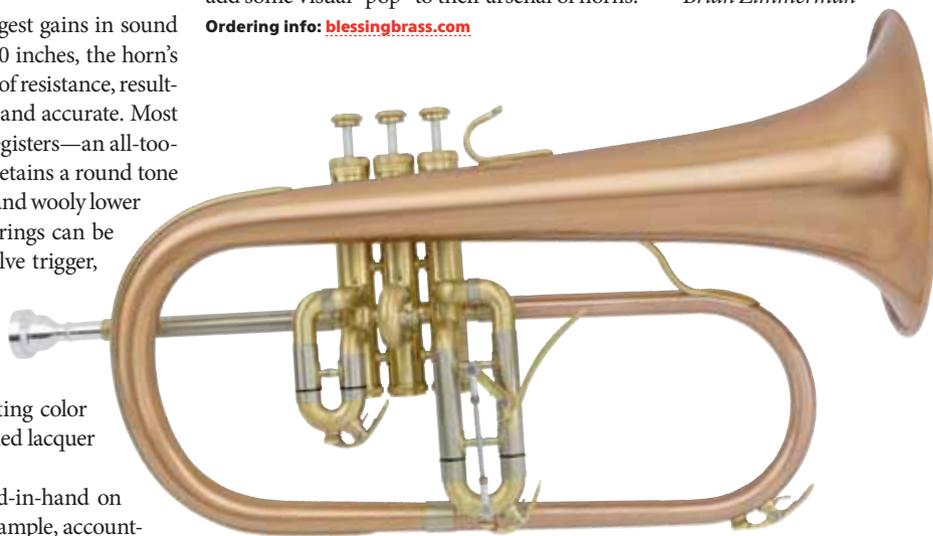
The Blessing BFH-1541 flugelhorn makes the biggest gains in sound quality via its redesigned leadpipe. Clocking in at .460 inches, the horn's bore provides plenty of give with just the right amount of resistance, resulting in a warm, velvety tone that is both free-blowing and accurate. Most importantly, the horn doesn't pinch off in the upper registers—an all-too-common occurrence for flugelhornists—but instead retains a round tone and steady intonation well above the staff. In the dark and wooly lower registers, pitch discrepancies due to third-valve fingerings can be easily smoothed out with the horn's vertical third-valve trigger, which rests ergonomically against the horn's hand-lapped Monel pistons. A stickler for good valves, I appreciated the BFH-1541's quick-fire yet graceful finger action, which struck the perfect balance between springy and silky. Plus, the model's contrasting color scheme—with the valve casings and leadpipe in brushed lacquer and the bell in rose gold—is a stylistic triumph.

Aesthetic and mechanical features often go hand-in-hand on the BFH-1541. The horn's 6-inch one-piece bell, for example, accounted for a big tone and easy projection in all dynamic ranges, and its lac-

quered inside-bell finish is yet another pleasing visual touch. The same can be said for the flugelhorn's hook-style pinky ring (finished in a creamy brushed lacquer) and lever-style waterkeys (positioned on the first valve, third valve and crook). A single brace between the crook and bell helps maintain a sleek profile, and a tuning bracket on the gold brass leadpipe blends seamlessly with the large morse taper receiver.

The horn also comes with a trendy backpack-style case with customizable padding inserts and tuckaway straps, offering protection and transportability that would be ideal for local gigs and road shows alike. The included 3FL mouthpiece is a suitable stock piece, providing enough cushion and bite for an aspiring flugelhornist, but routine players might want to hang onto their regular mouthpiece. (I play a Bach 3C Megatone and found that it adapted to the flugelhorn without much finagling.) Whether in the bandroom or on the bandstand, the BFH-1541 is a solid choice for trumpet players in search of their first flugel or established flugel pros looking to add some visual "pop" to their arsenal of horns. —*Brian Zimmerman*

Ordering info: blessingbrass.com



Fishman SA Performance Audio Systems

Increased Power & Expandability

Fishman has remained dedicated to the art of acoustic instrument amplification ever since Larry Fishman designed his first pickup for upright bass more than 35 years ago. Constantly evolving, the business has expanded to offer a complete line of amplification solutions. In 2008, Fishman introduced the SA220 Solo Performance System, a portable P.A. that set new standards for convenience and performance. Building on the success of the original SA220, Fishman's new SA Performance Audio Systems offer performers increased power and expandability.

With the SA220, Fishman targeted the solo performer, and its two-channel interface was perfect for singer-songwriters, or even acoustic duos. Extremely well received in the market due to its easy setup and stunning sound, Fishman found that there were two main requests on

their customers' wish lists. Although the modified line-array design of the SA220 produced great sound, its 4-inch speakers were not capable of reproducing deep low-end bass frequencies. In addition, many customers were beginning to push the limits of the two-channel SA220 by utilizing it with larger ensembles. These requests materialized in three key enhancements added to the new systems: The power of the new SA330x wide dispersion modified line array speaker system has been increased to 330 watts (110 more than the SA220) in order to handle larger venues; a four-channel expander/mixer option (SA Expand) is offered to accommodate larger groups; and a subwoofer add-on (SA Sub) is provided to tackle the bass.

The overall appearance and design of the SA Performance Audio Systems are very similar to the original, with the same form factor and

panel layout. The modified line array speaker design at the heart of the systems uses four 4-inch speakers and a 1-inch tweeter placed in a vertical pattern. The line array concept holds many advantages over the larger speaker boxes commonly used in P.A. systems. Line arrays produce an even, consistent sound with a wide dispersion, which means the SA330x sounds clear and natural throughout the space. The main advantage is that the P.A. sounds the same to the performer on stage as it does to the audience in the room, allowing it to function as its own monitor. The line array is also resistant to feedback, so the SA330x can be positioned behind the performers on stage. According to Gary Lenaire, director of new product marketing and sales at Fishman, "The concept behind SA was to create a portable stage PA and monitor that produces the same audio quality as a professional studio monitor."

Under the hood, there are some improvements as well. The basic unit is 4 pounds lighter due to using extruded aluminum instead of plywood. Also, advances in Class D power supplies have made the new systems more reliable overall. The SA Performance Audio Systems come with the basic unit containing the P.A. column and speaker stand for mounting. The four-channel SA Expand and the 8-inch SA Sub can be purchased separately, providing a scalable solution.

The systems are unbelievably easy to transport, and they set up in minutes. The full three-piece system sounded absolutely wonderful at all the gigs I used it on. The SA330x's two-input front panel provides a well-thought-out set of controls with a great anti-feedback notch filter and four reverb options. The back panel offers plenty of connection options for DI output, monitors, aux in and the connection for the SA Sub. I particularly like the adjustable tweeter control for fine-tuning the high frequency response. The SA Expand (which connects to the unit with a single Cat 5 cable that also handles power) adds four additional inputs and can be conveniently mounted directly onto the speaker pole. The SA Sub also connects easily, adding quite a bit of low end. Fishman offers the option of mounting the SA330x onto the sub via an optional pole that fits right into it.

Fishman has taken a great product and made it even better. With added power and expandability, this is a very solid solution for those who need a reliable and convenient P.A. for small to medium-sized venues. The base unit, which includes the P.A. column, stand and padded carrying case, is available at an MSRP of \$1,549.99, with the SA Expand listing at \$237.99 and the SA Sub at \$849.99.

—Keith Baumann

Ordering info: fishman.com



Eastman Custom Edition Guitars

Boutique Instruments Built To Order

Eastman launched its guitar division in 2004 with a mission to produce quality, handcrafted instruments at affordable prices. Building on a strong background in violin making, the company has significantly raised the bar for Asian-manufactured guitars.

Now, Eastman has unveiled its Custom Edition line, offering premium-level instruments that are custom-built to a customer's individual specifications.

The process begins with bodies and necks that are hand-carved in Eastman's Beijing plant and shipped to the United States in unfinished condition. The remaining work is done in Eastman's new custom workshop in Pomona, California, by master luthier and guitar designer Otto D'Ambrosio, a contractor with Eastman for many years who was brought onboard full-time to spearhead the new division.

This hybrid approach takes full advantage of Eastman's skill and efficiency in manufacturing overseas while retaining the ability to offer a true custom-made guitar. D'Ambrosio describes it as "bringing the boutique vision to a production instrument."

Each Custom Edition guitar begins life with a body and neck based on one of Eastman's standard models. Once the raw necks and bodies (made of carefully selected premium-quality woods) arrive in California, D'Ambrosio and his team put about 40 to 50 hours of work into each instrument.

Customers have the ability to customize numerous aspects of their build, including color, finish, inlay, tuners, pickguard design, pickup selection and configuration, and even fret wire preference. You can even have the neck profile custom-carved and request specific neck-set angles.

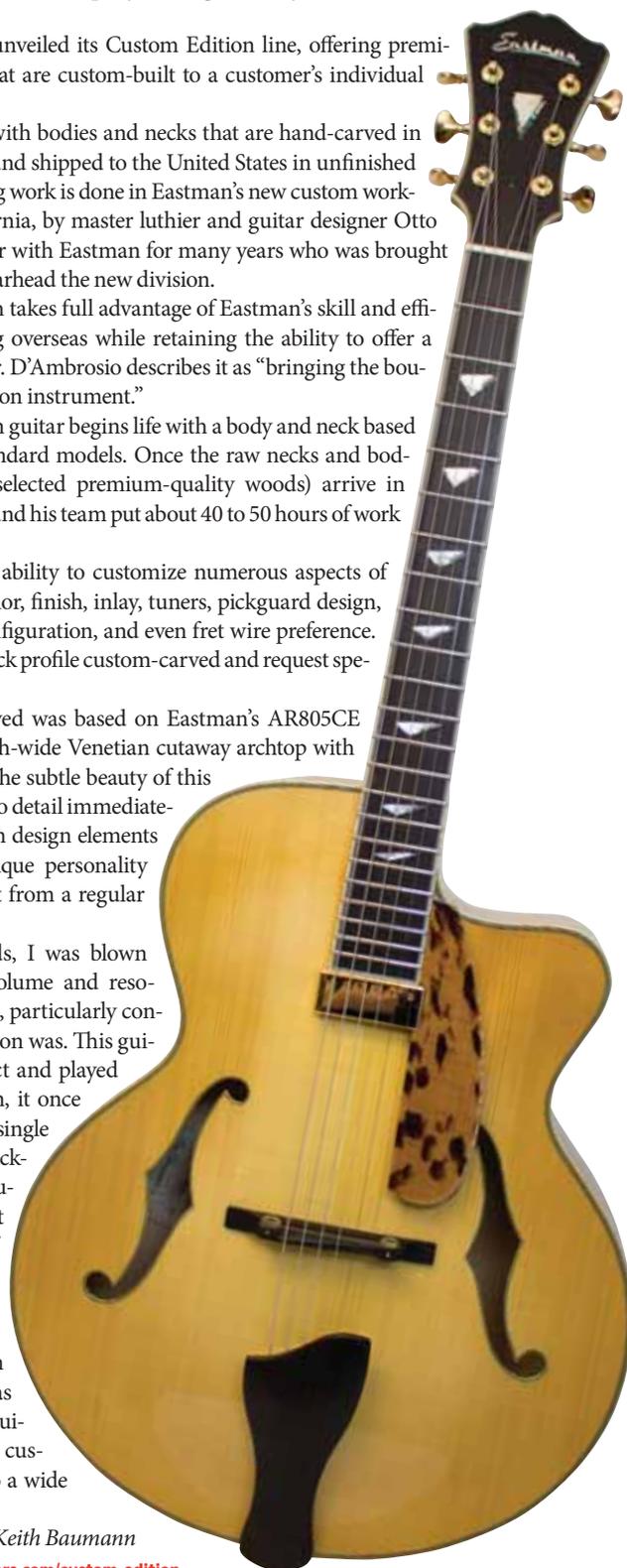
The guitar we received was based on Eastman's AR805CE model, which is a 16-inch-wide Venetian cutaway archtop with a 3¼-inch body depth. The subtle beauty of this guitar and the attention to detail immediately struck me. The custom design elements lend to the guitar's unique personality and definitely separate it from a regular production model.

Hitting a few chords, I was blown away by the acoustic volume and resonance of this instrument, particularly considering how low the action was. This guitar was absolutely perfect and played like a dream. Plugged in, it once again delivered with a single Lollar neck-mounted pickup. This particular instrument retails for about \$4,500, but prices of Custom Edition guitars will vary with each individual order.

With the Custom Edition line, Eastman has entered the high-end guitar market, offering the custom guitar experience to a wide range of players.

—Keith Baumann

Ordering info: eastmanguitars.com/custom-edition



1. Strap Comfort

The Ernie Ball Comfort Collection of guitar straps includes neoprene and leather models. The straps redistribute the instrument's weight, making them ideal for players with chronic pain and back and shoulder problems. The neoprene strap material is offered in 2.5-inch and 3.5-inch widths. The chestnut and black leather straps feature Fur Sherpa synthetic fur lining, which conforms to the shoulder for added comfort.

More info: ernieball.com

2. Icons in Print

Stan Getz Omnibook from Hal Leonard offers 54 heads and improvisations transcribed for B-flat instruments exactly from the iconic tenor saxophonist's recorded solos. The collection includes chord symbols, metronome markings and record information. Songs include "All The Things You Are," "Autumn Leaves," "Billie's Bounce (Bill's Bounce)," "Desafinado," "Funkallero," "Garota De Ipanema," "Quiet Nights Of Quiet Stars (Corcovado)," "Where Or When" and others. Also available from Hal Leonard, *The Real Pat Metheny Book* features 147 of the groundbreaking guitarist's tunes arranged for C instruments in the classic *Real Book* style. All songs were compiled and gig-tested by Metheny himself, a first in the *Real Book* series. Titles include "April Joy," "Bright Size Life," "Jaco," "Phase Dance," "Question And Answer," "Sueno Con Mexico," "Unity Village," "Whittlin" and more. More info: halleonard.com

3. New Plasticover Coating

Plasticover by D'Addario features a new and improved synthetic coating formula that enhances durability and increases reed lifespan and consistency. Featuring a bright, projecting tone, the hybrid cane-synthetic reed remains stable in varying weather conditions, making it especially suitable for outdoor settings.

More info: daddario.com

4. Recording Bundle

The 770X Multipattern Condenser Microphone Package from MXL Microphones offers flexibility and performance for the studio in an all-in-one bundle. The 770X improves on the MXL 770 Studio Condenser Microphone with an upgraded large-diaphragm gold-sputtered capsule and three selectable polar patterns—cardioid, figure-8 and omnidirectional. More info: mxlmics.com

5. Handy Tablet Holder

The AirTurn Manos Universal Tablet Holder turns your tablet or smartphone into a digital music stand. Modeled after the human hand, with cantilever "thumbs" in back and spring-loaded "fingers" in front to ensure a secure grip, the Manos mount attaches to any microphone stand and delivers 360-degree rotation with portrait and landscape locking positions. It can grip tablets up to 8.5 inches wide, with or without a protective case.

More info: airturn.com

6. Clarity & Attack

Sabian's XSR Fast Stax offers drummers an aggressive effects option. Designed with a thin 13-inch X-Celerator top over a high-profile, wide-tipped 16-inch Chinese bottom, the Fast Stax delivers pop and attack. The X-Celerator "Air Wave" edge eliminates airlock for increased volume, and the lip of the Chinese is shaped to fit the top snugly for maximum clarity.

More info: sabian.com



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Jeff Jarvis (right) conducts the Cal State Long Beach Concert Jazz Orchestra at a 2016 performance.

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University of Toronto 12tet

8 Tunes from 12tet: The University of Toronto 12tet, a contemporary ensemble made up of students in the bachelor's, master's and doctorate programs, has released *Trillium Falls*. The eight-song album includes a couple of Billy Strayhorn/Duke Ellington tunes ("Isfahan," "The Star-Crossed Lovers"), and the title track was composed by band director Terry Promane, the university's jazz area chair. The University of Toronto Jazz Orchestra's new album, *Sweet Ruby Suite*, is a tribute to trumpeter/composer Kenny Wheeler (1930–2014). It features contributions from soprano saxophonist Dave Liebman and vocalist Norma Winstone, who frequently collaborated with Wheeler. uoftjazz.ca

CSULB Students Meet High Standards

THE INFORMAL TITLE OF THE JAZZ PROGRAM at California State University, Long Beach—Jazz at the Beach—gives the impression it takes an informal approach to music education. But, while the surfing nearby may be great, the program's director, Jeff Jarvis, says it's all business at the Bob Cole Conservatory.

"We teach our students to become professionals," Jarvis said. "It's a highly competitive business, and we want our graduates to know that you have to present yourself well, dress appropriately, be punctual for jobs and know your stuff. We set high standards."

Alumni of the program range from major jazz stars, such as bassist John Patitucci and saxophonist Mark Turner, to the siblings Richard Carpenter and Karen Carpenter (1950–'83) of the Grammy-winning pop group The Carpenters.

Through his extensive work adjudicating competitions, Jarvis said he typically knows about three-quarters of the 200 young people who apply each year for the 12 freshman spots in the bachelor of music program. Out of those, he'll invite 45 for live auditions and a private lesson, which is one of the conservatory's cornerstones of the application process.

"I already know these are good kids with a lot of skills, but I need to see them sight-reading and soloing on pieces they don't know," he said.

Saxophonist Jimmy Emerzian, a Jazz at the Beach alumnus who has taught improvisation in the program for 12 years, said the competition keeps getting tougher.

"The standard of raw talent and musical knowledge possessed by our students has increased every year," he said. "I rewrite my syllabi every year with more in-depth information

because the students are increasingly ready and hungry for it."

The conservatory has about 600 students—out of the university's total of 38,000—and the bachelor's of music program is set up so that first- and second-year jazz students must play in a non-jazz ensemble.

"We really don't want any jazz snobs here," Jarvis said. "Students here have to be able to play a lot of styles and be well versed in all of them. If we look at the reality of the jobs that are available just down the road in L.A., you have to be versatile."

"Thanks to Jeff's vision, student leadership is also nurtured," Emerzian said, "whether it be managing jazz nights at our on-campus pub, updating our Facebook page or hosting performances at our jazz forums."

Students in the master's program get hands-on teaching experience by running the school's jazz combos and lab big bands.

Like many jazz programs around the country, Jazz at the Beach includes some music business courses to ensure that students gain exposure to the changing face of the industry.

Emerzian recognizes that a large part of his job is to share the "real-world" experience he has gained by touring with artists like pop singer Engelbert Humperdinck and numerous big bands and performing on *The Tonight Show*.

"I try to illuminate the paths that brought me from where I was when I graduated from the program to where I am now," he said.

Jarvis explained that he gets great satisfaction from sending new professional musicians out into the world: "I just try to make sure they realize they have a gift to put a smile on people's faces with their music."
—James Hale

MI Online Launches: The Musicians Institute in Los Angeles is launching online courses on July 17. MIO's exclusive online courses include jazz, blues and rock guitarist Scott Henderson's "Approach to Guitar Improvisation." Other courses are "Intro to DJing," "Harmony and Theory Fundamentals" and "Ear Training Fundamentals." More courses will be added in the coming months.

online.mi.edu

Next Generation Players: The Monterey Jazz Festival has announced the 2017 members of the Next Generation Jazz Orchestra, an all-star big band featuring high school students. Five members of the orchestra are returning for their third year, including trombonist Jasim Perales (Berkeley High School in Berkeley, California) and trumpeter Carlos Ramos (Downey High School in Downey, California). After a tour that includes performances at the Xerox Rochester International Jazz Festival, the TD Toronto Jazz Festival and the Montreal Jazz Festival, the orchestra will play numerous times at the Monterey Jazz Festival, including a show with John Clayton, Jeff Hamilton and Gerald Clayton on the Jimmy Lyons Stage on Sept. 17. montereyjazzfestival.org

Composer Awards: The ASCAP Foundation has announced that Žan Tetičević is the recipient of the Johnny Mandel Prize, and Annie Booth is the recipient of the Phoebe Jacobs Prize. Composer/drummer, producer and educator Tetičević (aka Jean John) hails from Slovenia and resides in New York. Booth is a Denver-based jazz composer/pianist, arranger and educator. ascapfoundation.org



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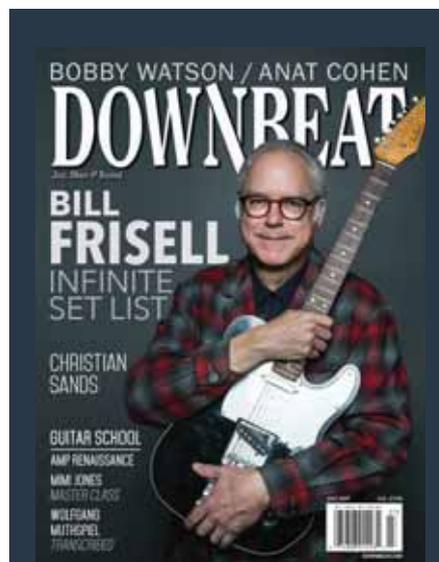
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Matthew Garrison

Electric bassist Matthew Garrison has played with a wide array of stars—from Herbie Hancock and John McLaughlin to Whitney Houston and Meshell Ndegeocello. The son of legendary bassist Jimmy Garrison and modern dancer Roberta Escamilla Garrison, he has led his own bands on bass and electronics. Additionally, he has played in such esteemed settings as drummer Jack DeJohnette's *In Movement* trio with saxophonist Ravi Coltrane. He's also the cofounder of the musician-led club ShapeShifter Lab in Park Slope, Brooklyn, where he took his first DownBeat Blindfold Test with cofounder Fortuna Sung at the soundboard.

Marcus Miller

"Blast!" (*Marcus*, Concord Jazz, 2008) Miller, bass guitar, keyboards, sitar, beat programming; Keith Anderson, tenor saxophone; Patches Stewart, trumpet; Andrea Braido, guitar; Bobby Sparks, Bernard Wright, synthesizers; Grégoire Maret, harmonica; Poojie Bell, hand drums; Julian Miller, percussion programming; Lalah Hathaway, vocals.

That's definitely Marcus. I haven't heard this before. The breadth and scope of the territory he's covered as a musician, composer and producer is astounding. As for this song, it's OK. I like it. It's well-defined, and it is Marcus' sound. So 5 stars for Marcus, 3½ stars for the song.

Avishai Cohen

"Smash" (*Continuo*, Razdaz/Sunnyside, 2006) Cohen, acoustic and electric bass; Amos Hoffman, oud; Sam Barsh, piano and electric keyboards; Mark Guiliana, drums.

I'm not sure who the bassist is. But the cat plays both acoustic and electric, which rang a bell for me. Maybe Victor Wooten trying out something new? But it's not his phrasing. One run reminded me of Brian Bromberg, but I don't think that, either. I liked the tune, especially with how the oud and the electric bass sounded together, and I liked the rhythmic movement. [after] It's Avishai Cohen? I'm not that familiar with his work. His acoustic bass is definitely happening, but the electric was just OK. He's got the facility, but it sounds like an older-school approach that brings to mind people like Jeff Andrews or Jeff Berlin. I'll give Avishai 5 stars for his acoustic playing and 4 stars for this song. They're playing their butts off on it.

Percy Heath

"A Love Song" (*A Love Song*, Daddy Jazz Records, 2003) Heath, bass.

I'm trying to pick up some kind of phrasing. This sounds like it's from an earlier generation, given the frame of reference of this artist choosing this kind of song. And the playing is fantastic, even though I'm a stickler on intonation. But I play a fretted bass, so who am I to say? When trying to play acoustic, I struggled with that precision of intonation. It's a serious discipline. When I hear someone completely and accurately being exactly in tune all the time, I guess that's the standard. But that's not the only thing that counts. It's [more], what is the *feel*—even if technically the facility is a bit out of tune? [after] This is Percy Heath? He's one of the masters who left us so much to work with. I'm indebted to him. For Percy, 5 stars. The song, 5 stars because it's so much of who he is.

Ben Williams

"Little Susie" (*State Of Art*, Concord, 2011) Williams, bass; Marcus Strickland, tenor saxophone; Jaleel Shaw, soprano saxophone; Matthew Stevens, guitar; Gerald Clayton, keyboards; Jamire Williams, drums; Etienne Charles, percussion.

This is a masterful musician who can play, but I don't know who it is. As a bass player, 5 stars. The song is 3½ stars. Listening to that intro, I feel unfortunate I didn't navigate the acoustic world. The sound of this player's instrument is incredible, and he really knows how to make the bass



Matthew Garrison

sing. I loved the opening. There's something in general about the bass where you have a wide gamut of octaves to work with. You can play high, but in understanding the full scope of the instrument, you can investigate the lower [end], where you can hit the string on the fretboard and make it growl. That's what this player does so well. He can play all over the instrument. [after] It's Ben Williams? Oh, wow, he's a badass.

Charnett Moffett

"Universal Beat" and "Scrambled Eggs" (*Still Life*, Evidence, 1997) Moffett, acoustic and electric bass; Rachel Z, piano, synthesizer; Cindy Blackman, drums.

This is pretty "out." I love it. It's crazy—fretless and acoustic. I'm thinking Charnett Moffett. What a record this is. I've never heard it. I first experienced him when I was 14 and I saw him playing in a band in Rome. It blew my mind. And he was just 17. What he does here is so intense and involved and raw. Even at the beginning where he's playing acoustic, he's using effects like chorus and reverb and delay. He's investigated that stuff over the years. And then on electric, he does fast runs and big slides. I give Charnett a 5. I give the band 5 stars because of the way they approach the music—serious, passionate and it doesn't have to be exact. It's in the moment.

Cecil McBee Band

"Catfish" (*Unspoken*, Palmetto, 1997) McBee, bass; Randall Connors, alto saxophone; James Zollar, trumpet; David Berkman, piano; Matt Wilson, drums.

I don't know who this is, but maybe it's Lester [Bowie] on trumpet. I love the song. It's fantastic. I give this song 5 stars plus 5 stars because of the use of space and the way they're tackling the composition. It's almost like an orchestrated piece of contemporary classical music. But it's also making me think of a whole generation of artists who were hanging out in the '70s loft scene—people like Lester, Julius Hemphill, Beaver Harris, the whole gang. It was all about using space, melody, structure, arrangement, open improvisation. [after] Oh, it's Cecil McBee. I love him, but I'm not that familiar with his music.

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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