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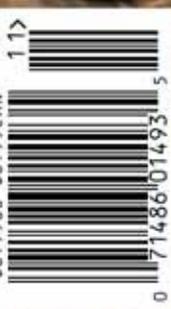


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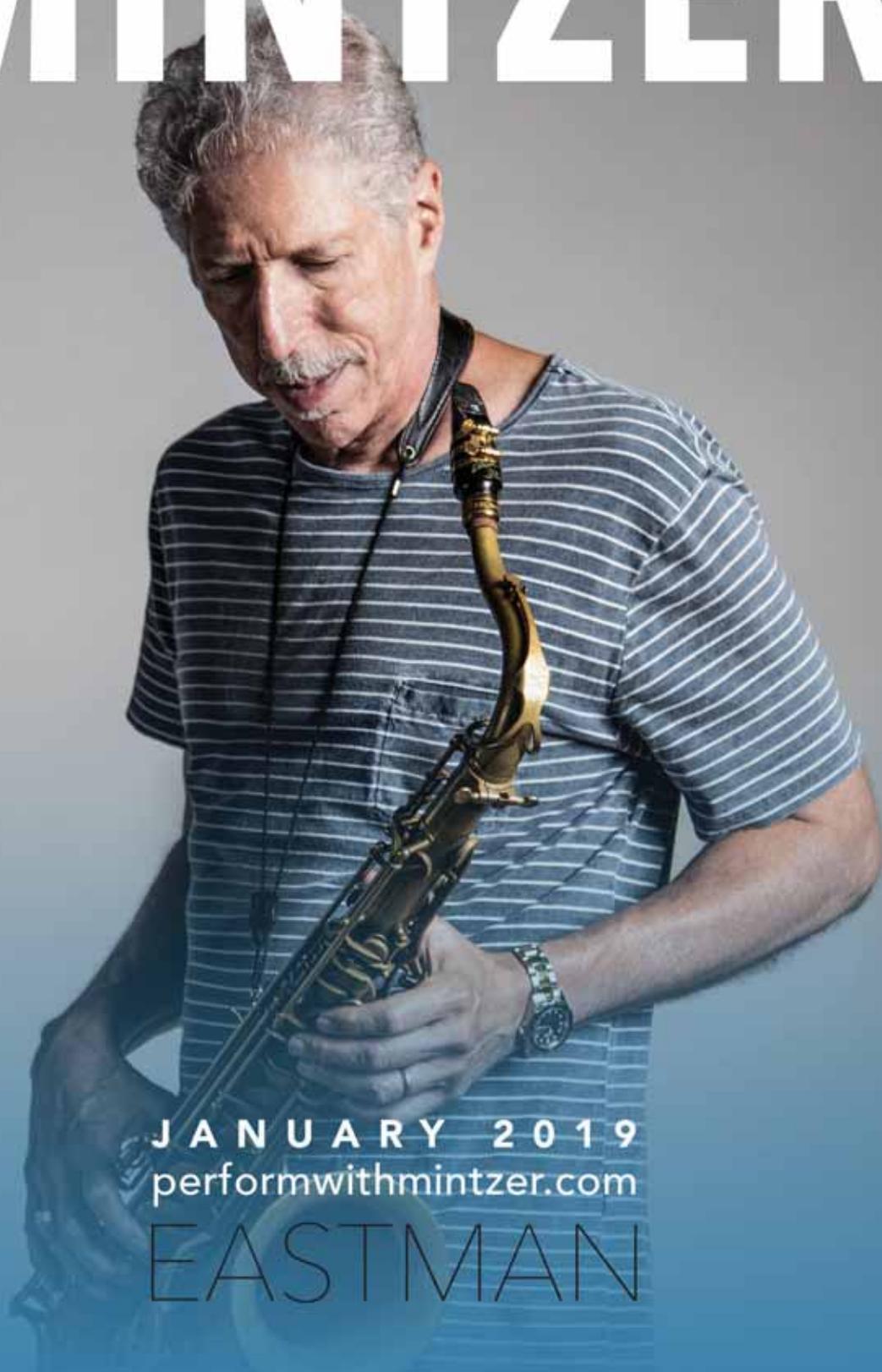
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NOVEMBER 2018

Inside

ON THE COVER

30 Stefon Harris

Nurturing Spirit

BY PHILLIP LUTZ

DownBeat catches up with Stefon Harris, who topped the Vibraphone category in our 2018 Critics Poll. In a wide-ranging conversation, Harris talks about his new album, *Sonic Creed*, his innovative work as an app developer and his role as an educator at Manhattan School of Music, where he serves as associate dean and director of jazz arts.



Kandace Springs

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Cover photo of Stefon Harris shot by Jimmy & Dena Katz at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) in Newark on Aug. 9. Info for this venue is at njpac.org.

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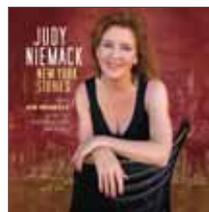
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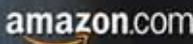
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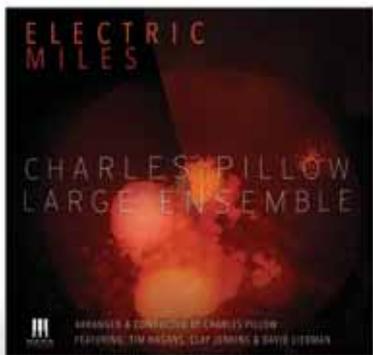
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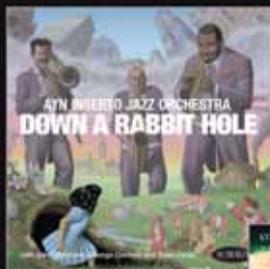
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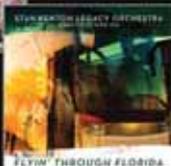
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First Take > BY GEOFF BRADFIELD



Pianist Randy Weston (left) with saxophonist Geoff Bradfield at the 2016 Hyde Park Jazz Festival in Chicago

MICHAEL JACKSON

Randy Weston’s Generosity

EVERY INTERACTION I HAD WITH RANDY Weston—who passed away Sept. 1 at age 92—was a lesson in generosity. I first met him in 2011 while I was researching and developing a project inspired by Melba Liston (which I later recorded on my Origin album *Melba!*).

I was thrilled to meet Randy, but I also felt some trepidation. Liston had been his friend and collaborator for several decades. Their work was explicitly Afrocentric, and I’m white. I was afraid he might view my work as unnecessary—or even worse, an act of cultural appropriation. Instead, Randy embraced me, overjoyed that I shared his enthusiasm for Liston and their work together.

A year later, he called me to wish me well on the morning of the premiere of *Melba!* One of the great moments of my life was when Randy joined my band for a performance of his “African Sunrise” at the 2013 Chicago Jazz Festival. But before that, I had an equally amazing experience. In the fall of 2012, Randy invited me into his Brooklyn home, where he gave freely of his time and wisdom for two hours.

Pan-African idealism was the root of Randy’s generosity. He said he inherited his love for African culture from his father: “He let me know I was an African born in America. ... You go there, and you really understand the meaning of music, because music describes the life of the people.”

During that conversation at Randy’s home, he and I didn’t talk about the mechanics of music, but rather about the African values that permeate African-American culture. Randy saw evidence of these everywhere. He read the Jimmie Lunceford band’s sharp presentation as African. “They were

clean,” he said. “To be a master [in African culture], you have to be clean of mind, you have to be clean of spirit. You have to be a storyteller, you have to be a historian. ... Hawk and Dizzy were so great because they didn’t take solos, they told stories.”

Randy was a consummate storyteller himself. As a young man on 52nd Street, he once overheard Ben Webster and Coleman Hawkins talking about Don Byas. Webster warned Hawkins: “You better watch out—there’s a young guy in town, and he can play some saxophone.” Hawkins’ solution was to hire Byas. Randy recalled that the next time he saw Hawkins play, “He had Don Byas in the band out front, and Hawk was in the back running his hands over the keys. I said, ‘Wow, what a lesson!’” For Randy, Hawkins’ gesture affirmed an African values system that celebrated competition, but didn’t view it as a zero-sum game.

Randy rejected categories that could diminish the music: “For us it was not jazz music. For us it was African-American culture.” And he was deeply interested in ways that music could unite, rather than divide, people: “Charlie Parker is just as spiritual as Mahalia Jackson—what’s the difference?” He proffered an intriguing explanation of the wide appeal of jazz: “Why do people in Japan and Europe love this music? Because we all come from Africa. Every damn person on the planet’s got African blood.”

I saw Randy for the last time in 2016, when he played a solo-piano concert at the Hyde Park Jazz Festival in Chicago. He shared with me a key to his longevity: “I’m still learning. I’m like a 5-year-old!” Let me add that insight to the long list of gifts Randy Weston gave us all.

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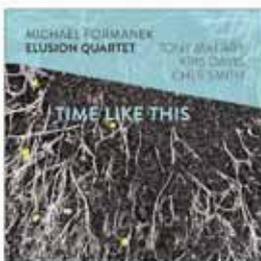
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Chords & Discords >

Can Art Survive The Hot Box?

In the Chords & Discords section of the August issue, Kevin McIntosh's letter complains—in the lame name of gender equality—that saxophonist Roxy Coss' *The Future Is Female* was not in The Hot Box. But he should thank Roxy's lucky stars she was *not* reviewed there. I have followed the average ratings in The Hot Box for more than a decade; I can't recall one instance of an average of 4½ stars.

My sense is that The Hot Box is where albums go to die of mediocre reviews, averaging 3 stars or a little more.

Roxy is great—I remember her at Garfield High School in Seattle—and she deserved her 4½-star review. Therefore, I'm glad she avoided DownBeat's Penalty Box.

GARY ALEXANDER
 LOPEZ ISLAND, WASHINGTON



Saxophonist Roxy Coss is based in New York City.

Applauding Inclusiveness

I've noticed there are more female musicians being covered in your articles and reviews. Thank you! These artists are beating the odds for the sake of their art, and they help many of us feel more welcome and hopeful as musicians.

It's always great to read about leading musicians, and your coverage helps bring even more new, talented and deserving musicians into the field. Kudos.

DANA BAITZ
 TORONTO

an extremely enjoyable visit. This was my 16th trip to this festival, and I will continue to attend as long as it exists.

I am so thankful to DownBeat for supporting this and other live music around the globe.

Jazz lovers: Please get out and support live music, whether it's at a club, a concert hall or a festival. Your lives will be so enriched by it.

LARRY FUGLIESE
 FUGLIESE@ATT.NET

One of Finland's Finest

Thank you for the detailed appreciation of Tomasz Stańko in your October issue. There was a mistake in the article: The late, great drummer Edward Vesala was from Finland, not Poland. The Scandinavian musicians often collaborated with Polish jazz players.

ERICH BERINGER
 BAD KREUZNACH, GERMANY

Honest Musicianship

In your August issue, the article on Marian McPartland by Paul de Barros ("Invitation To Listen") is a great piece of writing honoring a versatile jazz pianist who could cross over to pop music and still make you sit up and take notice.

To me, this lovely lady showed honesty in her playing, and that's why I will always remember Marian McPartland. This classy lady had style—and how she could play!

HERB STARK
 MOORESVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

Loving Litchfield

In late July, I attended the Litchfield Jazz Festival. Days later, I was still on a musical high from the improvisational wizardry of the Jeff "Tain" Watts Trio, the explosive drumming of 89-years-young Jimmy Cobb with the Emmet Cohen Trio, the melody and interplay of the Yoko Miwa Trio, and the work of all of the other world-class musicians who performed during the two-day event.

This is a gem of a jazz festival in the beautiful hills of Litchfield County in Connecticut. The artist interviews conducted by DownBeat Publisher Frank Alkyer, the delicious food and the varied craft and music vendors make for

Correction

■ In our October print edition, the article "Five Gems of Jazz Education" should have indicated that the Jazz in July Festival at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, was started in 1981 by professor emeritus Dr. Frederick C. Tillis in collaboration with Dr. Billy Taylor.

DOWNBEAT REGRETS THE ERROR.

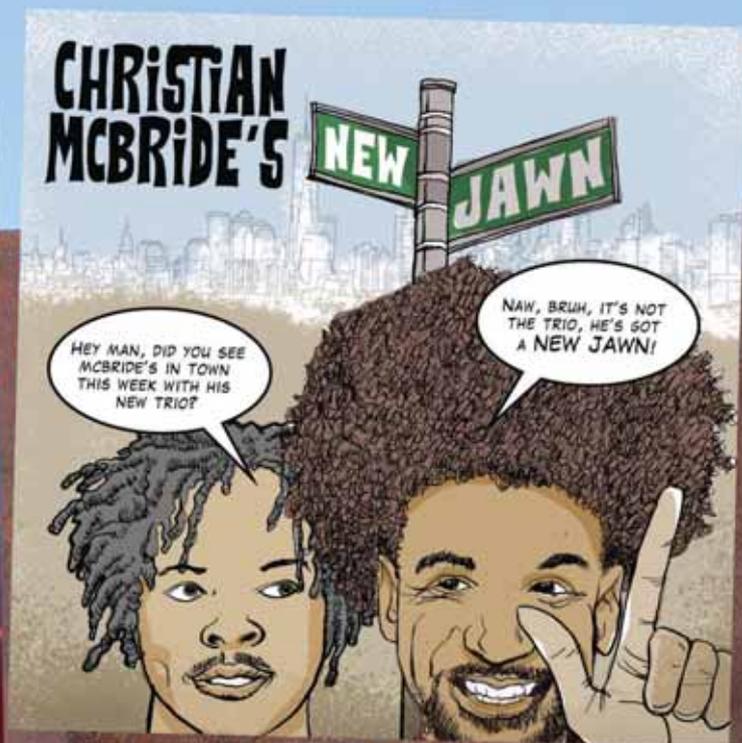
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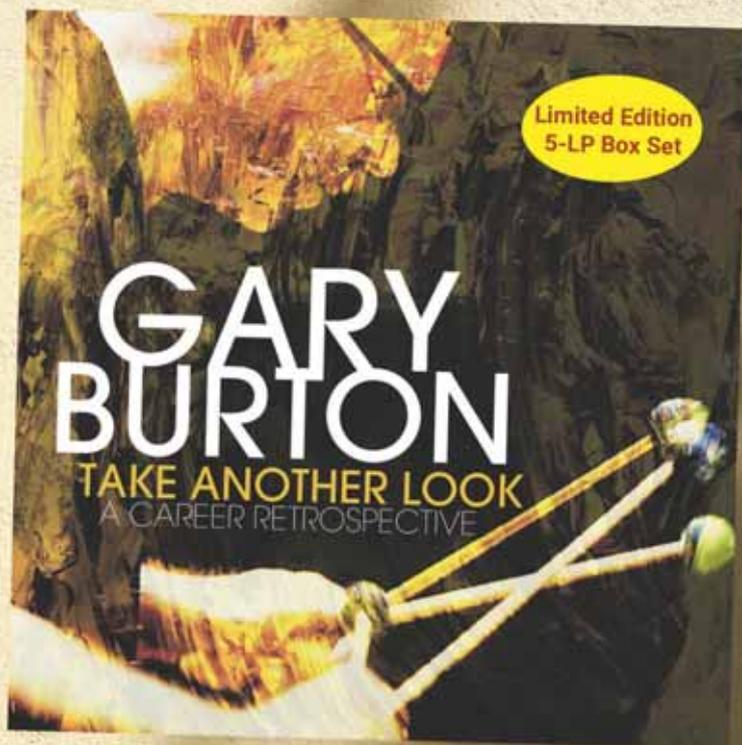
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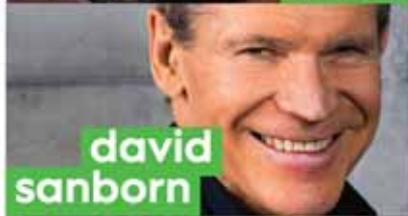
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Beat

Camille Thurman Finds Her Voice

Saxophonist Camille Thurman kept her singing under wraps all throughout her time at the famed LaGuardia High School for the Performing Arts in New York City. And in college at SUNY-Binghamton, she wasn't even a music major—she earned a bachelor's degree in geological science. But in less than a decade as a professional singer and woodwinds player, she's made her mark as one of the most promising—and intriguing—young musicians around.

Thurman hails from the St. Albans section of Queens, known for the many jazz greats who'd lived there during the swing era, including Count Basie and Ella Fitzgerald. Growing up, Thurman took inspiration from their musical accomplishments; she listened to these jazz masters, taught herself to plunk out tunes on the piano and started playing flute in middle school. (Tenor saxophone, her bailiwick today, came later.) Several educators along the way encouraged her playing, and eventually the final piece of her musicianship—artful scats and rich vocals—fell into place.

"It took a while to find out what I was comfortable with as my identity," Thurman said. "I play and I sing. Sometimes society—especially for women—might pressure you to do one thing, because it might be aesthetically easier to accept."

Arguably, as a musician, Thurman has taken the less-worn path, and so female role models were harder to find. She credits saxophone player Tia Fuller and bassist/singer Mimi Jones with helping her to land on her feet in New York after graduation. Their advice? If you're going to sing and play, be great at both or don't bother. Thurman took this advice to heart, and within a few years had placed as a finalist in the 2013 Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition, played at Jazz at Lincoln Center, toured interna-



Camille Thurman is an accomplished vocalist and saxophonist.

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

tionally and performed alongside some of the biggest names in the jazz and r&b worlds.

Her debut album, *Origins*, and her second, *Spirit Child*, both released in 2014 on Jones' label, Hot Tone Music, fueled Thurman's rapid ascendancy. She followed these successes with *Inside The Moment: Live At Rockwood Music Hall* last year—her first album as a Chesky artist, and her first time using the binaural recording technique, which creates a three-dimensional sound sensation for the listener. This method doesn't allow for audio "punch-ins," however, so on her Chesky albums, Thurman relies on her expert ear and indefatigable skills as an improviser to guide her in her quest to record complete takes.

Her second recording for Chesky, *Waiting For The Sunrise*, dropped in August. Thurman sings more and plays less on this album, often deferring to her band, an ensemble of instru-

mentalists who worked with the singers who captivated her young ears back in St. Albans: Steve Williams, Shirley Horn's drummer; Cecil McBee, Dinah Washington's bassist; Jack Wilkins, Sarah Vaughan's guitarist; and Jeremy Pelt, Cassandra Wilson's trumpeter.

"She made it happen," said Williams, remarking on the challenges a young player faces when recording with such iconic musicians. "She's a bright light in the future of this music."

This fall, Thurman will promote the new album with concerts in Russia; headline with the Darrell Green Trio at the Caramoor Center in Katonah, New York; finish a Horace Silver tribute album; and tour as a guest musician with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. The latter is quite an accomplishment for a player who made her Lincoln Center debut three years ago as part of a "Generations in Jazz" concert. —Suzanne Lorge



Josephine Davies

TOR HILLS

Satori Set: Saxophonist Josephine Davies' trio Satori is set to follow up its eponymous 2017 album with *In The Corners Of Clouds*, a November release from the U.K.'s Whirlwind Records. Davies, who also leads an ensemble called Orenda, is joined by drummer James Maddren and bassist Dave Whitford on the new album. Satori has a series of U.K. tour dates scheduled through the fall and into December.

More info: whirlwindrecordings.com

McBride Productions: Bassist and band-leader Christian McBride announced in September his new imprint, Brother Mister Productions, in partnership with Detroit's Mack Avenue Records. The label, which takes its name from an honorific James Brown bestowed on the bassist, is releasing a self-titled recording of acoustic jazz by Christian McBride's New Jawn with trumpeter Josh Evans, saxophonist Marcus Strickland and drummer Nasheet Waits. Read a review of the new album on page 52.

More info: mackavenue.com

Final Bar: Best known for her role as Carmela Corleone in the first two *Godfather* films,

Morgana King maintained a steady career as a jazz vocalist, releasing albums on the Reprise and Muse imprints, among many others, over the course of several decades. In 1964, the singer was nominated in the Best New Artist Category at the 7th Annual Grammy Awards; the Beatles took home the hardware that year. King's death on March 22 from cancer reportedly came to the media's attention following a Facebook post by a friend months after the fact. King was 87. ... **Queeneth Ndaba**, a stalwart of jazz in South Africa, died Aug. 15 in Boksburg at age 81. Ndaba previously managed Dorkay House—a Johannesburg arts center and performance space that fostered the jazz community and hosted Miriam Makeba, Hugh Masekela and Abdullah Ibrahim early in their careers—where she booked shows and helped keep the venue afloat during the apartheid years. A tireless organizer of South African ensembles, Ndaba invested heavily in the music she presented.

Kris Davis (left), Dave McMurray, Esperanza Spalding, Ravi Coltrane and Terri Lyne Carrington pay tribute to the late Geri Allen at the 2018 Detroit Jazz Festival.



TAK TOKIWA

Amid Stormy Skies, Detroit Jazz Fest Honors Geri Allen

OVER LABOR DAY WEEKEND IN DETROIT, many buildings hung their flags at half-mast, as the city laid to rest its favorite daughter, Aretha Franklin. But like a jazz funeral that bursts from solemn hymn to celebratory march, the 39th annual Detroit Jazz Festival—which featured dozens of performances on four outdoor stages from Aug. 31 to Sept. 3—waved in all its glory.

This year's festival celebrated another one of its soul sisters, the brilliant pianist and composer Geri Allen (1957–2017), with a resident ensemble that had bassist/vocalist Esperanza Spalding and drummer Terri Lyne Carrington as its core. The ensemble presented three very different concerts.

Three shows also were scheduled for the festival's artist-in-residence, Chick Corea, but the keyboardist's Elektric Band performance had to be canceled, due to weather. According to Chris Collins, the festival's artistic director, reshuffling allowed more than 90 percent of the scheduled shows to be presented.

But the Allen shows were a revelation, even for the musicians. Carrington and Spalding at several points commented on how challenging and rewarding the music was. Allen's free-ranging melodies, slippery key signatures, odd meters, layered approach and probing lyrics all were on full display.

The first concert, aptly titled for one of her tunes, "Open On All Sides," featured a sextet, with Ravi Coltrane (saxophones), Dave McMurray (flute), Kris Davis (piano) and Maurice Chestnut (tap dance) joining Spalding and Carrington.

Following another performance of Allen's work, the Detroit Jazz Festival Orchestra played *Dream Time*, an extended piece based on compositions by the pianist and arranged and conducted by composer Edmar Colón. True to its title, this rendition of *Dream Time* highlighted the surreal quality of Allen's work, with roiling waves of knotty string harmony and effective punctuations in the brass. In eight movements, Colón inked welcome colors over Allen's melodies and

words, conveying how she mingled everyday and spiritual planes.

The final Allen-focused show included electronically enabled highlights, including an interpolation of her poem "Metaphor" and snippets of Allen performing Thelonious Monk's "Bemsha Swing" and reciting a tribute to Betty Carter in which she might as well have been talking about herself: "Celebrate life as a metaphor for freedom."

At one point, Carrington wondered aloud why she hadn't done such a tribute earlier and urged folks to enjoy what they have in the moment, rather than wait. It was a message Allen herself would have endorsed. But this tribute was not too late, by any means. Kudos to Detroit for honoring its own.

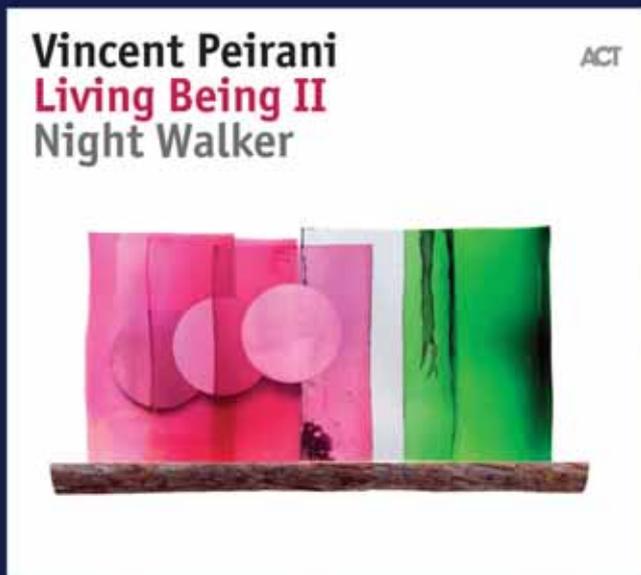
Hearing Corea perform at this festival was to experience a master at the top of his game. His Acoustik Trio with bassist John Patitucci and drummer Dave Weckl had been playing all summer, and they cut through the music like greased lightning.

Corea and the Detroit Jazz Festival Orchestra, conducted by Steve Mercurio, closed the event with the first two movements of Joaquin Rodrigo's guitar piece "Concerto De Aranjuez," rearranged by Corea for piano, followed by Corea's "Spain" (based on a theme from Rodrigo's piece). Rarely does an orchestra play with such clarity on an outdoor stage, and Corea's elegantly restrained blend of jazz sextet and orchestra was an exceptional treat.

At the end, Corea led the crowd in a sing-along on "Spain." The generous spirit of inclusion was emblematic of a free festival that Detroiters genuinely seemed to own. Surrounded by classic 20th-century buildings, crowds spilled out onto the streets, sidewalks and lawns or dined at outdoor cafes, drinking in the music. In a city that has seen its share of hard times, the festival was a welcome celebration of the soul.

—Paul de Barros

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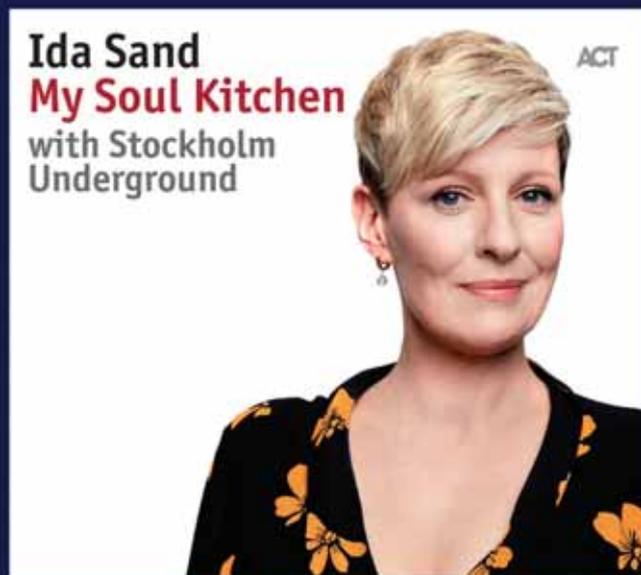
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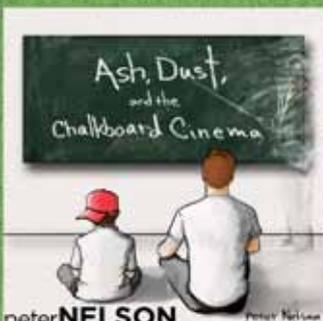


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Bob James' 1974 recording of "Nautilus" is frequently sampled by hip-hop artists.

COURTESY OF ARTIST

James Returns with Trio Disc

KEYBOARDIST BOB JAMES IS ONE OF THE most sampled jazz artists of all time, thanks to his 1974 song "Nautilus," elements of which have appeared on more than 300 hip-hop tracks, by artists such as Run-DMC, Freddie Gibbs and Ghostface Killah. Nearly 30 years after Eric B. & Rakim's "Let The Rhythm Hit 'Em" incorporated samples of James' floating Fender Rhodes, "Nautilus" remains a rap staple. "I'm still getting requests very regularly for it," said the 78-year-old composer. "So, at some point I thought: Why don't I just go ahead and sample myself?"

That's exactly what James did on the final track of *Espresso* (evosound), his new acoustic trio album with drummer Billy Kilson and bassist Michael Palazzolo. On "Submarine," it's hard to tell where the "Nautilus" samples end and the musicians' original work begins, which was James' intent. "I wanted my listeners to know that I was having fun playing games with the whole concept of sampling," said James, speaking by phone from his home in Traverse City, Michigan.

"Fun" is the operative word for *Espresso*, an exuberant studio recording that is James' first trio album since 2004's *Take It From The Top*. Where that record featured reinterpretations of jazz and pop standards, *Espresso* consists mainly of original material, plus a radical reworking of the Grover Washington Jr. hit "Mister Magic," one of several tracks James arranged for the late saxophonist while working as an in-house producer and arranger for CTI Records in the '70s.

During James' 2017 residency at the Blue Note jazz club in New York, he and his bandmates enjoyed trying to determine whether audiences even recognized their highly syncopated version of "Mister Magic," which features interlocking 3/4 and 6/8 rhythms. Kilson, a native of Washington, D.C., wanted to sneak in some nods to that city's '70s go-go music, a local funk variant. "The first time I heard go-go, it was playing over the 'Mister Magic' groove," Kilson said.

Since 1995, Kilson frequently has toured and recorded with the keyboardist. But in all those years, he'd never seen James more inspired as a songwriter. "He just went on a tear," Kilson said. "Bob outdid himself on this. It's really an encyclopedic view in one CD of everything Bob has done for the last 40 years."

Although acoustic piano is James' featured instrument, he alludes to other phases of his career through clever use of additional instrumentation. "Topside" echoes his late-'70s forays into what later would be called smooth jazz, with breezy synths and wordless backing vocals buoying his insouciant piano licks. "One Afternoon" harks back to his lush '70s arrangements for CTI and his '80s classical experiments, with strings and lovely work by oboist Angela Scates, whom James discovered at the Interlochen Arts Academy, which is located near Traverse City.

The other young musician featured on *Espresso* is bassist Palazzolo, a newcomer from Detroit who brings a sense of melody and groove far beyond his years. A 2013 graduate of Wayne State University, Palazzolo first came to James' attention four years ago through guitarist Perry Hughes. Upon seeing the bassist again a couple years later, "I immediately noticed how much he had progressed and how seriously he was taking his instrument," James recalled. By the time of the New York residency last year, Palazzolo was more than holding his own alongside his more experienced collaborators. "He's challenged me more than I've challenged him," James said.

It was the success of those Blue Note concerts, more than anything, that inspired James to bring this trio into the studio to capture their chemistry. "I hadn't set out to do a trio record," James said, but after the Blue Note shows, "I just felt like this was the direction we should go. I like having more focus on the acoustic piano and having a chance to stick my neck out a little bit."

—Andy Hermann



Pianist Randy Weston (1926–2018) performs at the 2013 Chicago Jazz Festival.

In Memoriam: Randy Weston

IN 2016, WHEN PIANIST RANDY WESTON was inducted into the DownBeat Hall of Fame, he said that he viewed his life's work as a kind of musical recipe.

"You take the black church, the calypso, the blues, Duke, Basie, Art Tatum, put them in a pot and stir them up, and add Africa: that's Randy Weston," he said in an article that initially ran in the August edition of the magazine that year.

It's a fairly apt summation of the elements that impacted the way Weston—who passed away on Sept. 1 at the age of 92—approached his chosen instrument and the music to which he devoted his life. As with most mottos, though, it doesn't fully capture the depth of feeling and acuity in his playing, formed from years of study of the jazz and classical canon, as well as his long-time advocacy of the African roots in all modern music.

Bassist Christian McBride, who recorded with Weston on the 1997 album *Earth Birth*, put it this way: "While many naively spoke of the connection between African and African-American heritage, he was someone who actually spent extensive time playing, studying and maintaining a business in Africa—experiencing many cultures there first-hand and bringing those experiences back to America to share with all of the musicians who learned from him. He was one of the only musicians many of us knew who could seamlessly thread the sounds of the Yorubas to bebop."

Weston's interest in both the music and history of Africa was ingrained in him at an early age. Born in Brooklyn in 1926, his parents—

mom, a domestic worker; dad, a restaurateur originally from Panama—encouraged him to study his ancestral homeland at the same time he was taking piano lessons. And they supported him as he started his music career following high school and a stint in the Army.

Along the way, he found notable mentors, including his neighbor Max Roach, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk and jazz scholar Marshall Stearns. Through their friendship and teachings, Weston began to develop his singular playing style: a fluid, yet reserved, approach that built a percussive, angular flow off of a stride-blues foundation. He could swing with the best of them, but seemed most comfortable blending with the steady polyrhythms of the Gnawa music of Morocco or the spirited throb of highlife from Ghana.

His interest in blending the sounds of modern jazz with African rhythms began in earnest during the late '50s and flourished on early albums, like 1961's *Uhuru Afrika*, which included poetry from Langston Hughes, and 1963's *Music From The New African Nations*. Around that time, he also was conscripted to tour the western and northern parts of the African continent by the U.S. State Department. He often would return there during his life, including spending a few years living in Morocco, where he taught and helped run the African Rhythms Cultural Center.

"His association with African musicians and the time he spent traveling the continent gave him a wealth of information," remembered trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater, who performed with Weston

on and off during the past four decades. "A lot of other guys did similar kinds of things, but didn't seem to absorb it the same way. Randy would hear the balafoon [a percussion instrument that originated in Mali] and understand that it was as much a piano as the piano was."

Weston kept up a steady output of recordings and performances throughout his long life, including his most recent work, *The African Nubian Suite*, a live large-ensemble album captured in 2012 at New York's Skirball Cultural Center that aimed to trace human evolution back to its African roots in the Nile River delta. He also was playing concerts until very recently, with his last appearance occurring in July in France.

In addition to his induction into DownBeat's Hall of Fame, Weston received other honors, including a Jazz Masters Award from the National Endowment for the Arts, fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the Doris Duke Charitable Trust, and honorary doctorates from the New England Conservatory of Music and Brooklyn College.

Above all else, according to Bridgewater, Weston will be remembered for being one of the most gregarious and kind artists in jazz.

"He treated everybody well—even the Gnawa musicians he got to know became family to him. Yesterday at Randy's funeral, somebody said, 'I never heard Randy say a bad thing about any musician or anybody,'" Bridgewater recalled after attending a Sept. 10 service at Cathedral of Saint John the Divine in New York. "That was his nature. He welcomed everybody."

—Robert Ham

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European Scene / BY PETER MARGASAK



Rodrigo Amado (right) recently issued *History Of Nothing (Trost)*.

NUNO MARTINS

Amado Makes His Mark, Boldly

Portuguese saxophonist Rodrigo Amado prides himself on the fact that all of the music made under his leadership has been fully improvised. In fact, a few years ago he convinced guitarist Luís Lopes to take over sole leadership of Humanization Quartet, because the band used written themes, and the saxophonist didn't feel comfortable with the approach as something under his guidance. At the same time, the reedist's music reveals impressive discipline and control. *A History Of Nothing (Trost)*, a recent album in the company of three veteran American musicians—multi-instrumentalist Joe McPhee, bassist Kent Kessler and drummer Chris Corsano—bristles with energy and clarity, as the charged playing never supersedes a sense of proportion and thoughtful interaction.

Amado has been guided by an instinctual, autodidact framework since he got his first horn as a 17-year-old. He had severed his sciatic nerve when accidentally falling through a glass door, and his mother purchased him a horn to keep him occupied during a lengthy convalescence. Although he took a few rudimentary lessons to learn scales, he's largely self-taught. And for a couple of years, he stuck to rock-driven improvisation with friends. But as he became more inspired by jazz—whether post-bop titans like Ornette Coleman or contemporary explorers like Mats Gustafsson—he began formal training at Lisbon's Hot Clube de Portugal, a storied nightclub that began offering private lessons during the early '80s.

"The overall vibe toward young guys was that you had to study this particular way, to master bebop, before you can do anything else," Amado said.

Although he took lessons with some of Portugal's most important reedists, Amado did most of his learning at home from recordings. After about two decades of working in experimental circles, Amado had begun to tire of ad hoc improvised sessions.

In 2001, he was invited by Pedro Costa to help launch Clean Feed, one of the strongest and most adventurous labels of the past decade. At the same time, he started the Lisbon Improvisation Players, a loose collective injected with his stylistic imprint.

But Amado truly came into his own when he began organizing international ensembles, including a long-running trio with Kessler and Norwegian drummer Paal Nilssen-Love. He also formed his main working band, Motion Trio, with cellist Miguel Mira and drummer Gabriel Ferrandini, which has recorded on its own and with guest musicians, like trumpeter Peter Evans and trombonist Jeb Bishop.

"We have this strong thing with the trio, and if we record on our own it has a certain weight, but if we have a guest, we open up," Amado said. "We really play the game with this new voice and we never know how it's going to turn out. With Peter, there was this panic—the first concert was like, 'What the fuck is happening?' He was fighting us and if Gabriel started to play some kind of groove, Peter would go against it—it was amazing. In terms of our playing, we grow a lot in that context—one concert can make you a different player."

The rapport Amado has with McPhee, Kessler and Corsano grew from instincts, rather than regular meetings. "Putting those bands together is the most important decision. I'm always listening to stuff, and in an intuitive way, I try to figure out the personality of the musicians, which is kind of stupid. But I've never been wrong. I've played plenty of times with guys I first met on the afternoon flight, and we played a concert that same night, and I've never been deceived. Most of the time, the guys are exactly how I imagined they would be, even in personal terms. And I think that says a lot about what the music transmits about the musicians."

DB

Fishman Assembles Multifaceted Career

SAXOPHONES SURROUND GREG FISHMAN every time he walks into his teaching studio, a cozy room at the front of his friend Paul Maslin's PM Woodwind repair and retail shop in Evanston, Illinois.

The multi-reedist, who has worked throughout the Chicago area since the '80s and has toured the world with jazz legends, is known among saxophonists for the informative and distinctive instructional books he has written and self-published. And listening to his recently released album *So You Say*, it appears that his zeal for playing straight-ahead jazz saxophone and his passion for teaching spring from the same source.

"I've loved playing since I was 12, practicing 8 hours a day, because I loved doing it every minute," Fishman said. "In those hours, I figured out ways the music made sense to me and figured out a way of explaining it."

One wall of Fishman's studio includes photos of his times with an array of mentors—including Stan Getz, James Moody and Joe Henderson. He watched them work, listened to their stories and eventually incorporated the wisdom he gleaned from those experiences into his own teaching. "Students can be obsessed with playing the right

notes, right scales, technical things," observed Fishman, whose frequent duo performances with his wife, singer-pianist Judy Roberts, have long been a staple of the Chicago scene. "For the experienced players, it's more about interaction with the group and communicating something to the audience—portraying a mood."

To help his students improve their instrumental technique, Fishman began writing saxophone etudes designed to help players develop a professional-level vocabulary. He released the first volume of *Jazz Saxophone Etudes* in 2005. Since then, Fishman has written guides to duet playing, phrasing and harmony. His lively *The Lobster Theory* (2014) uses imaginative analogies to describe improvisation. "When I saw people were confused, not getting the beauty of improvisation, I'd come up with some analogy with whatever they did or relate a concept about music to some everyday event," he explained.

Fishman and California-based tenor saxophonist Doug Webb wrote all of the material for *So You Say*, an adventurous romp through 10 tunes tailor-made for tag-team-style improvisation. Both Fishman and Webb believed that the album should emphasize first or second takes,



Multi-reedist and educator Greg Fishman has published four volumes of his *Jazz Saxophone Etudes* series.

recorded quickly in the studio, as if it were a live performance. In addition to several high-octane, uptempo numbers, Fishman's ballad "Harlem Avenue" is a highlight of the program.

Webb believes that their differing styles are complementary. "Greg is more precise, very methodical," he said. "I just tried to improvise and have fun."

—Aaron Cohen



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Pianist Marcin Wasilewski's trio has been together for about 25 years.

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Wasilewski Trio Propelled by Unique Interactions

IN 2019, ONE OF EUROPE'S MOST ESTEEMED jazz ensembles, the Marcin Wasilewski Trio, will celebrate its 25th anniversary. In advance of this milestone, the Poland-based group just released its fifth ECM album, *Live*, which vividly captures the threesome in a relaxed and organic mood two years ago at Jazz Middelheim, in Antwerp, Belgium. These triumphs have been tempered by news of the July 29 death of the trio's longtime mentor and for-

mer bandleader, Polish trumpeter Tomasz Stańko.

"It's a big loss—not only for me, but for my fellow band members, and for the whole music world," Wasilewski said the day before the trio performed in Warsaw for Stańko's memorial. "I think of him as a musical father."

Pianist Wasilewski, bassist Sławomir Kurkiewicz and drummer Michał Miśkiewicz first played with Stańko in 1994, then toured wide-

ly with him for 15 years, recording three albums for ECM: *Soul Of Things* (2001), *Suspended Night* (2003) and *Lontano* (2006). Like Stańko, they melded a melancholy, introspective vibe with the bluesy, inside-outside approach of the late-'60s Miles Davis Quintet. "Tomasz's approach to the music was new to us," Wasilewski said. "We had been listening to open music, avant-garde music, but for us it was like a mystery. From the beginning, we felt a chemistry."

The trio always has enjoyed great chemistry on its own, too. But even they were surprised by the Middelheim tapes, done for radio, but without any intention of releasing an album.

"When we listened to the recording, we realized the interaction in the band was unique," Kurkiewicz said. "Each of us had already digested and internalized the music, so our approach was to take a risk and be as creative as we could."

Those familiar with the trio's 2014 album, *Spark Of Life* (ECM), with Swedish tenor saxophonist Joakim Milder, will recognize the material. The new album opens with the celestial title track from that earlier recording, but as an intro to the livelier, unevenly pulsed "Sudovian Dance," a tune inspired by a rhythmic pattern Wasilewski heard in Sudovia, an area of northeast Poland rich in folk dances. "It's a waltz, but with a little step—one-two-three-one-one-two-three," he explained. "You can dance to it."

Wasilewski definitely dances over the keys with crisp and playful abandon. The evocative "Night Train To You" also chugs along in an odd meter: 11/8. The trio often includes a familiar pop song on its albums—this time, Sting's "Message In A Bottle," which exemplifies the trio's knack for expressing churning anxiety beneath an apparently calm surface. "Three Reflections," an allusion to the cooperative nature of the trio, lives up to its name, as piano, bass and drums intertwine. Wasilewski's clear, clean keyboard attack and the swell and ebb of his lines here recall Keith Jarrett.

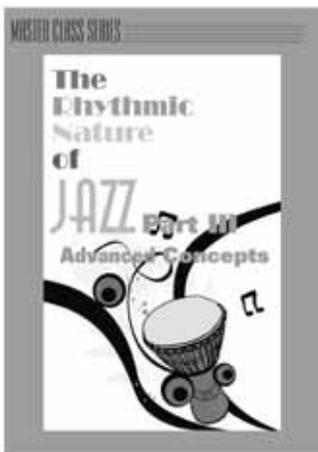
"When I was 13 years old, I watched a video of [Jarrett]—*Standards*, from Tokyo—every day for one year," Wasilewski recalled.

"Austin" is a gorgeous eulogy for Austin Peralta (1990–2012), the Los Angeles pianist and composer who recorded with Ron Carter at age 16 and later worked with Flying Lotus. "He was like my younger brother," Wasilewski said. "I was so proud of him." *Live* closes with Herbie Hancock's "Actual Proof," a hard-driving contrast to the placid moods elsewhere. Though Wasilewski acknowledges the influence of Hancock, he emphasizes that he never has been a transcriber. "I remember Bill Evans was asked about how he makes a certain harmony, voicings, and he said, 'Do it yourself. Then you will be happy when you find your own way.'"

The Marcin Wasilewski Trio has done exactly that, and will no doubt continue to do so.

—Paul de Barros

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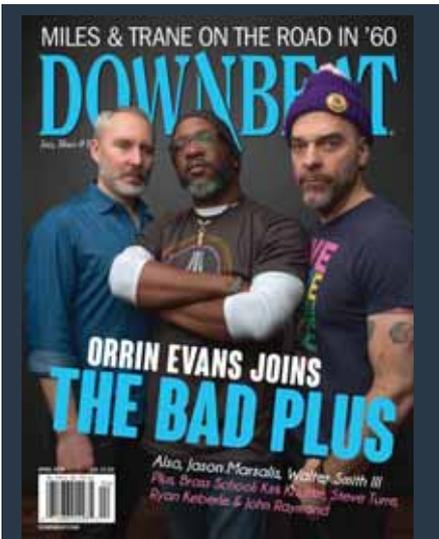
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Eddie Arkin (left) and Lorraine Feather frequently have collaborated on her albums, including *Math Camp*.

Everything Adds Up for Feather

INSPIRATION TRULY CAN COME FROM anywhere. For proof of that, look no further than vocalist Lorraine Feather's decision to title her album *Math Camp* (Relacion) after hearing that phrase uttered on an episode of the TV show *Frasier*.

"One of [Frasier's] many girlfriends was trying to get him to loosen up," Feather said, speaking from her home in Massachusetts. "He said, 'Fun's been my name since math camp.' I thought it was an appealing phrase, and it kind of stuck with me."

It was only after working on the album for a while, writing songs with longtime collaborators Eddie Arkin and Shelly Berg, that the theme of science and mathematics started to emerge within the material. At first it was Feather's realization that she had managed to work most of the numbers between zero and 10 into the lyrics of the opening track, "I Don't Mean To Make A Big Deal Of It." From there, she started writing some material, like the gently shuffling title track and the baroque-meets-ambient closer, "Some Kind Of Einstein." The next thing anyone working on the album knew, a concept had surfaced.

"I thought of it as a metaphor for connectedness and relationship," said Arkin, the composer and multi-instrumentalist who co-wrote seven of the 10 songs on *Math Camp*. "The foundation of everything."

At this point in her career, Feather could find a way to spin the phonebook into a collection of engaging and catchy tunes. The daughter of famed jazz critic Leonard Feather and singer Jane Feather, Lorraine has built a sturdy career as a songwriter for hire, writing lyrics for an array of TV and film projects, as well as more high-profile assignments, like crafting a song for the opening ceremony of the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta.

"My dad was very excited when I started

writing," she said. "He took me to my first ASCAP meeting. He was so thrilled when he realized that I had a talent for writing lyrics. Literally, almost on his deathbed, when he was in the hospital, he said, 'Did you send those Ellington tunes you wrote lyrics [for] to Cleo Laine?' He was very into the whole thing."

Feather seems most fulfilled these days when she's creating her own work. The process of writing and recording *Math Camp* presented some hurdles, one of which was geographic. She lives close to Boston, while Arkin resides in California, and Berg lives in Florida when he's not keeping up a busy touring schedule. Because Feather pays for studio time out of her own pocket, the recording sessions were broken up by long stretches of time to, as she described it, "spread out the expense as much as I could." Hence *Math Camp* took the better part of three years to finish.

Having been a working musician and performer for four decades, the Grammy-nominated Feather has developed a sense for which musicians are right for a particular project. Among the guest contributors to *Math Camp* are several high-profile stars, including drummer Terri Lyne Carrington, bassist James Genus and pianists Fred Hersch and Russell Ferrante, of Yellowjackets.

Arkin and Berg have been regular contributors to Feather's albums since the early '00s and have established a kind of rapport with her that allows them to come up with new material quickly and efficiently—most of the time, anyway.

"There have been times when we've had what I call a 'garbage' day," Feather said. "Days when we got nothing and nothing came out. But it's never really wasted, because, inevitably, the next time we get together, something happens. It's an intimate thing—writing with somebody like that, because you have to just allow things to go down different roads." —Robert Ham

City's Cultural Capital on Full Display at Chicago Jazz Festival

ALTHOUGH SINGER DIANNE REEVES' SET was cut short by a thunderstorm and alto saxophonist Maceo Parker proclaimed early in his climactic set that he doesn't play jazz—and commenced to prove it—the 40th annual Chicago Jazz Festival fulfilled ambitious goals. Five days of performances at Millennium Park with successful homegrown headliners Ramsey Lewis, Kurt Elling and trumpeter Orbert Davis, plus two afternoons of programs at the nearby Chicago Cultural Center, drew thousands to appreciate the widely varied music of a vibrant, multi-dimensional local scene.

Thanks to the city's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events Commissioner Mark Kelly, once a drummer for maverick bandleader Hal Russell, funding also went to eight off-site venues across town, allowing them to offer shows without a cover charge in the week prior to the fest's Aug. 29 kickoff. That evening, a two-and-a-half-hour cavalcade of native legends and lions, backed by Davis' 60-piece Chicago Jazz Philharmonic, presented exciting, genre-spanning artistry with tradition and experimentation in almost equal measure.

Lewis, arguably Chicago's best-known living

jazz player, had promoted his Urban Knights appearance as his last before retirement; he's since backed off that notion. Accompanied notably by guitarist Henry Johnson, keyboardist Tim Gant and drummer Charles Heath, he played his hits, including "The 'In' Crowd," songs from *Sun Goddess* (his album with Earth Wind & Fire's Maurice White), The Beatles' "A Hard Day's Night," The Stylistics' "Betcha By Golly, Wow" and "After Hours." Considering the fest also featured pianists Kenny Barron in a quintet, Barry Harris and Charles McPherson in a quartet, Arturo O'Farrill's Sextet, Matthew Shipp and tenorist Ivo Perelman, and both Myra Melford and Amina Claudine Myers in an ensemble remembering Muhal Richard Abrams, Lewis' jazz was modest and mild, yet well-received.

The fest's other music was truer. Representative members of the born-in-Chicago AACM, such as Ernest Khabeer Dawkins (leading the Great Black Music Ensemble), drummer Avreeayl Ra, clarinetist Mwata Bowden (in the Muhal tribute) and cellist Tomeka Reid, who subbed for flutist Nicole Mitchell when she was called away by a family emergency, demonstrated improvisational individuality in the context of



Pianist Ramsey Lewis performs at the Chicago Jazz Festival on Sept. 1.

challenging collaborations.

But expatriate Chicagoan Myers' trio was a special treat. Rooted in blues, gospel and freedom, Myers sang original songs while excelling on piano and organ, like a looser Nina Simone. First emerging in the mid-1960s as a member of Gene Ammons' band and a founding member in 1965 of the AACM, Myers moved to New York in 1977. She still epitomizes the indomitable, exploratory expressivity that characterizes jazz, blues and beyond sounds from the Midwest's cultural capital, fully displayed at the Chicago Jazz Festival.

—Howard Mandel

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Will Kennedy (left), Russell Ferrante, Luciana Souza, Bob Mintzer and Dane Alderson collaborated on the album *Raising Our Voice*.

ANNA WEBBER



Yellowjackets Team Up with Sousa

SINCE THE RELEASE OF YELLOWJACKETS' self-titled debut in 1981, the band has released about three chart-topping excursions per decade. Along the way, the band has developed a large fan base, while undergoing some lineup changes. Keyboardist and co-founder

Russell Ferrante has been a constant presence, with saxophonist Bob Mintzer (who replaced Mark Russo in 1990) being the second-longest tenured member. Drummer Will Kennedy has played with the group for more than 20 non-sequential years. When the quartet's current

bassist, Dane Alderson, was born, Yellowjackets was already recording its third album.

Raising Our Voice (Mack Avenue), Yellowjackets' 24th album, is Alderson's second studio appearance with the band, bringing a youthful vibrancy to the workhorse ensemble.

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But the biggest change is guest vocalist Luciana Souza, who stretches the band out with a compelling, earthy vibe. Souza contributes to more than half the album, but that feel for the organ-ic presides over the whole affair. The result is a revitalizing project for everyone involved.

When Ferrante recently spoke with *DownBeat*, he was enjoying the waning days of summer before returning to his teaching gig at the University of Southern California. "What remains as challenging as ever is coming up with music that we feel shows some kind of progression—not just recycling and rehashing what we have done in the past," he said. "The challenge is to find new things and keep the music invigorated."

Souza and Ferrante both live in Los Angeles. Through management connections, the two paired up to test the waters. They passed melodic missives back and forth for a while before Ferrante decided to have her join the band on its next session. *Yellowjackets* occasionally have worked with vocalists—including Kurt Elling and Bobby McFerrin—but Souza's work with the band went deeper.

From the first note of *Raising Our Voice*, the band is charged with a sense of exploration, revisiting "Man Facing North," the tune that opened its 1993 album, *Like A River*. Souza offers wordless flights atop Ferrante's patient support before Mintzer enters with authoritative, yet

tender, lines on tenor saxophone. Unlike the original version, the synths have been ditched in favor of a more acoustic vibe, and the band rides effortlessly on that unplugged interplay.

Ferrante and Souza collaborated on two songs for the album, the peace-affirming "Quiet" and "Solitude." On the former, Souza shifts from Portuguese to English into a delicate ballad with plaintive tones from Mintzer, filling the gaps with a languid touch. The latter song closes the album, a slow build that finds Mintzer and Souza rising over the churning rhythm section.

"I collaborate with a lot of dead poets," Souza joked. "It's not something that feels very natural to me. I give and I take; I work on my own. When I collaborate with my husband, [producer Larry Klein] I ask, 'Can you work on this for me?' But it's usually more like an assignment. With *Yellowjackets*, it felt very organic. They are all brilliant writers, and they have a beautiful rapport together. It's joyous. They love seeing what comes up. That's probably why they've been together so long."

After 40 years as a band, it can be hard to keep things interesting. On this go-round, spontaneity in the presence of a guest seemed to spur everybody on. "Most of the time, we'll have everything really spelled out and clearly written and arranged beforehand, so when we go into the studio, we're just trying to cap-

ture a live performance," Ferrante said. "For this recording, since we hadn't previously worked with Luciana, we had no time to meet and work on the music prior to arriving at the studio. We started adding things once we got a feeling for how it was working. How will these pieces unfold? The ideas we thought were going to work, sometimes they didn't. But the overarching feeling by everyone was 'Wow, this is really working.' You don't know until you're making the music."

Elsewhere, Alderson flexes his composing muscles with the rumbling "Brotherly," which keeps the tempo popping. Mintzer's "Swing With It" is as straightforward as the program gets, with the composer delivering the song's angular melody before his bandmates take turns dishing out a dollop of four-to-the-bar swing.

Walking into the middle of a band with so much history, Souza is consciously democratic in her approach. "I try to observe a lot and see where I fit," she said. "The voice is there for a reason. I'm not needed to expose the melody or find the groove. The music already exists. I'm an added color." Like a hawk circling her prey, Souza is patient, flying in an ever tightening circle as she ponders her next opportunity: "A lot of the time I spend in a quiet corner. 'Should I really add something?' They are brilliant improvisers. I am not. So, what can I contribute? If nothing, then silence." —Sean J. O'Connell

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Pianist James Francies has released his Blue Note debut, *Flight*.



JAMES FRANCIES

Empathy & Authenticity

In 2015, when pianist James Francies signed with Blue Note, he was a 20-year-old sophomore at The New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music with an elite resume. He had improvised at the highest levels with drummer Jeff “Tain” Watts and vibraphonist Stefan Harris, plugged in with drummer Chris Dave, served as a sub with The Roots on *Late Night With Jimmy Fallon* and appeared on the soundtrack to the 2015 Netflix documentary *What Happened, Miss Simone?*

But the Houston native remained in school, earning his BFA and bolstering his reputation. He played on Chance The Rapper’s 2016 hit “No Problem,” and has performed with a diverse

array of artists, including Common, Nas, Lauryn Hill, José James, Pat Metheny, Chris Potter and Eric Harland.

Francies accesses all these experiences on his Blue Note debut, *Flight*, with bassist Burniss Travis II and drummer Jeremy Dutton, from his group, Kinetic, several vocalists and guest instrumentalists Potter, vibraphonist Joel Ross and guitarist Mike Moreno.

“The record goes a bunch of places, but a spine threads through it,” Francies said. “Instead of playing a bunch of notes and songs everyone knows, I wanted to show my different layers.”

The album showcases what pianist Aaron Parks describes as Francies’ “undeniable techni-

cal virtuosity,” marked by “remarkable independence between his hands that lets him keep two very distinct, coherent ideas—sometimes it feels like three—going on all at once.”

Consider “Reciprocal,” on which all members soar cogently through the 21/8 form; or “Crib,” on which Francies and Potter converse at length over gnarly changes; or his efflorescent opening solo on “Sway,” a beautiful line that Francies wrote in high school.

But for the most part, Francies reserves pyrotechnics for the numerous concerts he expects to do with Kinetic next year. He takes his time, develops motifs, focuses on storytelling. On “Dark Purple,” a spacey, swirly, rubato ballad, Francies—whose synesthetic visions direct his creative flow—enters “a Zen place as different colors pass by.” He generates richly orchestrated layers of harmony and colors to surround Chris Turner’s incantatory lyric on the kaleidoscopic “Dreaming” and to frame his lyric solo on the opening section of “A Lover And A Fighter,” whose final section upholds the band’s sobriquet.

“It’s like a wave, constant motion that we add to and remove things from,” Francies said of his attitude toward rhythm. “It feels like flying—we’re somewhere else for that hour we perform. It’s defying fear, finding a higher place, believing and trusting in yourself. When birds fly, they trust their wings and the air around them. If you think about it too much, it probably won’t happen.”

“Pointing out a single song doesn’t do James justice,” said Derrick Hodge, who produced the album. “There aren’t many James Francies-isms. What makes him unique is the album’s flow, the contrast from song to song, his willingness to throw himself into different situations—to be in the moment and put what’s honestly him on the line when the lights are on, with the confidence he’ll land on his feet. He doesn’t worry about being judged.”

Francies evolved this aesthetic ethos coming up in what he described as an “iffy” section of Houston. “I was probably the only person in my neighborhood going to a magnet school,” he said, referring to the exemplary High School for the Performing and Visual Arts.

He played sermons at his parents’ church and, from age 14 through 17, led a gigging jazz trio modeled on Oscar Peterson, an early hero. His real-world experiences “reinforced that this isn’t a joke,” he said. “People who are supporting families are sacrificing to hear you play. Some people waited all week to hear you, or didn’t eat that day because they wanted to go to a concert.

“For me, music is music. Always play from your heart, with empathy and authenticity. It doesn’t matter where you are—I’d play the same in front of you for an hour as I would with The Roots in front of thousands of people. There’s a saying, ‘If you’re always ready, then you never have to be ready.’”

—Ted Panken

COURTESY OF ARTIST

Vocalist Johnaye Kendrick performs and teaches in the U.S. Northwest.

JOHNAYE KENDRICK

Taking Flight

Although Johnaye Kendrick says she's tired, there's little sign of it to be found in her bubbly demeanor and highly animated style of speaking.

The jazz vocalist has every reason to be worn out. She and her husband have twin 3-year-old girls to keep them busy, and when she met up with DownBeat at her favorite brewpub in her current hometown of Tacoma, Washington, she had just wrapped up a week leading an intensive camp for young singers run by her employer, Cornish College of the Arts.

Despite her entreaties of exhaustion, Kendrick enjoys a meal of oysters and cider as she recounts her artistic growth—from playing violin in high school in San Diego to her days in New Orleans singing with Ellis Marsalis to her current life in the Northwest, where she teaches and performs.

"The music scene here is open-arms love," Kendrick says. "They're so open and loving and excited to connect. It's charming. I love it here."

Much of her enthusiasm right now concerns the release of her new, self-released album, *Flying*. Produced and arranged by Kendrick, it's a warmly conceived set of tunes that mixes together her original compositions and some renditions of songs from the jazz and pop canons, like "I've Got No Strings," from the Disney classic *Pinocchio*, and "Fallen," a tune heard by many in the film *Pretty Woman*.

"I did 'Fallen' for my mom," said Kendrick. "Growing up, we would watch *Pretty Woman* every weekend. She was visiting me and my twins recently, and we were talking about the days when we'd do that. And she said, 'Oh, I love that song.' So, in my mind, I was, like, 'Record that one for mom.'"

The tribute is a fitting gesture to a woman who encouraged Kendrick's musical interests from a young age, from her early piano lessons to

her interest in playing violin. It wasn't until high school, though, that Kendrick decided to take singing seriously. But once she got to college, she realized she still had a lot to learn.

"My freshman year, I went into jazz piano," Kendrick recalls. "And the teacher goes, 'You're going to be swinging your eighth notes,' and I leaned over and said, 'What does that mean?' I didn't know anything about it. I just knew how it felt."

After graduating from Western Michigan University, Kendrick earned an artist's diploma from the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz and a master's degree in jazz studies from Loyola University in New Orleans. During her time in the Crescent City, she was hired by Marsalis, as well as trumpeter Nicholas Payton, as a featured vocalist in their respective ensembles. These days, she seems most comfortable leading her own ensemble, which she has done ever since relocating to Washington State.

Kendrick chooses her collaborators carefully, looking for the right mixture of raw talent and an ability to slip between styles with ease. From the sounds of the musicians backing her up on *Flying*, including pianist Dawn Clement and drummer D'Vonne Lewis, she has perfected the formula.

Clement finds her ongoing work with Kendrick to be deeply satisfying: "I can't speak highly enough of Johnaye and can honestly say that I enjoy the listening experience as much as I enjoy playing music with her. She is the real deal, so legit, so true-blue, out of another era and yet pushing and propelling the music forward."

Tired as Kendrick might say she is now, she has a new school year to plan for, as well as gigs in Los Angeles and Mexico City—in addition to her regular performances in the Seattle area. True to the name of her new album, Kendrick is flying.

—Robert Ham

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Even as an expatriate engineer in Saudi Arabia, French-born saxophonist Stéphane Spira found opportunities to play. As a student, he'd excelled in math, a skill that gained him entrée to one of the best polytechnic schools in Paris, and it seemed likely that his career would take a more conventional turn. But while in engineering school, he began to teach himself to play saxophone, and before long he was sitting in at jam sessions, learning from more experienced players and developing his sound. (Chet Baker's pianist, Michel Graillier, was a mentor.) When he returned to Paris from the Middle East in the 1990s, "I decided to quit everything for music," he said.

That decision has paid off.

Spira released his debut album as a leader, *First Page*, featuring renowned French flugelhornist Stéphane Belmondo, in 2006 and his second, *Spirabassi*, with pianist Giovanni Mirabassi in 2009, both on the independent French label Bee Jazz.

To step out professionally alongside such accomplished jazz musicians "was pretty incredible for me, coming from an engineering background," Spira recalled.

Spira has no trouble holding his own with the big guns, and his skills as a player—garnered in clubs, rather than in a conservatory—are carefully honed. As a composer, Spira brings to his writing a cultured appreciation of harmonic and melodic constructs, with a penchant for challenging chord progressions and elegant motifs. "As a sax player, I feel more influenced by Shirley Horn than by John Coltrane," he explained.

By the time Spira recorded his third album, *Round About Jobim* (Jazzmax), an exploration of the overlap between European romanticism and Brazilian jazz, he'd relocated to New York City—

another geographic shift in pursuit of his artistic goals. As he had during his school days in Paris, Spira began playing jam sessions around town and readily was accepted into the local jazz scene.

"It was really a dream," Spira said. "New York is a fantasy for so many jazz players in the world."

But the move to New York prompted more introspection than gig-hopping for the newly transplanted musician, who was dealing with the recent death of his father and the feeling that he was psychologically "in between" Paris and New York. Spira's fourth album, *In Between* (Jazzmax, 2014), reflects this soul-searching—and with it, he emerged as a sophisticated composer and player who can hold his own among the jazz glitterati of his adopted city.

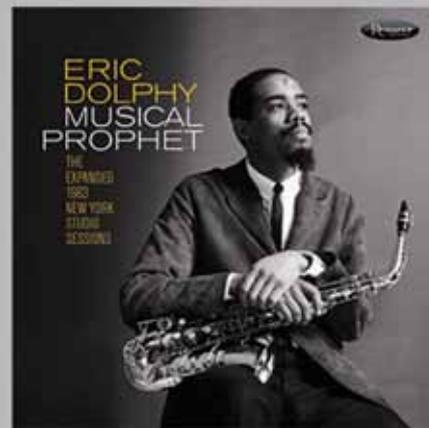
Today, nine years into his New York life, Spira is more settled. He's married to classical vocalist Jessica Goldring and the couple has a young son. Additionally, the late-bloomer has found a core group of New York musicians with whom he can grow musically. These relationships provide inspiration and context for Spira's latest album, *New Playground* (Jazzmax), which features the leader on soprano saxophone alongside Joshua Richman (piano, Fender Rhodes), Steve Wood (bass) and Jimmy Macbride (drums). It's a tight program of eight originals (seven by Spira) that range from the teasingly rhythmic ("Peter's Run") to the tender ("Gold Ring Variations" and "Nocturne," composed for his wife and son, respectively) to the inspirational and exultant title track.

Cinematic in mood and autobiographical in theme, *New Playground* marks that exciting moment when a gifted artist finds his definitive voice. "I'm really revealing myself with this album," Spira said. "I'm not trying to prove anything. It's just who I am." —Suzanne Lorge

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Saxophonist Chantal De Villiers has released an album of duets recorded with three different pianists, including her father, Burt De Villiers.

COURTESY OF ARTIST

CHANTAL DE VILLIERS

Powerful Lineage

Adventurous fans who look beyond the sprawling, 10-day extravaganza of the Montreal International Jazz Festival might get the impression that the city's jazz landscape is skewed toward the avant-garde. Often more closely aligned with European aesthetics than North American norms, Montreal has, in fact, bred several generations of woolly improvisers.

How, then, to explain tenor saxophonist Chantal De Villiers, whose tone and musical allegiances are a throwback to Coleman Hawkins, Dexter Gordon and Stan Getz?

On a conference call with her partner—fellow Montreal reedist Rémi Bolduc—as occasional translator, De Villiers laughed and replied that she has connected with the emotions expressed by mainstream tenor players since she was a teenager.

As a 44-year-old who has just finished her second album, the self-released *À Travers Le Temps ...*, De Villiers might seem like a late bloomer. In fact, she's been actively honing her sound for 30 years, playing primarily with her father, Burt De Villiers, one of the three pianists who perform duets with her on the nine-track disc.

The album's program reflects her diverse tastes. The father and daughter perform his original "Samba De Doçura" and her "Once Again Dad." Pianist François Bourassa is her duo partner on "I Loves You Porgy" and Sam Rivers' "Beatrice."

At 16, De Villiers made her debut with her father on a Quebec City TV program, playing his arrangement of "Blue Moon." As a youth, De Villiers mostly had been listening to Michael Jackson and other pop music of the 1980s. Then she began to pay attention to Gordon, Getz,

Benny Golson and other older tenor players.

"They began to inspire me to play jazz, because of their soul and their sound," she said.

After graduating with a bachelor's degree in music from the University of Montreal, De Villiers began getting booked for performances in the area. "She played a lot of gigs with different musicians—trios, quartets and a lot of gigs with me," her father said. "She developed her own musical style and sound, and her priority was to create a stunning, original sound that nobody ever had."

"I loved ballads," said the saxophonist, "because you can take your time and become part of the spirit of the music. I wanted to create something that people could respond to emotionally, something that would move them. I think I've stayed true to that as my career has developed."

Bourassa, who plays on the album's opener—the leader's original composition "Romance Sur La Rive"—said, "Chantal has a beautiful sound with a lot of sensitivity and musicality. She is a great listener and she knows how to make music breathe."

Despite De Villiers' talents as an instrumental balladeer, it was a more rhythm-based recording—2015's *Funky Princess*—that signaled her breakthrough as a musician.

"That was a turning point for me," she said. "I found the musicians I wanted to work with and really started to express myself as a bandleader."

Now, she has her sights set on moving beyond Montreal and testing her ability to move people on a broader scale. Although she said she's striving to reach a bigger audience, she's already accomplished one goal.

"I had a listener tell me they cried when they heard me play 'I Loves You Porgy,' and I thought, 'My job is done.'"
—James Hale

BY PHILLIP LUTZ | PHOTO BY JIMMY & DENA KATZ

NURTURING SPIRIT

Quick of mind and compact of body, **STEFON HARRIS** moved easily from the vibraphone to the computer to the electric keyboard in the studio of his New Jersey home. Loquacious by nature, he maintained a steady stream of talk along the way.

But for someone known as patient under pressure—on the bandstand, in the boardroom or at the podium—his delivery was uncharacteristically urgent. The August day was waning, and he had an improbable story to tell.

Up from hardscrabble origins in Albany, New York—where he was too poor even to own an instrument—he has, at age 45, parlayed multiple gifts and considerable grit into positions of distinction. In the process, he has begun to shape a legacy as the personification of the modern artist/educator/entrepreneur.

Harris topped the Vibraphone category in the

DownBeat Critics Poll this year and last. With the retirement of Gary Burton in 2017 and the death of Bobby Hutcherson (1941–2016), Harris has emerged as perhaps the most renowned practitioner of the instrument. But he yearns for something much deeper than fame.

“When I think about the end of my time on this planet,” he said, “I want to be able to look back and say I did something I could be proud of. It’s not an aspiration of mine to look back and say, ‘I was the greatest vibraphonist in history.’ My ultimate ambition is to help the world understand the value of empathy.”





Stefon Harris at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark on Aug. 9



Harris' latest album, *Sonic Creed*, includes a number of original compositions, as well as "Now," a track written by vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson.

By all accounts, the strands of his narrative—leveraging his clout as associate dean and director of jazz arts at the Manhattan School of Music to connect the school with its Harlem environs, developing an ear-training app to bring jazz education to a wider audience and creating presentations that convey the jazz sensibility to the corporate world—support that lofty ambition.

So, too, does his new album, *Sonic Creed* (Motéma). Out Sept. 28, the album, the third with Harris' group Blackout, pays homage to African American artists on a personal level, while placing them in a larger context. "There's nothing on *Sonic Creed* that isn't directly from my life experience," he said. "This album is about celebrating and amplifying the values of black culture and art."

At the center of the project are Blackout's core members: James Francies on piano, Joshua Crumbly on bass and two mainstays—saxophonist Casey Benjamin and drummer Terreon Gully—who appeared on the band's previous albums, 2004's *Evolution* (Blue Note) and 2009's *Urbanus* (Concord). Those efforts represented departures from Harris' other, more orchestrated ensembles.

"He had charts, but they were to be loosely interpreted," Benjamin said. "I don't think any of us knew what shape the band would take on."

Blackout has taken on a free and open shape, its palette incorporating colors and textures from outside the jazz mainstream—Benjamin is known for his vocoder, as well as his saxophones, Gully for his forays into gospel, r&b and reggae—even as it draws on jazz standards. The artists'

dedication to this approach is evident throughout the new album.

"It's the right confluence of spirits who have the same vision," Harris said.

That vision is clear from *Sonic Creed's* opening track, "Dat Dere." Written by Bobby Timmons and popularized by Art Blakey on 1960's *The Big Beat*, the tune's presence on the album shines a light on the teaching of jazz—and the status of Blakey's Jazz Messengers in that endeavor—before it became institutionalized in the academy.

"As an educator, a dean in a position of influence, I wanted to be able to herald Art Blakey as one of the founding fathers of jazz education," Harris said.

Following "Dat Dere," the album focuses on the values of family and community with two Harris originals. "Chasin' Kendall"—dedicated to Harris' two sons, whose middle names are Chase and Kendall—recalls the summer days of Harris' youth, built as it is around a bass line like those that anchored the easygoing Motown hits that filled the air.

"I was wondering how you make a piece of music that captures that spirit," he said, adding that it wasn't until the days leading up to the April 2017 recording session that he came up with the defining bass line while picking at the piano.

"Let's Take A Trip To The Sky," meanwhile, is a sensuous setting of a poem Harris wrote for his wife while he was on the road. The piece, intended as a 10th anniversary gift, takes flight on the wings of Jean Baylor's soaring vocals, backed by Benjamin's spare vocoder and Harris' luminous

harmonies—each chord a sonorous evocation of a specific emotion.

The album then circles back to classics, with animated versions of Horace Silver's "The Cape Verdean Blues" and Wayne Shorter's "Go," which Harris arranged for the SFJAZZ Collective a decade ago. Shorter's ability to build community is something of a model for Harris, who recalled sharing a transcendent moment onstage with the saxophonist in 2014.

"With one note he completely galvanized all the musicians to create something that was far greater than he could have done on his own," Harris said.

Amid the tributes to the masters, the new album gives exposure to a lesser-known writer, Lasean Keith Brown, whose Caribbean-inflected "Song Of Samson" follows "Go." Gully suggested the tune, which underlines Harris' keen understanding of the vibraphone's rhythmic role as he, Gully and percussionist Pedrito Martinez negotiate some tricky interplay.

"Stefon leaves enough space and gives enough support," Gully said.

In addition to suggesting that tune, Gully was integral to sparking one of the recording session's most powerful moments. As the band was struggling to find a way into Abbey Lincoln's "Throw It Away," the drummer suggested turning off the studio lights. The sudden darkness reset the mood, and pianist Francies chimed in with an otherworldly bolt from the blue that energized the band.

"There is this heavenly keyboard sound that comes out of nowhere," Harris recalled. "He's not

playing the song, he's playing a chord. I completely improvised an intro, and we followed each other in the moment. It all unfolded in the most organic way that was all about empathy and a connection between a group of human beings who genuinely care about one another."

The empathy is sustained—even heightened—as "Throw It Away" segues seamlessly into Hutcherson's "Now." Harris, who shared good times onstage and backstage with the elder vibraphonist, said the decision to include the piece—the title tune from a 1970 Hutcherson album—reflected a desire to acknowledge their special relationship.

"He was the most generous, kind human being to me," Harris said. "I have a love for Bobby Hutcherson that absolutely is expressed in the way we play that piece of music."

Drawing on the work of arranger Omar Thomas and orchestrator Scott Arcangel, the charts for the piece were the most complex on the album—it is the only one to incorporate both strings and winds—even before singer Baylor upped the ante with an in-studio request.

"When we got to the hook," Harris recalled, "Jean said to me, 'Do you mind if I try something?' This is late in the session. We're running out of money and we're still going. But I said, 'Absolutely. This piece of music is about that nurturing spirit. Here's a microphone—just sit and listen and react.'"

Harris cleared the studio, save for Gully and engineer Joe Marciano, and, on the spot, Baylor overdubbed 16 versions of her voice, to which Harris added Benjamin's vocoder, Mike Moreno's guitar, Regina Carter's violin, Daniel Frankhuizen's cello, Felix Peikli's clarinet and Elena Pinderhughes' flute. The result is an uplifting swirl of sound that captures Hutcherson's soul without imitating his style.

"What you hear is a reflection of a broader community perspective than I can deliver on my own," Harris said.

Harris' respect for consensus is thorough, but not absolute. Carter, an old friend, noted that he knows when to reject others' ideas—as he did when she asked for a do-over. As it turned out, she said, he was right: Whatever might have been gained technically would have been outweighed by a loss in spontaneous feeling.

"Part of his brilliance in music is in getting people to get in touch with their emotion," Carter said.

Emotion, pure and simple, is the essential ingredient on the album's closing track, "Gone Too Soon." Harris and Joseph Doubleday (on marimba) perform the Larry Grossman/Buz Kohan tune as a sweet-and-simple tribute to singer Michael Jackson. The pop superstar himself recorded "Gone Too Soon" on his 1991 album, *Dangerous*, in honor of AIDS victim Ryan White (1971-'90).

"Here's a guy who clearly faced lots of racism and somehow had the audacity and fortitude to lead with love throughout his life," Harris said of Jackson. "That is not an easy thing to do, and quite honestly I struggle with that myself. It's difficult to look at what we're facing politically and socially in this country and maintain that compassion and love."

"I love that piece of music because it's enough of an artistic challenge just to deliver the melody in a way that's emotional and authentic. A piece like that is indicative of where I'm going as an artist. I really want to simply learn to organize sound and silence into emotion."

For all his interest in conveying emotion in a simple fashion, Harris remains fully engaged in the complexities of the academic life. "There's really no divide between the academic and the spiritual at all," he said. "When you think about someone like John Coltrane—as spiritual a musician as we understand him to be—he was equally brilliant intellectually, and so was Louis Armstrong and all the icons who have come before."

"Part of the challenge is the institutionalization of the art form, which is not a bad thing; you're going to be more successful when you work in concert with institutions. But as an educator, part of my task is to look at the existing system and to recognize that it is lacking in cultural competencies."

If one values authenticity and empathy, he said, the first order of business is listening. So, on assuming his posts at the Manhattan School of

Music in July 2017, he undertook an analysis of the school's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats—interviewing students, faculty and people at other schools.

"The primary asset of the Manhattan School," he concluded, "is place."

Setting out to exploit that fact, Harris adopted the phrase "Harlem is the birthplace of modern jazz"—a claim supported by the musical flowering of the Harlem Renaissance—and he arranged for the school's big band concerts to be held at Harlem Stage, CCNY's Aaron Davis Hall, the Apollo Theater and the Harlem School of the Arts.

He also began efforts to diversify the MSM faculty and student body. "You see a percentage of people of color at 1 percent or whatever it is," he said. "That's a problem. And if you don't have women included, that's a problem. You have to do something about it."

Edward Lowenthal, a trustee on the school's board who recommended Harris' hiring, stressed that the hiring was not in itself an attempt to increase diversity. "But it was important to me that we have greater diversity in the student body and the faculty. Stefon's very presence has been a catalyst for that."

"There's been a mild revolution. He's been able to change the tone. If you talk to the student body today—including classical musicians aware of what's going on in the jazz program—there's a high level of excitement. It's inspirational."

Harris—who has been associated with the Brubeck Institute, the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, Rutgers University and New York University—has recruited Carter to tutor MSM classical music students in the art of jazz.

He also has enlisted Buster Williams—a mentor in whose quartet Harris played on and off for nearly 20 years—to lead an ensemble dedicated to exploring the bassist's music. "Everything I've learned as a leader has come primarily from standing on that bandstand with Buster Williams," Harris said, "watching him deliver compassion, kindness, joy and art with a

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Harris' Harmony Cloud app changed the way he teaches.

high level of integrity.”

Williams, who was at the forefront of the music’s radical changes half a century ago, recalled the speed with which Harris, whose formal training largely had been in classical percussion, transformed himself into a nuanced jazz artist—and propelled himself to the top of the field’s change agents. “Connecting to him is like a fly connecting to a great stallion horse,” he said. “He’s setting a course for the future.”

Harris’ educational mission reaches beyond MSM, where he earned a bachelor of music degree in classical music (1995) and a master of music degree in jazz performance (1997). “I have this one vehicle,” he said. “But I want to help as many people as possible across the world.”

Harris, who this year added a Doris Duke Artist Award to his list of accolades, has opened avenues of communication with new audiences. In 2011, he gave a TED Talk—13 minutes of commentary and music accompanied by pianist Christian Sands, bassist Burniss Earl Travis and drummer Jamire Williams—that found its way onto YouTube and into the business media. (The talk has been translated into more than 30 languages.) Soon, Harris was in demand from industry groups interested in hearing his thoughts about how jazz can illuminate the connection between leadership and improvisation.

“This art form has at its core the blueprint for creative teamwork, for innovation,” he said. “I can unpack the way we work together as a team, the way a leader truly should be in terms of guiding a community of brilliant minds. This notion of micromanaging people and ‘I’m the smartest person in the room’—our culture has never hyperfocused on the individual. You’re only elevated in black culture in many situations when you’re giving voice to the people.

“What we do as musicians is translate vibrations into emotion. That’s the science behind it.

The difference between jazz and other art forms is we do it so it’s completely unpredictable, and that is empowering. Our roles are so fluid—ultimately, it’s a science of empathy.”

Harris has taken the science to another level with his ear-training app, Harmony Cloud. Released through his Melodic Progression Institute, the app, developed with engineer and trombonist Cliff Swiggett, uses an algorithm that simulates the improvisation of chord progressions. First marketed in 2016, the app is being updated to include chords that extend to ninths, 11ths and 13ths.

Demonstrating the app in his studio, Harris stepped to the computer and, from the 500 or so chords loaded in its program, chose a group of varying complexity without specifying the order in which they would be played. The computer then organized a progression over which Harris, manning the vibes, was able to weave lines that clearly bore a relationship to the sounds emanating from the machine.

“What I’ve done is mapped out the DNA of Western harmony,” Harris said. “A chord may go five hundred different ways. I’ve taken every chord and figured out its behavior.”

Developing the app has involved an extraordinary level of sustained concentration, yielding notes covering thousands of pages in multiple notebooks. The contents are an idiosyncratic mix of musical analysis and psychoanalysis; in revealing them, Harris good-naturedly displayed an awareness of how they would be received.

“Want to see something crazy? You’re going to say, ‘This guy is weird,’” he said.

The notebooks, he said, constitute a kind of “neurological network,” with innumerable permutations of chord combinations and long series of adjectives applied to seemingly every chord he knows. Interspersed are notes to himself that, in whole or part, hint at the ups and downs he

experienced in the long hours spent developing the app.

The first note, written 12 years ago, reads: “I need to design an algorithm for my harmonization. This requires a thorough understanding of the fundamentals of progressive harmony.” Later, doubts seem to creep in: “Either I’m very brilliant or delusional, based on the thoughts in my head.” Later still, he appears to overcome those doubts: “Man’s ability to dream is just as beautiful as his or her ability to achieve. Design an entire curriculum—college first, then backtrack. Why not you? If not you, then who? NOW!!!!”

The project, he explained, grew out of a bout of ennui suffered at the age of 33: “I looked at the vibraphone and said, ‘I’m not touching that until I understand what I need to do.’ I got sick of it. I thought, ‘I can play concerts, I can tour the world. But it’s not enough. I can see something, and I have to have enough courage to go after what it is I see.’”

While he did not give up performing, his recording output slowed and he began devoting much of the time he would have spent practicing to developing the app. “Sometimes, people think I’ve disappeared,” he said. “But I haven’t. I’m trying to develop something to help people.”

The app certainly has helped him in the classroom. “It’s the best thing that’s ever happened to me as an educator,” he said. His answers to students’ questions have become clearer and more concise, because working with software—which, lacking intuition, is unforgiving—has forced him to analyze more precisely his own thinking. That process, he asserted, will be a lifetime project that runs parallel to the evolution of Blackout. Both, he added, are “authentic expressions of myself.”

For the moment, as he is unveiling Version 2.0 of Harmony Cloud, Blackout will be embarking on a tour. In October and November, the band will play the East and Midwest, before closing out the year on Dec. 1 in Harris’ hometown, Albany. The tour will resume in the new year with a swing westward, before concluding next July in Europe.

Some of the venues will resonate more deeply, among them the Apollo Theater in New York and the Carver Community Cultural Center in San Antonio, Texas, a historic hub of African-American culture retooled for the 21st century. But the Albany date, at the Egg Performing Arts Center, might loom largest. There, Harris will come face-to-face with that earlier version of himself, the ambitious young musician with limited means—and limited access to the tools he needed to succeed.

What better place to ponder the potential for an inexpensive app to make music education more accessible?

“I want everybody to have the opportunity to express themselves,” he said. **DB**

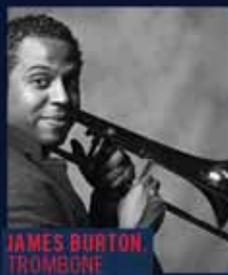
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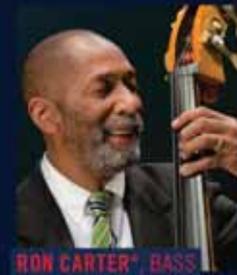
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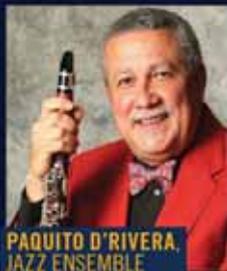
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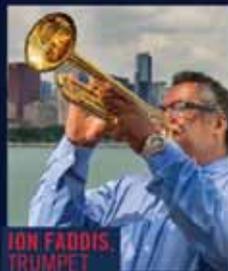
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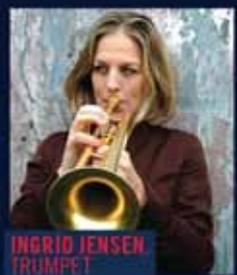


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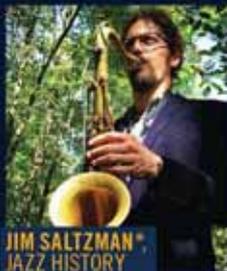
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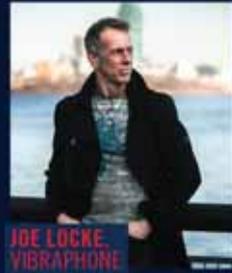
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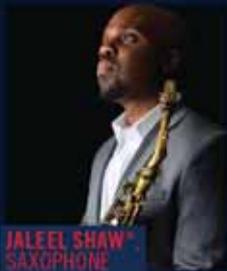
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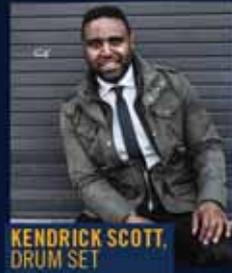
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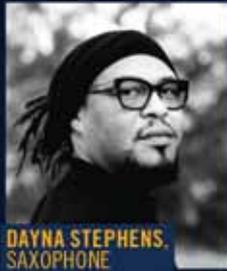
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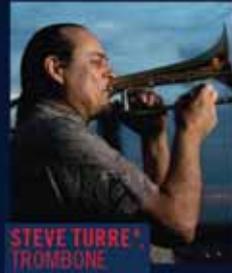
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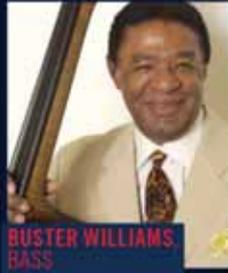
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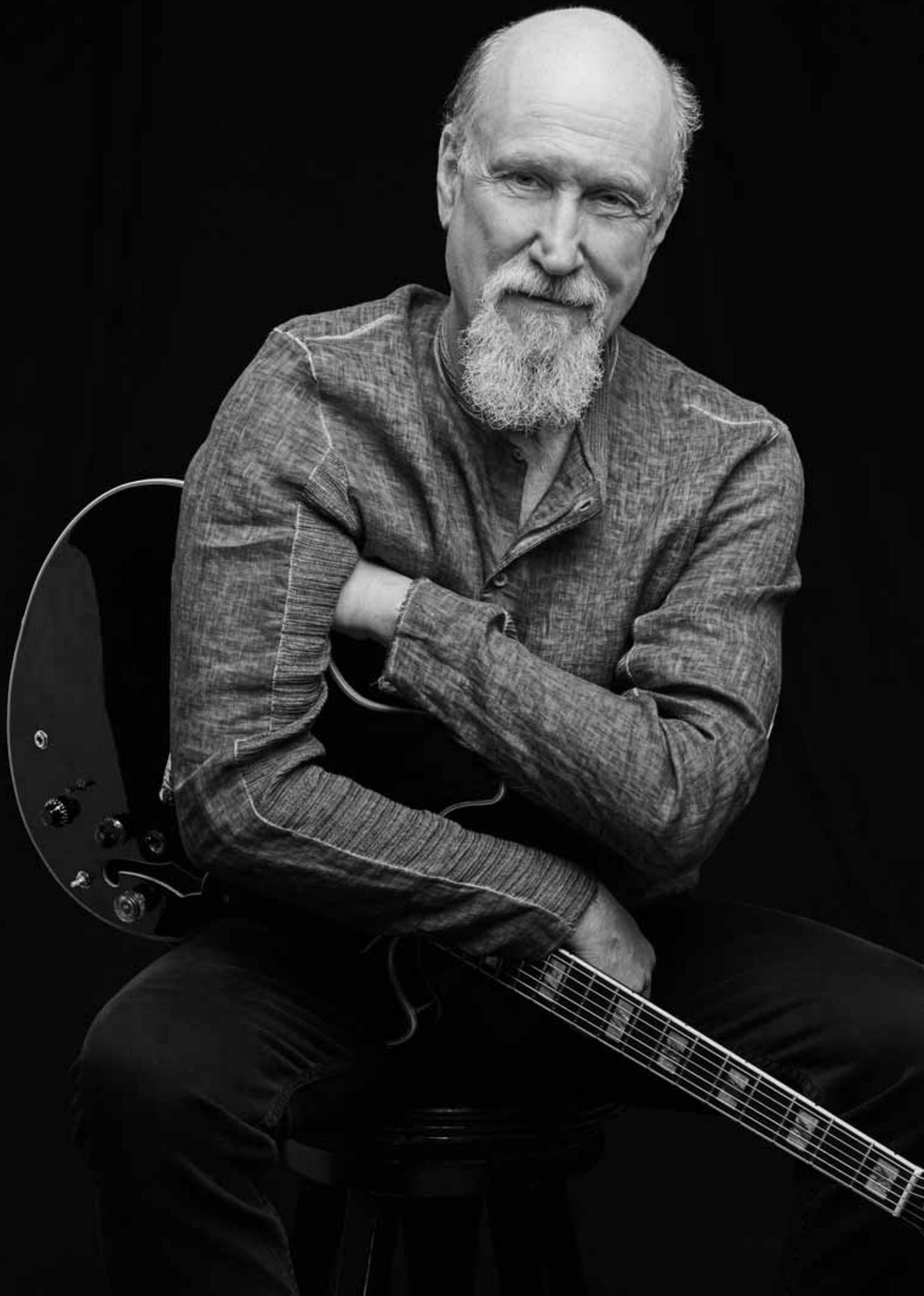
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POIGNANT SIMPLICITY

By Ken Micallef | Photos by Nick Suttle

It's November 1982, and 30-year-old **John Scofield** is in Cleveland to audition for Miles Davis' group. *The Man With The Horn* was released the previous year and guitarist Mike Stern is still on the bandstand, but Davis has heard about a hot-shot guitarist from Connecticut.

"Miles [would] always bring in guys—he was notorious for doing this," Scofield recalled over sushi in Brooklyn.

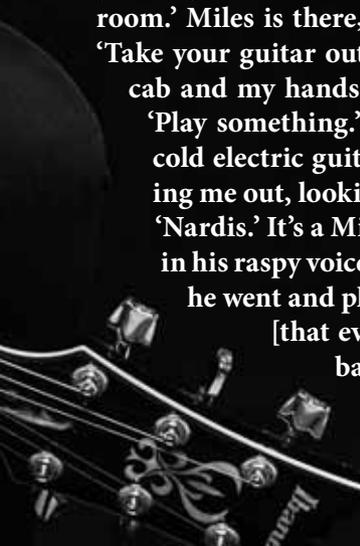
"I was unbelievably nervous," he continued. "It's winter in Cleveland—it's freezing cold. Miles was gigging that night at the Front Row Theater. I show up, got my guitar with me. Road manager says, 'Go in that room.' Miles is there, all dressed for the gig. He says, 'Take your guitar out.' My guitar is all cold from the cab and my hands are cold, too, right? Miles goes, 'Play something.' I'm like, 'Play by myself on my cold electric guitar with no amp?' Miles is checking me out, looking at me. Then, stupidly, I played 'Nardis.' It's a Miles tune. He looks at me and says in his raspy voice, 'You don't sound so good.' Then

he went and played the gig. I felt like shit. Later [that evening], Miles said, 'Listen to the band, then you'll start tomorrow night.' So, I listened to the band

and he paid me for the gig, though I didn't play. Then I started playing in the band and I guess I didn't sound like shit, because he went for it."

Scofield went on to work with Davis for about two years, recording a few albums with the iconic trumpeter: *Star People* (1983), *Decoy* (1984) and *You're Under Arrest* (1985), for which he composed the title track.

Today, Scofield continues to compose prolifically, and lessons learned during his time with Davis have proven invaluable in his ongoing experience as a bandleader. He penned all of the material for *Combo 66* (Verve), a new album that celebrates the guitarist's 66th birthday. Returning to his venerable hard-bop quartet format, with longtime collaborator Bill Stewart on drums joined by pianist/organist Gerald Clayton and upright bassist Vicente Archer, *Combo 66* combines blues- and country-inspired melodies with fantastic, free-thinking guitar solos. As Clayton keeps the harmonic structure intact, Scofield burns.





“When I play with really good players who are like-minded, it just makes me play better,” Scofield said. “Gerald inspires me. He’s been knocking me out since I first heard him [when he was] in high school, and he only gets better. Guitar and piano are both percussive and chordal, so sometimes they can cancel each other out. But that never happens with Gerald: He just enhances the music, and his solos are about as good as you can get. And Vicente loves to support the music in the bottom end. So many bass players nowadays think they must play a whole lot. Vicente loves the function of the bass. Just like all the greats, Paul Chambers and Ron Carter, and Vicente’s also an incredible soloist.”

Scofield reserves special praise for Stewart, one of the hardest-swinging if enigmatic drummers in jazz.

“A lot of drummers, you bring them a tune and they don’t know what to do,” Scofield said. “They know the established grooves, but they can’t find something of their own that works with it. Bill can always do that. He’s a genius. Things are easy for Bill that are difficult for the average drummer. He can just conceive of stuff beyond what’s written on the page. That is really far-out. And, his sense of time: Bill knows how to make the music feel good without pushing it.”

The tunes on *Combo 66* roll off Scofield’s guitar and into the listener’s brain instantly—and stay there. A sturdy sense of melody and style can be heard throughout the guitarist’s leader discography, which dates back to 1977 and has earned him three Grammy awards.

Kernels of the blues, bop and country inform every corner of *Combo 66*, served on a bed of dry, surging swing. “Can’t Dance” pulses gently, with Stewart’s tipping ride cymbal driving Sco’s equally touching and rustic melody, the second half played in unison with Clayton’s percolating organ, Archer goading the

groove down below. Dark and moody, Scofield’s “Combo Theme” recalls a Henry Mancini soundtrack missive. “Icons At The Fair” soars through stop-time, curling melodic phrases and a see-sawing, tumbling arrangement. The country-fried “Dang Swing” bucks and jerks like a bronco. “I’m Sleeping In,” titled, as are most of his tunes, by his wife and manager, Susan Scofield, is a fine example of his skill at composing a memorable, if left-of-center, ballad.

“I wrote all these tunes around my 66th birthday,” Scofield said. “I’d go to my studio and think of what type of tune I’d like to try and write, medium tempo or a ballad or something funky or a bebop tune, and then I’d improvise into my iPhone. Sometimes, the first thing that comes out can be the germ of a tune. I’ll use that for the first bar or first two bars. Then comes the work of getting the next phrase: You just build it phrase by phrase. Sometimes, it comes rather quickly, and other times I’ll take an idea that I had 15 years ago and make that into a tune.

“The song ‘Combo Theme’ is challenging, for sure,” he continued. “But I’m trying to write something poignant and simple. ‘New Waltz’ has a little bit more writing in it than the others; that’s got a little more composition to it. ‘Dang Country’ is just a blues. It’s so simple. It’s like a country guitar lick over straight-ahead blues-jazz. I just can’t get away from trying to play ‘the shit’: bebop.”

Freed by Clayton’s harmonic bedrock, Scofield plays some of the most dynamic, melodic and downright nasty solos he’s ever committed to disc. Is he engaged in storytelling or simply reworking the melody?

“People can get hung up on trying to tell a story—it’s notes, it’s freaking music!” he exclaimed. “But one thing that helps if you’re soloing is to use variety, so you’re not just hammering the same thing every chorus. And to get variety, you have to use melody, right? I wish I

used more harmonic stuff, more chordal stuff in my solos, and I want to develop that more. But you have to play melody and find melodic phrases. Take Lester Young: He played such beautiful melodies, but he swung so hard. Paul Desmond does that, too, and Chet Baker. There are certain improvisers over the years who play a little bit more melodically and that doesn’t mean that they were wimpy. Miles Davis could burn as hard as anybody, but he also played with melody. And that’s telling the story.”

When asked about day-to-day life on the road with Davis, Scofield said, “Miles was an amazing human being. He liked to talk about music all the time and the way to approach this art form and how to psych yourself into doing some good shit—not settling for the easy shit that just comes out, like licks. He would be complementary of me one day and then really, really critical the next day. He would put himself down, too. Miles was a cultural icon. But when you played in Miles’ band, you were a member of a special club and he made you feel like that. Like, ‘Now you’re on the inside,’ and that was cool.”

Thirty-six years later, Scofield is a revered guitarist and composer, one of the most restless and endlessly creative musicians to emerge from Davis’ innovative groups. Along with his friends and fellow guitarists Bill Frisell and Pat Metheny, Scofield’s recorded legacy looms large, debatably unchallenged by younger guitarists determined to plant their own flags on the jazz corpus.

“Pat and Bill and I all learned to play bebop in the rock era—that has something to do with our [influence],” Scofield explained. “I’m obsessed with modern jazz; when I say ‘modern’ I mean ‘How High The Moon,’ and playing on standards. But there’s so much other music that’s interesting to me, and I try to do stuff that feels good. If it doesn’t have that instinctual

feeling, or it's too intellectual, I don't do it. And with any luck, my music has gotten better and simpler."

Scofield's 50-something albums include many confirmed classics, from his first fusion foray, the majestic *Still Warm*, to other blistering '80s work (including *Blue Matter*, *Loud Jazz* and *Pick Hits Live*), to perfectly timed early '90s hard-bop blowouts, such as *Time On My Hands* and *Meant To Be*. His oeuvre also includes some tremendous collaborations, such as *54* (with Vince Mendoza and Metropole Orkest), *Saudades* (by Trio Beyond, featuring drummer Jack DeJohnette and organist Larry Goldings) and *A Go Go* (the 1998 disc that was the first of his collaborations with Medeski Martin & Wood).

More recently, Scofield's all-star tour with DeJohnette, John Medeski (keyboards) and Larry Grenadier (bass) in support of their collective 2017 release, *Hudson* (Motéma), drew enthusiastic crowds. Scofield perpetually pushes himself and his trusty Ibanez AS200 guitar forward, drawing from a seemingly bottomless well of inspiration.

"I've been lucky to play with really great musicians, because [my success] would not have happened if it wasn't for the guys that I played with," Scofield said. "But [now], I do understand how this is supposed to go—and I wasn't always like that. Something [Thelonious] Monk said, which I thought was great: 'Everybody has to love the song. If somebody in the band doesn't love the song, it's not going to sound good.' I really believe that. You have to create this situation where everybody really wants to be playing; you can't bum people out. Don Cherry said, 'Music is a celebration.' And along those same lines Charlie Haden said, 'I'm in church when I'm playing.' So, you just do what is necessary to make everybody feel great."

Scofield owns up to ambition, to working hard and searching long—forever a student.

"I'm following in the footsteps of the great jazz composers: Wayne Shorter and Monk, people like that," he said. "As I get older, I learn more songs in the Great American Songbook. I've studied Richard Rodgers and George Gershwin and Jerome Kern and Irving Berlin, and this stuff sort of seeps into you. I've got a bunch of fake books. I like The Beatles. I like Steely Dan. I like country music a lot. I like The Carter Family, those Appalachian melodies.

"More than making the right decisions, I've played the cards I was dealt, and I haven't blown it," Scofield replied when asked about his enduring success. "Playing with Billy Cobham and George Duke when I started out, and then a couple years later joining Miles' thing—those were big audiences that would eventually listen to my *Blue Matter* and *Still Warm* records. On my own, I might have just stayed in my apartment practicing 'Billie's Bounce' forever, which is my natural tendency. But I got into this other kind of music and it was exciting and new at the time."

Stewart—who began collaborating with Scofield on the 1991 Blue Note album *Meant To Be*—has observed his friend's artistic development. "I think John plays better now than he's ever played," Stewart said. "His guitar sound has evolved a little bit over the years. What he goes for sound-wise—some things that he's been doing in recent years with bending notes—has increased. And I hear an increased vocal quality in his playing. His sound was different in the '90s than it is now."

After a lengthy tour supporting *Combo 66*—including residencies at the Jazz Kitchen in Indianapolis (Oct. 1–2) and Jazz Alley in Seattle (Oct. 11–14)—Scofield will take on a new challenge. He's been asked to do a tour of Europe performing solo, just his guitar and an amp.

Scofield almost makes success look easy. So, can any hardworking musician find his or her way in the world?

"I think they can achieve something," Scofield replied. "I think none of us can do what others have done. The world always changes so much, so you can't say, 'I want what that guy had.' It's not going to be that; it's going to be something else. It might be more, it might be less, whatever. But the thing about anything is, if you put the work in—you will see the results."

DB

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INTUITIVE LEADERSHIP

BY TED PANKEN | PHOTO BY STEVEN SUSSMAN

Seventeen years into a distinguished career in the jazz business, **AARON PARKS**, 34, now focuses on his own projects, and is increasingly selective about making long-term commitments to other artists' bands.

Midway through August, though, Parks accepted an invitation from guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel, his steady employer between 2008 and 2015, to do a six-night run at the Village Vanguard in quartet with bassist Eric Revis and drummer Allan Mednard. Alternating between the Vanguard's Steinway and his own Wurlitzer and a laptop with keyboard controller that accessed sounds he'd crafted in *Repro-1*, Parks offered a master class in fulfilling the sideman function. While stating the melody-saturated themes, he found textures that blended seamlessly with Rosenwinkel's luscious harmonies and searing tone; as the leader soloed, he anticipated, processed and instantly responded to every permutation. He asserted his own instrumental voice, an instantly recognizable marker on the jazz soundscape, on a series of contextually appropriate declamations, developing ideas with thematic cohesion, logic and concision.

The effect mirrored the feeling Parks projects on his new album, *Little Big* (Ropeadope), named for the plugged-in quartet he has assembled in recent years with guitarist Greg Tuohey, electric bassist David "DJ" Ginyard and drummer Tommy Crane. On the double-vinyl edition, they play 15 songs (14 on the CD) culled from Parks' sizable corpus, with eloquent melodies to which it's easy to imagine the application of a lyric.



Keyboardist Aaron Parks (left), bassist David "DJ" Ginyard, guitarist Greg Tuohey and drummer Tommy Crane collaborated on *Little Big*.

For the most part, the rhythm section is less interactive than complementary, postulating strong beats, declarative gestures and an expansive timbral palette.

Little Big is Parks' follow-up to his 2008 leader debut, *Invisible Cinema* (Blue Note), recorded with guitarist Mike Moreno, bassist Matt Penman and drummer Eric Harland. The quartet interpreted and improvised upon Parks' cogent refractions of indie rock, hip-hop, electronica and Bulgarian music. The CD quickly assumed signpost stature for a sizable cohort of Parks' Generation X and millennial peer group.

"The way Aaron orchestrated melodies between guitar and piano changed the way people wrote songs, especially in the 'modern jazz' world," said pianist James Francies, 23, who roomed with Parks from 2015 until this summer.

"I feel like the wheel of life is in Aaron's music," Rosenwinkel testified. "When I think of the word 'genius,' I think of a connection to nature, that nature can express itself undisturbed through human activity. I feel that in Aaron's playing. He illuminates natural shapes and figures. His intuitive understanding is so strong and powerful that it's always informing his technique, which is homegrown. He has a high-level intellect, which serves to embrace and give headroom to his daydreams."

Parks does much of his daydreaming in the music room on the lower floor of his duplex in Brooklyn's Cobble Hill district, where DownBeat visited him on a steamy August afternoon.

First, Parks traced the project's backstory. For various reasons, both personal and economic, Parks never toured with the *Invisible Cinema* band. Instead, he joined forces with Penman, Harland and saxophonist Joshua Redman in the still-active collective James Farm.

"It felt like I needed to find something else for my own thing, although in working out the ideas from *Invisible Cinema* with them, I found what worked and what didn't," Parks recalled. "So, James Farm played a role in how I wanted to move forward with [the band] Little Big."

During his time with Rosenwinkel, Parks recorded the hardcore jazz trio album *Alive In Japan* (2012) with bassist Thomas Morgan and drummer R.J. Miller, and the impressionistic, Paul Bley-esque ECM solo recital *Arborescence* (2014). In 2017, ECM released *Find The Way*, documenting a shamanistic trio with Ben Street on bass and Billy Hart on drums. But Parks never stopped absorbing, as Rosenwinkel put it, "underground, creative, indie rock, eclectic music."

"In 2012, I was feeling a strong pull to engage much more with swinging, which brought me into this music in the first place," Parks said. "But I started to record some songs that didn't fit into that—needed more specific ideas from the drums, for example. I used various formations—each one had strengths and beautiful things of their own, but none of them quite felt exactly like a band in the way I was looking for. It took a long time to find the right people, and then work with them to bring this stuff together."

He credited Crane's off-the-grid, loose-but-not-loose time feel, as well as his ability "to internalize the drum parts and make them feel alive, full of surprise and a raw energy I don't always hear in combination with rock and electronica grooves," as key to animating his songs. Friends since they met at a summer workshop at Manhattan School of Music in 1999, Parks and Crane did several post-*Invisible Cinema* sojourns in Europe with bassist Matt Brewer. Then they reunited in the Little Big project in 2013.

By then, Parks was well into rehearsing repertoire with Tuohey, to whom his manager, Tommy Wilson, had introduced him in 2011. A New Zealand native, Tuohey enrolled at Berklee on a scholarship in 1994. He studied there for about a year, earning a reputation, Rosenwinkel said, as an "incredible jazz improviser." Around 2000, Tuohey began moving away from jazz and established a career in rock and pop arenas.

"Greg wanted to learn as much of the music as possible by ear, and he memorized it all," said Parks, who explained that Tuohey laid down his parts and solos after the piano, bass and drums had recorded their tracks. "He's much more interested in texture and melody and phrasing than many mainstream guitar players. He is not trying to play shredding, killing solos. He is looking for his thing. For me, the guitar is a sort of foil. It has something to do with the energy and raw power—it lets you rock."

In Tuohey's view, *Little Big* "goes all-in with what Aaron did on *Invisible Cinema*. Rather than

just use these little influences to color a sort of modern jazz record, this really digs into those styles. It's genre-fluid. Jazz is the closest thing you could call it, and it's overarchingly improvised. But personally, I'm not trying to play fast, sweating modern jazz over it. We're improvising within those styles, trying to play within the sound world of each song. Everything is about thinking compositionally."

Parks enthused about bassist Ginyard's ability "to figure out what each composition needs and create a complementary angle to bring to it."

'WHAT I LOVE ABOUT THIS BAND IS THAT IT FEELS LIKE ITS OWN LITTLE WORLD.'

They met Thanksgiving weekend 2015 at the Blue Note in New York as subs in Terence Blanchard's E-Collective. "Almost from the downbeat I was like, 'Who is this guy?'" Parks recalled. "David thinks flexibly in response to what's happening around him, but simultaneously very producer-like—he constructs and builds parts with an overview approach."

"Aaron gives you a road map, but he trusts my judgment and allows me to be an artist," Ginyard said. "I listened to *Invisible Cinema* all the time when it came out. For me it was a combination of science and soul, head to heart—smart, articulate music mixed with emotion. That's what this band is for me. I wasn't as familiar with some of the time signatures Aaron uses, but his soulfulness makes it feel natural."

In fact, Parks noted, "Most of *Little Big* is in 4, one way or another." But he did single out "Professor Strangeweather," an improvised, studio-constructed jam that proceeds in 39. "There's a measure of 4, a measure of 3/8, then a measure of 5," Parks said. He attributed his comfort zone within that type of structure to several tours with oudist-singer Dhafer Youssef.

"I love accompanying Dhafer when he sings," Parks said. "We get into some interesting spaces together. Everyone has different approaches toward creating an environment that draws in the audience and creates a possibility of communion."

Asked whether he attains different satisfactions from playing in acoustic or plugged-in contexts, Parks denied any bifurcation in his tonal personality. "For me, the keyboards is another voice that I speak or sing with," he said. "The primary thing with this [band] is the song. We're all

improvising and coming up with our parts and improvisations to serve that song. We've done a handful of tours since [recording *Little Big*], and we're finding our identity as a live band. Certain songs open up more, and we're finding segues between songs where we improvise together. I'm always trying to be authentic to myself within the context of what we're doing. I love threading my way through some changes, and if a song requires me to do that, I will."

As examples, Parks cited "Rising Mind," a mostly acoustic track on the final side of the two-

LP vinyl edition of *Little Big*, and "Siren," a kaleidoscopic tone poem that leads off side 3. He then turned his attention to "Kid," the opening track. "The chromatic and rhythmic syntax of the melody sounds like something Kurt might write and/or play—there are several tunes on this record I wouldn't have written if I hadn't spent so much time playing Kurt's music."

"I feel the album as a whole tells a story," Parks continued. "I live in a generation of singles and playlists, and I love making them myself. At the same time, I love albums, and I love a sequence that tells a story from beginning to end. So, I took care to present something that made sense every step of the way. I didn't compose all the songs as a suite. They came together over many years."

Parks named the band for John Crowley's novel *Little Big*, which he's read three times and has purchased on multiple occasions as a gift. "I grew up as a science fiction/fantasy kid, and this book has fantastical elements, as well as really smart, poetic writing," he said. "The sentences, said aloud, are delicious. It gives you the feeling of world-building, a world that exists almost side-by-side with our own, but with a bit more magic and sense of wonder, looking into the hidden structures undergirding it all. One thing I love about this band is that it feels like its own little world. If you surrender to the flow of what we're into, it gives you a sense of a little bubble you can live within."

After mixing and sequencing the album, Parks offered the finished product to ECM head Manfred Eicher. "Manfred likes to be involved from the beginning, and I had my own specific ideas about the sonics," Parks said. "Manfred isn't

necessarily opposed to that—David Virelles' electronic record, *Antennae*, was its own little universe, and I was hopeful it could come out on ECM in that kind of way. But it didn't seem to be exactly what they were looking for."

Parks parsed the respective thought processes that generated *Little Big* and *Find The Way*. "With *Little Big*, I had a clear vision and wanted to recruit people who are also interested in that vision, who can bring it into even clearer focus with their own elements," he said. "With the trio, it's the opposite—the idea was really about surrender—not to impose my will. I said as little as possible to Ben and Billy about how I conceived the music, because my interest was to get their pure and natural reactions to it after we'd done a six-gig tour in the U.K."

"Manfred was in the studio when we recorded [*Find The Way*], and the first tune was 'Melquiades,' which is one of my favorites and wound up being the next-to-last track. Manfred said, 'Oh, this is nice.' Then we recorded the second tune, which is 'Adrift,' and he said, right away, 'That's the first track on the album.' A few tunes later, we did 'Song For Sashou,' and he said, 'This is track 2.' I was like, 'Let Manfred make records the way he does, and see what happens.' What's interesting is that the beginning track feels on the verge of falling apart a couple of times, like three people who are starting to find each other. As the record continues, it comes into clearer focus, and by the last two tracks it feels like a breathing unit of one thing."

Speaking of sequencing, Parks said that he followed pianist Micah Thomas' suggestion to end *Little Big* with "Good Morning," an ascendant rock-out anthem, followed by "Doors Open," a ruminative miniature. "I was puzzled by how to place them, because they're both B major and start with a repeated piano figure, and I thought they were too similar to go anywhere near each other," Parks said. "Micah told me to double down on the similarity and make 'Doors Open' feel like a coda."

This interaction highlights the fact that Parks—who joined Blanchard at 18—has adopted the role of mentor and avatar to more than a few of New York's best-and-brightest up-and-comers. In this regard, he cited an end-of-September gig at Smalls when he'll play new music in a quintet that includes tenor saxophonist Maria Grande, trumpeter Marquis Hill and drummer Savannah Harris. Several recent encounters with trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire, a longtime associate, have sparked thoughts of a possible duo project.

"I've got a number of different irons in the fire," Parks said. "I'm learning so much now as a leader. I'm creating contexts that challenge me to do different things—that put me in situations where I still have to grow. I feel more clear than ever about the different directions I'm interested in pursuing. They're separate, but they're all connected at the same time." **DB**



By Bob Doerschuk | Photos by Jeff Forney

MOTORING FORWARD

Kandace Springs isn't the kind of performer most fans think of when they hear the phrase "Nashville-based artist."

At a typical concert, decked out in elegant attire that complements the sophistication of her jazz-meets-soul aesthetic, she offers a vocal intonation rich and sultry on ballads, playful and improvisational at more sprightly tempos. Her singing is impeccable. Accompanying herself on piano, she sprinkles in sly quotes from the American Songbook, as well as elements from the classical repertoire.

The 29-year-old daughter of vocalist Scat Springs has been building an international fan base for a few years, and the release of Kandace's new album, *Indigo* (Blue Note), is certain to expand her following.

Kandace's house sits on a rural road, near a tiny, white-framed Apostolic church outside of Nashville. On this August afternoon, her neighbor's donkey occasionally brays. Keyboards dominate her living room: vintage Rhodes and Wurlitzer suitcase-model electric pianos, a spinet and a nine-foot Baldwin concert grand. But model cars define the decor. These, too, are vintage, the kind of Revell products her dad might

have collected when he was young.

A door opens from the kitchen into her garage, where her Corvette Stingray and MG, a replica of a '52, are parked. "And over here," she says, leading the way outside and to the backyard, "is a Jeep I just bought from Tanya Tucker. It's got a four-inch TeraFlex lift, 37-inch tires, all the bells and whistles. It can go anywhere; I could drive it up a wall."

Kandace is in her element, beaming as she shows off her fleet. Yet her love for music, particularly classic jazz, runs just as deep. How do her two passions coexist? Do they fulfill different needs in her life or somehow run parallel to each other?

"They're both art projects," she answers. "Cars are art on wheels. My dad gave me a Hot Wheels car when I was 3. My mom gave me a Barbie. I played with it a little bit and then I was like, 'Do I really have to?' So I set the Barbie aside—but I still have that little Matchbox car.

"Cars are like music, too, in the way they sound," Kandace continues. "I love exhaust systems.



Composer, keyboardist and singer Kandace Springs enlisted trumpeter Roy Hargrove to play on her new album, *Indigo*.

They sound so good. And when I'm cruising down the road, it's like therapy for me. Say I'm working on a new song. I'm looking at something that maybe wasn't there a while ago. I'm building on it. Then I have another artist come in to produce. We put it out on iTunes or a CD. When I hear it playing back on the radio for the first time, it's like hearing a car I've been working on run for the first time. Watching how people react when they hear me perform a song I wrote is like watching people turn their heads when I drive by in a car that really looks different to them."

Her father gave her a lot more than that fateful toy car. He instilled in her an awareness of music and of her gift for being able to express herself through it. When Kandace was growing up, Scat worked in the studio as a backup vocalist for Aretha Franklin, Brian McKnight, Chaka Khan and other headliners, and he did voice-over work for radio spots. At night, he rocked Nashville clubs with his own band as one of the city's most energetic and entertaining performers.

Still, it took awhile for the lesson to sink in. "I wasn't dreaming of music as I was growing up," Kandace recalls. "But I certainly knew what it was. My dad started taking me to gigs and to the studio when I was maybe 5 years old. He'd do a jingle session or a festival or kill it at someone's wedding, which was just normal for me, like, 'That's my dad. This is what he does.'"

But cars, sports and drawing were her priorities until the day that Scat decided to do a favor

for a friend who had fallen into hard times and had to move his family out of their place. "They had an upright piano, probably a hundred years old," Kandace recalls. "My dad offered to keep it for a while. He helped move it in. It was dusty and had keys missing. My mom was like, 'Get this thing out of our house!' But I remember the first time I saw it, after waking up and coming downstairs. To me, it was beautiful."

A precocious child, Kandace immediately began picking out tunes. "One day, this commercial came on with *Moonlight Sonata* playing in the background," she says. "My dad has a really strong ear; he has perfect pitch. So, when he overheard me using my ears to try to find the key and play it back, he came over and started playing it in his ghetto way."

Kandace laughs at the memory. "He made stuff up because he didn't know the whole piece. I played it back really quick and he said, 'This ain't normal! Baby girl, you want lessons?' I said, 'Uh, I guess so.'"

So, he called one of his good friends, guitarist Regi Wooten of the Wooten Brothers, who played keys as well. "I went to his apartment," Kandace says. "He had all these old guitars, posters and stuff from all over the world. He also had a beatbox and this little-ass Casio with 64 keys or something like that. The first song he showed me was 'Soul Train'; I didn't read music yet, so I played by listening. Regi called my dad and I played it over the phone. Pops was so happy—he started laughing his ass off!"

Lessons progressed quickly, with Wooten introducing her to suspended chords and swing on her second visit. "I was like, 'What is this?' He's like, 'That's jazz, baby!' And I went, 'I want to learn more of this stuff.'"

Scat helped out by broadening her awareness of various types of music. He began by giving his daughter albums by Norah Jones and Diana Krall, and followed that up with some Nina Simone. After that came albums by Oscar Peterson, Bill Evans and George Shearing.

When Scat's friend reclaimed the piano, Kandace's mother went to a music store and returned with an upright electric piano. Kandace dug into it, playing Chopin and Liszt compositions by ear until she developed her reading skills. At 14, she bought her first sheet music, Chopin's *Fantaisie-Impromptu*, memorizing it in less than a month and being handed off by Regi to his brother Joe Wooten for more advanced jazz studies.

Kandace began singing in public around that time as well. She had been attending Kids On Stage, a summer camp in Tennessee, on scholarship. For two years she had played piano in the annual showcase. The year after that, she decided to try something different. "I was like, 'Maybe I ought to sing this time.' So, I got Norah Jones' lyric book, learned 'The Nearness Of You' and developed my own interpretation of it. I led into it with Oscar Peterson's 'Chicago Blues.' And everybody was like, 'What? Kandace, you sing, too?'"

Shortly after that, Scat sent a recording of

Kandace to Evan Rogers and Carl Sturken, producers who have worked with Rihanna and Christina Aguilera. “Things started to get a little more complicated,” she says. “I had just turned 18 and was working as a valet at the Renaissance Hotel in Nashville, parking cars for country stars like Wynonna Judd, Carrie Underwood and Rascal Flatts. Evan texted me and talked about wanting to make me a pop star. I texted him back from the bathroom in the Renaissance, like, ‘I’m still trying to figure out what to do!’”

The dilemma for Kandace was whether to accept Rogers and Sturken’s plan to mold her into an r&b star or to be true to her roots in jazz.

‘Cars are like music, in the way they sound. I love exhaust systems!’

As she mulled over her options, word about her spread throughout the music industry. David Foster, then chairman of the Verve Music Group, flew her out for an audition and immediately offered to sign her. The day she received the contract from Verve, she heard from producer/executive L.A. Reid and agreed to audition for him as well. This led to a third offer, this time from Epic Records, which similarly promised to target a commercial pop market.

Then came an opportunity she was eager to accept, from Don Was, president of Blue Note Records. With his commitment to allow her to build her identity on a jazz foundation, she gracefully declined the previous offers and signed on with Blue Note. Since then, Kandace’s ascension has been as quick as a cruise in her Corvette. Blue Note released a self-titled EP in 2014 and *Soul Eyes*, her full-length debut, two years later. Concert promoters and festival organizers booked her for gigs around the globe.

Kandace crafted *Soul Eyes* to be a work of art that stands on its own, but even as she was recording it, she viewed the album as a deliberate step toward a follow-up.

“With that last album, I was laying down a foundation of who I was growing up,” she reflects. “It wasn’t pure jazz, but I love jazz and *Soul Eyes* captured that. It’s almost like the feel of Norah Jones’ first album. And that was cool. I stayed in that box because I needed to say, ‘Hey, this is me! I play the piano and sing. I’m Kandace!’”

Indigo was conceived to expand on that statement. “The new album captures that, too, but it’s a little more soulful. I’ve always had this other side, but now it’s out for the world to see. It cap-

tures all of my influences, starting with Nina Simone, Ella Fitzgerald, Roberta Flack ... but also Luther Vandross, Eva Cassidy, Erykah Badu, even D’Angelo. And lots of Chopin.”

This meant following a new, more holistic, approach. Key to this was finding a producer who could help bring them to fruition. By pure chance, she found him, or rather he found her, one night in New York.

On Jan. 6, 2017, Kandace was booked into the Bowery Ballroom as part of Winter Jazzfest. “I was sick with the flu and high on Robitussin,” she says. “I left [the venue] right after I was done, because I was feeling shitty.”

Drummer, producer and composer Karriem Riggins was in the audience, and he didn’t sense that Kandace was ill. “She was incredible,” he recalls. “I didn’t have a chance to meet her, because I had to do a DJ set after her show. So, the next day, I looked her up on Twitter. It turned out we were already following each other! I [contacted her and] told her I thought her show was amazing and that I’d love to work with her. She hit me back with a message that said, ‘That’s great, because I was just talking to my manager about asking you to produce my album.’”

The two artists clicked as soon as they got together. “He talked about how into this project he was,” Kandace says. “But really, all I needed to see was which artists he’d worked with. He said to me, ‘Hey, I’m playing at the Hollywood Bowl with Diana Krall and an orchestra. Why don’t you come down? I’ll give you a special booth.’ I got to meet Diana that night—she’s my idol. I was like, ‘OK, you’re the one! Anybody that plays for her, yeah, that works for me.’”

Riggins, in turn, appreciated the creative space she gave him when they started collaborating. “That’s what I love about Kandace,” he says. “She left the responsibility on me to just do what I do. I hear where she’s going: She’s pushing the envelope, doing innovative music. There were no boundaries. We didn’t put *Indigo* in a box.”

Casting musicians wasn’t too difficult; each agreed that Krall’s guitarist Anthony Wilson and bassist Bob Hurst would fit right in, with Kandace on piano and Riggins playing or programming drums. Then they began considering the best ways to arrange the songs they had selected. For Kandace, this was an exhilarating

opportunity, a freedom she hadn’t allowed herself while intentionally staying “inside the box” on her first album.

“We did *Soul Eyes* almost completely live,” she points out. “We were all in a circle, looking at each other as we tracked. We cut two or three songs a day for a week straight that way—before [doing any] editing and overdubs. That’s how I wanted it. *Indigo* goes to a lot more places. I was thinking about Nina Simone as we worked because she played everything—a Beatles song, a classical piece, some jazz stuff. That’s who I am. That’s what I wanted to show this time.”

Her vision is fulfilled on *Indigo*. Only one of its tracks—“Unsophisticated,” featuring trumpeter Roy Hargrove—might have been appropriate to include on *Soul Eyes*. It’s a slow-burn ballad, the most jazz-influenced song in the program. Significantly, she wrote it years ago with Rogers and Sturken, who also produced it for *Indigo*.

“Unsophisticated” is just one flower in a varied bouquet. A strong hip-hop sensibility emerges elsewhere, particularly on “Fix Me” and “Piece Of Me,” where Riggins lays down a steady-eighths beat and silences it out at strategic points for a few bars. “The first group I ever heard doing those kinds of drops was A Tribe Called Quest,” he says. “They were an amazing influence in giving me a different approach to dynamics, where Kandace’s voice and what she’s saying need to take you on a ride.”

Again unlike *Soul Eyes*, parts of *Indigo* are left open for the leader to stretch out with wordless vocal improvisation, particularly on “Six Eight” and “Piece Of Me.”

“To me, that’s like painting a picture, kind of like Erykah Badu does, when she purposefully goes slightly flat and slows down her vibrato like a Rhodes electric piano,” Kandace says. “Music with no words is an open road, so you can sing completely from your heart.”

No track on *Indigo* is more personal than the closer. Kandace and Scat wrote “Simple Things” years ago for an album they recorded, but never released. A stroke sidelined her father early in 2017; as his slow but steady recovery continues, he has had to put his career on hold. By retrieving his vocals from the original recording and adding new vocals and keyboard accompaniment, his daughter honors Scat’s dream of someday making a guest appearance on one of her albums.

Assessing the emotional and artistic terrain reflected by *Indigo*, Kandace comments, “I’m just growing. That’s just natural as time goes on. Every time I feel like, ‘Man, this is hard,’ I’ve got to correct myself. Because this is what I’ve been waiting to do. Not everybody gets this opportunity, to go around the world and do these things.”

So, has she ever thought about doing a tour in a classic convertible that she has customized, its top down and the breeze in her hair? Kandace laughs before concluding, “I’m not mad at that.”

DB

BLUE NOTE®



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The 22 year-old pianist, composer and one of **the brightest young stars in Jazz**, presents a bold new vision with his **debut album** which features special appearances by saxophonist **CHRIS POTTER** and vocalists **YEBBA** and **CHRIS TURNER**, along with a cast of Jazz youngbloods including vibraphonist **JOEL ROSS**, guitarist **MIKE MORENO**, bassist **BURNISS TRAVIS II**, and drummers **JEREMY DUTTON** and **MIKE MITCHELL**.



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On his Blue Note-debut, the Detroit native delivers a cohesive program of modern jazz that bristles with soul. Joined by **IBRAHIM JONES** (bass), **RON OTIS** and **JEFF CANADY** (drums), *Life* consists of 7 originals along with covers of songs by fellow Detroiters – George Clinton's funk anthem "**Atomic Dog**" and the White Stripes' rock hit "**Seven Nation Army**."



THE NELS CLINE 4 CURRENTS, CONSTELLATIONS

Following the release of Nels Cline's Blue Note debut *Lovers*, the Wilco guitarist pares it down to **The Nels Cline 4**. The 4 features Cline alongside fellow guitarist **JULIAN LAGE**, bassists **SCOTT COLLEY** and drummer **TOM RAINEY**, on a set of seven originals plus one piece by composer Carla Bley. It's a showcase of Cline's versatility that veers from rollicking rock energy to ballads of serene beauty.



AMBROSE AKINMUSIRE ORIGAMI HARVEST

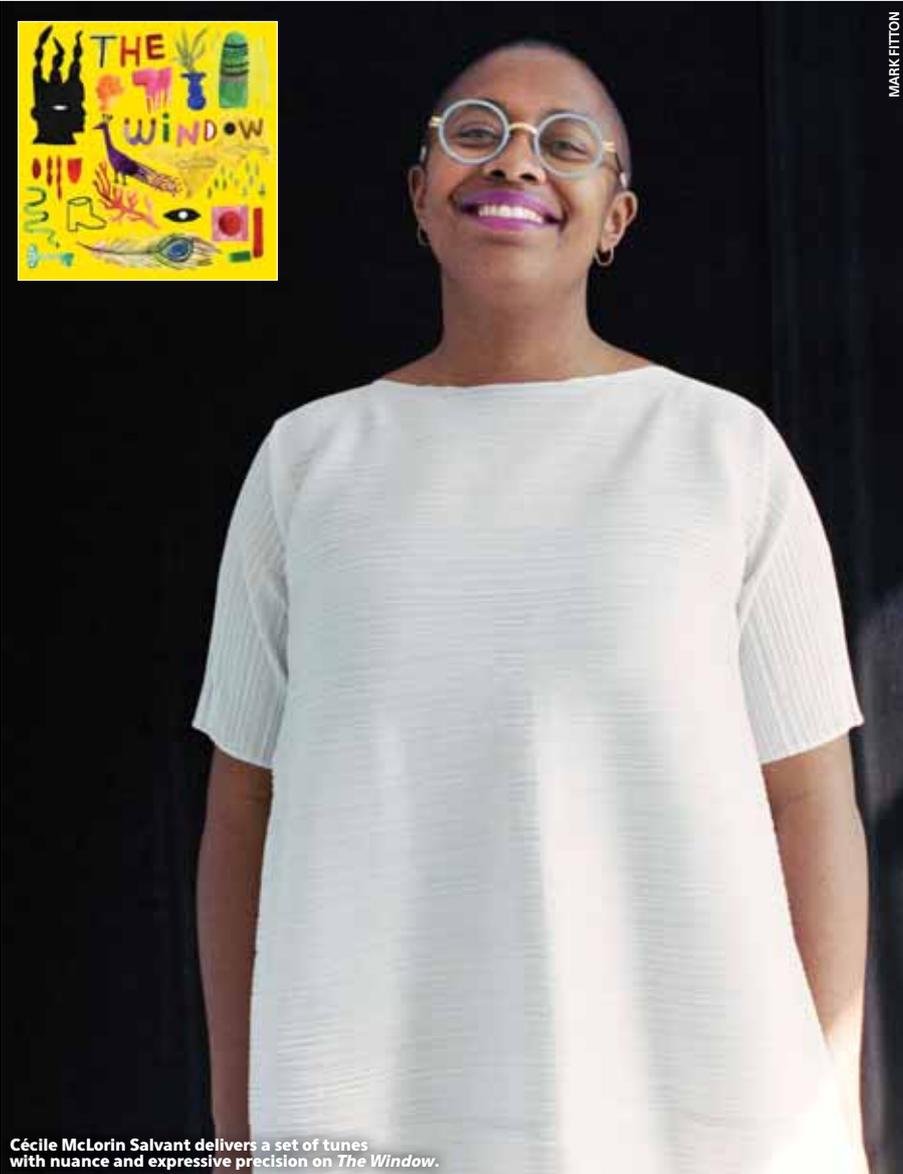
The acclaimed trumpeter breaks new ground with a study in contrasts that pits contemporary classical wilding against deconstructed hip-hop, with bursts of left-field jazz, funk, spoken word, and soul with help from the **MIVOS QUARTET** and art-rap expatriate **KOOL A.D.**, along with pianist **SAM HARRIS**, drummer **MARCUS GILMORE**, and saxophonist **WALTER SMITH III**.

Masterpiece ★★★★★ Excellent ★★★★ Good ★★★ Fair ★★ Poor ★

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MARK FITTON

Cécile McLorin Salvant delivers a set of tunes with nuance and expressive precision on *The Window*.

Cécile McLorin Salvant *The Window*

MACK AVENUE 1132

★★★★

Cécile McLorin Salvant might have been weaned on the great jazz singers, but the vocalist on this sophisticated and adult recital owes more to the orderly emotional measurements of musical

theater than the nomadic spontaneity of a jazz set. Its songs, mostly covers, are said to address the “complexities” of love. OK, but that’s a net big enough to bag three-quarters of the Great American Songbook. More specifically, Salvant draws on high-end theater and cabaret songs, delivering them with nuanced dynamics and expressive precision that uses jazz more as scenery than a reigning sensibility.

In many ways, Salvant is, first, an actor. She knows that actors are dependent upon their roles and that, for her, the song is the role. She chooses carefully, sometimes unexpectedly, if not always successfully. Her repertoire mixes the safety of the familiar with the risks of the obscure. Yes, exploring the past for forgotten gems can be a provocative and rewarding quest. But it also teaches, more often than not, that there are reasons for obscurity. Good songs slip into the shadows for all sorts of reasons, most clearer in retrospect. Alec Wilder’s “Trouble Is A Man” feels like a thoughtful poem whose music seems an afterthought. “Wild Is Love” was stillborn in a 1960 Nat “King” Cole album, and a dozen fine singers since have failed to resuscitate it. And “Ever Since The One I Love’s Been Gone” never quite rises to the meticulously contoured drama that Salvant pours into it, though its bridge suggests Duke Ellington’s “Come Sunday.”

Amid a program of mostly duets, pianist Sullivan Fortner mirrors Salvant’s dramatic projection. His aptitude for extravagance can spiral into crescendos of rhapsodic flourishes. But he also appreciates contrasts. He slides in and out of tempo in a long solo on “Sweetest Songs” that’s as smart as it is spikey. He also can throw in a solid splash of stride (“By Myself”) or a bit of Teddy Wilson-ish poise (“Everything I’ve Got Belongs To You”) when the occasion warrants.

Still, Salvant makes you listen. The authority of her performances forces listeners to appreciate her confidence in the material, even when it’s weak or unfamiliar. Her vocal range and elasticity clearly are made for jazz material, but for now that’s a matter for another recording. Here the bandstand becomes an intimate theater. Oddly, though, the album’s climax is a jazz standard—Jimmy Rowles’ “The Peacocks,” performed in a long, slow whisper that becomes almost ghostly when Melissa Aldana’s tenor flutters past in fortissimo convergences.

—John McDonough

The Window: Visions; One Step Ahead; By Myself; The Sweetest Sounds; Ever Since The One I Love’s Been Gone; A Clef; Obsession; Wild Is Love; J’ai L’Cafard; Somewhere; The Gentleman Is A Dope; Trouble Is A Man; Were Thine That Special Face; I’ve Got Your Number; Tell Me Why; Everything I’ve Got Belongs To You; The Peacocks. (70:23)

Personnel: Cécile McLorin Salvant, vocals; Sullivan Fortner, piano, organ; Melissa Aldana, tenor saxophone (17).

Ordering info: mackavenue.com



Orrin Evans and The Captain Black Big Band *Presence*

SMOKE SESSIONS 1805

★★★★

Back in the aughts, I'd take New York house-guests from out of town to hear the Mingus Big Band's regular weekly gig. The ensemble's sheer sonic force empowered timid jazz listeners, and its merit-based camaraderie gave visitors a sense of the city's stand-out-to-fit-in culture.

Orrin Evans' piano chair in that band was ideal training for his own Captain Black Big Band and its long-running residency at Smoke.

Art Hirahara *Sunward Bound*

POSI-TONE 8186

★★★★½

The frequent references to yoga in the notes that accompany pianist Art Hirahara's fourth outing on Posi-Tone belie his obvious love of clamorous keyboard runs and his desire to mix it up with the aggressive rhythm duo of Linda May Han Oh and Rudy Royston. In addition, on the aptly named "Unbound" he turns Donny McCaslin loose for a skittery howl of a solo.

At his most assertive, Hirahara is a muscular player who employs broad swaths of the keyboard with exemplary technique. Even when performing "Akatombo," a shimmering ballad adapted from a Japanese lullaby, Hirahara's playing has a tensile nature, and when he churns up another Japanese melody—"Ringo Oiwake"—he recalls the brawny approach of McCoy Tyner.

One of Hirahara's early mentors was trumpeter Dave Douglas, so the hookup with his compatriots Oh and Royston is a natural fit. They push the pianist hard on the rough-edged pieces like "Unbound," yet have the ability to swing lightly when he downshifts.

Although *Sunward Bound* is principally a trio outing, McCaslin comes across as much more than a hired hand—blending effectively

On *Presence*, Captain Black returns to its first album's live format, but with a smaller nine-piece group. Recorded in two Philly clubs, this is Evans in hometown party mode, offering a spirit of openness and ease to the musical family that gave it to him first. Still, Evans' composing and playing here have the originality and outsider flash that make him a natural addition to The Bad Plus. As always, he's happy to feature Captain Black's other composers and arrangers, who craft some finely interwoven ensemble passages. Because they write for individuals as much as the group, this is a blowing session, too. Trombonist David Gibson's "The Scythe" offers equally charismatic solos from himself, saxophonist Troy Roberts, trumpeter Josh Lawrence and Evans.

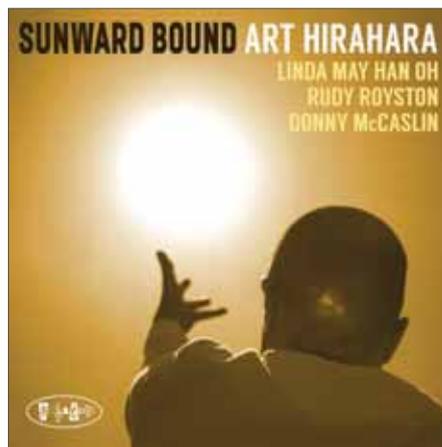
Roberts' "Trams" begins with audience applause fading into a clap-a-long, which Anwar Marshall finesses into a second-line beat. "I forgot my tambourine, man!" someone yelled, and it's unclear if it comes from the band or the audience. This music's exuberance blurs boundaries like that: If you're hearing it, you're family.

—Michelle Mercer

Presence: The Scythe; Question; Onward; When It Comes; Flip The Script; Trams; Answer; Presence; When It Comes (Set Closer). (77:13)

Personnel: Orrin Evans, piano; Caleb Curtis, Todd Bashore, alto saxophone; Troy Roberts, tenor saxophone; John Raymond, Josh Lawrence, Bryan David, trumpet; David Gibson, Stafford Hunter, Brent White (9), trombone; Madison Rast, bass; Anwar Marshall, Jason Brown, drums.

Ordering info: smokesessionsrecords.com



with Hirahara on "Brooklyn Express" and adding a gauzy layer to Oh's tender bass on the title track. When he shreds on "Unbound," it sounds like Hirahara wrote it with him in mind.

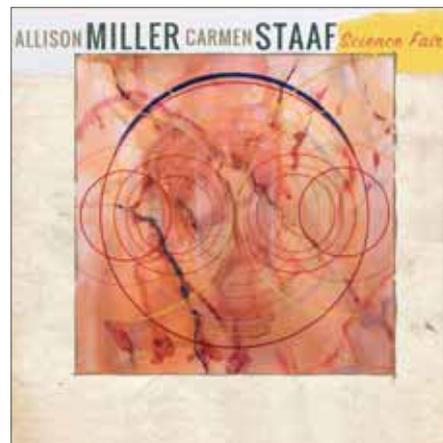
When Hirahara steps out alone to close with David Ake's "Inverted Fountain," he brings all his characteristics together: the sinewy touch, breadth of scope and innate sense of swing.

—James Hale

Sunward Bound: Ruse For Blues Shoes; Brooklyn Express; Akatombo; Sunward Bound; Unbound; Points Of View; Ringo Oiwake; Beyond Right And Wrong; Up Turn Out; Suspended; Inverted Fountain. (55:06)

Personnel: Art Hirahara, piano; Linda May Han Oh, bass; Rudy Royston, drums; Donny McCaslin, saxophone (2, 4, 5, 6).

Ordering info: posi-tone.com



Allison Miller/ Carmen Staaf *Science Fair*

SUNNYSIDE 1524

★★★★½

We listen to music because we want to be startled and assured at the same time—to hear something striking and then to invest in it. *Science Fair* is one of few acoustic jazz albums in 2018 that gets there. Within the first few seconds of "What?!", the opening track, you feel it.

After a braying blast from the full band—drummer Allison Miller, pianist Carmen Staaf, bassist Matt Penman, tenor saxophonist Dayna Stephens and trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire—the drums hunker down into a taut, pebbly beat, swimming and swaggering in a choppy shuffle. Then Staaf and Penman fall back in and, immediately, the pianist's gently emphatic phrasing is exuding flexibility and comfort.

"What?!" is one of five Miller tunes on this collection. Those pieces tend to be tight and studious and thrashing, in a way that recalls her work in Boom Tic Boom. An additional four cuts are by Staaf, and hers usually take longer breaths, letting their harmonies glow from within. On pieces like "Symmetry" and "Nobody's Human," she starts with a small phrase and reshapes it repeatedly, giving the illusion of repetition, as well as the allure of constant change.

Science Fair is a true collaboration between two impressive leaders, though what makes you sit up and pay attention the most is Staaf's pianism. It's brilliant, enriched stuff, as rugged as it is lush. Still a rather unrecognized figure, her playing comes from a lineage that favors Mary Lou Williams over Art Tatum, Herbie Nichols over Herbie Hancock—but every one of those figures is in there. *Science Fair* suggests we're just starting to see how deep her talents go.

—Giovanni Russonello

Science Fair: What?!; Symmetry; Ready Steady; MLW; Weightless; Nobody's Human; West Of The Moon; Skyway Intro; Skyway. (55:09)

Personnel: Allison Miller, drums, percussion; Carmen Staaf, piano; Matt Penman, bass; Dayna Stephens, tenor saxophone (1, 2, 5, 6); Ambrose Akinmusire, trumpet (1, 5).

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

The Hot Box

Critics	James Hale	John McDonough	Michelle Mercer	Giovanni Russonello
Cécile McLorin Salvant <i>The Window</i>	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★½
Orrin Evans <i>Presence</i>	★★★★	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★★
Art Hirahara <i>Sunward Bound</i>	★★★½	★★★	★★★½	★★★½
Allison Miller/Carmen Staaf <i>Science Fair</i>	★★★★	★★½	★★★★	★★★★½

Critics' Comments

Cécile McLorin Salvant, *The Window*

Stripped of all trappings, save for Fortner's piano, Salvant has nowhere—and nothing—to hide. Stunning intonation and heightened sense of drama are all she needs. —James Hale

Bessie Smith and James P. Johnson. Ella Fitzgerald and Paul Smith. Carmen McCrae and George Shearing. Cécile McLorin Salvant and Sullivan Fortner. —Michelle Mercer

Salvant and Fortner's new pairing explores some fresh repertoire and new stances. But perhaps she'll forever be a kind of sophisticated historiographer. Her most revealing moments are not always her strongest—at least not yet. —Giovanni Russonello

Orrin Evans, *Presence*

Evans might have cut the size of his big band in half, but it has lost none of its brawling, blustery nature. Even John Raymond's "Onward," the set's quietest piece, bristles with surging energy and a stacked deck of brass and reeds. —James Hale

Charts are a little brass-heavy and mostly just frame the solo flights. But everybody plays with such stampeding abandon, it hardly matters. The excitement, eagerness and sheer fun are palpable throughout. —John McDonough

Live recordings that capture the gasket energy of the rooms where they were made. A band with just enough musicians to fill out the parts—not so big it takes a grant writer to maintain. Arrangements as newfangled as they are old-fashioned. —Giovanni Russonello

Art Hirahara, *Sunward Bound*

The opening Monk-ish whimsy and streamlined drive on several tracks deliver handsomely. But Hirahara is a pianist of multiple voices. Some swing. Others rant, ruminate and roam without knowing what they're looking for. An accomplished, but mixed, mélange. —John McDonough

Kurosawa's multiple perspectives in *Rashoman* inspired Hirahara's reharmonized melody on "Points Of View." I wonder what would happen if the pianist brought more of Kurosawa's daring wildness to his carefully wrought music. —Michelle Mercer

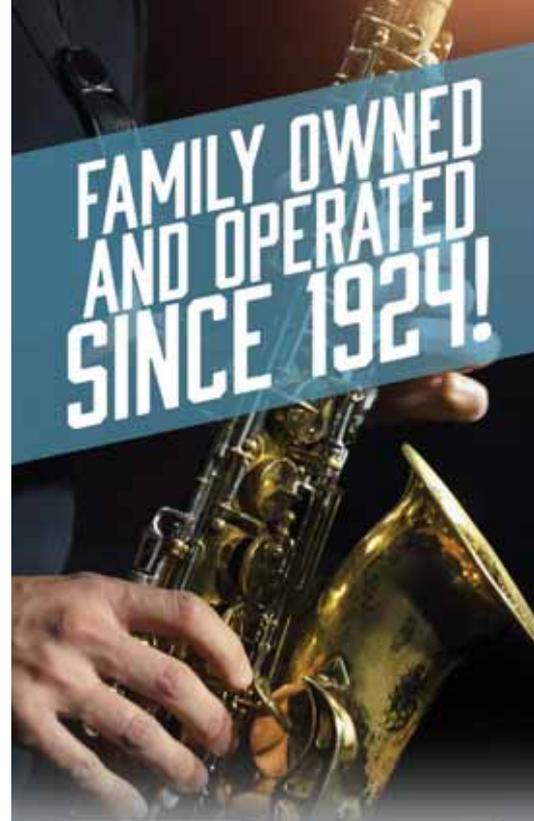
In terms of jazz-world renown, Hirahara hired up for this date—but he never gets lost in the mix or becomes a passive navigator. —Giovanni Russonello

Allison Miller/Carmen Staaf, *Science Fair*

Sharp, churning music that explodes whenever Ambrose Akinmusire adds his piquant voice. Miller and Staaf share a wide-ranging rhythmic aesthetic that stretches from locked-down hard-bop to free-floating impressionism. —James Hale

For all the skillfully apportioned thunder and vapor meted out here, principally by Staaf, little in the way of a breakout emerges. One nice blues named for Mary Lou Williams stands apart among the seriousness. —John McDonough

A first-place project from the tradition-steeped innovators on whom jazz's future depends. As with the best experiments, this album is ahead of the curve, and we'll be benefiting from its discoveries for years to come. —Michelle Mercer



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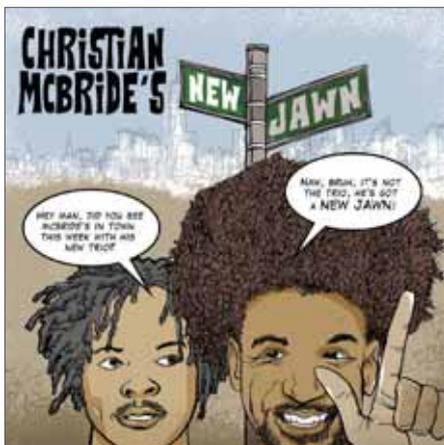
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Christian McBride's New Jawn

Christian McBride's
New Jawn

MACK AVENUE 109

★★★★

The word “jawn”—a fresh new phenomenon—is familiar argot to Christian McBride, a Philadelphia native. And when it comes to trail-blazing new, cool jazz concepts in eponymous trios or big bands, the venerable bassist always delivers. Enter his latest jawn—a pianoless quartet, born of a New York scene that sates East Coast soul-seekers and purists alike. Christian

José James Lean On Me

BLUE NOTE 0028674

★★★★½

Ever since José James emerged on the scene, he's struck a shaky alliance with jazz. For every tribute he'll do, for, say, Billie Holiday or John Coltrane, he'd go to great lengths to declare that he doesn't want to be viewed as a jazz singer. For sure, he'd established ties to DJ culture, starting with his sterling debut, *The Dreamer*, and teaming with British impresario Gilles Peterson.

His “neither fish nor fowl” stance hasn't always played to his advantage. On some of his later albums, many of his genre-defying originals lacked the melodic stickiness associated with pop, r&b, hip-hop or jazz. Mainly, it was because of tentative songwriting. Sometimes, though, the best way to become a better songwriter is concentrating on someone else's indelible songbook.

That's what he's done with *Lean On Me*, a superb exploration of Bill Withers' discography. With the help from a few jazz contemporaries, James doesn't stray far from Withers' rugged soul arrangements. In fact, the disc is as much a case study of Withers' artistry as it is a tribute. But what *Lean On Me* lacks in interpretative ingenuity, James compensates for with conviction. He sounds truly engaged with the mate-

McBride's *New Jawn* faithfully salutes its forebears—Gerry Mulligan, Ornette Coleman and the like—but leave it to this next-gen assimilation of bandleaders to take musical liberties.

No doubt, the Philly flavor is present—tight instrumentation, fast-and-loose percussive subtlety and soul for days. Trumpeter Josh Evans and saxophonist Marcus Strickland rewrite the rulebook, bringing asymmetrical whimsy to the drive of “Walkin' Funny” and “Middle Man,” and moody suspense to the balladeering on “Ernie Washington” and “John Day,” all with impressive linearity. A proper captain, McBride always brings the swing full-circle, setting pace with a particularly pulsating solo on “Seek The Source.” He also finds a confidante in rising drummer Nasheet Waits, who rides the pocket dutifully, even on the shimmering, slow groove of “Kush.”

For the faithful, stick around for bonus tracks—“Brother Malcolm” shines lyrical motives and anthemic political perspective on this mix, and live track “Obsequious” finally takes a raucous instrumental plunge previewed on “Ke-Kelli Sketch,” something eagerly craved at the 11th hour.

—Hilary Brown

Christian McBride's New Jawn: Walkin' Funny; Ke-Kelli Sketch; Ballad Of Ernie Washington; The Middle Man; Pier One Import; Kush; Seek The Source; John Day; Sightseeing; Brother Malcolm; Obsequious. (55:75).

Personnel: Christian McBride, bass; Josh Evans, trumpet; Marcus Strickland, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet, Nasheet Waits, drums.

Ordering info: mackavenue.com



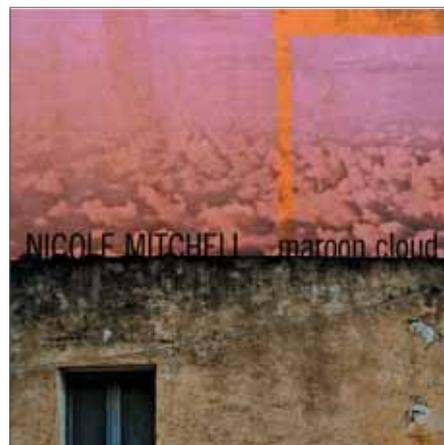
rial throughout, as his whiskey-sour baritone conveys the rainbow of emotions that distinguishes Withers' music. James deftly articulates simmering vim on “Who Is He,” bottomless remorse on “Hope She'll Be Happier” and care-free optimism on “Lovely Day” with poised aplomb, making *Lean On Me* his most assured effort since *The Dreamer*.

—John Murph

Lean On Me: Ain't No Sunshine; Grandma's Hands; Lovely Day; Lean On Me; Kissing My Love; Use Me; Who Is He; Hello Like Before; Just The Two Of Us; Hope She'll Be Happier; The Same Love That Made Me Laugh; Better Off Dead. (54:27)

Personnel: José James, vocals; Pino Palladino, bass; Kris Bowers, keyboards; Nate Smith, drums; Brad Allen Williams, guitar; Lalah Hathaway, vocals (3); Dave McMurray, flute (5); Marcus Strickland, tenor saxophone (9); Takuya Kuroda, trumpet (6).

Ordering info: bluenote.com



Nicole Mitchell Maroon Cloud

FPE 020

★★★★

Flutist Nicole Mitchell attaches at least three meanings to the title of her new disc. One reference is to the dark color itself, another honors the Maroons, Africans who resisted slavery in the Caribbean. And the third sense of the word denotes creativity springing from isolation—or being marooned. These intertwined connotations ultimately enhance a sense of joy that runs through the album's eight interconnected parts.

Mitchell and cellist Tomeka Reid are long-time collaborators, while pianist Aruán Ortiz and vocalist Fay Victor are newer partners. Even without significant time spent as a working unit, their dialogue comes across clearly on this recording of a 2017 Brooklyn performance.

Maroon Cloud primarily conveys Mitchell's depictions of black resistance through her continuing fascination with Afrofuturism, which the group blends with blues on the stellar “Vodou Spacetime Kettle.” The piece begins as Victor's tribute to Bessie Smith, and then Ortiz's accents push her further upward. As the vocalist repeats key lines, Reid and Mitchell's counterpoint builds throughout the piece. That feel also shapes “No One Can Stop Us,” when Mitchell and Reid engage in a sharp call-and-response with Victor, as she repeats the title phrase, turning it into a mantra for perseverance. Classic echoes of Rahsaan Roland Kirk and Brian Jackson's combination with Gil Scott-Heron run throughout, but this group remains individualistic. That's particularly vivid with Mitchell's own remarkable tone when she careens through its higher register on “Hidden Choice” and then shifts into rougher terrain for “Constellation Symphony.” This narrative ends on notes that sound simultaneously serene and incendiary.

—Aaron Cohen

Maroon Cloud: Warm Dark Realness; Vodou Spacetime Kettle; Otherness; No One Can Stop Us; Endurance; A Sound; Hidden Choice; Constellation Symphony. (65:23)

Personnel: Nicole Mitchell, flute; Fay Victor, vocals; Tomeka Reid, cello; Aruán Ortiz, piano.

Ordering info: fpercs.com

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Photo by Hiroyuki Ito

Artistic Visions Realized

When Juilliard-trained trombonist Nick Finzer was ready to release his first album, he didn't want to wait for a label to take notice. So, he debuted the record, *Exposition*, on his own newly minted jazz imprint, Outside In Music, in 2013. Post-launch, the record label took on a life of its own and the album did well, too. Two tracks snagged ASCAP Herb Alpert Awards for Young Composers.

Today, Outside In Music represents about 25 artists and offers them a full suite of creative services—album and video production, media outreach, branding, content creation, artist management—to help them bring their artistic visions to the world. In keeping with the ever-morphing music business, Finzer continues to experiment with new formats for music promotion. And for the up-and-coming Outside In artists below, that's good news.

Multi-woodwinds player **Lucas Pino** and his **No Net Nonet** can cover a lot of ground on one tune. Listen to "Horse Of A Different Color" from its latest release, ***That's A Computer* (OIM 1814; 58:32 ★★★½)**. Four minutes in and the group already has tackled big band, blues, swing and bebop (with some deft allusions)—and they've still got about six minutes of tune left. Clearly, this is a group with a lot to say, and it's said with confidence and alacrity. The recording's success derives in large measure from the effortless cohesion among Pino and his musicians; the arrangements showcase their skills as synchronous, tightly aligned players, whether on dramatically surging passages ("Antiquity") or on languid stretches of sustained harmonies ("Film At 11"). As a bandleader, Pino demonstrates significant musical muscle in corralling this much sound into one sleek record.

On its debut album, ***Kin* (OIM 1807; 52:15 ★★★½)**, the young trio **Paragon** explores chordless jazz, balancing free improvisation, post-bop composition and imaginative experimentation. All three band members—bassist Emiliano Lasansky, drummer Connor Kent and saxophonist Daniel Dickenson—are recent transplants to New York who met up someplace else; the eight tunes on the album evoke different aspects of the city that inspire them. Some of the tunes, like "Cosmos Scapes" and "Vantablack," rely heavily on the compelling groove between Lasansky and Kent—a perfect foil for Dickenson's exploratory soloing. But none of the players stay in one place for long; what seems like a soothing ballad at the top will likely tumble into an exciting, harmonic jangle at



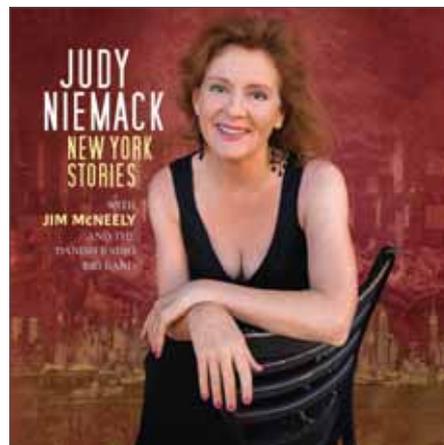
some point. The one all-improvised piece, "Free Interlude," impresses for its eerie romanticism.

Warsaw-born, New York-based guitarist **Rafał Sarnecki** is a gifted composer—you can hear the evidence in just a cursory listen to ***Climbing Trees* (OIM 1804; 58:34 ★★★½)**, his fourth album as leader and his first for Outside In. But it's better to dig deeper into his sophisticated use of form and feel. "Dadaism" offers complex, wide-ranging melody lines and a subterranean pulse, while "Little Dolphin" is a piece in three movements of contrasting motion. Sarnecki's wordless vocal parts, performed by the talented singer Bogna Kicinska, differentiate his sextet from the pack; not everyone can write this well for the voice. Saxophonist Pino, who uses Sarnecki in his No Net Nonet, offers up some blistering playing on this disc ("Hydrodynamics"), only to shift moments later into Zen-like calm ("Homo Sapiens").

Trombonist **Peter Nelson** drew the inspiration for his new album, ***Ash, Dust, And The Chalkboard Cinema* (OIM 1813; 43:12 ★★★)** from his struggle to overcome the chronic pain of focal dystonia, a neurological condition caused by his playing. The cycle of 10 songs reflects the path of his recovery, from the emergence of his condition, through the collapse of his art, to his eventual recovery and re-emergence as a player. On the album, he plays with three groupings of musicians, each with its own distinct quality: vibes and vocals for the ephemeral, a standard rhythm section for the disquieting and a horn-based septet for the exultant. Nelson also gets props for the most imaginative song titles in recent memory ("To The Water, My Eyes (To The Wave, My Heart)").

LAUREN DESBERG

Ordering info: outsideinmusic.com



Judy Niemack *New York Stories*

SUNNYSIDE 1515

★★★★½

Trust Judy Niemack to banish blues, blahs and social despair. Sounding fresh as her debut with Warne Marsh in 1978, this sunny vocalist of pinpoint articulation, exuberant scat and riveting vocalese soars from aerie to peak on Jim McNeely's catchy charts, brimming with vitality and subtle quotes, all navigated with cool aplomb by the Danish Radio Big Band. This singer's singer flies with boundless joy in cozy union with reeds or trumpets, her moods ranging from warmly confiding to radiantly bantered free fours with Hans Ulrik's tenor and Per Gade's guitar. She jimmies the DNA of "Round Midnight" and strikes lightning on the eerily unfolding "Misterioso." After scattering it for years, she wrote the lyric quickly, but takes her sweet time to lift us into the ozone.

Her luminous lyrics also speak pitch-perfect politically. A post-9/11 rap on Jeanfrançois Prins' "New York Stories" urges a Jon Hendricks-like wry toughness to beat The Big Apple's grinding toll. Niemack gamely engages listeners on "Talk Awhile (It's Just Talk)" with "people coming together, every race and every style" to "find some better way to be free." A recurring mantra—communicate, don't confront—extols social outreach ("Straight Up To The Light (Talking To Myself)") and to end affairs politely.

This date's torturous odyssey began when McNeely penned this set for Niemack's 1993 and 2001 gigs with WDR Big Band. Later recorded with Danes, it's finally released here. Some music is really worth the wait. —Fred Bouchard

New York Stories: New York Stories; Suddenly (In Walked Bud); Talk Awhile (It's Just Talk); A Crazy Song To Sing (Misterioso); I Should Have Told You Goodbye (Daahoud); Straight Up To The Light (Talking To Myself); Fragile; Round Midnight; It's Over Now (Well You Needn't). (74:52)

Personnel: Judy Niemack, vocals; Jim McNeely, arranger, conductor; Anders Gustafsson, Christer Gustafsson, Thomas Kjærgaard, Mads La Cour, Lars Vissing, trumpet; Vincent Nilsson, Steen Nikolaj Hansen, Peter Jensen, Annette Saxe, Jakob Munck Mortensen, trombone; Nicolai Schultz, Peter Fuglsang, Hans Ulrik, Frederick Menzies, Anders Gaardmand, saxophone; Søren Frost, drums; Nikolaj Bentzon, piano; Per Gade, guitar; Kasper Vadsholt, bass.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com



Jon Batiste *Hollywood Africans*

VERVE 0028869

★★★

As bandleader and comic sidekick on *The Late Show With Stephen Colbert*, Jon Batiste appears nightly before an audience most jazz artists only can dream of. But playing that show's jaunty opening theme on his trademark melodica and leading his band through snippets of pop tunes provides Batiste few opportunities to flaunt the chops that got him the gig in the first place.

Hollywood Africans plays out like a calculated attempt to regain some of the gravitas he sacrificed when he took the *Late Show* gig. It's a hodgepodge of a set, featuring everything from an extended riff on Chopin's *Nocturne No. 20 In C Sharp Minor* to a reverential treatment of Ray Noble's "The Very Thought Of You" and a version of "St. James Infirmary Blues," the New Orleans standard he approached with far more swagger and iconoclasm on 2013's *Social Music*. The only thread connecting such disparate material is Batiste's piano—lively throughout and occasionally dazzling, often with little or no accompaniment. The melodica remains pointedly absent.

The original songs here provide most of the set's highlights. Instrumental opener "Kenner Boogie," named after Batiste's hometown, is a showcase for his skill at mixing stride, ragtime and boogie-woogie styles into a rollicking whole. "Mr. Buddy" is a beautifully simple ballad, and "Is It Over" sounds, in the best possible way, like Ray Charles covering a lost Randy Newman tune. Such moments should leave listeners longing for more Batiste originals and fewer homages.

—Andy Hermann

Hollywood Africans: Kenner Boogie; What A Wonderful World; Chopinesque; St. James Infirmary Blues; Nocturne No. 1 In D Minor; The Very Thought Of You; Green Hill Zone; Mr. Buddy; Is It Over; Smile, Don't Stop. (41:34)

Personnel: Jon Batiste, piano, vocals; Evan Arntzen, clarinet (4); Jeffery Miller, trombone (4); Jon Lampley, trumpet (4); Joe Saylor, drums, percussion (4, 5, 8); Carlos Henriquez, bass (5, 8); Bashiri Johnson, percussion (5, 6); Leon Pendarvis, organ (9); Delaney Stockli, Emily Uematsu, Francesca Dardani, Julia Daintz, violin (11); Elise Frawley, Amanda Diaz, viola (11); Alice Bacon, Timothy Leonard, cello (11); Chris Turner (4); Ben Lusher (4); Elliott Skinner (4); Richard Saunders (4); Brenda-White King (9); Dennis Collins (9); Ken Williams (9); Sharon Jerry-Collins (9); Janelle Kroll (11), backing vocals.

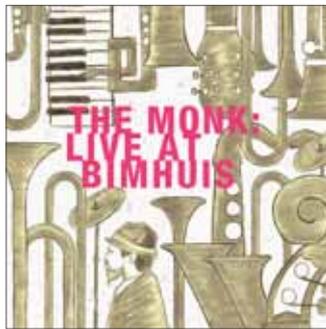
Ordering info: vervelabelgroup.com



**Miho Hazama/
Metropole Orkest
Big Band**
*The Monk: Live
At Bimhuis*

SUNNYSIDE 1525
★★★★

Setting Thelonious Monk's music in a big band format is nothing new. But when composer/arranger Miho Hazama was invited to collaborate with the Netherlands-based, 17-piece Metropole Orkest Big Band for a 2017 Monk centennial celebration, she took a decidedly different tack. When researching sources, Hazama became entranced by Monk's solo piano work and decided to make it the foundation for the majority of her arrangements. The results, as captured live from Amsterdam, are thoroughly imaginative and thrilling. The intent here is not to simulate Monk's sly, ragged playing. Instead, the material highlights the beauty of Monk's simple melodies and his distinct harmonies. The opener, "Thelonious," sets the tone, mischievously unfolding with what seems to be an orchestra tune-up, morphing into a baritone/tenor duet, followed by full-blown swing. "Ruby My Dear" initially makes great textural use of multiple clarinets, the canvas segueing to a swaying pulse. Rich with rewarding surprises, this captivating collaboration both reinvents and re-embraces an old friend. —Jeff Potter



The Monk: Live At Bimhuis: Thelonious; Ruby, My Dear; Friday The 13th; Hackensack; 'Round Midnight; Epistrophy; Crepuscule With Nellie. (50:05)

Personnel: Miho Hazama, conductor; Marc Scholten, Paul van der Feen, Leo Janssen, Sjoerd Dijkhuizen, Max Boeree, saxophone, clarinet; Ray Bruinsma, Martijn de Laat, Nico Schepers, Ric Mol, trumpet; Jan Oosting, Louk Boudesteijn, Jan Bastiani, trombone; Martin van den Berg, bass trombone; Marcel Serierse, drums; Aram Kersbergen, bass; Peter Tielhuis, guitar; Hans Vroomans, piano.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

Eli Degibri
Soul Station

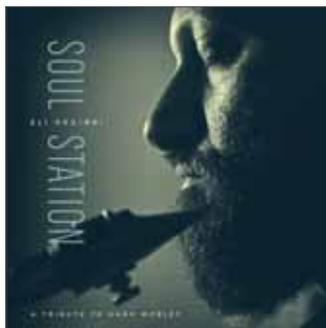
DEGIBRI 1008
★★½

There's a natural desire for jazz artists to follow in the footsteps of their musical ancestors. But is the goal to just ape one's influences or to use them as a leaping-off point?

For his latest release, Israeli-born saxophonist Eli Degibri answers those questions by landing somewhere in the middle. The album is a remake of Hank Mobley's 1960 classic *Soul Station*, with the track listing shuffled a bit and an original stuck at the end to pay tribute to one of Degibri's greatest influences. But the six songs from Mobley's album are treated like standards, with new solos and textures introduced to recognizable melodies.

The starkest difference between the two records, though, is in how much more insistent Degibri's playing is as compared to Mobley's. The latter approached even the snappiest tempo with a measured calm, allowing his playing to melt over each song. Degibri goes for a more forceful approach that pops and sizzles when it should simmer.

That works best on the rendition of "If I Should Lose You," which veers away from Mobley's hearty swing. Elsewhere, Degibri's playing tends to push too far into the foreground, as with the otherwise delightful title track or the speedy "Split Feelin's," a tune that finds the bandleader using soprano saxophone to surprisingly shrill effect. —Robert Ham



Soul Station: Remember; This I Dig Of You; Dig Dis; If I Should Lose You; Split Feelin's; Soul Station; Dear Hank. (38:20)

Personnel: Eli Degibri, saxophones; Tom Oren, piano; Tamir Shmerling, bass; Eviatar Slivnik, drums.

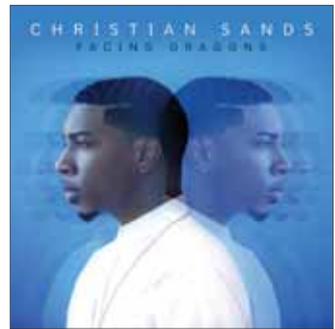
Ordering info: degibri.com

Christian Sands
Facing Dragons

MACK AVENUE 1143
★★★★

Facing Dragons is a promise that tomorrow's jazz is in good hands. Most of the players on this session are quite young; the eldest, Marcus Strickland, hasn't hit 40. Yet each one plays at a peak of musicianship that most could spend their entire lives trying to achieve.

Facing Dragons involves preternatural maturity, an uncanny sense of the moment and, as Sands once again proves, an exquisite understanding of writing material that speaks on its own and equally feeds the fires of improvisation. But there's more than that. Taken one track at a time, *Facing Dragons* takes us back to an early Herbie Hancock aesthetic on the delicate, if enigmatically titled, "Frankenstein." Right after that, we hear Caio Afiume playing a slow figure way down on the guitar neck on "Her Song." The next track, "Samba De Vela," begins at the same tempo, in the same key, with a similar four-bar motif. Much more can be said about *Facing Dragons*, all of it good (though Sands' take on "Yesterday" is tough to get into). But the last track, "Rhodes To Meditation," must be acknowledged—a solo piece on Fender Rhodes, glistening in reverb and reminiscent of Brian Eno. End your journey here, breathe deep and you're home. —Bob Doerschuk



Facing Dragons: Rebel Music; Fight For Freedom; Yesterday; Sanguo Soul; Sunday Mornings; Frankenstein; Her Song; Samba De Vela; Rhodes To Meditation. (58:30)

Personnel: Christian Sands, piano; Fender Rhodes, Hammond B-3; Yasushi Nakamura, bass; Jerome Jennings, drums; Marcus Strickland, saxophone (2, 6); Keyon Harold, trumpet (2, 6); Caio Afiume, guitar (2, 4, 5, 7, 8); Cristian Rivera (4, 5, 8); Roberto Quintero (4), percussion.

Ordering info: mackavenue.com

**Eva Novoa's
Ditmas Quartet**
Live at IBeam

FRESH SOUND NEW TALENT 556
★★★★

A wonderfully wild, moody, collaborative and improvisational set by Spanish composer Eva Novoa's Ditmas Quartet was recorded live during the summer of 2016 at Brooklyn's IBeam, home to experimental and innovative new works. Opening with the pensive "Déjà Vu," its escalating intensity lent by Novoa's piano and drummer Jeff Davis, there's something familiar about the quartet's approach to free-jazz, at once feeling its 20th-century origins and free of them. Contrasting with Novoa's striking and inventive playing, saxophonist Michaël Attias lends his arresting style to the set's stand-out performances: the haunted and dramatic "Enough," the angular study of "Why You Here" and the pleasantly quirky "Yela." Bassist Max Johnson stands out on "Walk On The Moon," as he keeps it floating on the solos until Davis finally tips in and the quartet brings home the set's penultimate and climactic number.

For the final mood piece, "Lines And Dots," Novoa's gong contributes to the dark and somber effect—an unusual way to end a show and an album, but then, Novoa's Ditmas Quartet is anything but usual, and that's exactly what makes it so compelling. —Denise Sullivan



Eva Novoa's Ditmas Quartet Live At IBeam: Déjà Vu; Enough; Why You Here; Yela; Walk On The Moon; Lines And Dots. (39:52)

Personnel: Eva Novoa, piano, Chinese gong; Michaël Attias, alto, baritone saxophone; Max Johnson, bass; Jeff Davis, drums.

Ordering info: freshsoundrecords.com



Ambrose Akinmusire *Origami Harvest*

BLUE NOTE 0028662

★★★★★

This might be the golden age for jazz string writing.

Where once violins were drizzled over arrangements like semi-classical ganache, albums like Vijay Iyer's *Mutations* (ECM), Tyshawn Sorey's *The Inner Spectrum Of Variables* (Pi) and Fabian Almazan's *Alcanza* (Biophilia) have made the notion of a jazz/ chamber music cross-pollination more

than just some Third Stream pipe dream. And with the daring and original *Origami Harvest*, trumpeter and composer Ambrose Akinmusire takes jazz string writing to a new plateau.

When Akinmusire toured the *Origami Harvest* project prior to recording, the music was a "jazz/rap/classical mash-up," in part to explain the presence of both rapper Kool A.D. and the Mivos String Quartet. But the music itself doesn't really stitch jazz, rap and classical together. Instead, it repurposes elements of each to create something strikingly unique.

Given the eclectic ambition of Akinmusire's earlier work, particularly 2014's *The Imagined Savior Is Far Easier To Paint* (Blue Note), that shouldn't come as a surprise. But even the exceptional power of that earlier work doesn't quite prepare listeners for the audacity of what is to come.

For starters, Akinmusire manages to evoke a hip-hop feel without a bass player, often without even a bass line. Instead, he'll rely on a rhythmic cadence that recurs—sometimes stated, sometimes implied—throughout the piece. For instance, "Miracle And Streetfight" opens with a clattering Marcus Gilmore drum statement, in which the tune's basic pulse carries like a clave. When the rest of the band comes in, piano

and string chords continue the rhythmic reference, while Gilmore, Akinmusire and Kool A.D. work contrasting elaborations. About halfway through the 15-minute epic, Walter Smith III's saxophone enters, looped and overdubbed, simultaneously collapsing and telescoping the rhythmic ideas. That's followed by a quartet sequence that expands the material both harmonically and rhythmically, which in turn sets up a churning, elegiac conclusion anchored by Akinmusire's mournful, vocalized trumpet line.

And yet, as powerful as the trumpet playing is here, apart from the sly, snarky "Free White And 21," Akinmusire often seems less a presence as a player than Gilmore, pianist Sam Harris or the string quartet. Where his genius most keenly is felt is in the writing, which not only presents a wealth of ideas, but deploys them with power, ingenuity and grace, and that makes this a harvest worthy of thanksgiving. —J.D. Cosidine

Origami Harvest: The Lingering Velocity Of The Dead's Ambitions; Free White And 21; Particle/Spectra; Americana/The Garden Waits For You To Match Her Wilderness; Miracle And Streetfight; A Blooming Bloodfruit In A Hoodie. (59:46)

Personnel: Ambrose Akinmusire, trumpet, synthesizer (3), vocals (2); Kool A.D., vocals (4, 5, 6); Lumbrijck.t, vocals (3); Sam Harris, piano, keyboards (5, 6); Michael Aaberg, keyboards (6); Marcus Gilmore, drums; Olivia De Prato, Lauren Cauley Kalal, violins; Victor Lowrie Tafoya, viola; Mariel Roberts, cello; Walter Smith III, tenor saxophone (5).

Ordering info: bluenote.com

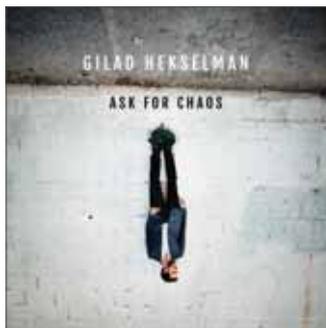
Gilad Hekselman *Ask For Chaos*

HEXAPHONIC/MOTÉMA 0284

★★★★★

Guitarist Gilad Hekselman expresses two very different sides of his musicality with separate trios on his sixth outing as a leader. With his gHEX Trio, Hekselman turns in appealing, warm-toned, post-Pat Metheny offerings, like the gently introspective ode "It Will Get Better," the breezy, Brazilian-influenced "Milton" and the engaging rubato ditty "Little Song For You." His more heavily effected side comes out with his dynamic Zuperoctave trio on numbers like "VBlues" and the pulse-quicken fusion romp "Tokyo Cookie."

The serene "Stumble," based on Wayne Shorter's "Fall," finds Aaron Parks and Hekselman sharing bass duties. Parks solos first, turning in sparse, deliberate lines on Fender Rhodes, while Hekselman underscores lines on his guitar before delving into a lyrical solo. The real surprise here is the heartland closer, "Do Re Mi Fa Sol," replete with overdubbed strings, a bit of Bill Frisellian countrified twang and a memorable whistled refrain that sticks in the brain. In both settings, Hekselman combines his inherent melodicism and uncanny technique with a fresh vision as a composer, showing why he topped the Rising Star-Guitar category in the 2017 DownBeat Critics Poll. —Bill Milkowski



Ask For Chaos: PROLOGU00001101; VBlues; It Will Get Better; Tokyo Cookie; Stumble; Milton; Home To You; Little Song For You; Clap Clap; Do Re Mi Fa Sol. (60:06)

Personnel: Gilad Hekselman, guitar, bass; Rick Rosato, bass (3, 6, 8, 10); Jonathan Pinson, drums (3, 6, 8, 10); Aaron Parks, synthesizers, Rhodes, piano (2, 4, 5, 7, 9); Kush Abadey, drums (2, 4, 5, 7, 9); Duncan Wickel, strings (10).

Ordering info: motema.com

Wolfgang Muthspiel *Where The River Goes*

ECM 6751712

★★★★★

For his third ECM leader date, *Where The River Goes*, Austrian guitarist Wolfgang Muthspiel reconvened most of the personnel from *Rising Grace*, his second album for the label (Eric Harland replaces Brian Blade on drums). The quintet met up in February of this year at the same picturesque studio in the Alpes-de-Hautes-Provence region of southern France, where they'd recorded the earlier release.

On this album, Muthspiel again creates a space for his ensemble's sonic musings, each player expounding on the guitarist's musical assertions—his clean chordal structures, his descents into dissonance, his satisfying resolutions. Their discourse is one of understated beauty. Muthspiel wrote all but two of the eight compositions on the disc. A representative slice would include the title cut, which unfolds from a solitary guitar line into a rapturous, full-band manifesto; "For Django," a tangle of melodic turns and intrepid solos; and "Descendants," with its simple diatonic riffs serving as jumping-off points. Pianist Brad Mehldau's "Blueshead," one of the two non-Muthspiel tunes, makes full use of the group's keen listening ability and dexterity, delving into the personal modes of each player. —Suzanne Lorge



Where The River Goes: Where The River Goes; For Django; Descendants; Clearing; Buenos Aires; One Day My Prince Was Gone; Blueshead; Panorama. (48:14)

Personnel: Wolfgang Muthspiel, guitar; Ambrose Akinmusire, trumpet; Brad Mehldau, piano; Larry Grenadier, bass; Eric Harland, drums.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

Tradition and New Hues

Russ Green, *City Soul* (Cleopatra 0904; 56:33 ★★★★★) On a debut album of depth and maturity, ex-soldier Russ Green parlays the stylistic flourishes of his harmonica (Sugar Blue's an obvious influence) into an ensemble sound more about dynamism than stagnant conventionalism. Those licks and longer phrases are, indeed, smartly turned and packed with conviction. Chicagoan Green's well-above-average singing succeeds in its balance between his allegiance to tradition and his aim to reinvigorate the music in a discernible way. Eight highly entertaining originals are joined by two of a serious mien: "Train Of Pain" takes stock of lives affected by urban poverty and "Goin' Down South," with guest Eric Bibb, looks at the former heartland and its Jim Crow laws.

Ordering info: russgreenmusic.com

Shemekia Copeland, *America's Child* (Alligator 4984; 49:22 ★★★★★) For her eighth Alligator album, Shemekia Copeland keeps within the spirit of the blues as she searches out cross-genre songs of humanity and compassion. In particularly good voice, she moves confidently among likable songs from manager John Hahn and producer-guitarist Will Kimbrough, and worthies such as Mary Gauthier (she sings harmony with Emmylou Harris on "Americans"), John Prine (co-lead singer on "Great Rain"), the Kinks' Ray Davies ("I'm Not Like Everybody Else") and her late father, Johnny Clyde ("Promised Myself"). Her keen, steady musical intelligence is matched by Kimbrough and the supporting players.

Ordering info: alligator.com

Whitney Shay, *A Woman Rules The World* (Little Village 1021; 36:22 ★★) Bold and sassy 20th-century show business star Sophie Tucker was called "The Last of the Red Hot Mamas." Now, here's a wannabe. On the San Diego blues and jazz scenes since leaving musical theater nine years ago, Whitney Shay mixes impertinence with staginess, and candor with contrivance, as she sings originals and covers that mostly celebrate womanly independence. Mildly appealing overall, but do steer clear of ridiculous covers of Little Richard's "Freedom Blues" and "Get Down With It."

Ordering info: littlevillagefoundation.org

Beth McKee, *Dreamwood Acres* (Self Release; 42:42 ★★★★★) Mississippi-born and once on the Austin and New Orleans roots scenes, Floridian Beth McKee has taken five albums to fully realize a singular personal voice as singer, songwriter and keyboardist. While versed in Mississippi hill country blues, Louisiana swamp pop and other strains of Southern music, she skirts genre conven-



Shemekia Copeland

tions to embrace an animated life force that generates crisp, innovative and unclassifiable music, and intelligent lyrics on universals like hope, faith and love. Angelic "Angus" is especially memorable. Note the references to Allen Toussaint and Dr. John in her piano playing. Producer and multi-instrumentalist John Pffifner fully understands McKee's artistic intentions.

Ordering info: bethmckee.com

Stone The Crows & Maggie Bell, *Best Of* (Angel Air 518; 49:49/40:46 ★★½) Maggie Bell was the lodestar of U.K.-based 1970s rock singers who were savvy about American blues and soul. This showcase takes tracks from four albums she made as part of Stone The Crows, as well as her two solo efforts. Bell's raw emotional directness is in keeping with Janis Joplin's. Yet even in the throes of passion, the Glasgow native retains close sight of a lyric's narrative meaning. She really works wonders with Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee's "Penicillin Blues." The eight solo career tunes on disc two encourage full investigations of her albums *Queen Of The Night* (produced by Jerry Wexler) and *Suicide Sal*, both Angel Air reissues. One track too many: "Taggart," a 1983 pop excrement.

Ordering info: angelair.co.uk

Billy F Gibbons, *The Big Bad Blues* (Concord 00747; 48:20 ★★½) Unveiling his first solo blues release, ZZ Top's lead singer and guitarist supercharges old-school originals and borrowings from the Bo Diddley and Muddy Waters songbooks with the urgency of someone whose age—he's not far from 70—never will take sway on his lifelong ardor for the blues. Crank up the volume and experience an adrenal surge comparable to a ride on an elevator that's descending too fast. Gibbons always has had a sense of humor, taking Diddley's "Crackin' Up" south of the Rio Grande. **DB**

Ordering info: concordmusicgroup.com



Walking Distance

Freebird
SUNNYSIDE 1512

★★★★½

Anxious to avoid the dreaded sophomore slump, some groups try to play down expectations. If anything, for its second album, *Walking Distance* doubled down on an album featuring pianist Jason Moran that rearranges, deconstructs and sometimes simply explodes familiar Charlie Parker tunes.

Freebird excels when the band relaxes and lets it rip. "Bigment" opens with a steamy, bluesy vamp before turning to a maniacally paced frenzy of chord changes and riffing. Only bassist Adam Coté's heavy, hypnotic notes anchor the thing to earth. If there's a conceptual strain to mashing up Parker's "Segment" and "Bigfoot," it's not evident. However, some songs feel more like ideas than fully formed performances. "Lost & Found" can't escape the boundaries of its own in-joke and meanders; "Quasar Halo" similarly struggles to find its grip.

Performances from Moran, alto saxophonist Caleb Curtis and tenor saxophonist Kenny Pexton frequently lift songs with stellar maneuvers. Playing Parker's instrument, Curtis in particular shines amid homages and commentaries on the legend. However, Moran comes away with the best solo—a dramatic effort on "Fly By."

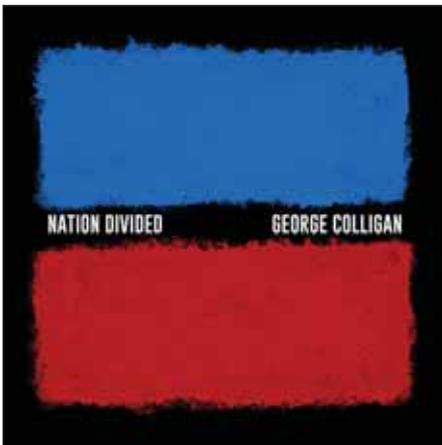
Producer Ben Rubin makes his presence strongly felt as well. His work places each song in a unique setting, adding context and insight to the compositions and performances. He locates some songs in the same lo-fi worlds as Parker's original recordings.

Freebird isn't stingy with memorable moments, but a listener's enjoyment might be tied to their grasp of sometimes-obscure punchlines about Parker's repertoire. —Andrew Jones

Freebird: William; Feather Report; Ghilnoorty Classic; Simple Ghilnoorty; Lost & Found; Bigment; Quasar Halo; Pextery; Cheat Sheet; Donnalise; Fly By; Confirmation Bias. (46:06)

Personnel: Caleb Curtis, alto saxophone, trumpet (6); Kenny Pexton, tenor saxophone, clarinet (6, 7); Jason Moran, piano (1, 2, 6, 7, 11, 12); Adam Coté, bass, Mellotron (4); Shawn Baltazor, drums;

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com



George Colligan *Nation Divided*

WHIRLWIND 4726

★★★½

Other Barry *Escape Route*

PJCE 031

★★★½

The latest pair of releases from prolific and versatile musician George Colligan have a strange sense of urgency to them. The compositional variety and the pure expressiveness of this Portland-based art-

ist's playing suggests that he's worried about how much time he has left to get all these ideas out. Or, less worrisome, these recordings simply are the products of someone amid a creative wellspring.

The title and artwork of Colligan's solo piano collection, *Nation Divided*, as well as the music, offers clues to his troubled state of mind. These 13 tracks, a mixture of through-composed and partially improvised works, are a stark reflection of our current, fractious times. Colligan balances the mood of the record through moments of calm and absurdist humor in the fluid, Keith Jarrett-like passages of "The Strength To Move On" or "Sentimental Foolishness" and the winking decision to use a Spinal Tap reference as the name for the closer, "Saddest Of All Keys."

But the most immediate pieces on *Divided* are those where Colligan leans into rage, fear and confusion. The spiky "Street Fight," a piece of jagged chaos, and the looping "Prelude" are unsettling visions, suggesting an internal struggle. And that steady left hand on the title track is challenged by the right, constantly working against the tempo. He runs ahead and lags behind, daring the rhythm to break stride. Like the rest of the album, it's complex—and devastating.

Colligan's other new release provides a counterbalance to the more socio-politically minded *Divided*. The first album from his new trio, Other

Barry, finds him leaving the piano almost entirely behind, replacing it with a variety of electric keyboards. Colligan's in pure fusion mode on *Escape Route*, giddily spinning out a lengthy Rhodes solo on "Way Too Easy" or letting a Moog synthesizer wow and throb on "The Shark." He sounds completely unbound here, reveling in the simple joy of plugging in and cutting loose.

Joining him in this endeavor are an equally game pair of players. Guitarist Enzo Irace proves to be Colligan's most able foil, making great use of effects pedals, adding gristle and juice to his already meaty solos or, as on the delightfully titled "Metheny On Steroids," he turns the sound into something pixelated and untethered. Drummer Micah Hummel is this trio's ballast. He's clearly game for wherever Colligan's compositions lead, but it's his splashy funk-inspired playing keeping everything grounded. —Robert Ham

Nation Divided: Wounds Of Another Time; Closure; Between Two Worlds; Street Fight; Blues For Charleston; Nights Of Passion; The Strength To Move On; Nation Divided; Prelude; If That's All There Is To Say; Cognac Logic; Sentimental Foolishness; Saddest Of All Keys. (55:13)

Personnel: George Colligan, piano

Ordering info: whirlwindrecordings.com

Escape Route: Thing 3; The Seventies; Pad; Agitate! Agitate! Agitate!; The Shark; Escape Route; Metheny On Steroids; Way Too Easy; Intro To Thing 5; Thing 5; Dilla Sandwich; Thing 6; Heavy Metal Surf Beat; Revenge. (62:03)

Personnel: George Colligan, keyboards; Enzo Irace, guitar; Micah Hummel, drums.

Ordering info: pjce.org

Sungjae Son *Near East Quartet*

ECM 2568

★★★★

Saxophonist Sungjae Son and his cohort have been combining original compositions with traditional Korean folk songs since 2010. Their music has a surprising power on this concise album, which features three traditional pieces alongside five originals, blending them in a way that makes it impossible to tell which is which.

The bandleader's horn rarely is the lead voice here, instead offering long tones in the background. When Son does take a solo, as on "Ebyul," his notes are chosen with exquisite care, and his phrases are short and emotionally potent. Meanwhile, Suwuk Chung's guitar alternates between shimmering harmonic clouds and staticky, distorted riffs. In some ways, these pieces seem to share a kind of universalist, non-specific spirituality with the work of Japanese saxophonist Akira Sakata.

The album's closing track, "Jinyang," is effectively two pieces. It begins with gentle chords, ritualistic toms and Yulhee Kim's hushed vocals. But Soojin Suh eventually launches a barrage from behind the kit, Chung steps on the volume pedal, and the saxophonist and guitarist soar skyward, reaching doom-fusion catharsis. —Philip Freeman



Near East Quartet: Ewha; Mot; Baram; Galggabuda; Garam; Pa'do; Ebyul; Jinyang. (36:42)

Personnel: Sungjae Son, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet; Suwuk Chung, guitar; Yulhee Kim, vocals; percussion; Soojin Suh, drums; Soril Choi, percussion (3).

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

Arianna Neikrug *Changes*

CONCORD 00103

★★★½

A captivating mix of covers and originals, Arianna Neikrug's debut introduces a singer-songwriter of daring and versatility. Produced by pianist and arranger Laurence Hobgood, this polished album pushes the jazz envelope with style.

Neikrug, a Los Angeles native, won the 2015 Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition shortly after graduating from the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami. Her singing is free and fearless from the start here, and on "No Moon At All," she sings full-throated and scats, her voice light until she leans into the song.

Neikrug replaces the innocent aspiration of the Jackson 5's "I'll Be There" with something far more mature, and transforms Al Green's groove-heavy "Let's Stay Together." But she doesn't fare as well with the Joni Mitchell "Help Me/Be Cool" medley that caps the album.

The originals on *Changes* stand out for their candor and warmth. The title track, a samba with a lovely, querulous melody, speaks to Neikrug's childhood, while "New York Song" is a love letter to her adopted city. Neikrug sings beyond her years, and while her technique and flexibility are striking, it's her soulfulness that startles and lingers. —Carlo Wolff



Changes: No Moon At All; Spring Can Really Hang You Up The Most; Let's Stay Together; Changes; Never Let Me Go/I'll Be There; The Song Is You; New York Song; After You've Gone; Devil May Care; Help Me/Be Cool. (48:23)

Personnel: Arianna Neikrug, vocals; Laurence Hobgood, piano; Matt Clohesy, bass; Jared Schonig, drums.

Ordering info: concordmusicgroup.com

More Than a Second Line

New Orleans music, with its famous street rhythms, is an American treasure. And r&b families, like their jazz counterparts, play a significant role in the constant regeneration of Crescent City sounds.

Hail the Nevilles. Singer and percussionist **Cyril Neville**, the youngest of four brothers, has every right to his "Uptown Ruler" moniker. Now, Cyril's son **Omari** further confirms his father's high standing by releasing ***Endangered Species: The Complete Recordings*** (World Order Entertainment; 41:57/50:29/50:16/49:59/42:43 ★★½). Here's a five-disc set of three Cyril Neville albums and two by family members that he produced, all originally out between 1991 and 2000. Also new is the single-disc abridgment, titled ***Endangered Species: The Essential Recordings*** (World Order Entertainment; 52:35 ★★★★★).

Die-hard NOLA r&b fans will salivate over the big package; others will do just fine with the stripped-down *Essential*. Cyril's soulful musical personality stamps the 30 tracks of *New Orleans Cookin'*, *Soulo* and *The Fire This Time*, little harm that the funk sometimes seems over-processed. His voice is, after all, a poignant cry for justice for African-Americans. As producer, Cyril oversees the Diamonds' *Solemnly Yours*, something of a throwback to '80s r&b with his wife, Gaynielle, among the lead vocalists. On *Medicine*, Cyril's nephew Damien and the Deff Generation deliver routine '90s hip-hop, along with welcomed blasts of second-line parading. As for *Essential*, its 11 tracks all project animation and uplift; its highlight, "Love Has Got To Win," a new recording not included on the multi-disc set.

Ordering info: worldorderentertainment.com

Cha Wa lead singer J'Wan Boudreaux is the 21-year-old grandson of Monk Boudreaux, a venerated Mardi Gras Indian, formerly with the Wild Magnolias. On ***Spyboy*** (UPT 1820; 43:15 ★★½), J'Wan and seven more sashaying second-liners, including band founder Joe Geline on drums, merge brass band music and local r&b of the past and present. They thicken the air with asserions of rollicking celebration across a program of originals and reconditioned old standbys. One stumble: Bob Marley's "Soul Rebel" wears its echoey dub badly.

Ordering info: chawaband.com

Though a Nashvillian, **Tom Hambridge** has performed in New Orleans many times. He's in top form as a singer, a drummer and a songwriter on ***The NOLA Sessions*** (Superstar Factory; 52:36 ★★½). Luminaries Allen Toussaint, Ivan Neville and Sonny Landreth help out, the latter's guitar splash-



JEFF FASANO

Vanessa Collier

ing Tabasco sauce onto the roots rock.

Ordering info: tomhambridge.com

Saxophonist and singer **Vanessa Collier**, a Berklee graduate from Maryland, often has New Orleans in mind, and ***Honey Up*** (Self Release; 44:58 ★★½) wants to fix its heart in the Lower 9th Ward. That's wishful thinking for a number of reasons. Yet, there's enough tone, skillfulness and genuine spirit in her playing to make one believe she'll develop into a commendable descendant of great New Orleans sax players like Lee Allen and Lionel Torrence.

Ordering info: vanessacollier.com

Delgres' Mo Jodi (PIAS 570160; 44:45 ★★★★★) can make your day. Pascal Danaë, the leader of this Paris-based trio, identifies emotionally and musically with the Guadeloupean Creoles who settled in New Orleans. With drummer Baptiste Brandy and brass band-ready sousaphonist Rafgee, the 53-year-old singer-guitarist fans the tension between traditionalism and modernism, achieving an enthralling music that at times suggests a meeting of the Black Keys and BeauSoleil. Singing in Creole and English, Danaë is inclined to wax poignantly about human rights, slavery, forgiveness and love on mostly memorable originals. Not only familiar with New Orleans parade pulses, Delgres makes high-spirited use of rhythms from the French Caribbean, the Mississippi Delta and elsewhere.

Ordering info: pias.com

Kevin Gordon's sixth album, ***Tilt And Shine*** (Crowville 4005; 34:17 ★★★★★), has compelling little song-stories, filled with colorful Louisianan characters that seem to have sprung from his creative mind, full-tilt. In addition to radiant and literate songwriting, there's depth to Gordon's vocals and blues-influenced guitar work. **DB**

Ordering info: kevingordon.net



Connie Han *Crime Zone*

MACK AVENUE 1140

★★★½

In an age when exceptional technical ability is commonplace, jazz artists seem to feel intense pressure to write their own material as a way of standing apart from the virtuosic throng. Yet, if you're objectively picking material for a new album, you probably wouldn't pick tunes from a novice composer. After all, the whole history of pop and jazz songwriting is at the ready. Nevertheless, that's what most young jazz artists do.

And that's, in part, what 22-year-old pianist Connie Han has done on her Mack Avenue debut, *Crime Zone*. She's already a crazy-good player, arranger and improviser. She's got all the technical mastery she'll ever need and has absorbed the post-bop piano masters, both considerable achievements for anyone, let alone someone so young.

Han might prove to be a terrific composer, too. Seven of the disc's 10 tunes are originals with angular melodies and odd, abruptly shifting meters. The material effectively shows off her prowess and that of her fine band, which includes L.A. drummer Bill Wysaske, her mentor and producer. The other three tracks, however—Stephen Sondheim's "Pretty Women," Joe Henderson's "Shade Of Jade" and Duke Pearson's "Is That So?"—all have stood the test of time and offer many of the album's most engaging moments.

Han said that the experience of studying with a drummer for years has given her the decidedly percussive approach that is so evident throughout the album, and helps give the recording its edge. What's not quite there yet is a definable sense of personality. It will, no doubt, come forward. Meanwhile, Mack Avenue has found a diamond in the rough. —Allen Morrison

Crime Zone: Another Kind Of Right; Crime Zone; By The Grace Of God; Pretty Women; Southern Rebellion; Grúvy; A Shade Of Jade; Member This; Is That So?; Extended Stay. (61:17)

Personnel: Connie Han, piano; Fender Rhodes; Edwin Livingston, bass; Bill Wysaske, drums; Walter Smith III, tenor saxophone (1, 2, 3, 4, 9); Brian Swartz, trumpet (1).

Ordering info: mackavenue.com



Jason Lindner's Now Vs. Now *The Buffering Cocoon*

JAZZLAND 3779045

★★★★½

Brooklyn keyboardist Jason Lindner has received increased attention following his contributions to David Bowie's final album, *Blackstar*, and currently is making his mark as part of Donny McCaslin's touring band. In timely fashion, Lindner is pulling the focus back on his own outfit, *Now Vs. Now*. On *The Buffering Cocoon*, the group appears in a basic trio format, as Lindner is joined by bassist Panagiotis Andreou and drummer Justin Tyson.

The bandleader combines upright acoustic piano with an array of keyboards, including a Wurlitzer and a pair of Prophet synthesizers, with effects pedals littering their surfaces.

Retro mirage-shimmers overlay all, as Lindner glances over his shoulder at the 1970s and '80s, picking tonal inflections from multiple decades. But he's also cosmically attuned to the future, cannibalizing a range of sonic influences.

On "Glimmer," pitches slide, bass warbles, drums jet then cease, blending shades of Krautrock and minimal house. Three minutes in, a clipped vocal repeat enters, almost converting the tune into Brazilian pop. Lindner's phrases always are offered through a veil of imaginative, hands-on effects, and where "Silkworm Society" has a more conventional flow, it's only by comparison. "Pergamos" has a Greco-Turkish electro-vibe, cutting to glitched reggae for its second phase, a highlight track in its near-demented mashing-up. Quality persists with "400 PPM," its crashing beats, tiny vocals and squirting decorations sounding like a soundtrack to an unseen Biblical epic.

—Martin Longley

The Buffering Cocoon: Buffering 3; Cloud Fishing; Glimmer; Motion Potion; Silkworm Society; Buffering 43; Dichotomy; Pergamos; Squoosh; 400 PPM; The Scarecrow; Accelerating Returns; Buffer Failed, Restart. (56:22)

Personnel: Jason Lindner, piano, keyboards, electronics; Panagiotis Andreou, bass; Justin Tyson, drums; Sasha Masakowski, vocals (11).

Ordering info: jazzlandrec.com

Mia Dyberg Trio Ticket!

CLEAN FEED 487

★★★★

Bebop inspired beat authors to invest their writing with more rhythm, soul, spontaneity and unpredictability. Now, the Mia Dyberg Trio, a collection of Danish and Norwegian musicians with strong connections to Berlin's improvised music scene, brings things back around by claiming the influence of beat writer William S. Burroughs. In addition to working through the varied dimensions of his oeuvre, Burroughs was a vivid performer, a serpentine narrator, a bone-dry comic and an unsparing truth-teller.

The trio's music, whether composed by alto saxophonist Dyberg and bassist Asger Thomsen or collectively improvised, matches its inspiration with impact and clearly has the edge when it comes to lucidity.

Thomsen has a strong instinct for structure, which ensures direction and cohesiveness, even during the music's most free-flowing moments. The saxophonist's adroit phrasing and tonal flexibility express a variety of moods and textures quite clearly, and her melodic imagination ensures that each gesture lands with emotion. "Party Ist Vorbei" captures the reflective mel-



ancholy one might experience when a long evening's fun winds down; "Claws Out" stretches and twists with feline elasticity.

Ultimately, it matters less that one can spot the literary influence here than the music succeeding on its own merits. With its strong writing, responsive interaction and expressive playing, the trio delivers.

—Bill Meyer

Ticket!: Ticket!: Party Ist Vorbei; Wil's Swing; Silversmoke; Mia's Pulse; Nord; Snap!; Claws Out; Tropical; Chinese Laundry; Snapback; Stillhed; The First Track; How Do You Know When You Are Through? (49:58)

Personnel: Mia Dyberg, alto saxophone; Asger Thomsen, bass; Dag Magnus Narvesen, drums.

Ordering info: cleanfeed-records.com

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Auspicious Beginnings

The world was just catching on to the sublimity of pianist **Fred Hersch**'s art in December 1989, when he recorded **Heartsongs (Sun-nyside 1474; 60:14 ★★★★★)**. It would be in the coming decade that Hersch would become a major figure. Still, this remastered trio session with bassist Michael Formanek and drummer Jeff Hirshfield contains as much depth and lyricism as his post-breakthrough recordings. Hersch still wears his Bill Evans influence on his sleeve, as evidenced by the premiere of his tune "Evanessence." But that song and others, like "Lullabye" and "Rain Waltz," also highlight how he had transcended that influence with a highly personalized latticework. Hersch also gives gorgeous, nuanced and idiosyncratic readings to two Wayne Shorter tunes—"Fall" (on which Hirshfield takes a stellar turn) and "Infant Eyes" (on which Formanek does the same)—as well as a resplendent version of Ornette Coleman's "The Sphinx," simultaneously free and beautifully controlled, that stands with the best of Coleman interpretations.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

The man who one day would be known as "the Nat 'King' Cole of Brazil" was just an up-and-coming nightclub singer when he debuted in 1975 with **Emilio Santiago (Far Out DIS04; 30:01 ★★★★★)**. It would be more than a decade before he found commercial success—but from this auspicious beginning, he commanded either the respect or the budget to convince the cream of the Brazilian crop (keyboardist João Donato, saxophonist Victor Assis Brasil and drummer Paulinho da Costa among them) to back him. In retrospect, the eponymous record is rightly remembered as a classic, showing Santiago as equally conversant with bossa nova ("Nega Dina"), lush balladry ("Porque Somos Iguais") and funk ("Bananeira"). He's not quite so skilled at making them flow coherently: Hearing Santiago's dark-hued baritone turn from aggressively belting out "Bananeira" to flawlessly, delicately articulating the breezy bossa "Quero Alegria," it's hard to believe it's the same vocalist, let alone the same album.

Ordering info: faroutrecordings.com

Some two decades earlier, another South American legend was making his own debut with rather less distinction. While Argentine composer **Lalo Schifrin** now headlines **Mambo In Paris (Harkit 8347; 63:01 ★★½)**, the original 1953-'55 recordings were made under the auspices of either the Eddie Warner or Lolo Martinez Orchestras, for whom Schifrin worked as a pianist and arranger while studying at the Conservatoire de Paris. Martinez is represented on



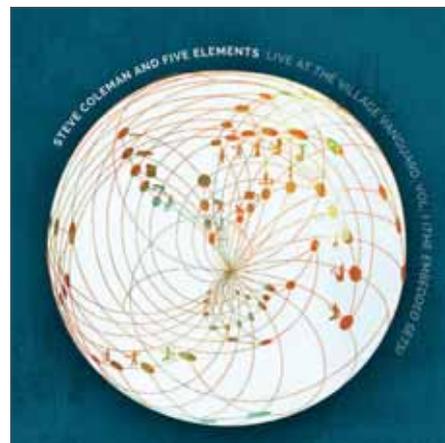
COURTESY THE DON ELLIS ESTATE

only three of the 21 tracks, but they are the standouts—primarily because they include violin great Stéphane Grappelli as featured soloist. But also because two of them ("Brincando" and "Lamento") are Schifrin originals with interesting touches, particularly the bass clarinet riff on "Lamento." The Warner sides—except for a genuinely exciting staccato take on "Caravan"—are period-piece mambo, bland at best and kitschy at worst. Solos are sparse and mostly written, so Schifrin's competent-but-formulaic arrangements have the floor. His admiration of Dizzy Gillespie is already apparent in a chart of "Manteca," but it takes some doing to make such a lively tune feel so lifeless.

Ordering info: harkitrecords.com

Like Schifrin, trumpeter **Don Ellis** was a composer, arranger and bandleader who successfully broke into film and TV scoring. His most famous work in that department, the theme "The French Connection," brings down the house on **The Lost Tapes Vol. 2 (Sleepy Night 006; 74:08 ★★½)**, a collection of mostly muddy live recordings from 1972 or thereabouts. That theme also demonstrates that Ellis was on the fusion train—and a Stanford University performance of "Head Quarters" from summer 1968, complete with clavinet, fuzztone bass and "electric saxophone," marks him as an early pioneer. He infused it with soul and funk, along with orchestral textures (also like Schifrin, Ellis wrote for violin, particularly in the person of Tom Buffon on 1972's "Lydian Riff"), resulting in music that often sounded like film cues, even when it wasn't. But Ellis' experiments with unusual time signatures distinguish him from the pack, without strangling either the groove or the fun of his music. **DB**

Ordering info: sleepynight-records.com



Steve Coleman And Five Elements *Live At The Village Vanguard, Vol. 1 (The Embedded Sets)*

PI 176

★★★★

Steve Coleman and Five Elements outshines all current standing jazz quintets in the quality time its members have spent together, bonding through performance. Though on last year's *Morphogenesis* and 2015's *Synovial Joints*, saxophonist Coleman used expanded personnel for rich orchestration, this two-CD set, recorded live at the Village Vanguard during three nights in May 2017, features his core unit: bassist Anthony Tidd and drummer Sean Rickman, guitarist Miles Okazaki and trumpeter Jonathan Finlayson.

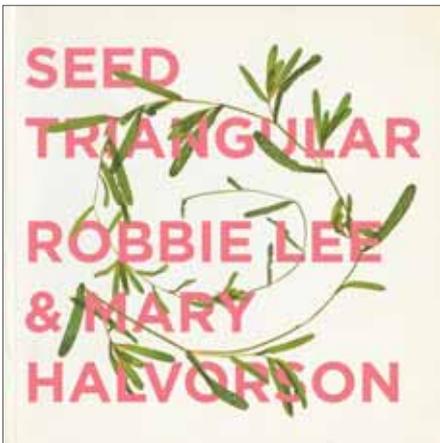
Coleman's interest in "systems" might apply more to his compositions than to the band's improvisational interpretations, which seem intuitive, yet everyone's always in flawless sync. The rhythmists tend exceptionally to dynamics, Rickman and Tidd intensifying or backing off from the ladder-like phrases and tumbling descents Coleman and Finlayson toss off. Okazaki offers understated, but appropriate, comping.

Coleman's second rendition of "Little Girl I'll Miss You," a tune by his alto hero Bunky Green, is a tender, intimate statement. "Figit Time," by drummer Doug Hammond, another of Coleman's mentors, fits with the otherwise original repertoire, which encourages disciplined virtuosity, spontaneous exploration and the pleasures of teamwork. Overall, Five Element's cohesion gives its music a surface of cool consistency. Coleman's first in-concert release in 15 years, *Live* is an exemplary example of his current art and practice. —Howard Mandel

Live At The Village Vanguard, Vol. 1: Embed A (First Set): Horda; Djw; Little Girl I'll Miss You/Embedded #1; idHw; twf; Figit Time; Nfr; Little Girl I'll Miss You; Change The Guard. Embed B (Second Set): rmT/Figit Time; Nfr; idHw; twf; Horda; Embedded #1; Djw; rmT/9 To Five. (78:04:76:16)

Personnel: Steve Coleman, alto saxophone; Jonathan Finlayson, trumpet; Miles Okazaki, guitar; Anthony Tidd, bass; Sean Rickman, drums.

Ordering info: pirecordings.com



Robbie Lee & Mary Halvorson *Seed Triangular*

NEW AMSTERDAM 103

★★★★½

Guitarist Mary Halvorson's reign of versatility and convention-breaking instincts continues. In a deviation from her usual-unusual projects and postmodern guitar notions, *Seed Triangular* finds Halvorson unplugging and embarking on a series of empathetic duets with reed player Robbie Lee. The results are simultaneously iconoclastic and rooted in some fuzzy folklore.

Between the opening "The Booming" and

the resolution of the closing title track, *Seed Triangular* traverses 15 tracks with titles borrowed from Henry David Thoreau's journals. The Thoreau connection translates neatly into music that seems to breathe self-reliance, resistance to modernity (at least its tech tools) and a private sense of transcendentalism.

Lee plays baroque flutes, an 1829 eight-key flute, a chalumeau (Renaissance-era clarinet) soprillo saxophone, melodica and bells, while Halvorson works out on the 18-string Knutsen Harp Guitar, a 1930 Gibson and an 1888 SS Stewart six-string banjo. On "Rock Flowers," as Lee channels micro-Albert Ayler energy on the soprillo, Halvorson summons angular lines on banjo, slipping into a teasing power-chord rock cadence as the dialogue heats up.

Halvorson sounds vaguely reminiscent of John Fahey's meandering grace amid her brief solo spotlights on "The Stuttering Note Of Probably" and "Sing O-Gurgle-Ee This Morning," as Lee's overblown tones help create an impressionistic wash of sound.

—Josef Woodard

Seed Triangular: The Booming; Seven Of Strong; Like A Ripple Made By The Wind; A Forest Viol; Potamogeton; Fireproof-Brick Dust; The Stuttering Note Of Probably; Pondetera; Rock Flowers; Spring Up There; Sing O-Gurgle-Ee This Morning; Shoots Have Shot; The Tawny Orange; Early Willows; Seed Triangular. (51:22)

Personnel: Robbie Lee, Baroque flutes, chalumeau, soprillo saxophone, melodica, bells; Mary Halvorson, 1930 Gibson L-2 guitar, 18-string Knutsen harp guitar, 1888 SS Stewart six-string banjo.

Ordering info: newamrecords.com

Maaïke Den Dunnen *Inner Space*

QFTF 112

★★★★

The soulful lines of Thomas Kugi's tenor saxophone open the proceedings, and r&b is on the agenda. Milan Nikolic adds a funky bass riff to the colorful harmonies of Dena DeRose's piano, the only newcomer on Maaïke Den Dunnen's sophomore album. Soul jazz and gospel grooves also can be heard on "Over And Done With," the closing number on *Inner Space*. But the journey in between takes listeners along a different road, one of mellow textures and quiet introspection.

On "The Deep," a lilting 5/8 bass line, slightly offbeat piano chords and expansive layers of synthesizer create a dreamy, weightless atmosphere, elevating Den Dunnen's limpid vocals. The lack of drums also contributes to this floating feeling, although this absence can at times be detrimental, as on "Ground Control," where the trio of instrumentalists doesn't quite steer the ship. "The Gambler" takes on a more jaunty, whimsical flavor after the light, folksy tone of "There Once More," and next up is the first of three covers on the album. Den Dunnen's affinity for classic pop songs can be heard on Elvis Presley's "Can't Help Falling In Love" and James Morrison's "You Give Me Something," but the highlight has to be her



sultry duet with Kugi on "On The Sunny Side Of The Street."

Den Dunnen delivers vocals with clarity, warmth and subtlety throughout *Inner Space*. The album is likely to dissatisfy those who enjoy their contemporary jazz full of rhythmic propulsion and improvisational grit. But it's an impressive effort from one of the genre's promising young vocalists.

—Luke Seabright

Inner Space: Nature's Call; The Deep; There Once More; The Gambler; Can't Help Falling In Love; You Give Me Something; Ground Control; On The Sunny Side Of The Street; A Sea Of Waves; All Inside Your Heart; Over And Done With. (52:23)

Personnel: Maaïke Den Dunnen, vocals; Thomas Kugi, tenor, soprano saxophone; Dena DeRose, piano, Rhodes, synthesizer; Milan Nikolic, bass.

Ordering info: qftf.net

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Aaron Shragge & Ben Monder

This World Of Dew

HUMAN RESOURCE

★★★★½

This duo does not wander far from one's expectations of a "jazz album" featuring an electric guitar and a shakuhachi. Multi-instrumentalist Aaron Shragge also plays his custom-made dragon mouth trumpet, which doesn't so much spit fire as soar above the clouds. There's a lot of water imagery on this ethereal album—in all states. The title evokes small droplets of moisture, while the cover depicts them shattered and preserved as ice.

It is extremely difficult to fill an album with this instrumentation; this duo pulls it off admirably. Lines blend into each other, and aside from the jarring start to "Stink Worm," the duo eases into most of the scenarios here. When Shragge takes to the trumpet, he evokes a noir backdrop, the sounds becoming woefully human, at times pained, but always searching. In response, Monder mostly remains even-keeled, churning in short bursts, but mostly letting his guitar ring out into the ether. *This World Of Dew* isn't about flash, it's an album of patience and communication. But it is mesmerizing in its lack of urgency, rewarding the listener through subtlety rather than flare.

—Sean J. O'Connell

This World Of Dew: Companion; By Rain And Mud; A Tiny Boat; This World Of Dew; There Is Always One You Follow; Stink Worm; Pretending Wisdom; Roll The Dice; Nothing In The Cry; It's Ours; Old Dust; Settling; Blue Bird; Sun Coming Down. (62:48)

Personnel: Aaron Shragge, dragon mouth trumpet, flugelhorn, shakuhachi; Ben Monder, guitar.

Ordering info: aaronshragge.com



Chris Lightcap

Superette

ROYAL POTATO FAMILY 1805

★★★★½

On the heels of an excellent third album from his two-tenor Bigmouth band, blending rock and West African influences, bassist Chris Lightcap explores his love of electric guitar with the first release from his Superette project. The New York-based Lightcap switches from acoustic to electric bass to lead a double-guitar quartet that leans toward instrumental rock, with surf, garage and Americana overtones, plus occasional African references.

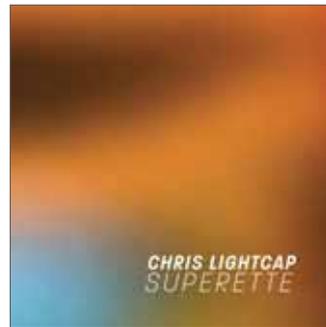
Along with Lightcap and drummer Dan Rieser, *Superette* features the sinewy interplay of guitarists Curtis Hasselbring and Jonathan Goldberger. Guitars and electric bass blend ideally in the intricate West African-style lines of the bandleader's "She Walked In," which includes a Wurliizer solo by guest John Medeski that evokes the sounds of Ethio-jazz. The other ring-er here is guitarist Nels Cline, whose unearthly solo makes Hasselbring's "Far Away Planet" a sonic thrill. *Superette* underscores Lightcap's taste in down-tempo rock with takes on two ballads: the hushed psychedelia of Skip Spence's "All Come To Meet Her" and Neil Young's "Birds." The latter benefits from the Goldberger-Hasselbring six-string blend, the band imbuing the song with a new, anthemic allure.

—Bradley Bamberger

Superette: Selector; She Walked In; Far Away Planet; While You Were Out; Djali; Calling On Cars; Ace Of Spades; Light Trails; All Come To Meet Her; Frozen Bread; Birds. (55:32)

Personnel: Chris Lightcap, electric bass; Curtis Hasselbring, electric guitar; Jonathan Goldberger, electric guitar; Dan Rieser, drums; Nels Cline, electric guitar (3, 5, 7); lap-steel guitar (8); John Medeski, Hammond B-3 (3, 6, 8); Wurliizer (2).

Ordering info: royalpotatofamily.com



Cory Weeds

Little Big Band

Explosion

CELLAR LIVE 111317

★★★★½

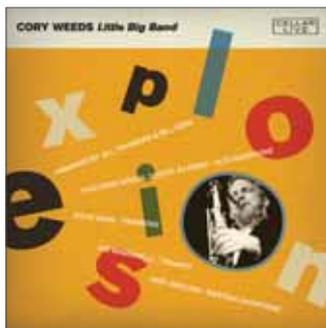
Canadian saxophonist, JUNO-winning producer and Cellar Live owner Cory Weeds has assembled some of his favorite Vancouver, Edmonton and New York musicians for an album that offers up loving respect of the jazz tradition. *Explosion* brings a fuller sound to Weeds' 11-piece Little Big Band, sourced from a nostalgic repertoire, and 1950s and '60s small-ensemble compositions. "Minor Mishap" captures the warmth of Tommy Flanagan's 1959 *The Cats*, as upbeat, spirited solos by trombonist Steve Davis and trumpeter Joe Magnerelli precede Weeds' heartfelt saxophone. Benny Golson's laid-back ballad "Park Avenue Petit" finds an impassioned Weeds creating a relaxed mood, before revisiting the 1956 hit "Canadian Sunset." Weeds and three additional reedists cap off the album with the fiery "Ready & Able." The Jimmy Smith burner features a frolic of the high-energy saxophone section, questing through "Rhythm" changes and finishing up the session with a suave and sizzling finale.

—Kerlie McDowall

Explosion: Minor Mishap; Soon; East Of The Village; Park Avenue Petite; My Girl Is Just Enough Woman For Me; Canadian Sunset; K.D.'s Motion; Please Send Me Someone To Love; Ready & Able. (60:20)

Personnel: Cory Weeds, Steve Kaldestad, tenor saxophone; PJ Perry, alto saxophone; Gary Smulyan, baritone saxophone; Rod Murray, Steve Davis, trombone; Joe Magnerelli, Chris Davis, trumpet; Chris Gestrin, piano; Paul Rushka, bass; Jesse Cahill, drums; Bill Coon, arranger (1, 3, 5, 7, 9); Jill Townsend, arranger (2, 4, 6, 8), conductor.

Ordering info: cellarlive.com



Judi Silvano & The Zephyr Band

Lessons Learned

UNIT 4868

★★★★½

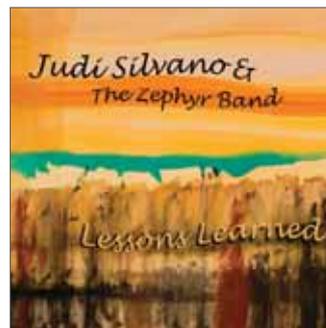
There are plenty of lessons musicians can learn while working their way through New York's venues. Vocalist Judi Silvano likely can attest to this, and *Lessons Learned* contains rather descriptive lyrics that attempt to enlighten listeners. Less common instrumental and performative aspects of the album, like the metallic, spring-like effect on the guitar in "Dark Things" and the high-pitched, bowed bass at the beginning of "The Music's In My Body," give the songs moments of individuality. But *Lessons Learned* struggles to find a sense of flow. There are times when Silvano's vocals seem at odds with the rest of the band. "Hand And Heart" plays out at a slow tempo, and Silvano's accompanying melody moves with such unpredictable rhythmic improvisation that it becomes hard to know who is leading and what is supposed to propel the song. While Silvano is conscientious of clear enunciation—a quality sometimes secondary in vocal jazz—this stylistic strength serves as a weakness when, on a song like the finale, everything is sung with bold punctuation, eliciting a feeling of spasmodic movement more expected in scat or bebop.

—Kira Grunenberg

Lessons Learned: Round And Round; You Will Know; Dark Things; Castle Song; Dust; Hand And Heart; After Love; Shuffle And Sway; Riding A Zephyr; The Music's In My Body. (60:30)

Personnel: Judi Silvano, vocals; Kenny Wessel, Bruce Arnold, electric guitar; Adam Kolker, bass clarinet, soprano, tenor saxophone; Joe Lovano, tenor saxophone (5, 9); Ratzon B. Harris, bass; Bob Meyer, drums; Todd Isler, percussion.

Ordering info: judisilvano.com





Joris Roelofs/ Han Bennink

Icarus

ICP 059

★★★★★

French-born, Amsterdam-based clarinetist Joris Roelofs has built his career balancing intense discipline and a deep commitment to post-bop tradition with a measured exploratory streak. He's worked extensively in the Vienna Art Orchestra and maintains a wonderfully buoyant trio with the American rhythm section of Ted Poor and Matt Penman. But this new recording suggests that his attraction to freedom is growing stronger. *Icarus* is a lovely duo project with veteran free-jazz drummer Han Bennink, a perfect match for the reedist. The percussionist is both a master of chaos and one of the most naturally swinging musicians on the planet, and he provides both grounding and provocation to his much younger associate.

Most of the music is freely improvised and the album opens with a blast of disorder on "Carmen," with Bennink banging out piano clusters and injecting some discordant cymbal explosions, while Roelofs blows harsh squawks. Suddenly, a wild gear-shift occurs and a tender, breathy melody that sounds like a lost standard and a rumbling groove takes over, indicating the sort of polarities that the pair giddily explores throughout. The clarinetist's lyrical gifts are so strong that when the duo tackle jazz standards like Eric Dolphy's "Something Sweet, Something Tender"—presented with an attractively slack drag from Bennink that deftly adds tension to the in-and-out-of-focus treatment of the theme—or Charlie Haden's indelible "Song For Che," they feel entirely of a piece with the spontaneous creations. *Icarus* captures an electric dialogue: raw, giddy, trusting. Here's hoping this conversation continues. —Peter Margasak

Icarus: Carmen; Guidi; Something Sweet, Something Tender; Rondo 2; Die Alte Perücke; Gustav 1; Icarus; This Is New; Rondo 1; Gustav 2; Bahbachbah; Broad Stripes And Bright Stars; The Old Wig; Song For Che. (40:37)

Personnel: Joris Roelofs, bass clarinet, B-flat clarinet; Han Bennink, drums, balk, C clarinet, piano.

Ordering info: icporchestra.com

ROVA *In Transverse Time*

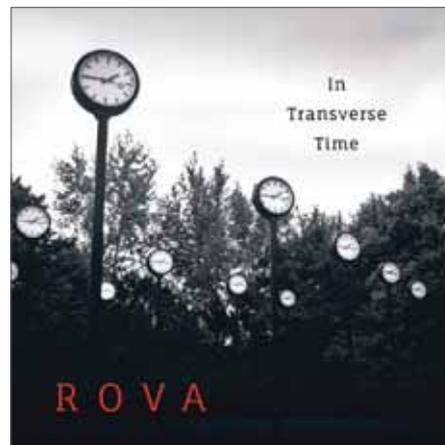
VICTO 131

★★★★★

On the release day for the venerable ROVA saxophone quartet's *In Transverse Time*, the group went to church—an ornate Catholic edifice in Victoriaville, Quebec, during the avant-leaning FIMAV festival. It made sense, given ROVA's resonant sonorities and, on Steve Adams' beguiling *The Dark Forest Suite*, its being influenced by the Republic of Georgia's religious choral tradition.

Remarkably, this vital San Francisco-based quartet has retained steady membership—Larry Ochs, Bruce Ackley, Jon Raskin and Adams, covering and blending the range of baritone to soprano saxophones—and continues to generate fresh ideas at the ripe age of 40. Though fortified by improvisatory strengths—individually and as a group—core values of *In Transverse Time* are steered toward the experimental fringe by ROVA's focuses on conceptual and structural explorations; structure matters here, even when intentionally equipped with a margin for spontaneous detours.

Opening with Ackley's "Oxygen," a melding of slow, long notes with kinetic, staccato parts, the album kicks into a heady semi-party mode on Raskin's "The Time Being." Time, and its subdivi-



sions, becomes a prevailing motif, as on Raskin's "A Leap Of Faith In Transverse Time," with its slow progression of staggered long tones—almost reminiscent of Morton Feldman's music—leading into a loosened sense of musical time.

To close, ROVA shines, blows, simmers and connects on Ochs' 25-minute "Hidden In Ochre," a grand finale and statement of continuity for its 40th anniversary. —Josef Woodard

In Transverse Time: Oxygen; The Dark Forest Suite (Introduction/Song 1/Song 2/Song 3/Song 4/Coda); A Leap Of Faith In Transverse Time; The Time Being; Hidden In Ochre. (56:48)

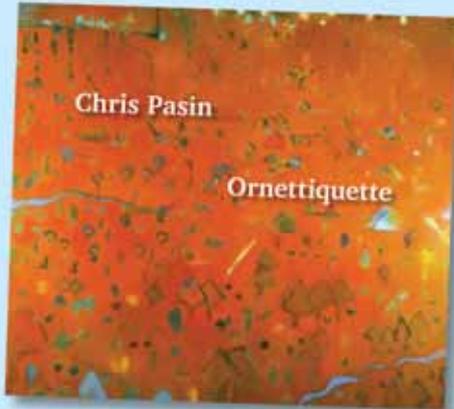
Personnel: Bruce Ackley, soprano saxophone; Steve Adams, alto, soprano saxophone; Jon Raskin, baritone saxophone; Larry Ochs, tenor saxophone.

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The Churchillian Sweep of Crosby's Life

What Will Durant achieved for Western civilization in 11 volumes, Gary Giddins seems on track to do for Bing Crosby. In volume two of his Churchillian-scale chronicle, ***Bing Crosby: Swinging On A Star, The War Years 1940–1946*** (Little Brown), he magnifies six years into 700 pages that confirm Crosby's primacy among the searchlights of American music and identity. The word *definitive* seems petite.

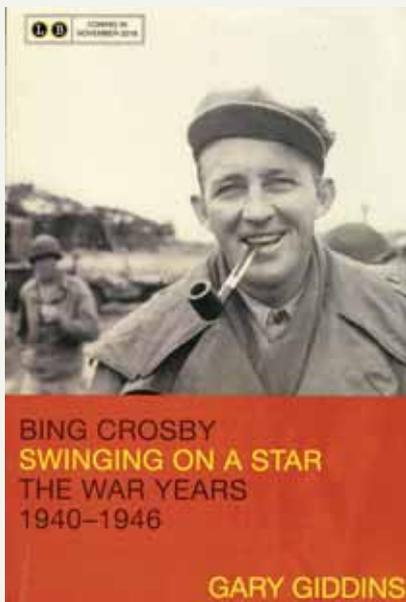
Like Churchill, in whom the world upheavals of the 20th century converge, Crosby offers a similar sweep. His career is a prism for the whole of American popular culture from the last days of minstrelsy to the postmodern patty-cake of the *Road To ...* films. And like Churchill, the Crosby saga peaks in the early '40s when he ruled radio, records and films.

Giddins' main argument is that Crosby consistently personified an American cultural consensus. In charting his rise in volume one, *A Pocket Full of Dreams*, Giddins sketched a man whose Depression-era persona shrugged at wealth, instilled self-respect in the vagabond spirit and made unemployment a lark by stripping it of its moral reproach. Now in volume two, Crosby evolves from New Deal philosopher-hobo to serene prototype of understated patriotism.

During the war, domestic propaganda instructed as much as it motivated. It held up lessons of proper home-front behavior in the guise of entertainment. No one made the medicine go down more easily than Crosby in the 1944 film *Going My Way*, for which he won an Oscar for being Bing. Still, said Giddins, his Father O'Malley character was "as emblematic of the war years as [Gregory Peck's] Atticus Finch was to the civil rights era."

When Giddins undertook this project 20 years ago, Crosby was virgin territory for serious biography. There had been a minor mudslinger and a bitter memoir by Bing's third son, Gary (much of which he moderates or recants here). Giddins must have envisioned a Jeckyl-and-Hyde narrative. Imagine his shock at the Crosby he found: mostly decent, loyal, disciplined, professional. The public Crosby was minted from the real thing. The present volume is a reassuring catalog of good deeds, small and large. They make clear why Bing mirrored a nation whose people always would be proudly nostalgic for what they became and the qualities they showed during the war.

Crosby probably would not fit into the many immodesties and excesses of contemporary America. So, his vast impact lies invisible in the post-Generation Y collective

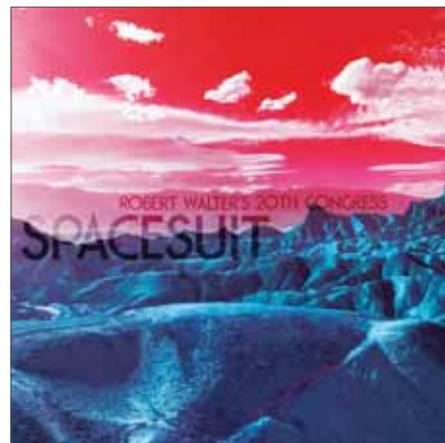


memory. He was suspicious of celebrity and embarrassed by its privileges. He was universally admired, but shunned pedestals. Giddins finds this at the root of the strict parenting of his four sons. All were raised in a bubble of fame, yet Bing was determined to instill in them a self-reliance that would immunize them against the "Hollywood kids" syndrome. Alas, good intentions never guarantee good outcomes.

Giddins finds the Crosby cool something of a mask, though. It put distance between him and things inside that he preferred to keep at bay: vulnerability, self-awareness, unwanted emotions. Alas, they remain as beyond Giddins' reach as they were in the music. "Crosby is rarely singled out for the emotional tenor of his music," Giddins wrote. "[He] expressed inborn virility, secure and stoic; he did not invite listeners to inspect his insecurities." Bing never offered authenticity or solicited empathy. He left that to Sinatra, whose love songs were directed toward women. Through hundreds of camp shows here and abroad, though, Bing was singing to men. "Crosby's reserve was at the core of his success with the troops," Giddins said, because "restraint carried more weight than amorous histrionics."

Presumably, further volumes are coming, though Little Brown has made no promises. In Giddins' care, they likely will be equally compelling in their contexts. But the "war years" period has a glory that seems to live in a precious Golden Age of the imagination. **DB**

Ordering info: littlebrown.com



Robert Walter's 20th Congress *Spacesuit*

ROYAL POTATO FAMILY 1812

★★★★½

Throughout *Spacesuit*—an album that assembles a new amalgam of 20th Congress players and launches Robert Walter into science-fiction frontiers—there's a clear sense of confident cohesion in chemistry and stylistic flow. The keyboardist's troupe is set up in classic '60s/'70s funk fashion. But the addition of sine-wave synthesizer tones on tracks like "Current Futures" and "Modifier" evokes futuristic sci-fi adventures. The half-spoken-word sample, half chromatically ascending electronic flourish of the title track sends the album on a space-fueled mission. It's as if each composition on *Spacesuit* is intended to embody a separate chapter of the ensemble's interstellar journey.

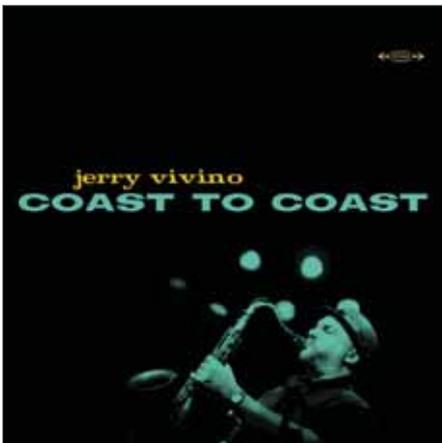
Clashing a smooth Rhodes melody with a jittery synthesizer pattern, cycling perfect fifths and octaves with augmented fourths and minor sevenths, injects immediate tension into "Nerva & Dumbo." "Emanate" exudes a vastness through its slower rhythmic hook and heavy-footed kick, contrasting with a stable and lighter-toned piano motif in a waltz's three. Conversely, "Most Of All Of Us" introduces a lively cast of organ, drums, piano, guitar, bass and more. Such density, alongside the organ melody's gradual crescendo, might convey a triumphant return to Earth from the ethereal places *Spacesuit* takes listeners. Here, Walter neatly could have completed his sonic journey with the subtle synthesizer fade. But the cleverly off-beat hi-hat, kick and rim shots on hidden gem "Electric Blanket" keep the music just unbalanced enough to make it all seem unfinished. Maybe Walter's just leaving the door open for further exploration.

—Kira Grunenberg

Spacesuit: Spacesuit; Nerva & Dumbo; Posthuman; 13th Key; Emanate; Modifier; Chalk Giant; Current Futures; Most Of All Of Us; Electric Blanket. (36:06)

Personnel: Robert Walter, piano, electric piano, organ, clavinet, synthesizer; Chris Alford, guitar; Simon Lott, drums, percussion; Victor Little, bass; Mike Dillon, percussion (2, 3, 7, 9).

Ordering info: royalpotatofamily.com



Jerry Vivino Coast To Coast

BLUJAZZ 3469

★★★★½

Most people don't think of Paterson, New Jersey, as a great jazz town, but maybe they should. Native son Jerry Vivino certainly makes a case for it by teaming with fellow Patersonians Bucky and Martin Pizzarelli, who provide many of the highlights on the veteran reedsman's fifth solo album. Bucky, the elder Pizzarelli (father of Martin and John), was 91 when he recorded the three tracks he appears on here, and still can swing with the best of them, especially on the aptly titled "Paterson," during which he solos over Martin's strutting bass with youthful insouciance.

Bucky's scene-stealing licks aside, Vivino's saxophone is the star of this set, which hangs together nicely, despite being recorded with five different sets of players on both coasts. Vivino's preferred style of playing is more tasteful than technical; his solos seldom overstay their welcome or venture far from the root chords. But his tone and timing on tenor, his main instrument here, are impeccable. He injects just the right hint of honk into his Sam Butera tribute, "Sam I Am," and evokes the fluidity of Coltrane in just a few concise runs on "Spud Time."

Throughout the set, Vivino gives his varied supporting cast plenty of room to shine—which becomes especially poignant on two numbers recorded in a quintet with trumpeter Lew Soloff (1944–2015). On the album's fiercest track, "Category 5," both Vivino and Soloff blow their instruments with gale-force intensity, making one wonder what else might have come from their collaboration, if it could have continued.

—Andy Hermann

Coast To Coast: Coast To Coast; Spud Time; Body And Soul; Sam I Am; Paterson; Category 5; Here's That Rainy Day; Lew's Blues; Honeysuckle Rose; Miracles. (53:23)

Personnel: Jerry Vivino, tenor, soprano saxophone, alto flute, vocals; John Leftwich, bass (1, 2, 4); Bernie Dresel, drums (1, 2, 4); Andy Langham, piano (1, 2, 4); Ron Stout, trumpet (1, 2); Bucky Pizzarelli, guitar (3, 5, 9); Martin Pizzarelli, bass (3, 5, 9); Karl Latham, drums (3, 5, 9, 10); Ken Levinsky, piano (3, 5, 9, 10); Mark Sganga, guitar (10); John Arbo, bass (10); Mitchell Forman, piano (7); Kevin Axt, bass (7); Lew Soloff, trumpet (6, 8); Kermit Driscoll, bass (6, 8); Shawn Pelton, drums (6, 8); Brian Charette, piano (6, 8).

Ordering info: blujazz.com

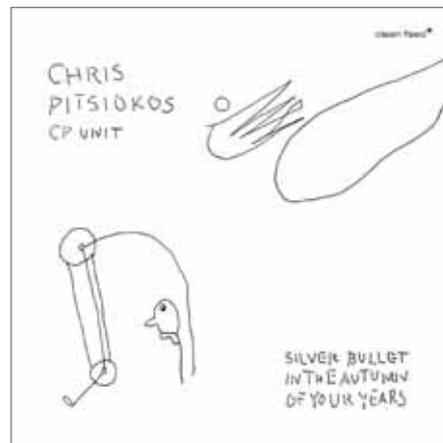
Chris Pitsiokos CP Unit Silver Bullet In The Autumn Of Your Years

CLEAN FEED 481

★★★★

About 40 years have passed since the release of Ornette Coleman's first electric record, *Dancing In Your Head*, and people still are trying to decode its information. When the members of his Prime Time band stepped out on their own, their subsequent music didn't adhere to a single sonic ideology. But all those recordings have made clear that there's plenty of room for an individual to make their own mark while dealing with Coleman's ideas. There's also room for younger musicians, like Chris Pitsiokos.

The Brooklyn-based alto saxophonist has been working with Prime Time-derived sound elements for at least half a decade, and with the latest version of his band, CP Unit, he's fashioned a persuasive combination of harmolodic jazz and contemporary noise rock. The bandleader also plays electronics, and he's not dabbling. On "Improvisation 27," he peppers a terse guitar-drums face-off with blips, and a moonscape synth bass line provides the foundation for jousting between alto and guitar on "The Tower." Guitarist Sam Lisabeth, a veteran of the herky-jerky rock combo Guerilla Toss who shifts eas-



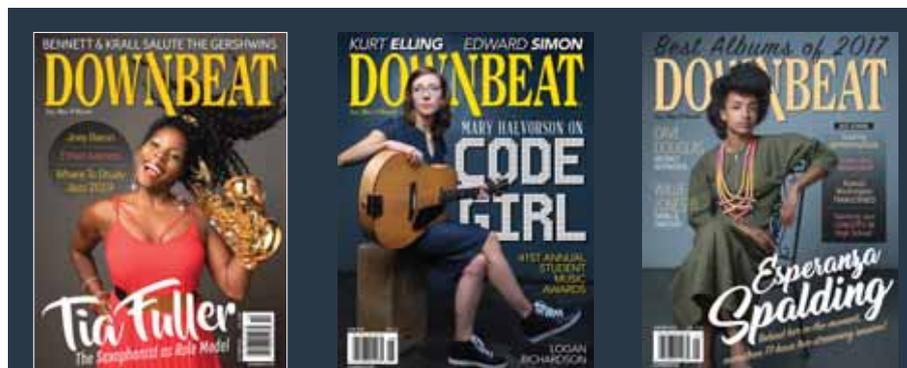
ily between Sonic Youth-like swathes of noise and stuttering, Bern Nix-like passages, is key to the ensemble's success. It's his pungent tone and wayward lines that turn "A Knob On The Face Of A Man" from a jaunty calypso into a white-knuckled amusement park ride.

—Bill Meyer

Silver Bullet In The Autumn Of Your Years: Improvisation 8; Dalai Lama's Got That PMA; Once Upon A Time Called Now; Oreluis; Improvisation 27; Positional Play; Silver Bullet In The Autumn Of Your Years; The Tower; A Knob On The Face Of A Man; Arthropod. (53:05)

Personnel: Chris Pitsiokos, alto saxophone, wind controller, sampler, analog synthesizer; Sam Lisabeth, guitar; Tim Dahl, electric bass (4, 6, 9, 10); Henry Fraser, electric bass (1, 3, 5, 7, 8); Jason Nazary, drums, electronics (4, 6, 9, 10); Connor Baker, drums (1, 3, 5, 7, 8).

Ordering info: cleanfeed-records.com



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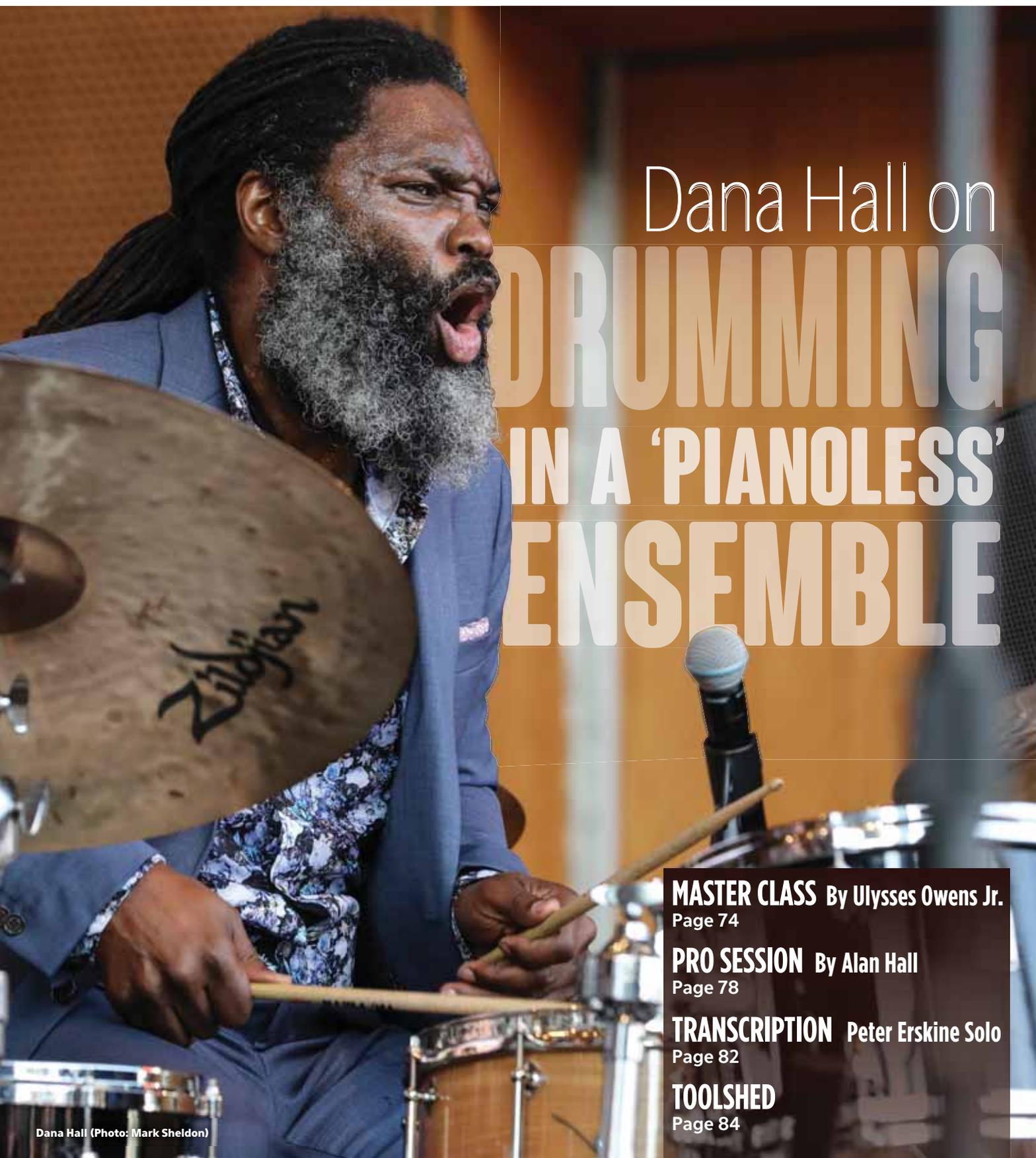
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DRUM SCHOOL



Dana Hall on

DRUMMING IN A 'PIANOLESS' ENSEMBLE

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DRUM SCHOOL

THE EVOLVING BASIS

By Dana Hall

Photo by Mark Sheldon

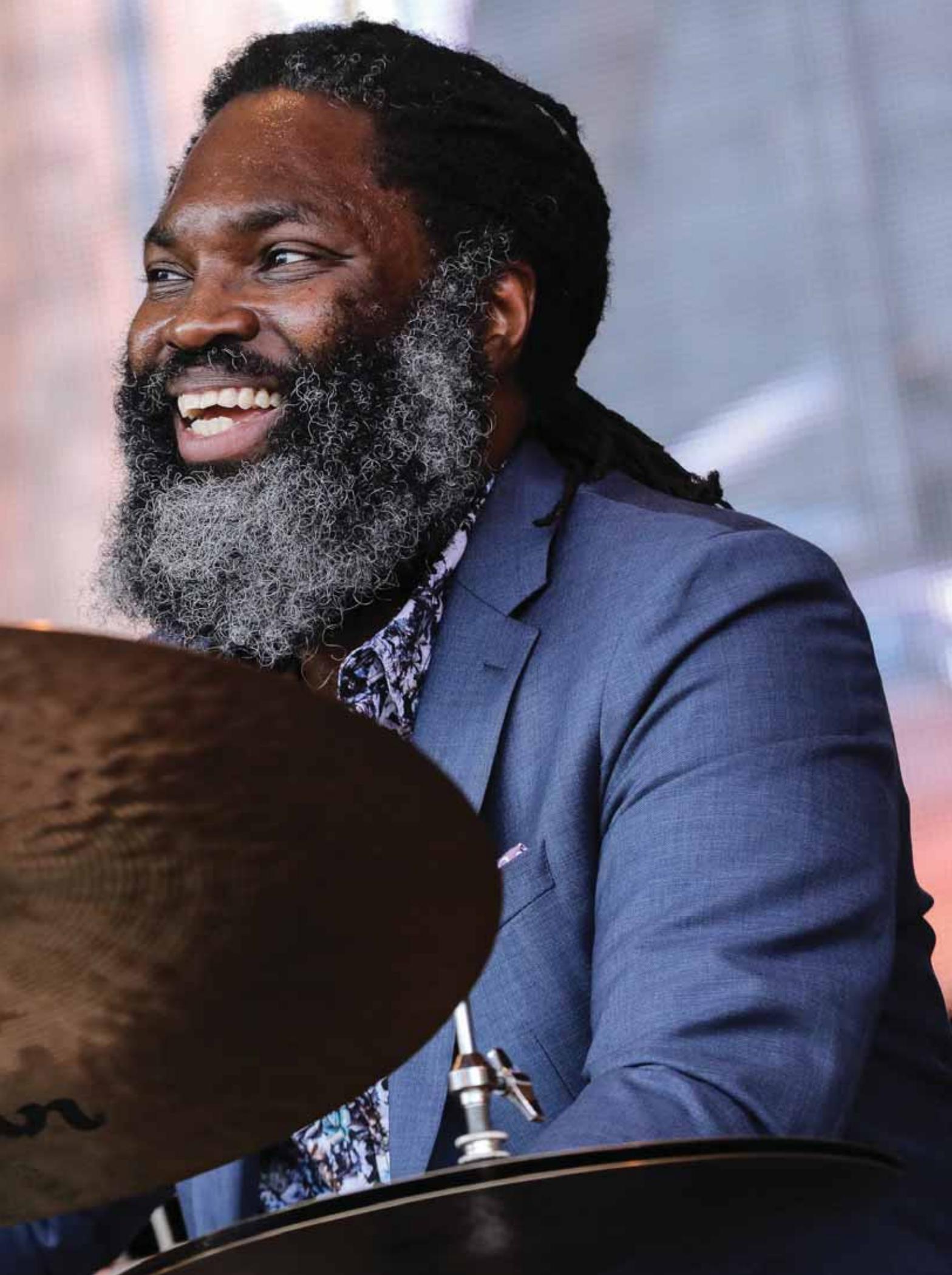
Exploring techniques and approaches to jazz drumset accompaniment and performance in a non-chordal-instrument rhythm section

A number of creative ensembles that I either lead or participate in as a sideman don't include piano, guitar, vibraphone or any other chordal instrument. Consequently, a very frequent conversation that I have—either with my students at DePaul University, where I serve as the director of jazz studies, or at the conclusion of one of my performances—begins with the statement, “Wow, I didn't even miss the (insert chordal instrument, usually piano) ...,” followed by the questions, “What are you thinking about and responding to when you're playing in a rhythm section and there isn't a chordal instrument?” and “How do you know what to play with and behind the soloist?” The first statement, with no offense to my chordal instrument-playing brothers and sisters, is a nice sentiment to receive, considering the musical setting. The subsequent questions are excellent ones deserving serious reflection.

This article expands upon my usual replies to those questions and explores the inherent complexities associated with jazz drumset performance in a musical setting without a chordal instrument.

Within, I suggest tips and strategies for being creative in this relatively liberated terrain. By understanding some basic concepts and re-engineering one's presumptions about the roles of rhythm section players individually and as a collective, drummers—and indeed all musicians—can develop the skills needed to confidently perform in musical environments without a chordal instrument present.

Before I go any further, let me be clear: Most guitarists, pianists and vibraphonists today who are engaged in contemporary jazz performance practices in the wake of the innovations of Gerry Mulligan, Charles Mingus, Ornette Coleman, Miles Davis, Steve Lacy and a number of other iconoclasts of the past 60 years are more than capable of supporting soloists so as to not box them into a creative corner. Nevertheless, “strolling”—the act of the chordal instrument in an ensemble laying out and not playing for a period of time while a horn soloist plays with the bassist and drummer sans chordal accompaniment—remains an integral part of many contemporary ensembles. Doing so results





Hall is the leader of Spring, a Chicago-based quartet featuring two woodwinds, bass and drumset.

in a refreshing textural change that usually leads to more focused listening by performers and audience members alike. And significantly, when a chordal instrument is removed from the equation, a new freedom emerges that allows the horn soloist, bassist and drummer to explore “off lead,” so to speak.

In a “pianoless” (I’ll use this term as shorthand for an ensemble without any type of chordal instrument) ensemble, all instrumentalists are free from predeterminations and circumscribed boundaries. They are more flexible harmonically and, in turn, rhythmically. My focus here will be specifically on the role the drummer plays in this situation, but my philosophy is that *everyone* in the band is a drummer. With that in mind, here are seven tips and associated strategies/suggestions for performing in a pianoless ensemble.

1) Know the tradition. It is likely that some of the first musical performances without a chordal instrument were borne out of necessity and chance. The story of Don Byas and Slam Stewart’s legendary and influential 1945 Town Hall performances, perhaps apocryphal, taking place only because all of the other scheduled musicians were caught in a snow storm (in June?), is one example. Another more authentic example is Gerry Mulligan’s pianoless quartet with Chet Baker. That group came into being principally because the club where Mulligan was scheduled to appear didn’t have a piano. Rather than add a guitarist or vibraphonist, Mulligan thought his interests in counterpoint and melody—along with sympathetic collaborators in Baker, Carson Smith and Chico Hamilton—could carry the group. They did,

and the rest is history.

I bring up these two classic examples to illustrate that music in ensembles without a chordal instrument doesn’t have to be particularly avant-garde or “out.” These two pianoless groups performed standard compositions and original material that is very approachable and requires no reboot of our understanding of jazz.

The reason why these two classic ensembles were so musically successful without a chordal instrument is because the artists involved were in full command of the fundamentals and were grounded in their approach. Drummers specifically must aspire to master that which is conventional behind the drumset, including developing excellent time, a ride-cymbal beat that dances, a conversational comping vocabulary, a touch that is sensitive to the demands of the music at hand, and a clear command of the fundamentals associated with the music being performed (i.e. knowing the song’s form, melody and associated harmony). The more confident you are with these skills, the more information you have at your disposal to make reasoned decisions while playing in *any* musical setting.

Further, a thorough command of independent coordination among all four limbs allows one to maintain a clear and consistent ride cymbal, while juggling and juxtaposing rhythmic ideas in the other limbs. There are a number of method books and videos on the market that explore coordinated independence, but the true primary sources are the recordings featuring Kenny Clarke, Philly Joe Jones, Max Roach, Art Blakey, Roy Haynes, Billy Higgins, Elvin Jones, Art Taylor, Mel Lewis and other pioneers of conversational approaches to the drumset. By listening to and copying the per-

formances on the recordings, you’ll be on your way to mastering the tradition.

In your next rehearsal with a musician playing a chordal instrument, play a few choruses with the full rhythm section comping. Then, as an experiment, have the chordal instrument lay out. Big difference, but in capable hands, the situation remains negotiable. In fact, new ideas can emerge. When the chordal instrument drops out, horn players then can converse musically with the bassist, exploring the terrain of the harmony and extending the tune harmonically. The music gains nuance when said soloist remembers the rhythmic part of the musical equation. And for drummers like myself, that’s when we extend beyond the mere timekeeping framework—generally associated with those early Mulligan sides—and begin to use those fundamental skills we’ve developed to interact on an extended plane with the soloist.

2) Use the drums and cymbals as complementary tones and colors to create and encourage rhythmic and melodic development in the ensemble. Comping is an art.

Each drum and cymbal, and their various combinations, has a specific weight, color and sound. Drummers should learn those variables within their own setups and employ them at moments in a performance to achieve a particular dynamic and shape for the ensemble. (We’ve all heard and felt the vibrational change when Mel Lewis moves to a china cymbal behind a saxophone solo or the impact of Ed Blackwell riding on a Chinese opera gong instead of a cymbal behind Don Cherry’s trumpet.)

When I hear harmonic tension in the dialogue between the bassist and horn player, one way I can contribute to that tension is to use repetition/rhythmic motifs, essentially playing the same rhythmic or melodic idea repeatedly or in the same location on my drumset, perhaps even displacing or playing the motivic idea over bar lines and thereby suspending any resolution, only to later release that wave of tension with the other members of the ensemble. I also can moderate that tension by keeping my accompaniment sparse and open, allowing the dialogue in the moment to “not be about me.”

In short, drummers should not only learn their equipment and develop a sense of how different parts of the kit affect the flow and sound of the music, they should also develop an understanding of how density and dynamics affect the music as it unfolds. Using volume to articulate a heightened intensity is only *one* way to achieve this goal. By spending time exploring every component of one’s instrument to determine the sounds, tones and colors it can generate, a drummer can begin to *orchestrate* parts that have more depth of time, a key attribute in a pianoless ensemble and, really, any ensemble.

3) Think rhythmically, play harmonically and expand your vocabulary. How do you play the drums like a harmonic instrument? More specifically, ask the following questions relative to the bassist and horn soloist: Are there pedal points occurring, and what do they imply harmonically? Are those pedal points rhythmically difficult in design or is their primary function harmonic in nature? Do those pedal points result in greater angularity, density, timbral alteration or another non-linear alteration from the soloist? Just as a 21st-century bassist should consider a number of techniques/strategies to expand beyond a more conventional role within an ensemble, so, too, should a drummer expand his or her techniques beyond the conventional. Doing so will add to one's toolbox in a pianoless landscape.

Drummers should learn to subdivide form, phrases and overall rhythm in compound ways. This includes creating metric ambiguity, engaging in metric modulation and exploring a phrase as a series of beats, rather than a number of measures. A good example of all of these ideas being presented at a very high level is the Branford Marsalis Trio's performance of Marsalis' composition "Citizen Tain" from the saxophonist's 1991 album *Bloomington* (Sony). Following an extended introduction that includes an initial melodic statement of three measures in 4/4, over which drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts solos, there is a second melodic statement (two measures of 4/4, two measures of 3/4, one measure of 7/4). This is followed by an extended duo dialogue between Marsalis and Watts over a harmonic/rhythmic sequence that is four measures of 4/4 and one measure of 5/4.

On cue, Marsalis plays the second melody a set number of times, followed by the first melody. Then bassist Robert Hurst joins the duo on a modal form consisting of five measures of 4/4, followed by a measure of 5/4. What's interesting throughout, and particularly in the extended section with the full trio, is the way that they are liberated and encouraged to think of the entire section as a particular number of beats. In doing so, Watts can accompany the ensemble by playing phrases that imply other time signatures, create new bar lines and phrases, superimpose meters that aren't necessarily in symmetry with the harmonic sequence, and a host of other gestures and rhythms that encourage the other members of the trio to perform in kind.

Other comping ideas Watts utilizes, and which are useful to the drummer wishing to think harmonically and texturally behind the drumset, include engaging in a call-and-response with the soloist, using rhythmic and melodic motifs around the instrument, (again) using displacement of rhythm and meter, using rhythmic density in phrasing, and other rhythmic devices to imply har-

mony or to co-sign and enhance musical decisions made by the bassist.

The idea is to create, encourage or contribute to a feeling of tension using density, alterations in the contour of one's line, rhythmic fragmentation, the removal of consistently articulated pulses on ride, or, perhaps more extreme, moving the ride pattern to the snare, floor tom or another instrument.

Playing the drums harmonically only can be fully realized when we as drummers develop our musicianship and our ears. Doing so as a drummer allows you to respond to the music that unfolds not based only on emotion or rhythms, but on real-time data—all of the fundamental elements of theory, harmony and rhythm that you've developed in your quest to become a well-rounded musician.

4) Don't overplay. Play in a contrapuntal manner that supports, while encouraging the other musicians. For all that Watts plays in the three minutes of the above example, when bassist Hurst enters, there's still almost 13 minutes left in the song. Watts, and the trio as a whole, can't show their entire hand in the first minute of the song. They don't use every structural, rhythmic and harmonically altering device they can think of at every moment. They merely are playing in a manner that encourages and supports each other and does so in a way that is progressive and engaging. As drummers, we must leave space for the music to elevate—dynamically, rhythmically and texturally. This is especially true in a pianoless ensemble.

Don't overplay or attempt to fill up the space because it's available to fill. It's really that simple. The beauty of this musical situation is the transparent texture and sparse instrumentation. Allow complexities to emerge and be prepared to respond. How? By having clarity of purpose, you are able to say more with less—and more with more when the moment is right. Drummers should play with intention, not randomly. Leave room for invention.

5) Study comping rhythms used by pianists/guitarists/vibraphonists and use them to comp behind soloists, particularly when those instruments aren't present. In doing so, you develop a strong sense of not only what to play, but most importantly, when to play it. All of the study invested in learning how to comp *with* a chordal instrument need not be discarded when that instrument isn't present. In many respects, the drummer is now that chordal instrument. Study master pianists, guitarists and vibraphonists for comping ideas. A few of particular note that I've been listening to lately are Andrew Hill, Wynton Kelly, Herbie Hancock, McCoy Tyner, Nat Cole, Orrin Evans, Bobby Hutcherson, Stefon Harris, Bill Frisell and Jim Hall. Studying musics other than mainstream jazz also opens rhythmic and orchestration-

al possibilities for drummers. Recordings of African, Cuban and other African diasporic musics, as well as music from India, Eastern Europe and Western Asia, provide me with a great deal of rhythmic inspiration and ideas.

6) Study recordings that feature a pianoless instrumental format and take note of what those artists do. I encourage you to listen to recordings that have a pianoless ensemble and pay particular attention to what the drummer is and isn't doing. We would all do ourselves a service to sit down and listen to our favorite recordings all the way through, focusing on one instrument at a time. We can take this a step further and listen to a particular artist with different drummers to hear how this change affects the ensemble. Let those discoveries serve as guides in your own playing.

Some drummers I've been listening to lately who have utilized a pianoless format in their own ensembles include Paul Motian, Jeff Ballard, Billy Drummond, Tony Williams, Elvin Jones, Jack DeJohnette, Joey Baron, Ed Blackwell and Max Roach. And there are plenty of drummers who have been called upon to play in this musical format because they have a firm understanding of and utilize the strategies discussed here, including Bill Stewart, Brian Blade, Marcus Gilmore, Ralph Peterson, Gregory Hutcherson, Billy Hart and so many others. Listen, decipher and absorb their works.

7) Under most circumstances, the best results are achieved through preparation. The strategies and tips suggested in this article can prepare you for performances in a pianoless ensemble. It's not a formula, but a process. The key to unlocking those magical moments is to try different things and see what ideas resonate with the musicians you're performing with. When things *are* working, ask yourself why and take note. When things are *not* working, ask yourself why not and take note. And continue to build on this repository of information and experience.

In your practice, focus your energies on only one of these strategies. Then, in another practice session, focus on another. Then, place these strategies into combinations. Before long, your confidence in a pianoless ensemble will be elevated. **DB**

Born in Brooklyn, New York, drummer Dana Hall has been on the international music scene since 1992. After completing his education in aerospace engineering at Iowa State University, he received his bachelor of music degree from William Paterson College and his master's degree in composition and arranging from DePaul University. Hall is currently a distinguished Special Trustees Fellow completing his Ph.D. in ethnomusicology at the University of Chicago. He previously taught at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign before joining DePaul as associate professor of jazz studies and ethnomusicology in 2012. Hall can be seen and heard in the Chicago area performing and recording with his own groups, including his quartet, spring, an ensemble featuring two multi-instrumentalist woodwinds, acoustic bass and drumset.

Ulysses Owens Jr.

RAYON RICHARDS



Designing Your Career — The Missing Link in Jazz Education

I remember watching an interview with Quincy Jones where he stated, “We as musicians forget that the music business is a business.” I couldn’t agree more. All the aspects of a business—scalability, sustainability, growth, vision and purpose—are necessary to consider when trying to establish oneself as a business entity. And the music business is no exception.

On my first day of ensemble class at The Juilliard School, jazz drum veteran Carl Allen posed the question to our class, “Are you guys interested in making a living or designing a career?” I immediately raised my hand and asked, “Carl, what’s the difference?” He then said, “Young brother, when you make a living, you are working as a musician and only focus-

ing on what gigs/performance you will take, based on the monetary value. When you are building a career, you are incredibly strategic about the placement each performance will create for you. You also begin to build your mind and your talent, learning to foster the right relationships, so that what you possess is a career, not a mere means of paying your bills.”

During my time at Juilliard (2001–2006), I discovered that, like most conservatories, there is a very antiquated approach to the business of music. I was taught what to study (the history of jazz), and what to play, but I was not taught how to take all those components and create a career. For example, I took a music business course with the classi-

cal majors and the focus was creating a beautiful headshot, formatting a nice resume and bio, and auditioning for particular orchestras. By my third year in school, the New York Times published two articles that changed my life. One, titled, “The Juilliard Effect; 10 Years Later,” (Dec. 12, 2004), cited several stories about students who obtained highly regarded degrees, but, because they weren’t taught how to build a career, they opted for more traditional paths in finance to sustain their growing economic needs. The second article, “As Funds Disappear, So Do Orchestras” (May 14, 2003), focused on the large number of orchestras closing down because of the lack of funding available to them.

Within the jazz department, the business

of music professor was great, yet his focus (with his admittance) was on an antiquated record-label model that was being shattered by the invention of the iPod, major shifts in CD sales and the emergence of streaming services like Apple Music and Spotify. Our first day in class, he asked, "What if Tower Records, didn't exist anymore?" We all thought he was the "Musical Anti-Christ." But within a year, the Tower Records that we all of loved on 66th Street went out of business, and all the other locations in New York closed within a year. However, no true mention of career building was taught in that class, and when I speak to other students around the world, this pattern continues in most universities and conservatories, globally.

What I found during my research on when formal jazz education began (1947) and was introduced at colleges is that there always has been this tense relationship between the professional gigging musicians and their lack of desire for the art form to be taught within the institution. One of the key ways musicians in the past would learn from musicians is by forming a close relationships with them, like family, and integrating themselves into that musician's life by assisting them with whatever daily needs they had. In return, those musicians who were seeking knowledge would get information on how to play better or be allowed to shadow the more experienced musicians at gigs, which allowed the novices to gain more opportunity to be indoctrinated onto the jazz scene. Even Louis Armstrong gained his "stripes" by apprenticing with the great Joe "King" Oliver on trumpet. One of the pioneers of this music, Jelly Roll Morton, scorned formal jazz education and in many ways felt that creating an opportunity for this music to be learned outside of mentorship and adoration of the masters would dilute its power and impact.

The reality of this tension is still very much prevalent within jazz education, with scores of professional musicians feeling that if you are truly talented, school is no place for you. This attitude is one of the main reasons why within jazz programs, the subject of teaching business and entrepreneurship is taboo, because there is a degree of learning that is still reserved for outside the institution.

However, that attitude is not only bullshit, but it is also a complete abandonment of responsibility from administrators. This abandonment of responsibility will cause a reversal of the system. Students no longer will think it's sensible to invest \$30,000–\$60,000 a year for four years of jazz "edu-

LESSONS IN CAREER-BUILDING

By Ulysses Owens Jr.

LESSON NO. 1: FINISH YOUR COLLEGE DEGREE

Within the first semester of my time at Juilliard, I met Mulgrew Miller, who became my mentor and started hiring me for gigs. In March 2002, he pulled up in a navy blue minivan, and I loaded my drums into the trunk, hopped into the back seat with bassist Darryl Hall and began my first tour. That tour was short but amazing: Mulgrew led by example and showed me what it meant to really pursue the music. When the tour was done, he flew me back to school, so I could make my classes. I was floating on Cloud 9, and I was no longer happy being in school. I had experienced more in the three days I was on tour with Mulgrew than I had in six months at the conservatory. So, I didn't want to be in school anymore; I just wanted to play music. How did I navigate that? Mulgrew told me, "Ulysses, the road ain't going nowhere. Trust me, it will always be there." He assured me that I needed to get my college degree, because something in my future would depend on the degree. He was right. I had no idea that after I graduated, I would end up starting an organization for inner-city kids that would utilize my college degree, and my network. College is also the perfect environment to intimately understand your weaknesses and work with a team of educators to fix and remove those weaknesses and refine your strengths.

CHALLENGE: Work on removing the anxiety that would make you shortcut the necessary experiences you will need to distinguish yourself in the world. Think about what is challenging you from completing your degree and remove it, knowing that your future requires it.

LESSON NO. 2: UTILIZE FACULTY RESOURCES

After I graduated Juilliard, I planned my first recording. I selected the studio, the band, the tunes, etc., but I felt that I needed some assistance. Greg Knowles—the esteemed producer, label executive and drummer—came to my rescue, because I always had a great relationship with him while in college. His input was incredibly insightful as he assisted me with the process of making that first album, and in many ways he taught me about the process. He was also the first person to tell me that I had the potential to be a producer.

CHALLENGE: Think about some resources and teachers within your current environment now, and try to envision how you can enlist their assistance for something you want to accomplish in the future.

LESSON NO. 3: WRITE THE VISION

School doesn't teach about money or how to create a budget and plan for future goals. I remember when I sat down with Knowles and told him about my recording, the first thing he asked me to send him was an email of my "pre-production plan," including my budget, timeline and an outline of how I was going to complete this project. I said to him, "Sure, I have that. I'll send it when I get home." I didn't have it, and I had a lot of work to do when I got home. Young musicians today can rely on the power of Google and Wikipedia to find out how to properly write these documents. Google them and copy the format. Having this ability to understand how to truly create plans, budgets and realistic timelines will give you a skill that you can utilize the rest of your career.

CHALLENGE: Write a business plan for an idea that you have, even if you don't intend to implement it right away.

LESSON NO. 4: RELATIONSHIPS BUILD BRIDGES

Going to college in New York City was great, because I was able to start working on my career in the environment that I would eventually be working in. This was a blessing, but it also came with challenges. I essentially was learning from professors and colleagues who were part of the jazz scene. So, when I would make dumb mistakes, those were also the same people who would be considering me for opportunities in the future. I had a few issues with several professors where, to be honest, I was acting young, and a little cocky, especially once I started to work with professional artists. By my second year, I started working every weekend, and certain musicians started to know who I was, and it got to the point where I was on the rise a little. Foolishly, I thought my professors were impressed, and it made me mishandle some relationships. Honestly, I had to work hard to rebuild those bonds. I realized that once I graduated, these people would no longer be my teachers; they were my future colleagues. I see them now at festivals, recording sessions, the airport, etc., and having a good rapport with them is healthy for business and life.

CHALLENGE: Understand that relationships are incredibly key, and they will be the reason why opportunities come your way (or don't). Identify at least one mentor right now who can help you achieve your goals.

LESSON NO. 5: MAINTAIN A WORK ETHIC

Much of what I have been writing about in this article has to do with mental conditioning. However, action must always follow any intention, otherwise you will not be successful. I remember early in my college career, Victor Goines, who was the artistic director at Juilliard, called me out and basically said that I was talented but a little lazy. I resented him and that comment so much that I pledged at that moment that no one would ever be able to say that about me. Now people often say, "Man, you work so hard; you need to slow down." I much prefer to hear that than hearing that I need to work harder. Remember, none of what you want to happen in your life will happen if you don't work.

CHALLENGE: Create a daily to-do list, and make yourself get into a routine of working on something constantly. This helps because when it's time to work on something important, you won't have to condition yourself to reach your goal.

DB

education,” only to still be lost and not fully educated on how to be successful in this art form. Jazz programs owe it to students to give them a complete education and prepare them for the world at large. Medical schools, law schools, business schools, etc., fully prepare their students for the pitfalls they will encounter in the corporate world, and in the “startup business” culture.

One of the fortunate aspects of my career is that I get to teach and travel around the world and encounter many kinds of students. One commonality shared by students majoring in music, specifically jazz, is fear. The students I’ve encountered are afraid of having a degree that doesn’t translate to real value in the world. They also are fearful, because they are unsure about how they connect with a scene of professional players with a large percentage of their career accomplishments not associated with jazz education programs, though they might currently teach in jazz programs.

We need to give this new generation answers, instead of just telling them how to preserve the art form of jazz, and when to play and/or echo the voices of yesterday. We need to answer a few hard questions, too. How will they survive? How will they build sustainable

careers? How will what they love and study create a life for them?

We currently are living in a time when the presidential office has plans to eliminate the National Endowment of the Arts. “45” refused to participate and show up at the Kennedy Center Honors celebration last year, which is the first time this has ever happened in the history of this country. “45” also has chosen to not be present at any such celebratory moments, not just for jazz, but for all fine arts in this country. We also lack a consistent national budget for festivals, unlike other countries that have a consistent place in their budgets to produce jazz, theater and other artistic events.

Facing this reality, students will have to be honest about the current climate and learn how to build and understand that multiple bands and opportunities aren’t necessarily awaiting them post-graduation. The number of bands and gig opportunities steadily is decreasing. What will define their success probably will be something they create themselves, as they learn how to partner with other creative entities outside of the jazz world.

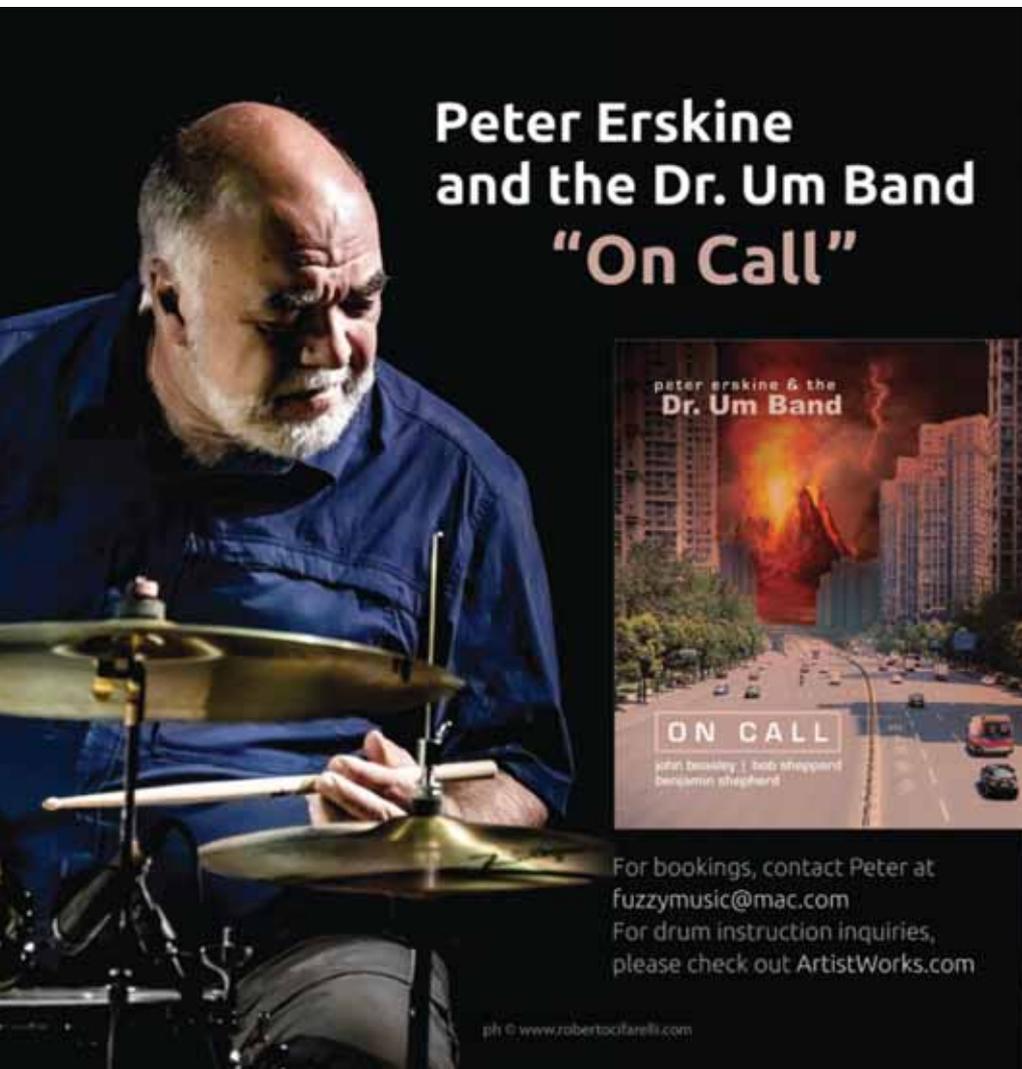
I would like to express my thanks to Carl Allen for this lesson, because it allowed me to create a secondary statement and pursue

multiple career avenues. What Allen challenged me to do was look at my friends and colleagues who have careers in other fields (medicine, finance, academia, etc.), discern the goals and career arcs they have created for themselves and their families, and then apply the same principles to my own career.

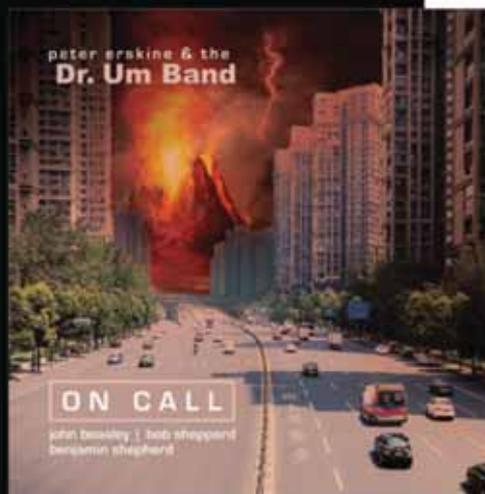
I chose to design a career, and that career has and will continue to lead me to some incredible experiences.

My challenge to this new generation is to study jazz, learn everything you can about business and fully embrace the concept of entrepreneurship. Become inspired by multiple sources of knowledge, because that’s ultimately what will allow you to be truly successful. **DB**

Drummer, producer, educator and entrepreneur Ulysses Owens Jr. has toured and recorded with Christian McBride, Wynton Marsalis, Kurt Elling, Diane Schuur, Renee Fleming, Monty Alexander, Russell Malone, Mulgrew Miller, Marcus Printup and Joey Alexander. He has released three albums of his own, including 2014’s *Onward And Upward* (D-Clef). As co-leader of New Century Jazz Quintet, he has released two albums on the Japanese label Spice of Life: *Time Is Now* (2014) and *In Case You Missed Us* (2015). Owens’ writing journey began in October 2016 when he started chronicling his touring experiences and sharing them with his fans. Partnering with editor Geveryl Robinson, he found his voice by composing his blog “Words From U,” initially available on Owens’ website (usojazzy.com). He now publishes his blogs on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter and has more than 20,000 followers. Owens is currently writing a book on music entrepreneurship that will serve as a resource to help artists and students design purposeful careers.



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DAVID BELOVE

Leading from Behind

I recently played several gigs in which I had to, very consciously, lead from behind. In one case, many of the tunes, unfamiliar to the rhythm section, were in odd time signatures. During the rehearsal, the bass player and pianist were struggling, and I sensed the guys might need help from me in order to avoid a total train wreck. Consequently, when we performed the more challenging material, I made sure to play very clear phrases, obvious subdivisions, simple grooves and setups. I marked, loudly and clearly, the begin-

nings and ends of phrases. If things wavered, I marked where beat “one” was. I wasn’t playing the way I aesthetically would prefer, but in that case, my artistic preference was not the point. Keeping the band intact was the point. Subtlety would not have helped.

In another case, I was in a trio backing adult vocal students in a concert. During one performance, a student forgot the arrangement and lost the form of the tune while improvising. She worriedly looked back at me with that “Help, I’m lost!” look on her

face. Arrangement shelved and form missing in action, someone had to bring her, the trio and the arrangement back together again. I indicated to her with facial expressions and a short, simple fill, where the top of the form was. She beautifully sang the tune out and happily, we all ended together. This was leading with a bit more subtlety.

These recent experiences reinforced for me exactly the point of this article. Whether aggressively kicking a 20-piece big band, gently nudging a spacious Euro-jazz quartet or driving a Latin jazz sextet, the drummer can, and many times should, provide musical leadership from the back of the band. There are obvious, big ways we do this; and there are subtle, graceful ways. Besides the examples above, I will address as many of these situations as space provides.

But first, let me address our most important function: Generally speaking, holding the groove and keeping a steady tempo are the prime jobs. In order to do these, we must stay connected to “the grid.”

The Grid

In most grooves, we actually are playing more notes “in the grid,” more of the time, than any other player. I define “grid” here as the smallest underlying subdivisions over which the tune moves. (A mainstream jazz grid is eighth-note triplets; a funk or hip-hop grid is usually straight or swung 16th notes). If you transcribed all the parts to any song, whether in jazz or pop or funk, you’ll find this to be generally true. Since the bass player and drummer usually are laying down the foundation as a team in practically all grooves, I’ve put together some typical bass-and-drum grooves in order to make this point clear. (See Examples 1 and 2 on the opposite page.) It is important to state that all members of the group should be holding the tempo and grid in their bodies, but in fact, that is not often the case.

Rather than just floating over pulse, or tugging against it—many horn players like to “lay back on the time”—state time/pulse/grid clearly. If we are uncertain of the tempo or grid, or our tempo-memory fails us, or we’re playing the groove without commitment, we are failing in a basic leadership role, and the music and fellow musicians will suffer.

Here are three analogies that might help elucidate the point of this article.

1) Conversation analogy. The “topic of conversation” in music always should be: How can we best present a particular piece of music? Drummers must be intentional “speakers” of

Example 1

Sample bass line

Typical accompanying drum groove

Example 2

Sample bass line

Typical accompanying drum groove

Example 3

Chordal Hits

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rhythm—sometimes urgently, sometimes with a whisper. Either way, we set up the rhythmic and aural environment where the other musical speakers (melody, harmony and lyrics) can be appreciated and understood clearly.

2) **Sports announcer analogy.** There are times, such as in a big band or large group playing complicated music, when the drummer must be more like a radio announcer at a sports event, who explains what's happening, or what's going to happen, and knows why it's happening. Like the play-by-play announcer, he's got to be quick and sharp and know how to make it clear that a particularly important musical event is about to occur. (See "setups and figures" and "marking" below). He "fills" in the fans (band members) on what play is coming up, where the main action might be found and the importance of any given moment. Imagine a baseball radio announcer announcing, "I don't know the score, which inning we're in or which batter is up, but the game is still being played, that I can tell you!" Wouldn't last long in the business, would they? Nor would a big band drummer who was unaware of the musical action taking place on the bandstand.

3) **Language and accent analogy.** Most music has a rhythmic and tonal language or accent in which it "speaks." The musical language in which a Count Basie blues of the '40s speaks (consistent 4/4 swing, riff-based blues phrasing) is quite different than that of John McLaughlin's Mahavishnu Orchestra of the '70s (mostly straight eighth notes and 16th notes, in odd times, played aggressively on a huge drum kit). The cultural lingo inherent in Robert Glasper's "Black Radio" bands (r&b, hip-hop grooves) is quite different than the subtle and unpredictable language in Tomasz Stańko's European groups (moody, spacious and floating).

The above groups and musicians generally can be called jazz-based, but observe how differently they each "speak" the language. Note the variety of approaches to tones, instrumentation, pulse, note attack, aural atmosphere, rhythmic nuance, stylistic references, space and dynamics. The drummer's musical choices have a lot to do with the "accent" of the music.

Getting Down Into the Weeds

I'm now going to outline more specific approaches to leading that drummers should know about.

In Example 3 on the preceding page, I've transcribed the chords and chordal hits of the standard "Autumn Leaves," along with a typical drum part one might play in approaching the arrangement. The feel here is straightahead jazz (i.e. an underlying eighth-note-triplet grid). I'll discuss many of the techniques used in the chart:

- **Marking:** a minimal form of announcing important moments in a given song. This can be a simple one-beat fill before the beginning of a new section or phrase, as in the second ending of the "Autumn Leaves" example. It could be a splashing hi-hat on beat 2 and 4 over several bars to help mark a pedal point occurring in a tune. This is what's happening in measures 11 through 17. Notice that the same bass note is played underneath changing chords. This is what a pedal point is. The musical effect is to create a sense of suspense. In order to emphasize the feeling of suspense, the drummer and bass player often emphasize the pedal notes on beats 2 and 4 underneath the chords and melody above.

Marking could be announcing a groove change, like swing to mambo, by playing a fill before the switch, in the style of the upcoming groove, thereby preparing the band for the change in feel. It could be a fill in the "tempo feel" of an upcoming double-time or maybe half-time section. Once again, it prepares the band for the change.

Marking points usually are not indicated in charts. Nonetheless, we should be marking as needed. Know thy form!

- **Set-ups and Hits:** obvious ways that drummers can emphasize and support a particular rhythmic figure in an arrangement (this is a more elaborate form of "marking"). A set-up involves clearly stating the down-beat with, for example, a rim shot or accent just before a particularly

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important rhythmic punch or set of figures occur. A hit involves catching the above rhythmic punch with, for example, a combination of cymbal and bass drum or choked hi-hat and bass drum. Look at measures 2 through 8 in the “Autum Leaves” example. Notice the set-ups and hits that go along with the chord hits above. This common arrangement technique is called “stop time.”

- **Holding Overall Vibe:** sticking with a particular groove, set of sonic choices, or approach to space or pattern in order to lend a given song a consistent “vibe.” This could be anything from laying down the odd-time funk groove played by Billy Cobham in the Mahavishnu Orchestra’s tune “Vital Transformation”; to the shifting, spacious, cymbal-based, ECM-type playing by Michał Miśkiewicz on Stanko’s tune “Lontano”; to the disjointed, mysterious quasi-solo of Ziv Ravitz throughout “Gal” by the Shai Maestro Trio.

Look at measures 19 through 24 in the “Autumn Leaves” example. Here is a standard jazz tune with a swing jazz (eighth-note-triplet grid) comping pattern written out, followed by time slashes, which indicate more of the same. Once the solos start, comping will be the main job. When the head returns after solos, the drummer will basically repeat the approaches used during the first statement of the melody.

- **Honoring the Arc:** being aware of the overall shape the arranger strives to realize, and adjusting your dynamics, density and tones to best frame that shape. A typical big-band tune might start big, settle down for the melody, start cooking behind a solo and then kick in to a bunch of set-ups and hits in a “shout chorus” near the end of the tune. Adjust as needed.

In a funk tune, with the crowd dancing, there might be a “breakdown” toward the end of the tune that features the drummer, all alone, fiercely and clearly slamming the groove for a while. This would not be a time for subtlety or super-complicated licks.

No matter what style, tempo or performance situation, the drummer should be aware of when and how obviously or subtly to take charge and guide the band. We are uniquely set up to do that, being the main percussive “staters of grid.” In big ways, and small, it’s expected of us. **DB**

Alan Hall is an associate professor at California Jazz Conservatory in Berkeley, California. He was an assistant professor in the percussion department at Berklee College of Music in Boston from 1986 to 1993. Hall’s sextet, Ratatet, has released two CDs on Ridgeway Records: *Arctic* and *Heroes, Saints And Clowns*. He has performed and/or recorded with Art Lande, Paul McCandless, Russell Ferrante, Ed Simon, Geoffrey Keezer, Cirque du Soleil and Teatro Zinzanni San Francisco. He remains an active studio drummer, clinician and sideman in the San Francisco Bay Area. Ratatet’s CDs and download tracks are available at alanhalldratatet.bandcamp.com and iTunes.

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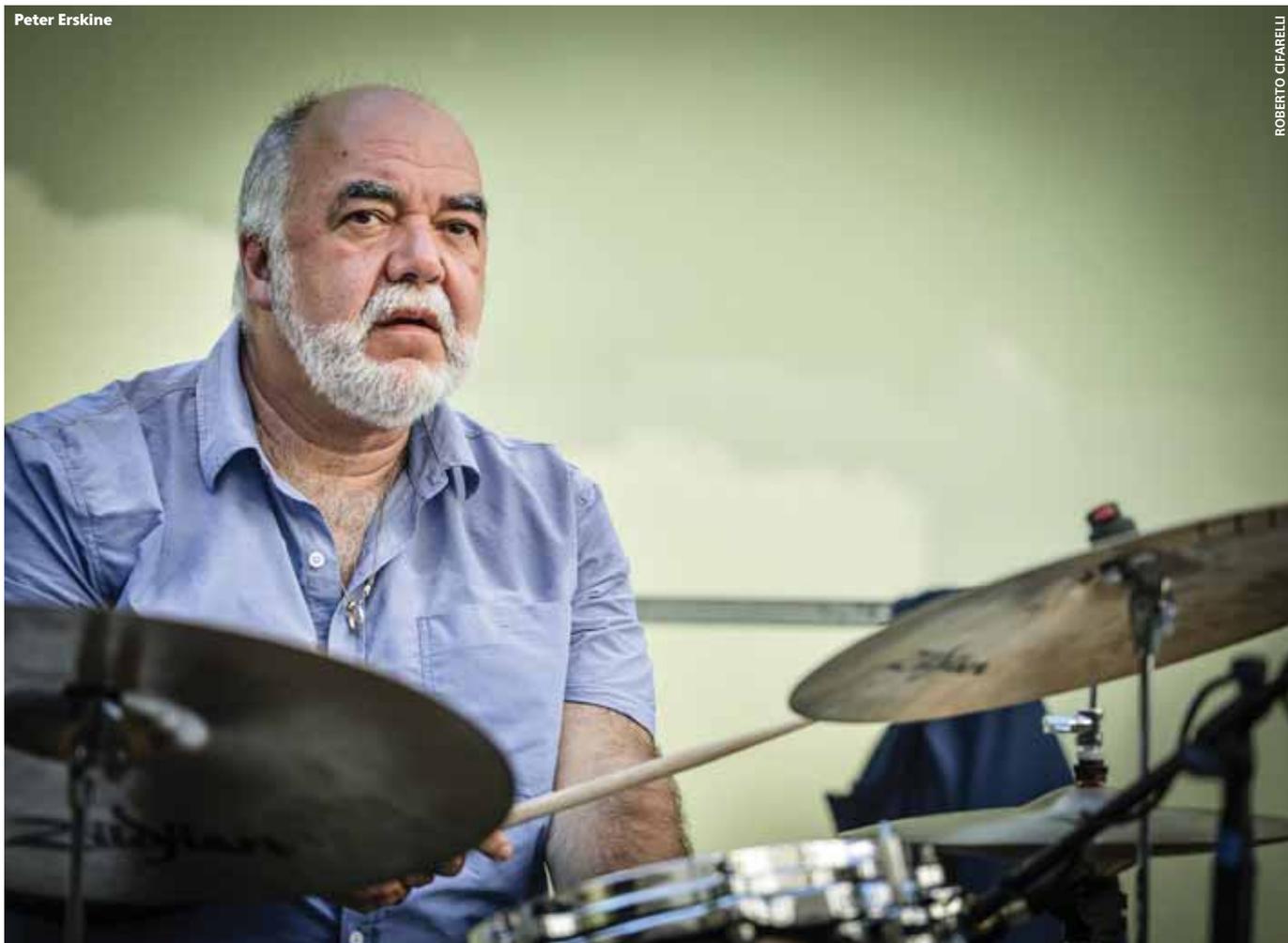
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Peter Erskine's Drum Solo on 'Hawaii Bathing Suit'

From his early beginnings in the bands of Stan Kenton and Maynard Ferguson, to his career-defining involvement as a member of fusion supergroup Weather Report, Peter Erskine remains a leading voice in modern jazz drumming. With a career spanning four decades, he has appeared on some 700 albums and has won two Grammys.

In recent years, Erskine has followed more of a minimalistic approach to drumming, turning the dial on the fire of his youth to a more relaxed simmer. He is seemingly at ease in any style of music. Whether holding down the high-pressure grooves of Steely Dan or performing solo concertos with some of the world's most renowned orchestras, he

is able to acclimate and transcend any musical situation.

If Erskine's efforts have been noted as more restrained in the past few years, then his new Dr. Um band is a definite return to a high-energy style of drumming. *On Call*, Erskine's 2018 double-album release on his Fuzzy Music label, is a nod to his fusion past. Joined by keyboardist/arranger John Beasley, saxophonist Bob Sheppard and bassist Benjamin Shepherd, Erskine's musicality and highly refined technical skill are on full display throughout the album. Perhaps no track better represents his musicality than his solo on the calypso-inspired live version of "Hawaii Bathing Suit," a song penned by Erskine. To

access the complete audio track online, go to bit.ly/erskinedb.

Following an adventurous, effects-laden solo by Beasley, Erskine picks up the reins (at the 3:55 mark) with a syncopated rhythmic motif built off of the third beat of measure 1. Performing alternating double stops between snare/floor tom and snare/high tom, Erskine focuses on constructing a melody between the differing sound sources.

The hi-hat plays a significant role throughout this solo, but it is most vital in this beginning sequence as it builds a foundation from which Erskine deviates upon the original motif. The first change in the sequence appears in measure 10 with the bass drum setting up

Drum Set Notation Key



beat 3, on the “and” of 2, but continues to develop in subsequent measures. In measure 18, Erskine applies the compositional method of rhythmic augmentation to stretch out the original motif using quarter-note triplets. He plays with this idea while building dynamic tension in the form of a crescendo that reaches its peak in measure 30.

After a funk-influenced measure 32, Erskine abandons the original motif in measure 33 to lead the solo into an impressive array of rudimental stick work. The technical mastery displayed in the bass drum/snare drum unisons and counter lines are flawless. In measures 41–48, Erskine moves from eighth notes into eighth-note triplets performing a 3-over-4 polyrhythm. This particular sequence requires some creative stickings to accomplish across three different drums, and at this particularly fast tempo, Erskine excels without the slightest imperfection. Following measure 48, Erskine slips into a second-line-influenced New Orleans groove on the snare, upping the ante with alternating flams. The hi-hat again is featured in this section as its own separate voice, utilizing open splashes on the second beats of measures 49, 52 and 53. Measures 55–56 see Erskine introducing a series of quintuplets and septuplets, adding additional tension as the groove seeks its final resolution.

Starting in measure 57, Erskine moves to full-on fusion mode with an open solo-over-groove concept. The overall downbeat becomes elusive and shaded over by the entrance of the previously unheard china cymbal, as it plays countermelodies against the ride cymbal and splash. This section is ultimately defined by a fresh change in texture as Erskine focuses the listener on new sound sources. None is more obvious than the inclusion of the cowbell in measures 71–74.

Somewhere between funk and Latin, Erskine creates a syncopated fusion clave to usher this solo toward its conclusion. In the few remaining measures, Erskine pulls a jungle groove akin to Art Blakey between the floor tom and high tom, dynamically surging and dissipating as it moves into snare-drum accents. In a solo full of surprises, Erskine makes one final statement in measure 80, dropping a heavy beat 3 on a second floor tom, a drum not previously featured in the solo.

It would be rare to hear Erskine play any phrase without a combination of accented and unaccented notes to aid in its shape. Much of his solo style revolves around pulling the most music out of any set of notes at a given time. These mainly occur in areas where upbeats are used to accentuate the feeling of swing, such as the triplets in measures 41–48. However, there are also moments when he will use a complete dynamic shift to help contour a phrase. Probably the most extreme example of this occurs in measure 69, where Erskine performs a successive set of quintuplets and septuplets while inserting two separate crescendos inside of the same measure. Considering the brisk tempo of 256 bpm, this is a difficult rhythmic feat to pull off, but it just goes to show how much Erskine strives to play musically, even in the tight corners.

Regardless of style or musical situation, Erskine always brings with him a strong commitment to groove and a high level of artistic integrity. Dr. Um might be a nod to electric days gone past, but in the spirit of this solo, and the album it appears on, it is most certainly a bold step forward for this legendary drummer.

DB

Jeffrey Lien is a Nashville-based drummer, writer and educator who performs and conducts clinics and master classes throughout the world. He teaches private lessons via Skype and can be reached at jeffreylieendrums@gmail.com.

Drum School Toolshed >

Roland TD-17 V-Drums

Dynamic Electronic Playing Experience

Roland's TD-17 series of V-Drums, with pricing in the neighborhood of \$1,500, is worth serious consideration if you are thinking about jumping into the electronic drums market.

There are four kits in the series. I play-tested the TD-17KVX, which features a redesigned snare, kick and hat. The pieces included were the PDX-12 snare, KD-10 kick pad, VH-10 hi-hat, three toms (all mesh heads), three cymbals, a rack to mount everything and the TD-17 module. The TD-17KVX comes with no hi-hat stand or bass pedal, so you use your own gear—and I actually prefer that because, it leads to a more realistic feel when playing. Other models in the TD-17 series include the TD-17KV and TD-17K-L.

The new PDX-12 snare pad is now 12 inches in diameter, so it feels more like an actual snare drum, in part due to its dual mesh head. One nice feature is the ability to re-tension the mesh heads with a normal drum key in order to dial in the rebound that's most comfortable for you. The hoops also have been reimagined and now are located nearer to the head in order to more closely emulate an actual drum.

The TD-17 module borrows a sound engine from Roland's higher-priced TD-50. There are 50 preset kit configurations that cover a wide range of styles, and the samples are high quality. A dedicated drum sample library would most likely offer a better sample set, but once I started exploring the TD-17's internal sounds, I felt encouraged that I could use them in most musical situations.

I liked the cymbals on a majority of the TD-17's kits, sometimes even better than those from my higher-priced drum libraries. Thanks to the unit's advanced sound engine, the cymbals have a wide velocity range that makes for a nice feel and allows for nuanced dynamics.

The first thing I did when setting up the unit was to plug into my computer via USB and record a tune that I had just completed writing. The setup was effortless, and my DAW recognized the kit right away. I was recording within a few minutes of powering up the unit for the first time.



Other than a few note-mapping adjustments in my DAW, the maiden voyage was completely painless.

The module instantly paired to my smartphone via Bluetooth. Once connected, I could play a tune on my phone and hear it through headphones while playing along on the TD-17KVX. I could then hit the "record" button on the module and capture the combined audio, which made it possible to review my playing on the TD-17KVX instantaneously.

For the student market, the TD-17 offers play-along grooves and a "coach mode" where it measures your accuracy and assists with a warmup mode. The TD-17 also connects to an online service called Melodics that places the kits in a lesson-based environment geared toward beginners.

Roland's TD-17 series of V-Drums bridges the quality vs. affordability gap in an exciting way and is a solid buy for anyone who's involved in teaching, investigating a new practice setup or wanting to record great-sounding drum tracks.

—Matt Kern

roland.com

Yamaha Tour Custom Maple

Durable Solution for Working Drummers

Yamaha's new Tour Custom Maple drumsets have a winning combination of professional features, top-quality sound and versatility in an affordable package. Highlights include a thin, but mighty, six-ply maple shell with 45-degree edges and inward-curving triple-flange hoops. Other nice touches include low mass and bass-drum claw gaskets. The drums have a wide tuning range that works well for many different kinds of music. My test kit consisted of a 20- by 15-inch bass drum, 10- by 7-inch and 12- by 8-inch toms, and a 14- by 13-inch floor tom. (Larger bass drum and tom sizes are available.) The Tour Custom Maple line seems to focus more on shell pack configurations, so there is no matching wood snare available. However, my test kit came with a nice higher-end aluminum Recording Custom snare that's offered as an option.

The Tour Custom Maple kits are light in weight, perfect for the working drummer who needs pro features, but doesn't want to haul around heavy gear. Don't mistake light weight for low quality, though. They are very well made and can handle the rigors of the working musician. The

absence of a thick, multi-layer lacquer finish no doubt adds to the incredible resonance of these shells.

There are several beautiful satin finishes to choose from. My test kit came in satin black (officially Licorice Satin), which looks clean, understated and classy under stage lights and on the bandstand. Other available finishes include Butterscotch Satin, Caramel Satin, Candy Apple Red Satin and Chocolate Satin.

I had a chance to try out these drums in a number of different playing situations. What impressed me the most is their tone and wide tuning range. It's worth noting that I used the stock heads that came on the drums, which were standard clear Remo Ambassadors on the top and bottom. The bass drum had a standard Powerstroke head. A saxophone-and-guitar based jazz quartet was the first context I played them in. I tuned the toms and the bass drum relatively high for this gig, and they had no problem retaining their depth and tone without choking and sounding thin. I was impressed with the clarity of sound and how they were able to blend in

with whatever instrument I was accompanying. Whether it was an open, delicate ballad or a ripping Art Blakey-style shuffle, the drums responded exactly the way I needed them to.

Next, I had a chance to use the Tour Custom Maples on a classic rock show in a large performing arts center. Fully miked up, I used a medium-low tuning with some light muffling on the toms. Again, the tone and attack of the drums was effortless. I found myself not needing to play as hard, as the drums responded at any volume with little effort. The bass drum has tons of bottom end and presence, but with just the right amount of attack, which is a distinct advantage of having a thinner shell. The aluminum Recording Custom snare has a bright, crisp sound, and has large die-cast rims that give you a thick cross-stick sound and cutting backbeats. Lower tunings are also a strong point, if you're looking to make use of the "fatback" groove on your gigs.

Yamaha has hit a real sweet spot, balancing must-have features and a friendly price point with the Tour Custom Maples. As a working drummer, I appreciate the versatility these drums provide, and I would be happy taking them out on any gig and even recording sessions. Transporting them around on a regular basis is a breeze due to their light weight, and the build quality is top-notch. The Yamaha YESS suspension tom mounts are



standard, and have been a trusted, reliable design for decades. From aspiring young musicians and weekend warriors to seasoned pros, these drums deliver, even if you're on a limited budget.

—Ryan Bennett

usa.yamaha.com

Toca Extended Range Cajon; Freestyle II Nesting Djembes, Toms

Creative, Innovative Designs

Toca Percussion offers creative and innovative design features on its newest cajon and djembe offerings. The Extended Range Cajon, the flagship of Toca's new Bass Reflex Cajon series, has a patented bass reflex port at the back of the instrument that represents a completely new design concept. Toca's Freestyle II Nesting Djembes have durable synthetic PVC shells and removable, pre-tuned synthetic heads that allow the set of three to be nested for maximum portability and ease of storage.

The vast majority of cajons have a hole or port in the back to maximize bass tones and overall response. A reimagining of the standard port design on the Extended Range Cajon distinguishes it from other instruments. Basically, there is a tube that extends into the cajon from the port hole. The result is noticeably increased, more controlled bass tones that seem to jump out of the instrument.

I took the Extended Range Cajon out to several different gigs in various acoustic situations—miked and unmiked, and the increased bass response was undeniable. I got much deeper bass frequencies compared to regular cajons of a similar or smaller size. It felt great to play, with a nice, dry snap at the top to contrast with the deep bass. I found myself appreciating the extra bass on tap with relatively minimal effort. The overall sound was on the dryer side, which I prefer over buzzier cajons with actual snare wires in them.

The internal flamingo-style wires feature eight adjustable strands on each side. My test cajon featured a neat tiger-mask graphic on the front that drew attention and positive comments wherever I took it. One thing I missed is the lack of a padded case—if you plan on gigging or transporting this cajon around on a regular basis, you'll definitely want to invest in one.

Toca's Freestyle II Nesting Djembes, which can be purchased as a set or individually, have the ability to stack within each other. The PVC shells come in 8-, 10- and 12-inch sizes, and feature a cool-looking "Woodstock



Purple" cloth finish. The factory pre-tuned (non-tunable) synthetic heads simply slip on and off of the shells, so you easily can nest the drums within each other. A neat side bonus with this feature is you also can use the top heads as frame drums, and they work well for this.

Toca has also released Freestyle II Nesting Tom Toms, available in 12-, 14- and 16-inch diameters. They're fitted with the same pre-tuned synthetic heads that pop off instantly, and each drum comes with a pair of matching mallets.

—Ryan Bennett

tocapercussion.com



1. Hardware Packs

Gretsch Drums has debuted its G3 series and G5 series of drum hardware. Available as individual pieces or a pack, the G3 series includes a straight cymbal stand, boom cymbal stand, hi-hat stand, snare stand and single-chain bass drum pedal. The G5 series, also available as individual pieces or a pack, includes a straight cymbal stand, boom cymbal stand, hi-hat stand, snare stand and double-chain bass drum pedal.

More info: gretschdrums.com

2. Larger, Not Heavier

Promark has launched new maple drumsticks as part of the company's Select Balance line. Compared with hickory, maple is a softer and lighter wood, allowing for a larger-diameter drumstick without the added weight. The new models feature the Rebound design of Promark's Select Balance models—a long, 3-inch taper for optimized finesse and agility, with the addition of a round tip for a bright, full tone that is articulate on drums and cymbals. Rebound 7A, 5A, 55A and 5B models will be available in both standard length (16 inches) and long versions (16½ inches).

More info: daddario.com

3. Lots of Sound, Little Bulk

The 10-inch CajonTab with snare from Louson Drums is designed for maximum portability, while maintaining a great snare sound and bass tone. Due to its small size, the CajonTab has a "poppy" sound with great projection. It features a dovetailed birch frame, an easily removable external snare, ultra-thin mahogany/poplar tapa for easy finger rolls, an adjustable soundhole cover and a guitar-type strap for mobile playing. A 12-inch Jumbo CajonTab also is available. More info: lousondrums.com

4. Electronic Emergence

Pearl and Korg have partnered to create e/Merge, a new electronic drum line. The e/Merge MDL1 module features a full library of high-definition, minimally processed acoustic Pearl drums, plus orchestral and world percussion sounds from Korg's library of samples. e/Merge features Wave Trigger Technology, which offers realism, instantaneous response and a wide dynamic range. More info: pearlemerge.com

5. Claps & Beyond

WMD has introduced Fracture, a multi-particle percussion synthesizer module that applies concepts from classic analog clap circuits to granular synthesis methods. Inspired by audience applause, hip-hop samples and classic drum machines, it is capable of generating a wide palette of sounds while maintaining a simple interface. More info: wmdevices.com

6. Hickory Attack

Gon Bops' Hickory Claves offer piercing, high-pitched attack with a sonic profile almost identical to classic rosewood claves. Crafted from hickory—which is virtually identical in density to rosewood—the new premium claves offer plenty of cut for both traditional Latin and modern musical styles. More info: gonbops.com





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Caleb Smith of Oberlin College & Conservatory was a co-winner in the Jazz Instrumental Soloist category (Undergraduate College division) in the 2018 DownBeat Student Music Awards.

DOWNBEAT 2018-'19 FALL/WINTER FESTIVAL GUIDE



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THE JAZZNOJAZZ FESTIVAL

ALL ARE WELCOME

Simphiwe Dana is shown performing at the 2018 Cape Town International Jazz Festival in South Africa. (Photo: Rashid Latiff)

YOUR GUIDE TO JAZZ FESTS AROUND THE WORLD



Earshot Jazz Festival Fosters Progressive Sounds

Over the course of 30 years, Seattle's Earshot Jazz Festival has earned a reputation as one of the premier U.S. jazz gatherings committed to new sounds. This year, the month-long spree (which runs Oct. 7–Nov. 4) features Myra Melford's Snowy Egret, Marquis Hill, Keyon Harrold, Fay Victor, Jakob Bro, Harriet Tubman and Jazzmeia Horn, while also presenting marquee names such as David Sanborn, Pat Metheny, Kamasi Washington, Bill Frisell, Maria Schneider, Tom Harrell and Regina Carter.

"For us, where the art form is moving forward is where the juice is," says Earshot Executive Director John Gilbreath, who has led the organization since 1992.

Earshot's commitment to edgy music goes back to 1984, when a scrappy group of volunteers started a newsletter, then formed a non-profit to present concerts by local musicians, as well as the very first Seattle appearance by legendary pianist Cecil Taylor. (Full disclosure: This writer was an Earshot Jazz co-founder and, briefly, its first executive director.) By 1989,

Earshot had gathered enough steam to mount its inaugural festival.

Though the early editions presented a mix of styles, Earshot co-founder Gary Bannister (who later booked Seattle's Jazz Alley and died in 2010) favored the avant-garde, and Gilbreath has followed his lead. Born in Seattle and raised there and in Minneapolis, Gilbreath, 70, worked for years as a construction estimator before volunteering for Earshot in 1990. Two years later, he found his calling as its executive director. Over the years, Gilbreath has presented Seattle debuts by The Bad Plus, trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire, keyboardist Robert Glasper and pianist Kris Davis, as well as multiple performances by trumpeter Dave Douglas (before he was well-known) and AACM figures such as multi-instrumentalist Roscoe Mitchell.

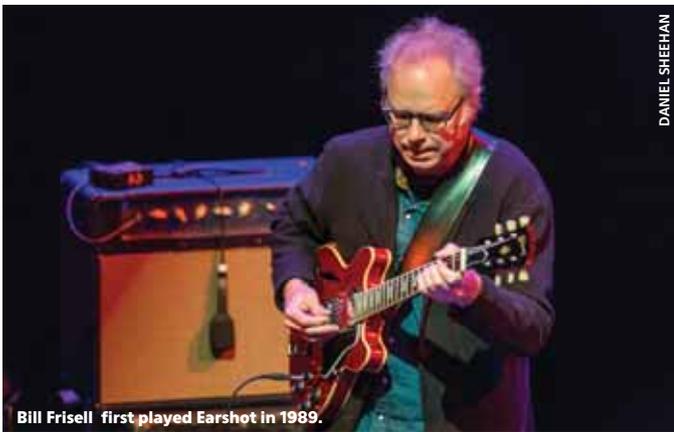
Frisell played one of his first engagements with his own band for Earshot, in 1989.

"It was rare that we could get a gig then," the guitarist recalls. "It was a big deal for us. Earshot is willing to take a chance on something that's

not a proven commodity."

Frisell moved to Seattle shortly thereafter and lived there until 2017. (He's now back in New York.) He has played Earshot numerous times. This year, he appears as a member of Circuit Rider (led by cornetist Ron Miles and featuring drummer Brian Blade). Miles' 2017 release with the band, *I Am A Man* (Yellowbird), also included pianist Jason Moran and bassist Thomas Morgan.

Like neighboring jazz festivals in Vancouver, B.C., and Portland, Oregon, Earshot is a sprawling, urban affair, spread out over a variety of venues, from nightclubs like the Triple Door, Showbox and the Royal Room to concert spaces like Benaroya Hall (home of the Seattle Symphony Orchestra) and Cornish College's Poncho Concert Hall. This year, the festival will present 62 concerts, plus film screenings, readings, panel presentations and workshops. On average, the festival fills about 15,000 seats over four weeks. Gilbreath is especially proud that 40 percent of the groups this



DANIEL SHEEHAN

Bill Frisell first played Earshot in 1989.

year are led by female artists.

“I was really trying to do 50 percent women-led ensembles,” he says. “I wound up at 40. Last year it was 25. So, we’ll just keep on it.”

Melford, who has played the Earshot Jazz Festival every few years since the early '90s and this year will be celebrating the release of Snowy Egret’s second album, *The Other Side Of Air* (Firehouse 12), supports Gilbreath’s efforts. While Melford notes other U.S. festivals also give voice to the avant-garde—the Chicago Jazz Festival, New York’s Vision Festival and the Angel City Jazz Festival in Los Angeles among them—she credits Seattle as being “way out ahead in the diversity of players and approaches, and especially emerging and experimental, progressive young musicians.”

Over the years, Gilbreath has accomplished a lot with a little, operating with a bare-bones staff—one managing director, a part-time newsletter editor and, during the festival proper, a production crew of five—and partnering with other organizations to share expenses, personnel and risk. Though the festival budget has grown from \$42,000 in 1992 to \$275,000 in 2018, that’s small potatoes compared to other large-scale festivals, where corporate-sponsored budgets can be measured in the millions.

One way Gilbreath economizes is by stretching the festival out over several weeks. Though this sometimes can make the event feel like a long, dense concert series, rather than a festive celebration, it affords Gilbreath a wide window from which to pick and choose acts that might already be on tour. The gaps in between leave nights open for local artists, such as pianist (and longtime Hermeto Pascoal collaborator) Jovino Santos Neto, who is part of the lineup this year.

“The three-day festivals that are spending 3 million bucks can create anchor dates for tours,” Gilbreath noted, “whereas we need to be more opportunistic in our booking.”

Though the Earshot Jazz Festival always has included at least one artist of the stature of a Keith Jarrett or Wayne Shorter, the event has been criticized in the past for catering to a boutique audience Gilbreath calls “the faithful 50.” But that might be changing. This year’s bill boasts a robust balance of old and new, established artists and rising stars. Two major grants Earshot recently received from the Doris Duke and Andrew W. Mellon foundations have been a tremendous boost to the organizational budget. The funding already has enabled Earshot to double its full-time staff and begin digitizing 34 years of Earshot magazine.

The grants also stipulate benchmarks for adding much-needed sponsorships and partnerships. Such growth feels appropriate to the vast expansion Seattle has experienced in the past decade, largely due to Amazon, which employs 45,000 locally, and other tech companies, like Adobe, which has a large branch plant in the Fremont neighborhood, right down the street from the Earshot office.

“I’ve always felt there has to be the perfect corporate partner out there, in a city so committed to innovation and the creative spirit, but that still honors tradition—just like jazz,” Gilbreath observed.

With or without a corporate sponsor, Earshot soldiers on, committed to new sounds, just as it has from the beginning.

—Paul de Barros

TUCSON JAZZ FESTIVAL

January 11 – 21, 2019

TucsonJazzFestival.org

Joey Alexander

Jan. 11



Special EFX

with Regina Carter & Eric Marienthal

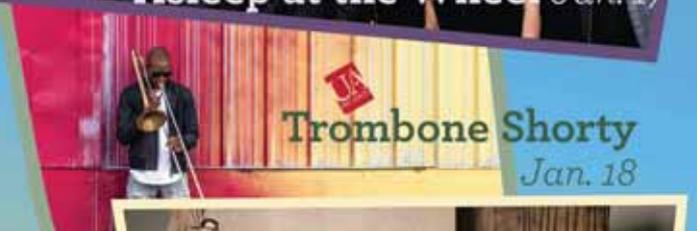
Jan. 12

Jane Bunnett & Maqueque

with Magos Herrera Jan. 16



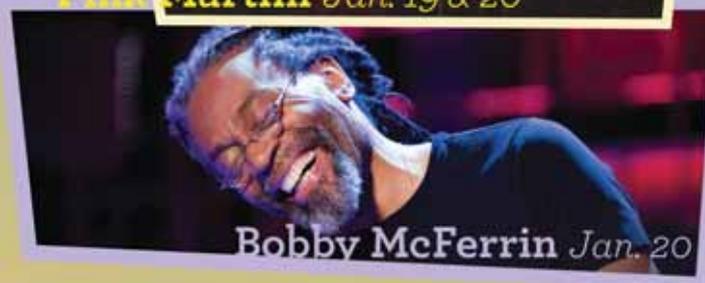
Asleep at the Wheel Jan. 17



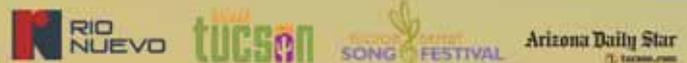
Trombone Shorty

Jan. 18

Pink Martini Jan. 19 & 20



Bobby McFerrin Jan. 20



Paul & Alise Baker Fletcher McCusker Jud Paradise



Pianist Gerald Clayton and bassist Essiet Okon Essiet at the Oregon Coast Jazz Party



Charleston Jazz Festival

Frost Music Live!

Coral Gables, Florida

September 2018–April 2019

The Frost School of Music at the University of Miami will present more than 100 concerts and events in four themes: Frost Classics; Jazz, Pops & Beyond; Frost Faculty Recitals; and Frost Lectures and Workshops. Among the highlights are concerts featuring internationally acclaimed guest artists collaborating with Frost faculty and students. The Signature Series also features a Jazz Roots concert at the Adrienne Arsht Center and Frost Symphony Orchestra performances with guest conductors.

LINEUP: Jeff Beal, Kneebody, Carl St. Clair, Trudy Kane, Tian Ying, Gerard Schwarz, Joshua Henry & Marcus Lovett, Rafael Padron with Eglise Gutierrez & Shelly Berg, Jo Lawry, Ingrid Jensen, Adam Rogers, Michelle Merrill, PRISM Quartet, Sybarite5, Thomas Mesa, Jodi Levitz, Alan Johnson, Ross Harbaugh & Tian Ying, Frank Ticheli, Zephyros Winds, Henry Mancini Institute Orchestra with John Daversa and Charles Castleman, Larry Rachleff, more.

frostmusiclive.com

Berklee Beantown Jazz Festival

Boston, Massachusetts

Sept. 29

Berklee College of Music will present Boston's biggest block party, a free event with three stages at the intersection of Massachusetts and Columbus avenues.

LINEUP: Tia Fuller, Gregory Lewis Organ Monk Trio, Jason Palmer, Ralph Peterson's Aggregate Prime, MikroJazz (Philipp Gerschlaue, David Fiuczynski, Jack DeJohnette, Giorgi Mikadze & Drew Gress), Catherine Russell, Berklee faculty members, more.

berklee.edu/beantownjazz

Angel City Jazz Festival

Los Angeles, California

Sept. 30–Oct. 14

This fest features more than 15 performances spanning seven venues across Los Angeles. It presents nearly 100 of today's most acclaimed, boundary-pushing artists on the jazz scene. The festival will include the world premiere of trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith's oratorio devoted to Rosa Parks.

LINEUP: Wadada Leo Smith, Satoko Fujii's This Is It! Trio, Xenia Rubinos, Ches Smith/Craig Taborn/Mat Maneri, Subtle Degrees, Azar Lawrence Experience, Tiger Trio (Myra Melford, Nicole Mitchell, Joëlle Léandre), Noah Preminger Quartet, Lisa Mezzacappa's avantNOIR, Christoph Irniger's Pilgrim, Lauren Elizabeth Baba's theBAOrchestra, Silverscreen Sextet.

angelcityjazz.com

Texas Jazz Festival

Corpus Christi, Texas

October (Dates TBD)

This free all-ages event features four stages, food and market vendors, and dancing.

LINEUP: Past performers include Greg Abate/George Prado, Powerhouse Big Band, Cruise Control, Alex Garibay & What Is Hip, Ric Cortez Latin Jazz Project, Fort Sam's Own 323d Army Band, Carolyn Blanchard Sextet, Leticia Rodriguez, Timberos Del Norte, Del Mar Jazz Band.

texasjazz-fest.org

Oregon Coast Jazz Party

Newport, Oregon

Oct. 5–7

The Oregon Coast Council for the Arts celebrates 15 years of the Jazz Party with "Honoring Women in Jazz" at the

Newport Performing Arts Center. Music Director Holly Hofmann's roster highlights the talents of numerous acclaimed artists, including DownBeat poll winners.

LINEUP: Regina Carter Quartet, Helen Sung, Grace Kelly Quartet, Tanya Darby, Sinne Eeg, Yve Evans, Mimi Fox's San Francisco String Trio, Kerry Politzer's Bossa PDX, Serena Geroy, more.

oregoncoastjazzparty.org

Pittsfield City Jazz Festival

Pittsfield, Massachusetts

Oct. 5–14

The Colonial Theatre and other venues in the Upstreet Cultural District participate in this fest, with the headline weekend taking place Oct. 12–13. The free "jazz crawl" features local musicians performing in restaurants and lounges throughout the downtown area.

LINEUP: Christian McBride's New Jawn, Veronica Swift, Gabriel Severn, more.

berkshiresjazz.org

Duck Jazz Festival

Duck, North Carolina

Oct. 6–7

Held at Duck Town Park, this non-ticketed festival presents a variety of jazz performers on two stages. Fans can extend their Outer Banks stay to enjoy jazz-themed events and promotions taking place throughout Duck businesses and beyond. Chairs will be available for rent, and the fest will be held rain or shine.

LINEUP: Bryan Carter & The Young Swangers, Russell Malone Quartet, Huntertones, Yolanda Rabun, Sidecar Social Club, U.S. Air Force Rhythm in Blue, First Flight High School Jazz Band.

duckjazz.com

BRUBECK FESTIVAL

UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC | 2018

Spanish Harlem Orchestra

Oct. 27 | 7:30 pm
Don and Karen DeRosa University Center



Cyrille Aimée with Pacific Jazz Ensemble

Oct. 26 | 7:30 pm | Faye Spanos Concert Hall



ALSO FEATURING:
Mimi Fox @ Take 5 Jazz
At The Brew

Oct. 26 | 10 pm | Valley Brewing Co.

Information and tickets at
BrubeckInstitute.org



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STOCKTON, CALIFORNIA

Mempho Music Festival

Memphis, Tennessee

Oct. 6-7

This festival, which was created to blend today's best contemporary sounds with the city's storied musical heritage, will be held at Shelby Farms Park, located less than 20 miles from downtown Memphis. The fest will offer multiple live music stages, art installations, unique food and interactive elements.

LINEUP: Janelle Monáe, George Clinton & Parliament/Funkadelic, Beck, Nas, William Bell, Bobby Rush, Eric Gales, Don Bryant & The Bo-Kays, Phoenix, Post Malone, DJ Logic, Project Pat, John Nemeth & Lovelight Orchestra, more.

memphofest.com

Ragas Live Festival

Brooklyn, New York

Oct. 6-7

Now in its seventh year, this 24-hour festival is inspired by the Raga Samay system in Indian classical music. Keyboardist Marc Cary and harpist Brandee Younger are among the musicians who will perform a raga tribute to John Coltrane.

LINEUP: Ritual Ensemble of Harvard (with Vijay Iyer, Yosvany Terry, Ganavya & Rajna Swaminathan), Max ZT & Karsh Kale, Aditya Prakash, Abhik Mukherjee, Rajeswari Satish, Adam Rudolph's Go: Organic Orchestra with Brooklyn Raga Massive, Coltrane Raga Tribute (feat. Sameer Gupta, Jay Gandhi, Trina Basu, Arun Ramamurthy, Brandee Younger, Marc Cary, Rashaan Carter, Abhik Mukherjee & Mari Tanaka).

ragaslive.org

Amelia Island Jazz Festival

Fernandina Beach, Florida

Oct. 7-14

Held annually and headed by Artistic Director Les DeMerle, this festival promotes world-class jazz in various styles, including swing, bebop, Dixieland, big band, contemporary and Latin, as well as blues. Concerts are staged in venues around Amelia Island, including the historic seaport of Fernandina Beach. The Festival awards a scholarship yearly to an aspiring high school musician.

LINEUP: Past performers include Janis Siegel, Henry Johnson, the Dynamic Les DeMerle Band with Bonnie Eisele, Roseanna Vitro, Nestor Torres.

ameliaislandjazzfestival.com

Earshot Jazz Festival

Seattle, Washington

Oct. 7-Nov. 4

The 30th annual edition of this festival will include more than 60 events in various venues. It will offer music, films, conversation and learning experiences that reflect the innovative spirit of Seattle. The festival offers an array of local, national and international artists, as well as award-winning student ensembles.

LINEUP: Kamasí Washington, Circuit Rider (Ron Miles, Bill Frisell, Brian Blade), Jazzmeia Horn, Regina Carter, Marquis Hill Blacktet, Maria Schneider with the Seattle Repertory Jazz Orchestra, Pat Metheny, Myra Melford, Jovino Santos Neto, Helen Sung, Keyon Harrold, Tia Fuller, David Sanborn Jazz Quintet, Allison Miller's Boom Tic Boom, Wayne Horvitz, Jane Bunnett & Maquette, James Brandon Lewis, Raul Midón, Brandee Younger, Caroline Davis, Harriet Tubman, Madison McFerrin, D'Vonne Lewis, Jen Shyu, Samantha Boshnack, Vernon Reid's Band of Gypsies Revisited, more.

earshot.org

Rehoboth Beach Jazz Festival

Rehoboth Beach, Delaware

Oct. 11-14

Now in its 29th year, this lively festival presents shows in multiple venues. It is produced by the Delaware Celebration of Jazz, a nonprofit arts, entertainment and educational organization.

LINEUP: Kirk Whalum, Take 6, Brian Culbertson, Raul Midón, Nick Colionne, Art Sherrod Jr. & The ASJ Orchestra, Morris Day & The Time, JJ Sansaverino, Gerald Albright, Norman Brown, Incognito, Mindi Abair & The Boneshakers, Matt Marshak, Pieces of a Dream, Club Phred, Urban Jazz Coalition, Keiko Matsui, Morgan James, Rick Braun & Richard Elliott, Steve Cole & Marcus Anderson, Lucky Chops, Kim Waters & Marion Meadows,

Eric Darius & Selina Albright, Charlie Thomas' Drifters, The Tokens, Jimmy Gallagher & The Passion, more.

rehobothjazz.com

Edgefest

Ann Arbor, Michigan

Oct. 17-20

The theme of the 22nd edition of this fest is Chicago: Out Kind of Town. The lineup includes artists from the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians. Also featured will be artists who left Chicago, but whose creativity always will be associated with their former home. A highlight will be a concert featuring new works for large ensemble composed by Roscoe Mitchell, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Art Ensemble of Chicago.

LINEUP: Artifacts Trio (Nicole Mitchell, Tomeka Reid, Mike Reed), Jason Stein's Hearts and Minds, Jaimie Branch Quartet, Myra Melford, Tim Haldeman Quartet, Tiger Trio (Myra Melford, Nicole Mitchell, Joëlle Léandre), Art Ensemble of Chicago 50th Anniversary Project, Roscoe Mitchell with Detroit Friends: A Tribute to the Creative Arts Collective, Kirsten Carey's Uruboros Sextet, Fred Lonberg-Holm/Tomeka Reid/Kathryn Young, Harrison Bankhead Quartet, Dave Rempis/Joshua Abrams/Avreeay! Ra/Jim Baker, Piotr Michalowski Ensemble, Guillermo Gregorio Trio, more.

kerrytownconcerthouse.com

Sun Valley Jazz & Music Festival

Sun Valley, Idaho

Oct. 17-21

Located in the Sawtooth Range of the Rocky Mountains, this event features 40 bands playing a variety of styles, including swing, zydeco and big band jazz. Fans can also enjoy free dance classes, hiking, biking and fishing.

LINEUP: Evs Evans, Black Market Trust, Blue Street Jazz Band, Bob Draga with Friends, Boise Straight Ahead, Bruce Innes Trio, Carolyn Martin Swing Band, Cocuzzi Trio, Comet Chop Suey, Gary Ryan, Joe Smith & The Spicy Pickles, Midiri Brothers Sextet, NNU Jazz Revival, Sherri Colby's Racket Makers, Jeff Barnhart, Bob Schulz, Bob Williams, Brady McKay, Brian Holland, Cynthia Sayer, Danny Coots, Rob Verdi, Tom Hook & The Terrier Brothers, Tom Rigney & Flambeau, Terry Myers Quartet with Jaimie Roberts, Yale Whiffenpoofs, more.

sunvalleyjazz.com

Clearwater Jazz Holiday

Clearwater, Florida

Oct. 18-21

Four decades strong, this festival draws tens of thousands of visitors each year to Coachman Park in Clearwater, against the backdrop of brilliant sunsets and one of the world's greatest beaches. The festival features a combination of legendary and rising musical artists.

LINEUP: Marcus Miller, JJ Grey & Mofro, The Devil Makes Three, Karl Denson's Tiny Universe, The Fabulous Thunderbirds (featuring Kim Wilson), The Lao Tizer Band (featuring Chieli Minucci, Karen Briggs & Nelson Rangell), Morris Day & The Time, Sheila E., The Doobie Brothers, Danny Kusz, Betty Fox Brass Band, George Thorogood & The Destroyers, Mindi Abair & The Boneshakers, The Greg Billings Band, Adam Hawley, Clearwater Jazz Collective, REH/CJH Youth Jazz Band.

clearwaterjazz.com

South Carolina Jazz Festival

Cheraw, South Carolina

Oct. 19-21

This fest will feature more than 20 regional artists performing shows at multiple venues in Dizzy Gillespie's home-

The advertisement features a black and white portrait of Bobby McFerrin on the left, with his name and the text "Bobby McFerrin with Ranky Tanky" overlaid. On the right is a photograph of a jazz band performing on a stage. Text at the top right reads "Charleston Jazz Festival". A white diamond-shaped graphic at the bottom right contains the event details: "January 26 Charleston Gaillard Center 95 Calhoun Street Charleston, SC 29401 8pm". At the bottom left, it says "Tickets 843-242-3099 charlestonjazz.com".

town. Other events include a Bebop Parade, a golf tournament, a birthday party for Dizzy (who would have turned 101 on Oct. 21), a Jazz Mass and children's activities.

LINEUP: Carlos Henriquez Octet, South Carolina Jazz Masterworks Ensemble, Robert Gardiner, Carl Payne Big Band, more. scjazzfestival.com

Brubeck Festival Stockton, California Oct. 23-27

Presented by the Brubeck Institute at University of the Pacific, this festival celebrates and explores the musical and philosophical ideas of Dave Brubeck and his influence around the world. The fest includes concerts and nightly sessions at the Take 5 Jazz Club, located at Valley Brewing Company.

LINEUP: Spanish Harlem Orchestra, Cyrille Aimée with Pacific Jazz Ensemble, Mimi Fox, more. brubeckinstitute.org

CU Jazz Festival Champaign-Urbana, Illinois Oct. 25-28

This festival features a jazz brunch, a composer workshop, a young artist series, lectures, a VandoJam session and library concerts.

LINEUP: Fat Babies, Adam Larson Quartet, Avreeayl Ra Trio, Chip Stephens & Glen Wilson, more. cujazzfest.wixsite.com/cujazzfest

Jazz For All Ages Festival Hilton Head Island, South Carolina Nov. 2-5

Held at The Jazz Corner and Sonesta Oceanfront Resort, this festival raises money for the Junior Jazz Foundation, contributing to its mission of keeping music healthy and alive in the school systems. The Sonesta offers discounted rooms for festival goers.

LINEUP: Christian Tamburr & Clint Holmes, Joey Alexander Trio, Ronnie Leigh. jazzforallages.com

TD James Moody Jazz Festival Newark, New Jersey Nov. 4-18

This annual festival, held at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, features a diverse array of world-class talent. There will be many ticketed concerts, plus free shows by the Roy Hargrove Quartet (Nov. 3) and Bobby Sanabria & Quarteto Aché (Nov. 7). The Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition (Sassy Awards) takes place on Nov. 18.

LINEUP: Cécile McLorin Salvant, Christian McBride Big Band, Eddie Palmieri, Sheila E., Tito Nieves, Antonio Sanchez, Dianne Reeves, Gregory Porter, Marcus Miller, David Sanborn, Lalah Hathaway, Terri Lyne Carrington, Jo Lawry, Kate McGarry, Luciana Souza, Count Basie Orchestra (with Kurt Elling, Jon Faddis, Stefon Harris & Catherine Russell), Sharon Isbin, Romero Lubambo, Stanley Jordan, Eric Alexander, Oran Etkin, Daryl Sherman, more. njpac.org/moodyjazz

Otis Taylor's Trance Blues Festival Boulder, Colorado Nov. 10

An evening performance will follow a day of public workshops and jams for musicians and fans of all levels and ages who wish to see and/or learn from award-winning

BIG EARS 03.21-24.2019 Knoxville, TN



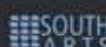
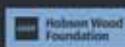
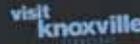
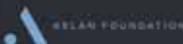
The Art Ensemble of Chicago
DeJohnette Coltrane Garrison
Wadada Leo Smith
Carla Bley Trio
Alex Schlippenbach Trio with
Evan Parker & Paul Lytton
Bill Frisell
Matt Wilson's *Honey & Salt*
Vijay Iyer + Craig Taborn
Avishai Cohen Quartet
Mary Halvorson's *Code Girl*
Tim Berne's *Snakeoil*
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bluesman Otis Taylor and his band.

LINEUP: Otis Taylor, Chuck Campbell, Mato Nanji, Jason Ricci, more.
trancebluesfestival.com

Taos Jazz Festival

Taos, New Mexico
Nov. 14-17

This event's full title is the Frank Morgan Taos Jazz Festival, in honor of saxophonist Frank Morgan (1933-2007), who worked with Lionel Hampton, Kenny Clarke, Teddy Charles and others. For this year's festival, award-winning saxophonist/vocalist (and former Morgan protégé) Grace Kelly will return to play a bebop tribute to Morgan. Pianist George Cables, who collaborated with Morgan, is also in this year's lineup.

LINEUP: Grace Kelly Quartet, George Cables Trio, Doug Lawrence Trio, Pete Amahl, more.
taosjazz.org

BSBI Jazz Festival

Manchester, Connecticut
Dec. 1-2

Beth Shalom B'nai Israel presents its 3rd Annual Jazz Festival, held in historic Cheney Hall. The festival will bring a variety of established and emerging Jazz musicians to central Connecticut.

LINEUP: Sheila Jordan, The Brubeck Brothers, Steve Davis, Cameron Brown, Alex Nakhimovsky, June Bisantz, Esteban Castro, Norman Johnson, Ed Fast & Conga-Bop, Scott Rosen, Grass Routes Bluegrass Band, more.
myshul.org/jazzfest2018

Winter Jazzfest

New York City
Jan. 4-12, 2019

The 15th anniversary edition of this festival will present seven standalone concert events, plus its signature Friday/Saturday marathon presenting more than 100 acts all over Greenwich Village. The 2019 artist-in-residence is Me'shell Ndegeocello. Once

again the fest will have a British jazz stage hosted by BBC DJ Gilles Peterson.

LINEUP: Past performers include Antonio Sanchez, Archie Shepp, Banda Magda, Cameron Graves, Donny McCaslin, Esperanza Spalding, Fred Hersch, Jaimie Branch, José James, Luciana Souza, Marc Ribot, Mark Guiliana, Marquis Hill, Nicole Mitchell, Nicholas Payton, Nubya Garcia, Sons Of Kemet, Stefon Harris & Blackout, Sullivan Fortner, Sun Ra Arkestra, Terri Lyne Carrington, Tyshawn Sorey, Wadada Leo Smith, Dave Douglas.
winterjazzfest.com

JazzFest at Sea

Cruise leaving from Miami, Florida
Jan. 10-20, 2019

JazzFest at Sea will take place onboard the MSC Divina, departing from Miami with stops in the Caribbean islands, including Antigua, St. Kitts, Tortola, Guadeloupe and St. Maarten. There are evening concerts, as well as afternoon sessions on days at sea. The JazzFest Jammers program happens every morning, providing an opportunity for guests to bring their own instruments and jam with the pros. Other events include a 1920s-themed party and a Charleston dance contest.

LINEUP: Allan Vaché, Terry Myers, Jon-Erik Kellso, Bob Draga, Russ Phillips, Paul Keller, Paolo Alderighi, Stephanie Trick, Jeff Barnhart, Anne Barnhart, Danny Coots, Bob Leary, Davey Jones, Kevin Dorn, Charlie Silva, Banu Gibson, Yve Evans.
jazzfestatsea.com

Tucson Jazz Festival

Tucson, Arizona
Jan. 11-21, 2019

This annual festival attracts fans from across the nation. The region's weather, typically in the 70s, is a big draw, as are the world-class concerts, which often sell out. A Jan. 13 concert celebrating the orchestrations of Nelson Riddle will feature the Tucson Jazz Festival Orchestra, vocalist Ann Hampton Callaway, trumpeter Terrell Stafford and many other acclaimed musicians.

LINEUP: Bobby McFerrin, Joey Alexander, Jane Bunnett & Maqueque, Tucson Jazz Institute Ellington Band with Terrell Stafford, Trombone Shorty, Special EFX All-Stars (with Regina Carter & Eric Marienthal), Mike LeDonne's Groover Quartet, Kathleen Grace with Larry Goldings, UA Studio Jazz Ensemble with Terrell Stafford, Magos Herrera Quartet, Sheila Jordan & Cameron Brown, Pink Martini, Asleep at the Wheel.
tucsonjazzfestival.org

The Jazz Cruise

Cruise leaving from Fort Lauderdale, Florida
Jan. 19-26, 2019

Since 2001, the Jazz Cruise has presented the best artists in straight-ahead jazz in an awesome setting. It features nearly 100 musicians and more than 200 hours of music.

LINEUP: Joey DeFrancesco, Eliane Elias, John Pizzarelli Quartet, Benny Golson, Houston Person, Joey Alexander, Chucho Valdés, Randy Brecker Band, Cyrille Aimée, SFJAZZ Collective, Mary Stallings, Clayton Brothers Quintet, Bill Charlap Trio, Tommy Igoe Sextet, Miguel Zenón, James Morrison, Nicki Parrott, Sean Jones, Wycliffe Gordon, Robin Eubanks, John Fedchock, Jennifer Wharton, Jeff Hamilton Trio, Jimmy Greene, Ken Peplowski, Gary Smulyan, Eric Marienthal, Lewis Nash, Emmet Cohen, Renee Rosnes, Steve Tyrell, Veronica Swift, Bill Cunliffe, Shelly Berg, more.
thejazzcruise.com

Charleston Jazz Festival

Charleston, South Carolina
Jan. 24-27, 2019

The fifth edition of this festival offers world-class headliners, the best local jazz bands and top youth artists. In addition to great music, Charleston offers exquisite cuisine, beautiful gardens, art galleries, golf, spas, carriage tours, boat tours, the Middleton Place House Museum and the Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum.

LINEUP: Bobby McFerrin, Ranky Tanky, more.
charlestonjazz.com

Berklee High School Jazz Festival

Boston, Massachusetts
Jan. 26, 2019

Berklee College of Music hosts its High School Jazz Festival at the Hynes Convention



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AND MORE... TICKETS + INFO : TAOSJAZZ.ORG

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Center in Boston. The event is free and there will be performances by Berklee faculty and open jam sessions.

LINEUP: Berklee faculty and ensembles, high school ensembles from around the country, plus special guests.
festival.berkleejazz.org

Blue Note at Sea

Cruise leaving from Fort Lauderdale, Florida
Jan. 26-Feb. 2, 2019

This cruise sailing through the Caribbean features more than 30 artists.

LINEUP: Marcus Miller, Don Was, Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis, Kurt Elling, Cécile McLorin Salvant, R+R=NOW, Robert Glasper, David Sanborn, Aaron Parks, Kandace Springs, Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah, José James, Terence Blanchard, Jason Moran, Candy Dulfer, Eric Marienthal, Wycliffe Gordon, more.

bluenoteatsea.com

GroundUP Music Festival

Miami Beach, Florida
Feb. 8-10, 2019

This festival once again will include three sets of music by its host, Snarky Puppy, as well as dozens of performances by other artists, master classes and interactive workshops.

LINEUP: Past performers include Robert Glasper, Lionel Loueke, Béla Fleck, Becca Stevens, the Wood Brothers.

groundupmusicfestival.com

San Jose Jazz Winter Fest

Venues in Silicon Valley, California
Feb. 13-24, 2019

The "cool" counterpart to the organization's popular Summer Fest, this festival features a genre-blending mix of young artists taking jazz beyond the expected.

LINEUP: Past performers include Cyrus Chestnut, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Mark Guiliana, George Kahumoku Jr., Mike Clark, SFJAZZ Collective, Benny Green, John Scofield, Regina Carter.

sanjosejazz.org/winter-fest

Newport Beach Jazz Party

Newport Beach, California
Feb. 14-17, 2019

At the 19th edition of this festival, fans can expect the unexpected as their favorite artists take the stage and often collaborate in surprise jam sessions.

LINEUP: Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra, Houston Person, Jack Jones, Akiko Tsuruga, Shelly Berg, Tom Scott, Tierney Sutton, Wycliffe Gordon, Ken Peplowski, more.

newportbeachjazzparty.com

Biamp PDX Jazz Festival

Portland, Oregon
Feb. 20-March 3, 2019

PDX Jazz presents living legends, established stars and emerging jazz artists in various venues. Special concerts include a tribute to Michael Brecker (under the direction of Gil Goldstein) and the Art Blakey Centennial Band and Spirits Up Above Ensemble celebrating Rahsaan Roland Kirk. In addition to world-class jazz, visitors to Portland can check out eclectic food carts, farm-to-table restaurants, award-winning micro brews, artisanal coffee and pino noir from the Willamette Valley.

LINEUP: Stanley Clarke, Ramsey Lewis, Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah, Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, The Bad Plus,

Aaron Diehl Trio, Freddy Cole, Stefon Harris & Blackout, Veronica Swift with Benny Green Trio, Terence Blanchard & The E-Collective, Darrell Grant, Charles McPherson, Matthew Whitaker, Chris Potter, Allison Miller's Boom Tic Boom, Cameron Graves, Eli Degibri, Habib Koite & Bassekou Kouyate, François Bourassa & Jean-Michel Pilc, Jovino Santos Neto Quinteto, Shemekia Copeland, Patrice Rushen, more.

pdxjazz.com/pdx-jazz-festival

Elmhurst College Jazz Festival

Elmhurst, Illinois
Feb. 21-24, 2019

Every February for the past 51 years, many of the best collegiate groups in the country have gathered on the campus of Elmhurst College for four days of performances and education. Student musicians will be surrounded by some of the most accomplished professional jazz musicians in the world to create an unparalleled learning environment.

LINEUP: John Fedchock New York Big Band, Michael Davis Hip-Bone Big Band, Randy Brecker, Bill Evans, Mike Stern, more.

elmhurst.edu/jazzfestival

Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival

Moscow, Idaho
Feb. 22-23, 2019

This event is the largest educational jazz festival in the nation. Students from more than 100 schools will attend more than 90 workshops

LINEUP: Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, University of Idaho Jazz Ensemble, more.

uidaho.edu/jazzfest

DeMiero Jazz Fest

Edmonds, Washington
March 7-9, 2019

The 43rd edition of this non-competitive vocal jazz choir festival will feature daytime performances from 60 choirs of all ages. Each night, there will be a concert with world-class jazz musicians as guest artists, including Sara Gazarek, the fest's new artistic director. Back this year is the Thursday Music Intensive (a day of concentrated performances, clinics and master classes for only 10 groups).

LINEUP: Sara Gazarek, Johnaye Kendrick, more.
demierojazzfest.org

UM Buddy DeFranco Jazz Festival

Missoula, Montana
March 14-15, 2019

The University of Montana will present the 39th edition of this festival at the Dennison Theatre. The emphasis of this instrumental and vocal jazz festival is on education, improvisation and the jazz language.

LINEUP: Past performers include Allison Miller, Steve Owen, Tanya Darby.

umt.edu/music

Big Ears Festival

Knoxville, Tennessee
March 21-24, 2019

Founded in 2009, Big Ears is a weekend of world-class musical performances that takes place in historic theaters, nightclubs, churches, museums and outdoor spaces. In addition to concerts, there are discussions, interactive workshops, installations, film screenings, surprise

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elmhurst.edu/jazzfestival

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CHRISTIAN SCOTT
AARON DIEHL TRIO
VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA

SHEMEKIA COPELAND

STEVE TURRE
Rahsaan Roland Kirk Tribute

FREDDY COLE
Nat King Cole at 100

CHRIS POTTER TRIO

ERIC ALEXANDER QUARTET
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and more ...



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Singer Dee Dee Bridgewater at the San Jose Jazz Winter Fest

ANDY NOZAKA



Sun Valley Jazz & Music Festival

NIC ROGEMAN



CU Jazz Festival in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois

TOM MCKENNA

collaborations and unexpected artistic collisions.

LINEUP: Mary Halvorson's Code Girl, Nils Frahm, Alvin Lucier, Joan La Barbara, Yves Tumor, Lonnie Holley, The Comet Is Coming, Matt Wilson, Irreversible Entanglements, The Messthetics, Peter Gregson, Clarice Jensen & Jonathan Turner, Rachel Grimes, Jlin, Kara-Lis Coverdale, Derek Gripper, more.

bigearsfestival.org

Knox-Rootabaga Jazz Festival

Galesburg, Illinois

April 2019 (Dates TBD)

With a mix of regional acts and visiting artists, Knox College and Galesburg team up to create this unique festival.

LINEUP: Past performers include Greg Ward, Matt Ulery, Gretchen Parlato, Knox College faculty members.

knox.edu

Next Generation Jazz Festival Presented by Monterey Jazz Festival

Monterey, California

April 5-7, 2019

Each spring, more than 1,300 of the nation's top student musicians attend this acclaimed festival, which welcomes middle school, high school and collegiate big bands, combos, vocal ensembles and conglomerate bands. The very best musicians win a spot at the Monterey Jazz Festival, which will be held in September.

LINEUP: Past performers have included ensembles from throughout the United States.

montereyjazzfestival.org

French Quarter Festival

New Orleans, Louisiana

April 11-14, 2019

This festival will feature more than 1,700 musicians on 23 stages, along with 60 food vendors from New Orleans' favorite restaurants. Fans from around the globe flock to this enormous showcase of Louisiana food, music and culture.

LINEUP: Past performers include Dirty Dozen Brass Band,

Irma Thomas, The Iguanas, Alvin Youngblood Hart, Cory Henry, Rebirth Brass Band, Chubby Carrier, Evan Christopher.

frenchquarterfest.org

Miami Downtown Jazz Festival

Miami, Florida

April 12-13, 2019

The goal of this festival is to reflect the rich roots and innovative developments of jazz, as well as the multiculturalism of Miami.

LINEUP: Past performers include Kurt Elling, Dr. Lonnie Smith, Arturo Sandoval, Lizz Wright, Regina Carter.

miamidowntownjazzfestival.org

New York City Jazz Festival

New York City

April 15, 2019

Hosted at the world-famous Apollo Theater, this festival gives instrumental and vocal jazz ensembles the opportunity to perform as part of a ticketed daytime performance, receive comments from a panel of vocal and instrumental jazz experts, have a private clinic with one of them, and attend an evening performance of select professional and amateur musicians.

LINEUP: Past professional collaborators have included Kurt Elling, Bob Mintzer, John Fedchock, Pete McGuinness, Darmon Meader, Paquito D'Rivera.

mcp.us/nyc-jazz-festival/

Eau Claire Jazz Festival

Eau Claire, Wisconsin

April 26-27, 2019

This event, founded in 1967, is a regional music festival dedicated to promoting jazz, as well as educating audiences. This festival is run by students at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, who receive supervisory assistance from a board made up of community members.

LINEUP: Past performers include Bob Mintzer, Bobby Sanabria, Carl Allen.

eauclairejazz.com



Chucho Valdés says come to Cuba

Havana Jazz Festival

January 13-21, 2019

JazzCuba.com





Miles Davis (left) and B.B. King at Barcelona in 1973

Barcelona's Jazz Party Thrives at 50

BY TED PANKEN

The Voll-Damm Barcelona International Jazz Festival, which launched in 1966, is billing 2018 as its 50th anniversary. In making this decision, the festival was not inspired by the Surrealist provocations of Salvador Dali, a son of Figueres, 85 miles north of Catalonia's capital city, or the perspectival mojo of Pablo Picasso, who spent a formative decade in Barcelona more than a century ago, and contributed an extraordinary cohort of works to that city's Museu Picasso. The reason is more prosaic. As Festival Artistic Director Joan Anton Cararach explained, the death of Spain's dictator, Generalissimo Francisco Franco, in 1975, "led to the first, let's say, burst-out of democracy in Spain, and no one in Barcelona was interested in promoting jazz in those years—so the festival was discontinued in 1977, 1978 and 1979."

The festival revived in 1980, operating under

various leadership until 1989, when The Project, a recently formed music promotion company owned by Tito Ramoneda and Joan Roselló, took the festival private. In 2003, one year after the S.A. Damm beer company signed on as a consequential sponsor, therefore providing financial stability, Ramoneda and Roselló hired Cararach, then employed as a professor of journalism, arts journalist and translator.

Cararach said that The Project organizes more than 400 concerts a year. Many feature Spanish pop artists and, in 2018, international stars like Bob Dylan and Ringo Starr. "With pop music, for 24 hours' work, you make 25 times more money than for a two-month festival," Cararach said. Cushioned by these profits, BJF has expanded from 27 concerts in 2003, when Cararach took the reins, to 100–120 events.

He acknowledged that festering political tensions between Catalonia and Spain pose logisti-

cal complexities. "We had a general strike last year, and Chick Corea, for instance, was stopped for four hours on a highway in Catalonia," Cararach said. "But we are surviving, because The Project has a clear vision about its pop music business and all the things it does. Sometimes, I make the joke that I am the guy losing money for The Project, so they can save on annual taxes."

The quality of the "50th anniversary" roster makes it hard to discern any difficulties. BJF offered concerts last summer by stars like Pat Metheny, Snarky Puppy, Cécile McLorin Salvant and R+R=NOW. The official fall season begins Oct. 26 with a concert at which Cuban piano maestro Chucho Valdés revisits his 1973 classic *Jazz Bata* under the serene, implacable gaze of 18 statues of muses looming over the stage of Barcelona's incomparable, 110-year-old Palau de la Música Catalana.

The next day, Cuba's folkloric Grupo



Buika performs at the Palau de la Música Catalana.

LORENZO DUJASO/BARCELONA
VOLL-DAMM JAZZ FESTIVAL



Bebo Valdés (left) and Joan Anton Cararach in 2008

JOAN ANTON CARARACH COLLECTION



Chucho Valdés (second from left) at the Rumba Para Bebo concert

LORENZO DUJASO/BARCELONA
VOLL-DAMM JAZZ FESTIVAL



Gonzalo Rubalcaba

LORENZO DUJASO/BARCELONA
VOLL-DAMM JAZZ FESTIVAL

Compay Segundo will perform at BARTS, a converted theater space, and The Bad Plus will play the Conservatori del Liceu, a modern auditorium at Barcelona's primary music school, which hosts the Billy Childs Quartet on Oct. 29 and the Mark Turner-Ethan Iverson duo on Oct. 30. Meanwhile, on Oct. 28, French pianist-composer-audiovisual artist Chassol plays solo at L'Auditori Sala 2, a modern 586-seat space that specializes in classical music. A half-hour earlier, Tribalistas, comprising all-star Brazilian vocalists Marisa Monte, Arnaldo Antunes and Carlinhos Brown backed by a strings and percussion quartet, begins its show a few miles northeast at Auditori del Fòrum.

The variety of styles and venues during opening week reflects, in microcosm, Cararach's aesthetic and curatorial philosophy. "What we do is like a classical season—one artist, one venue, one night," Cararach said. "It's not made for tourists, but for people who live in Barcelona. We have to sell tickets, so we represent many different tastes. Sometimes, we present concerts for 4,000 people, but usually for, let's say, 100 to 2,000. That's what makes the festival so interesting—you can always choose your thing.

"People don't like this word 'eclectic,' but I think 'eclectic' is the word that defines us. I try

to eat and drink everything, and I try to listen to any kind of music."

Cararach—whom Bad Plus bassist Reid Anderson, a one-time Barcelona resident, described as "a foodie and oenophile of the highest order"—finds ingenious ways to connect the jazz programming to Barcelona's efflorescent wine culture. For example, each year since 2010, he's presented "The Monvínic Experience" in conjunction with the renowned wine bar Monvínic, in which a musician is tasked with improvising a recital in response to eight separate wines for patrons who pay €80 for the sybaritic privilege of sniffing, tasting and consuming them.

Kurt Rosenwinkel, who performed the first Monvínic Experience (and participated in the last of five "Blindfold/Winefold Tests" that DownBeat conducted at Monvínic between 2011 and 2015), recalls it as "a special, magical occasion." He was touring Europe with his trio; to prepare him, Cararach sent the bottles to a restaurant in Paris that matched the vintages with a multi-course luncheon. "I didn't know where Monvínic was, or who was going to be there," Rosenwinkel said. "When I showed up, there were 100 placemats set with fine silverware, and a well-made, thick cardboard booklet that described all the wines. I

enjoyed every minute."

Rosenwinkel cited the "passion" of the audiences he encountered when residing in Barcelona during the 1990s. "They want your heart and soul, your blood and sweat and tears and everything else when you play," he said. "Every time I play the festival, I feel that passion and connection to the audience."

No idiom more palpably conveys those primal qualities than flamenco, represented at this year's Monvínic Experience event on Nov. 20 by vocalist Mayte Martín (a week after her Nov. 13 concert at BARTS), conjuring responses to selections by female winemakers. Also performing in proximity are eminent gitano singer Diego el Cigala at the Palau on Nov. 14, and guitar virtuosos Tomatito (Palau, Nov. 16) and Vicente Amigo (Nov. 21, at Gran Teatre del Liceu, Barcelona's opera hall).

As always, Catalan and Spanish musicians will be featured prominently. Bassist-bandleader Joan Chamorro's singular Sant Andreu Jazz Band, whose personnel, ages 10 to 17, navigate the jazz tradition with exceptional panache and freshness, make their annual appearance with a concert called All The Colors of Jazz, tracing the festival's history. Chamorro also presents a tribute to Dexter Gordon—who played the festival in



LORENZO DUASO/BARCELONA VOLL-DAMM JAZZ FESTIVAL

Cécile McLorin Salvant



LORENZO DUASO/BARCELONA VOLL-DAMM JAZZ FESTIVAL

Kurt Rosenwinkel

1971—in conjunction with Gordon’s widow and biographer, Maxine Gordon.

Sant Andreu Jazz Band’s best-known alumna is trumpeter, alto saxophonist and vocalist Andrea Motis. A regular at BJJ since adolescence, she will perform in duo with local pianist Ignasi Terraza (who performs in five concerts altogether) and in trio with Terraza and Paco DeLucia’s former harmonicist Antonio Serrano. Also representing Catalonia is the singer-pianist Mar Vilaseca, performing solo at Luz De Gas, an extraordinary hall from La Belle Époque, and pianist Marco Mezquida in the Pieris Trio with bassist Jesper Bodilsen and drummer Martin Anderson, both from Denmark, at LAuditori Sala.

When booking artists from the U.S. and Europe, Cararach doesn’t fetishize exclusivity. “I don’t like festivals that pay a lot of money for ‘special things,’” he said. “Musicians need to survive, they need to travel, and they need to play as many shows as possible. We’re in Europe in the fall, so we have a lot of artists who are playing other European festivals.” Fitting into that category in 2018 are John Scofield, Randy Brecker, Aaron Parks’ Little Big and Bill Frisell solo.

A more specialized and larger-scale event features Brad Mehldau playing a new piano concerto with the Barcelona Symphony Orchestra, which has co-commissioned the work with several other orchestras. “I love classical music,” said Cararach, who used to write about opera. He referred to a Nov. 10 duo concert by saxophonist Dave Liebman and pianist Marc Copland. “I also like jazz as chamber music, like presenting a quartet by Beethoven or Brahms or Schumann,” he said. “But what I like about a jazz concert is that even when the musician’s aesthetic is very clear, you don’t know what will happen until they start to play.”

Chamber music of a different sort transpires Dec. 1 at Conservatori del Liceu when Cuban-born pianist Pepe Rivero and bassist Javier Colina interpret the music that Colina recorded with maestro pianist Bebo Valdés on *Lágrimas Negras* in 2003. This is one leg of a tripartite celebration of the Mambo King’s centennial that also includes a performance by Cuban pianist Harold López-Nussa and Chucho Valdés’ opening-night event.

The release of *Lágrimas Negras* coincided with Cararach’s appointment as artistic director. He’d established a personal connection with Bebo after interviewing him in 1996, and immediately decided to present a concert around that album and Bebo’s *We Could Make Such Beautiful Music Together* with Federico Britos.

“I started at the top—my story after that is a complete downgrade,” joked Cararach, who has made it a point to focus on Cuban musicians—most notably the Valdés family—in his programming ever since. “When I have Cuban musicians on the stage, you can like or dislike their aesthetic, but what is sure is they don’t take prisoners. So, Cuban jazz and Cuban popular music have been important to the festival for the past 15 years.”

Cararach said that the qualities Bebo Valdés embodied in his musical production inform his attitude to booking the festival. “Bebo’s faith in music was amazing,” he said. “He was open to all kinds of sounds. He played jazz, of course, and Afro-Cuban music, but he loved everything from Barbra Streisand to Rachmaninoff. And he was very respectful to the audience.”

He compared Bebo Valdés to Duke Ellington, who played the very first concert of the Barcelona Jazz Festival on Nov. 3, 1966, while touring Europe with his orchestra and Ella Fitzgerald, and performed Sacred Concerts in Barcelona in 1969 and 1973. In his memoir, *Music Is My Mistress*, Ellington mentioned his admiration for the choir he

encountered in 1969 at Santa Maria Del Mar, Barcelona’s old cathedral.

“People who met Ellington told me he was an angel,” Cararach said. “One guy who sang told me, ‘Duke Ellington touched me,’ 50 years after the fact. I understand this sensation very well, because I saw Bebo Valdés do this with everybody. Bebo was de facto our godfather; this is the only festival where he played all his projects in his last years.”

When Bebo Valdés died in 2013, Cararach and Chucho Valdés fulfilled his request that a party be thrown where attendees, rather than weep, should eat chocolate and drink rum. Under Chucho’s direction, the program, titled *Rumba Para Bebo*, a truly surreal event, spanned the entirety of Bebo’s interests. “Chucho is now the festival’s godfather,” Cararach said. “He does a new project for us every year.”

In 2017 at the Palau, Chucho Valdés played duo piano with Gonzalo Rubalcaba, his “heir to the throne,” as part of a European tour. It was Rubalcaba’s third consecutive appearance at BJJ, a run that began with his own *Monvínic Experience* in 2015. Rubalcaba observed that the life story of his maternal grandfather, surnamed Fonseca, who followed the path of many Catalonians by emigrating to Cuba almost a century ago, connects him personally to Barcelona. “This festival brings to the audience the most contemporary voices of Cuban music today,” Rubalcaba said. “But what makes this event special is the city itself. It’s the music, the architecture, the food, the wine, the energy.”

“I like to compare the festival to the spirit of Barcelona,” Cararach said. “Barcelona is a capital for wine lovers and food lovers, and it’s important to understand that wine and food work very well together with jazz. Everyone is welcome to the table. But this table is our table—local products and our own taste.”

DB

3 AL 6 DE ENERO, 2019

23º FESTIVAL INTERNACIONAL DE

Jazz

DE PUNTA DEL ESTE

FINCA EL SOSIEGO

Punta Ballena, PUNTA DEL ESTE, URUGUAY



Jueves 3

"Amigos de El Sosiego"
La música de Lee Morgan

David Feldman, piano.
Popo Romano, bajo.
Pipi Piazzolla, batería.
Nicolás Mora, guitarra.
Diego Urcola, trompeta.

Invitados Especiales:
Alex Brown, violín.
Jessé Sadoc, trompeta.

Al Foster, Cuarteto

Adam Birnbaum, piano.
Doug Weiss, bajo.
Chris Potter, Saxo Tenor
Al Foster, batería.

Johnny O'neal "Trío"

Mark Lewandowski, bajo.
Itay Morchi, batería.
Johnny O'neal, piano y voz.

Invitado Especial:
Grant Stewart, saxo tenor.

Viernes 4

Gary Smulyan, la música de
Chet Baker y Gerry Mulligan

David Wong, bajo.
Rodney Green, batería.
Diego Urcola, trompeta.
Gary Smulyan, saxo barítono.

Aaron Diehl "Trío"

Paul Sikivie, bajo.
Quincy Davis, batería.
Aaron Diehl, piano.

Benny Green Trio

David Wong, bajo.
Aaron Kimmel, batería.
Benny Green, piano.

Sábado 5

Johnny O'Neal "Trío"
Homenaje a Joe Williams

Mark Lewandowski, bajo.
Itay Morchi, batería.
Johnny O'Neal, piano y voz.

Invitado Especial:
Grant Stewart, saxo tenor.

Benny Green Trío

David Wong, bajo.
Aaron Kimmel, batería.
Benny Green, piano.

Al Foster, Cuarteto

Adam Birnbaum, piano.
Doug Weiss, bajo.
Chris Potter, saxo tenor
Al Foster, batería.

Domingo 6

Aaron Diehl "Trío"

Paul Sikivie, bajo.
Quincy Davis, batería.
Aaron Diehl, piano.

"El Dúo"

Nnenna Freelon, voz.
Chico Pinheiro, guitarra.

Paquito D'Rivera, presenta:
La Música de Chick Corea

Oscar Stagnaro, bajo.
Mark Walker, batería.
Alex Brown, piano.
Diego Urcola, trompeta.
Gary Smulyan, saxo barítono.
Paquito D'Rivera, saxo alto
y clarinete.



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PAQUITO D'RIVERA

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festival.com.uy



Pat Meheny at Padova Jazz Festival

Agharta Prague Jazz Festival

Prague, Czech Republic

Sept. 26–Nov. 23

Lucerne Music Bar and the Agharta Jazz Centrum (a club located in the basement of a building constructed in the 1400s) host this festival, presenting a mix of U.S. and European artists.

LINEUP: Mike Stern, Candy Dulfer, Luboš Andršt, Dean Brown Band, Chris Minh Doky & Electric Nomads, more. aghartacz

Hong Kong International Jazz Festival

Hong Kong, China

Sept. 30, Oct. 7, Oct. 11–13

This event has become one of the premier music festivals in Asia. Renowned musicians from around the world play alongside young local musicians on various stages. Attendees can participate in workshops and other educational initiatives.

LINEUP: Jerry Bergonzi Quartet, Afternoon Tree, Alonso Gonzalez Latin Jazz Quintet, B's Bees, Dusha Connection, Funktion, Espen Berg Trio, Talie Monin & The World Jazz Compendium, Kari Ikonen Trio, Tjoe Man Cheung, more. hkjif.com

Enjoy Jazz

Heidelberg, Mannheim & Ludwigshafen, Germany

Oct. 2–Nov. 16

Germany's biggest jazz festival draws listeners to venues in Heidelberg, Mannheim and Ludwigshafen to experience unique concerts as well as films and other projects. Archie Shepp is the festival's artist-in-residence.

LINEUP: Archie Shepp's Fire Music, Jason Moran & Archie Shepp, Marcin Wasilewski Trio, Jan Garbarek Group feat. Trilok Gurtu, Ambrose Akinmusire Quartet, James Farm, Michael Wollny Trio, Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra with Cécile McLorin Salvant, Nicole Mitchell, Kaja Drakler & Eve Risser, Nicole Johänntgen, Aaron Parks Trio, Vincent Peirani Quintet, Sons Of Kemet, Marc Sinan &

Oguz Büyükberber, The Necks, Shai Maestro Trio, Ketil Bjørnstad, Richie Beirach Quartet feat. Gregor Huebner, Aruán Ortiz & Don Byron, Josef Leimberg, Anke Helfrich & Angelika Niescier, Pablo Held Trio, Punch Brothers, Kari Ikonen Trio, Tord Gustavsen Trio, Ryan Porter feat. The West Coast Get Down, more.

enjoyjazz.de

Angra Jazz Festival

Angra do Heroísmo, Terceira Island, Azores, Portugal

Oct. 3–6

Fans can enjoy the best in jazz during their visit to the historic Portuguese city of Angra do Heroísmo.

LINEUP: Gonzalo Rubalcaba Trio, Andy Sheppard Quartet, Billy Childs Quartet, Darcy James Argue's Secret Society, Jazzmeia Horn, Orquestra de Jazz do Hot Clube de Portugal, Orquestra Angrajazz.

angrajazz.com; visitazores.com

Jeonju International Sori Festival

Jeonju, South Korea

Oct. 3–7

Founded in 2001, this international music festival showcases music from around the world, including traditional Korean styles, with more than 90 acts performing this year. The festival features multiple stages, master classes, world music workshops and children's activities.

LINEUP: Gugak Ensemble, Dongdampung, Wang Ying-chieh, Trio Reijseger Fraanje Sylla, Odo Ensemble, Meshk Ensemble, Kiwi & The Papaya Mangoes, Naftule, Anders Hagberg, more.

sorifestival.com

Jarasmus International Jazz Festival

Gapyeong, South Korea

Oct. 12–14

This festival features multiple venues on a beautiful island on the Bukhan River.

LINEUP: Carla Bley Trio, Nik Bärtsch's Ronin, Pablo Ziegler

Trio, Etienne Mbappé & The Prophets, Grace Kelly, Blind Boys of Alabama, Schnellertollermeier, Paweł Kaczmarczyk Quartet, EYM Trio, Uriel Herman Quartet, Sunji Lee Chamber Ensemble, Jarasum Jazz Large Ensemble, Hachul Song Quartet, Ahran Shin Trio, Big Band Battle: Howon University Jazz Big Band vs. Seoul Institute of the Arts Big Band.

jarasumjazz.com

Stockholm Jazz Festival

Stockholm, Sweden

Oct. 12–21

Numerous jazz icons have played this festival, which has expanded to include more than 60 venues around the city. With attendance exceeding 25,000, it's one of Stockholm's biggest events. This year, pianist Bugge Wesseltoft will perform a special concert with the two surviving members of the late Esbjörn Svensson's trio.

LINEUP: Yellowjackets, Carla Bley, Judith Hill, Rymden (feat. Bugge Wesseltoft).

stockholmjazz.com/english

Padova Jazz Festival

Padova, Italy

Oct. 13–Nov. 24

In the past, the Padova Jazz Festival has lasted one week, but this year's edition will run for six weeks, with a few opening events and then a full month with daily concerts. This fest has become an important meeting place for U.S. and Italian bands.

LINEUP: Chick Corea, John Scofield, Jazzmeia Horn, Enrico Rava Quintet (feat. Joe Lovano), Pat Martino Trio, Emma Morton & The Graces, Scott Hamilton Quartet, Irreversible Entanglements, Steve Wilson & Wilsonian's Grain, Caffè Pedrocchi, Spike Wilner Trio, Francesco Cafiso Nonet, Chiara Pancaldi feat. Kirk Lightsey & Darryl Hall.

padovajazz.com

Akbank Jazz Festival

Istanbul, Turkey

Oct. 17–28

This festival was launched in 1991, and it has grown steadily over the decades. Akbank has hosted the most prominent artists in jazz while also providing a showcase for rising and promising next-generation artists. In addition to concerts, Akbank presents panels, workshops, film screenings and social responsibility projects.

LINEUP: The Bad Plus, Jamie Cullum, Avishai Cohen, The Comet Is Coming, Omer Avital Qantar, Nubya Garcia, Till Brönner, Birsen Tezer, Bixiga 70, Can Çankaya & Kağan Yıldız, Caloé, Ceylan Ertem, Ezra Collective, Josef Leimberg, Jehan Barbur (feat. Firat Tanış), Karl Hector & The Malcoons, Konstrukt, Rémi Panossian Trio, Ozan Musluoğlu Quintet, Skinya Fukomori Trio, Tarkovsky Quartet, Woody Black 4, more.

akbankjazzfestival.com

Døla Jazz Lillehammer Jazz Festival

Lillehammer, Norway

Oct. 18–21

Founded in 1978, this event has become one of the most acclaimed jazz festivals in Norway. Fans return to this festival not only because of the great music, but also because of the intimate settings of the shows. This festival seeks to unify audiences of all ages and occupations.

LINEUP: Jan Garbarek Group, Arild Andersen Quartet, Ellen Andrea Wang Trio, Kristin Asbjørnsen, Amund Kleppan/Arild Andersen/Marius Neset, Aloft Quartet, Petter Wettre & Audun Kleive, Ensemble Denada, Billy Meier, The Brazz Brothers, Fieh, Marit Sandvik & Nova Onda, Steinar Raknes, more.

dolajazz.no; padovajazz.com

Skopje Jazz Festival

Skopje, Republic of Macedonia

Oct. 18–21

Established in 1982, this festival hosts the best Macedonian jazz musicians, as well as top-notch talent from North America, Africa and other corners of the globe.

LINEUP: Wadada Leo Smith, David Murray Quartet (feat. Saul Williams), Harriet Tubman, Alexander Hawkins, Mette Rasmussen, Trondheim Voices, Mopo, Toni Kitanovski, Susana Santos Silva/Ab Baars/Hamid Drake, more.

skopjejazzfest.com.mk

Baloise Session

Basel, Switzerland

Oct. 19–Nov. 6

For the past 33 years, major stars have been coming to this popular Swiss boutique-music festival, where fans sit at tables positioned close to the stage. The diverse programming includes jazz, soul, funk, blues, reggae, world music and other genres.

LINEUP: Buddy Guy, Beth Hart, Ms. Lauryn Hill, John Legend, Ben Harper, Jimmy Cliff, Sunrise Avenue, Triballistas, Maria Gadú, Nicole Bernegger, more.

baloisession.ch

Canterbury Festival

Canterbury, United Kingdom

Oct. 20–Nov. 3

Canterbury Festival offers more than 200 events—from jazz and classical music to contemporary dance, comedy, theater and visual arts. On Oct. 30, singer Joanna Eden and pianist Chris Ingham's trio will perform a tribute to Ella Fitzgerald.



Gregory Porter at the Skopje Jazz Festival



Archie Shepp at the Enjoy Jazz festival

LINEUP: Bryn Terfel, Sammy Rimington International Band, Joanna Eden & The Chris Ingham Trio, Christ Church University Big Band, European Union Chamber Orchestra, Yolanda Brown, The Lunaire Quartet, Tom Robinson, Elégie, The Shires, Melvyn Tan, Mamas Gun, Sophie Ellis-Bextor, Club Click, Fourtouna, The King's Singers, Jamie Smith's Mabon, Simon Langton, Matt Ford, Trio HLK & Evelyn Glennie, more.

canterburyfestival.co.uk

Deutsches Jazzfestival Frankfurt

Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Oct. 22–28

Founded in 1953, this legendary festival is famous for presenting unique collaborations.

LINEUP: SFJAZZ Collective, Mark Guiliana Jazz Quartet, Kaja Drakler & Susana Santos Silva, Sfumato (feat. Émile Parisien), Shake Stew, Yazz Ahmed, Kamaal Williams, Echoes of Swing, more.

jazzfestival.hr2-kultur.de

Umeå Jazz Festival

Umeå, Sweden

Oct. 24–28

Umeå presents its 50th edition, with concerts at the Idun Theatre (main stage) and various other venues, including a Jazz Lab Stage, the Apple Club, Freja Jazzbar, Studiojazz and Soundgarden.

LINEUP: Angélique Kidjo, Goran Kajfes' Subtropic Arkesstra, Julian Lage Trio, Kennedy Administration, Norrland-soperan Symphony Orchestra & Adam Baldych Quartet (feat. Dima Orsho), Johan Lindström Septet, Trondheim Jazz Orchestra & The Maxx, Naoko Sakata, Stockholm Stompers, Mayito Rivera & Sons of Cuba, more.

umeajazzfestival.se

Guinness Cork Jazz Festival

Cork, Ireland

Oct. 25–29

Aside from a stellar international lineup, this festival offers numerous free events and activities, including outdoor shows, a Jazz Bus, a vinyl & CD fair at the Unitarian Church, a jazz parade, a food fair and a gospel service.

LINEUP: Maria Schneider Orchestra, Stanley Clarke Band, Fred Hersch Trio, Billy Cobham Band, Donny McCaslin, Billy Childs, T.S. Monk Sextet, Blind Boys Of Ala-

bama, David O'Rourke & Paul Dunlea, Sachal Vasandani, Paul Dunlea Sextet, Ronan Guilfoyle, Umbra, Roller Trio, Mary Hegarty, China Moses, Brian Deady, Frank Vignola's Hot Jazz Guitar Trio, Hypnotic Brass Ensemble, Laura Mvula, Linley Hamilton, Nnenna Freelon Trio, Pablo Ziegler Trio, more.

guinnessjazzfestival.com

Bologna Jazz Festival

Bologna, Italy

Oct. 25–Nov. 25

The inaugural edition of this festival, held in 1958, was the first jazz festival to ever occur in Italy. This year's festival has a special emphasis on large ensembles.

LINEUP: Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra (feat. Cécile McLorin Salvant), SFJAZZ Collective, Avishai Cohen Quartet, Ethan Iverson & Mark Turner, Martin Wind Light Blue Quartet, Manhattan Transfer, Jazz In'it Orchestra (feat. Jesse Davis), Fabrizio Bosso & Paolo Silvestri Ensemble, Samuel Blaser, David Murray with the Tower Jazz Composer Orchestra, Barry Harris Trio, Mikkel Ploug Trio, Antonio Faraò Trio, Oded Tzur Quartet, Enrico Pieranunzi, Steve Khun Trio, Steve Wilson & Wilsonian's Grain, Andrea Centazzo, Pat Martino Organ Trio, Bill Carrothers, Toninho Horta Trio, Brian Blade/Scott Colley/Benjamin Koppel.

bolognajazzfestival.com

Dominican Republic Jazz Festival

Cap Cana, Santiago, Puerto Plata, Playa Alicia & Cabarete Beach, Dominican Republic

Oct. 26, Nov. 1–4

The 22nd edition of this festival will be dedicated to the voice. The festival is free, but VIP tickets are available, enabling priority seating, complimentary beverages and other festival perks with proceeds benefiting the music foundation FEDUJAZZ.

LINEUP: Terri Lyne Carrington, Ingrid Jensen, Berklee Global Jazz Institute, El Prodigio, Sandy Gabriel, more.

drjazzfestival.com

Barcelona Voll-Damm Jazz Festival

Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain

Oct. 26–Dec. 12

Founded in 1966, the Barcelona Jazz Festival is one of the oldest European festivals, a musical marathon with the motto: "One artist, one venue." In other words, no



Chick Corea-Steve Gadd Band at the Bologna Jazz Festival



Renee Rosnes (left) and Bill Charlap at the Oscar Peterson International Jazz Festival

double-bills and no people rushing from one stage to another. Concerts are staged in the best venues in Barcelona, including the world-famous Palau de la Música Catalana, where the festival was born. Venues range from small clubs to big auditoriums. This year organizers are presenting the 50th edition (the festival was discontinued between 1977 and 1979) with more than 100 concerts.

LINEUP: Chucho Valdés, Brad Mehldau, Bill Frisell, John Scofield, Avishai Cohen, Cory Henry & The Funk Apostles, The Bad Plus, Andrea Motis & Ignasi Terraza, Billy Childs, Joan Chamorro, Aaron Parks' Little Big, Ethan Iverson & Mark Turner, Harold López-Nussa Trio, Randy Brecker/Bill Evans/Simon Phillips, Madeleine Peyroux, Dave Liebman & Marc Copland, Beth Hart, Tigran Hamasyan, Stacey Kent, Kyle Eastwood, Cyrille Aimee, Amadou & Mariam, Mallu Magalhães, Camille Bertault, Tribalistas, Kiki Morente, Eliot Zigmund Quartet (feat. Chris Cheek), Pepe Rivero & Javier Colina, Sant Andreu Jazz Band, more.

jazz.barcelona

Jazznojazz Festival

Zurich, Switzerland

Oct. 31–Nov. 3

Celebrating its 20th anniversary, this festival, held in a historic theater in the heart of Zurich, will offer more than 20 concerts featuring jazz, funk, soul, reggae and electronica. The festival includes exclusive Late Night Sessions, so that fans can keep the party going into the wee hours. Each concert is ticketed separately, although festival passes are also available.

LINEUP: Manhattan Transfer, Avishai Cohen, Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra (feat. Cécile McLorin Salvant), Jimmy Cliff, Tingvall Trio, Lisa Simone, Victor Wooten Trio, Kennedy Administration, Mario Biondi, GoGo Penguin, Incognito, Jojo Mayer & Nerve, Andreas Schaefer, Maceo Parker, Macy Gray, Raphael Saadiq, Fred Wesley & The New JBs.

jazznojazz.ch

Berlin Jazz Festival
Berlin, Germany
Nov. 1–4

The 55th edition of the festival (with new artistic director Nadin Deventer) will present more than 30 bands and projects with musicians from over 15 countries at

numerous venues in the city. The programming includes world premieres as well as German premieres. In addition to music, there will be dancing, films, installations, lectures and panel discussions. The artist-in-residence will be guitarist Mary Halvorson.

LINEUP: Moor Mother & Roscoe Mitchell, Mary Halvorson, Nicole Mitchell's Black Earth Ensemble, Théo Ceccaldi, Jamie Branch, Jason Moran, Makaya McCraven, Nubya Garcia, Maria Faust & Kara-Lis Coverdale, Rob Mazurek, KIM Collective, more.

berlinerfestspiele.de/jazzfest

Tampere Jazz Happening

Tampere, Finland

Nov. 1–4

Founded in 1982, this festival brings together the most interesting artists in modern jazz from Finland and from abroad.

LINEUP: Past performers include Steve Coleman, Tony Allen, Shabaka & The Ancestors, Kirke Karja Quartet, Kadri Voorand Duo, Jukka Eskola Soul Trio.

tamperemusicfestivals.fi/jazz/en

Jazzmandu

Kathmandu, Nepal

Nov. 1–6

For more than 15 years, Jazzmandu (aka the Kathmandu Jazz Festival) has gathered outstanding musicians from across continents for an annual celebration of music and community. In a packed schedule of shows across Kathmandu Valley, artists showcase their music and meld it with the best of Nepali and myriad other musical traditions.

LINEUP: Cynthia Abraham, Eduardo Mendonça, Adrien Brandeis Quintet, Dave Feusi & The Groove Gang, Dach, Cadenza Collective, more.

jazzmandu.com

JazzMi

Milan, Italy

Nov. 1–13

This festival will include 150 events and more than 500 artists. Under the artistic direction of Luciano Linzi and Titti Santini, this event offers concerts, unique collaborations, exhibitions, interviews and meetings.

LINEUP: John Zorn & Bill Laswell, Chick Corea, Stefano Bollani, Madeleine Peyroux, Art Ensemble of Chicago,

Enrico Rava Quintet (feat. Joe Lovano), Paolo Conte, Bireli Lagrene, Maceo Parker, Camille Bertault, Paolo Fresu & Lars Danielsson, Yazz Ahmed, more.

jazzmi.it

Wangaratta Jazz & Blues Festival

Wangaratta, Victoria, Australia

Nov. 2–4

With an eclectic mix of legends and rising stars, this event features contemporary, traditional, mainstream and experimental music.

LINEUP: Bernard Purdie, Anna Scionti, Australian Art Orchestra, Box of Blues, Cheryl Durongpitsikul, Cass Eager & Velvet Rope, Jeff Lang Trio, Justine Clarke, Kelly Auty Band, Matt Schofield, Opelousas (Alison Ferrier, Kerri Simpson, Anthony Shortte), Ray Beadle Band, Starlite Campbell, Tank Dilemma, The Meltdown, The Shuffle Demons, Aaron McCoullough, Alex Stuart Quintet, Ben Hauptmann, Emil Viklický & Miroslav Bukovsky, Esstee Big Band, Garden Quartet, High Society, Jackie Orszaczky Band, James Macaulay's Hishakaku Quartet, Joseph Tawadros, Julian Banks Group, Kate Wadey, Nirán Dasika Quartet, Philéas Fogg Trio, Sirens Big Band, Sumire Kuribayashi, Ted Vining & Adrian Sherriff, Tina Harrod, Virna Sanzone with Wayne Kelly Trio, Yuri Honing Quartet, more.

wangarattajazz.com

Leverkusener Jazztage

Leverkusener, Germany

Nov. 5–18

With more than 20,000 visitors as well as local attendees, Jazztage is one of the biggest jazz events in the German-speaking world.

LINEUP: Gregory Porter, WDR Big Band (feat. Kandace Springs), Jan Garbarek Group (feat. Trilok Gurtu), Wincent Weiss, Candy Dulfer, Incognito, Mörk, Okan Ersan & Noise Adventures, Thomas Quasthoff, Randy Brecker/Bill Evans/Simon Phillips, Naturally 7, Alex Han, Morcheeba, Laila Biali, Anastacia, Seven, Flo Mega, Jonah Nilsson, Myles Sanko, Electro Deluxe, Charles Pasi, Querbeat, Three Fall, more.

leverkusener-jazztage.de

POA Jazz Festival

Porto Alegre, Brazil

Nov. 9–11

This festival celebrates culture and music with concerts, master classes and other events.

LINEUP: Rudresh Mahanthappa, Bourbon Sweethearts, Mariano Loíacono Quintet, more.

[facebook.com/portoalegrejazzfestival](https://www.facebook.com/portoalegrejazzfestival)

Jazzdor Festival

Strasbourg, France

Nov. 9-23

The 33rd edition of this festival will present 31 French, European and international projects, ranging from solo performances to orchestra concerts. Shows take place in venues throughout Strasbourg.

LINEUP: Michael Wollny, Archie Shepp, John Scofield, Lucia Cadotsch, Nicole Mitchell, Myra Melford, Pablo Held, Yorgos Dimitriadis, Andrea Parkins, Philippe Lemoine, Emanuele Maniscalco, Joëlle Léandre, Darren Johnston, Jozef Dumoulin, Benoit Delbecq, Pierre De Bethmann, Michel Portal, Nils Wogram, Bruno Chevillon, Lander Gyselinck, Andreas Schaerer, Luciano Biondini, Kalle Kalima, Lucas Niggli, Aki Rissanen, Elaine Mitchener, Alain Blesing, Dominique Pifarely, Yuko Oshima, Claude Tchamitchian, Nelson Veras, David Helbock, David Murray, Saul Williams, Marc Ducret, more.

jazzdor.com

Vilnius Mama Jazz Festival

Vilnius, Lithuania

Nov. 15-18

Founded in 2002, this festival offers programming that focuses on contemporary developments in jazz, attracting more than 100 performers each year. Special improvisation sessions pair established veterans with young performers.

LINEUP: Past performers include Pharoah Sanders, Neil Cowley, Chick Corea, Snarky Puppy, Peter Brötzmann, Ravi Coltrane, Robert Glasper, Ambrose Akinmusire, Wayne Shorter, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Satoko Fujii, Oregon.

vilniusmamajazz.it/en

EFG London Jazz Festival

London, United Kingdom

Nov. 16-25

This ambitious, epic festival presents heavyweight musical talent from across the globe. The programming offers jazz masters flexing their chops, cutting-edge young bands, international legends with a wealth of new music, emerging British stars and outstanding collaborations.

LINEUP: Bobby McFerrin, Archie Shepp, Stanley Clarke Band, The Headhunters, Ethan Iverson, Madeleine Peyroux, Bill Frisell, James Taylor Quartet, Melody Gardot, Jeff Goldblum with the Mildred Snitzer Orchestra, Deva Mahal, Makaya McCraven, Nubya Garcia, Kandace Springs, Lea DeLaria, Christian Sands Trio, Soft Machine, Dave Liebman & Marc Copland, Jamie Baum Septet, Gareth Lockrane Big Band, Omer Avital Qantar, Kirk Lightsey Trio, Chris Ingham, Jazzmeia Horn, Jaimie Branch, Myra Melford's Snowy Egret, more.

efglondonjazzfestival.org.uk

Era Jazzu/Poznan Jazz Festival

Poznan, Poland

Nov. 24; April 10-14, 2019

The November and April editions of this festival feature concerts of established stars as well as a broad representation of trends happening throughout jazz. This is one of the most important jazz events in Poland.

LINEUP: Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Dee Dee

Bridgewater, Regina Carter, Oregon, Marcus Miller, Al Di Meola, more.

jazz.pl

Christmas Jazz of Jazzkaar

Tallinn, Estonia

Nov. 28-Dec. 14

This international festival specializes in intimate and serene concerts. Performances take place in clubs, churches and concert halls.

LINEUP: Phronesis, Salvador Sobral, Vein (feat. Andy Sheppard), more.

jazzkaar.ee

Riviera Maya Jazz Festival

Playa del Carmen, Mexico

Nov. 30-Dec. 2

About 65,000 fans attended last year's festival, which offered three exciting nights filled with jazz in a family atmosphere. This event, now in its 16th year, is located a few steps away from 5th Avenue, right next to the gorgeous Caribbean beach that is home to Mamita's Beach Club. Attendees from around the world can enjoy a weekend full of great music, culture, gastronomy and adventure.

LINEUP: Past performers include Chick Corea, Wallace Roney, Bobby McFerrin.

rivieramayajazzfestival.com

We Jazz Festival

Helsinki, Finland, and Tallinn, Estonia

Dec. 2-9

The sixth annual edition of this festival will take place at various venues in Helsinki and Tallinn. Organized by the creative collective and record label of the same name, We Jazz offers a look into the many shades of jazz.

LINEUP: Logan Richardson, Y-OTIS, Moskus, Enemy, Anteloper, Phronesis, Timo Lassy Band, Verner Pohjola & Mika Kallio, Ilmiliekki Quartet, Juhani Aaltonen & Raoul Björkenheim, Dalindèo, Koma Saxo, more.

wejazz.fi/2018

Umbria Jazz Winter

Orvieto, Italy

Dec. 28, 2018-Jan. 1, 2019

This festival began in 1993, and over the decades it has established its reputation as an important part of the Italian jazz scene. Concerts take place at the Teatro Mancinelli, the Palazzo del Popolo and the Palazzo dei Sette. Orvieto's magnificent cathedral will once again be the setting for a Mass for Peace with gospel singers on the afternoon of New Year's Day. In addition to world-class jazz and more than 100 events, fans can enjoy Umbria's rich heritage of history and art, plus its renowned cuisine and wine.

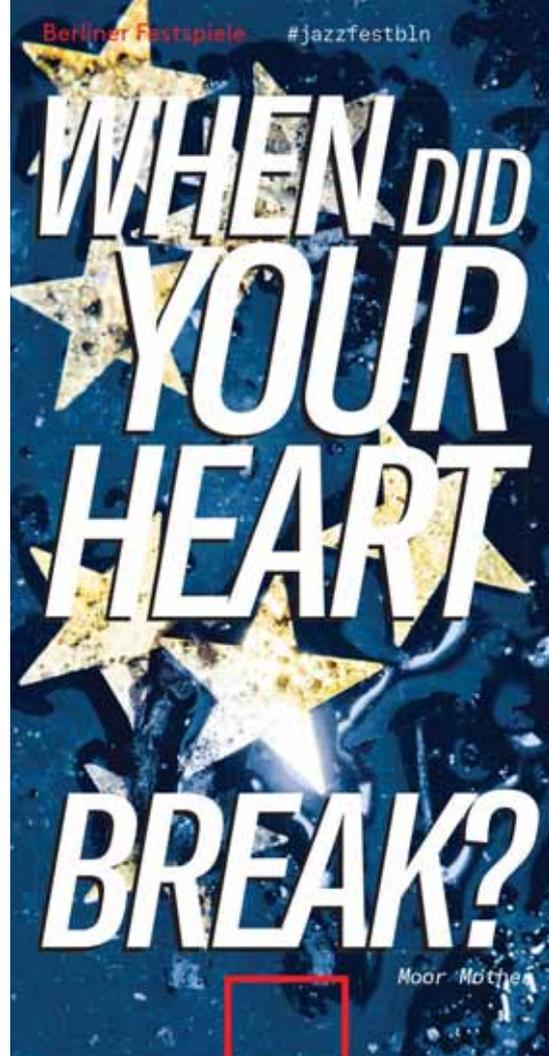
LINEUP: Paolo Fresu, Richard Galliano, Jan Lundgren, Enrico Rava, Danilo Rea, Ethan Iverson, Fabrizio Bossio, Allan Harris, Huntertones, more.

umbriajazz.com

Festival Internacional de Jazz de Punta del Este

Finca El Sosiego, Punta Ballena, Punta del Este, Uruguay
Jan. 3-6, 2019

This outdoor festival, which was founded in 1996, takes place in green pastures among horses and cows. Throughout the festival's history, its programming has remained faithful to jazz.



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and many more.

berlinerfestspiele.de
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LINEUP: Paquito D'Rivera, Diego Urcola, Chris Potter, Johnny O'Neal, David Feldman, Pipi Piazolla, Popo Romano, Nicolás Mora, Alex Brown, Jessé Sadoc, Al Foster, Adam Birnbaum, Doug Weiss, Mark Lewandowski, Itay Mochi, Grant Stewart, Gary Smulyan, Rodney Green, David Wong, Aaron Diehl, Paul Sikivie, Quincy Davis, Benny Green, Aaron Kimmel, Nnenna Freelon, Chico Pinheiro, Oscar Stagnaro, Mark Walker, Alex Brown, more.

festival.com.uy

Brussels Jazz Festival

Brussels, Belgium

Jan. 10-19, 2019

Throughout this festival, many styles of jazz will be presented at Flagey, a former institute for radio broadcasts that's a concert hall in Art Deco style with high-tech acoustics. Besides an exquisite selection of concerts by international and local jazz musicians, there will be a film program dedicated to the jazz scene, workshops for children and late-night DJ sets.

LINEUP: Ambrose Akinmusire Quartet, Antonio Sanchez & Migration, Mulatu Astatke, Yazz Ahmed, Black Flower, Martin Salemi Trio, Drijf Sanders, Kit Downes, Craig Taborn & Dave King, Donder, Tigran Hamasyan & Brussels Philharmonic, more.

flagey.be

Panama Jazz Festival

Panama City, Panama

Jan. 14-19, 2019

This festival typically includes more than 30 concerts, 70 master classes and a music therapy symposium. With more than \$4 million announced in scholarships, and over 5,000 Latin American students attending its master classes, this event combines great concerts with an important educational mission. Over the years, it has had participation from Wayne Shorter, Chucho Valdés, Herbie Hancock and other jazz legends. The festival's artistic director is Danilo Pérez.

LINEUP: Jane Bunnett & Maqueque, Danilo Pérez & Global Messengers, Alex Blake, Andre Hayward, Lucia Pulido, more.

panamajazzfestival.com

Havana International Jazz Festival

Havana, Cuba

Jan. 13-21, 2019

The 34th edition of this festival will showcase 100 artists at several venues. Programming features musicians from Cuba, the United States and Europe.

LINEUP: Past performers include Chucho Valdés, Chick Corea, Arturo O'Farrill, Kansas City Jazz Orchestra, López Gavilán, Terence Blanchard.

jazzcuba.com

Port-au-Prince International Jazz Festival

Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Jan. 19-26, 2019

This festival offers 40 concerts in different venues around the capital and ends at the Double Tree Hilton beach resort on the Côte des Arcadins. Daily workshops are followed by evening concerts and late-night jam sessions at bars and restaurants. The festival serves as a fundraiser event for music education in Haiti.

LINEUP: Past performers include Christine Jensen, Kenny Garrett, Reginald Policard, Marc Richard, Henri Texier.

papjazzhaiti.org



Wangaratta Jazz & Blues Festival

Dubai Jazz Festival

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

February 2019 (Dates TBD)

This festival has presented more than 450 shows since its inception in 2003, with fans from around the world attending.

LINEUP: Past performers include John Legend, Renegade Brass Band, Duran Duran, Ricky Martin.

dubaijazzfest.com

Flagey Piano Days

Brussels, Belgium

Feb. 7-12, 2019

Fans at this festival will enjoy top-notch jazz and classical performers in 15 concerts. There will be both acoustic and electric piano concerts, plus a film series devoted to piano music and workshops for kids.

LINEUP: Stefano Bollani, Poppy Ackroyd, Liebrecht Van Beckevoort, Mariam Batsashvili, Brussels Philharmonic & Rafal Blechacz, Niklas Pashburg, Víkingur Ólafsson, David Greilsammer, Paul Lewis, Alica Sara Ott, Vadym Kholodenko, Orchestre Philharmonique Royal de Liège with Plame-na Mangova & Denis Kozhukhin, Kris Defoort, Quatuor Modigliani & Lukáš Vondráček, Hélène Grimaud, more.

flagey.be

Oscar Peterson International Jazz Festival

Niagara Wine Country, Ontario, Canada

Feb. 15-17, 2019

The second annual OPIJF will present a wide variety of jazz performances in the beautiful wine region of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. Curated by Artistic Director Renee Rosnes, the festival will include lectures, jazz films and a gala dinner celebrating the Canadian Jazz Masters Awards ceremony.

LINEUP: Kenny Barron, Christine Jensen Jazz Orchestra with Ingrid Jensen, Lewis Nash, Peter Washington, more.

opjazzfest.org

Safaricom International Jazz Festival

Nairobi, Kenya

Feb. 15-17, 2019

Launched in 2014, this festival has hosted many jazz greats alongside stellar Kenyan musicians. Proceeds from the festival provide funding for a music education program for underprivileged children.

LINEUP: Marcus Miller, Kato Change, more.

safaricomjazzfestival.co.ke

Winter Jazz

Copenhagen, Denmark

Feb. 20-24, 2019

Held every February since 2009, this mainly Nordic festival presents the top artists in the Scandinavian music scene.

LINEUP: Past performers include Jean-Michel Pilc, Gilad Hekselman, Benjamin Koppel, Scott Colley.

winterjazz.dk

Jakarta International Java Jazz Festival

Jakarta, Indonesia

March 1-3, 2019

Java Festival Production is not only responsible for Java Rockin'land, Java Soulnation and Soundsfair, but also presents this acclaimed jazz festival.

LINEUP: Past performers include Nicholas Payton, Arturo Sandoval, Chick Corea, Dr. Lonnie Smith, Dewa Budjana, Dira Sugandi.

javajazzfestival.com

Fiesta Del Tambor

La Habana, Cuba

March 4-10, 2019

This annual festival of rhythm and dance includes an immersive percussion and drum workshop presented by festival sponsor/collaborator KoSA Cuba. Events take place all over Havana in a variety of venues.

LINEUP: Past performers include Mark Guiliana, Craig Haynes, José Eladio Amat, Will Calhoun, Dafnis Prieto, Aldo Mazza, Delvis Ponce, Eduardo Sandoval y Habana Jazz.

fiestadeltambor.cult.cu;

fiestadeltamborpopular.com

Cape Town International Jazz Festival

Cape Town, South Africa

March 29-30, 2019

Frequently referred to as "Africa's Grandest Gathering," the Cape Town International Jazz Festival is the largest music event in sub-Saharan Africa. It is famous for delivering a star-studded lineup featuring international and local artists in jazz and jazz-related genres. More than 40 bands will perform on multiple stages during the 20th edition of this festival.

LINEUP: Past performers include Vijay Iyer, Cassandra Wilson, Robert Glasper, Corinne Bailey Rae, Incognito, Hugh Masekela, Miriam Makeba.

capetownjazzfest.com



Bassist Avishai Cohen, who has played at Zurich's Jazznojazz Festival before, will return this year.

Jazznojazz Fest Celebrates 20 Years

Johannes Vogel had a vision for Jazznojazz from the moment in 1998 when the Zurich newspaper *Tages-Anzeiger*, then the underwriter, enlisted him to organize the fledgling festival.

"In the 1980s, I was a Montreux Festival-goer," Vogel recalled. "You always had four bands on the bill, and sometimes you were only interested in one, but you had to pay for all four; that's what I didn't like. So, I thought, 'We'll make it so that [at this festival] people can see only what they're interested in.' We have five shows per

night, for four days, and all are sold separately."

That marketing strategy has allowed Jazznojazz to thrive. The 20th edition of the festival, which runs Oct. 31–Nov. 3, features bassist Avishai Cohen and saxophonist Maceo Parker as its headliners. Over the course of two decades, Jazznojazz has become a staple of culture in Switzerland's largest city.

Each year, the fest attracts about 10,000 spectators to the Theaterhaus Gessnerallee, a small performance space near the Sihl River in Zurich's city center. Full-festival passes

are available, but Vogel's production company, All Blues (which acquired the festival from *Tages-Anzeiger* in 2003, though the newspaper remains a media partner), sells only about 50 each year.

According to Vogel, 90 percent of the fest's attendees are there to see a single show. "That's quite a special concept: Most people have one ticket for one evening," he explained. "I haven't seen this anywhere else."

The origins of Jazznojazz stretch back to 1996, when Pius Knüsel, a jazz club owner in Zurich, attempted a festival by that name. There was no 1997 iteration.

Tages-Anzeiger saw potential, however, and it hired Vogel and All Blues to design the event from top to bottom. Organizers retained the name of the original festival.

"I think it's quite a great name, Jazznojazz," Vogel said. "We have jazz concerts—and we have 'no jazz' concerts, but with implications of jazz: genres that are related, like blues, funk, soul, electronic.

"We are aiming a little younger than jazz festivals usually have, but we are not doing Deep Purple or Queens of the Stone Age, like Montreux has. We are definitely a jazz festival."

Jazznojazz is structured identically every year: It takes place the Wednesday through Saturday of the first weekend in November. The setup at Gessnerallee includes three stages: a main and second stage (capacities 1,000 and 600, respectively), each hosting two acts per night, along with a club stage (capacity 300) that hosts each night's late set.

Jazz artists dominate the first two days, with the last two days leaning toward non-jazz. In 2017, headliners included Dee Dee Bridgewater, Kamasi Washington and Cécile McLorin Salvant (who is also scheduled for this year's festival, fronting the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra). Previous years offered Chick Corea, the Joshua Redman/Brad Mehldau duo, GoGo Penguin and Somi.

Cohen, one of the 2018 headliners, is also a veteran. "It will be my third time performing at this lovely festival," said the Israeli bassist. "[It's] always a good experience with Johannes, a very professional and knowledgeable person."

Cohen tops the bill on the "jazz" side (although with his new album *1970* inclined toward songwriting, he said, "It's really more 'no jazz' than my last visit"), which he shares with Clayton-Hamilton and the Manhattan Transfer. Parker heads up "no jazz," joined by reggae legend Jimmy Cliff and the Swiss polyglot Jojo Mayer.

While All Blues produces other festivals in Switzerland, Vogel is particularly proud of the longevity of Jazznojazz. "I'm a long-term guy," he said. "I think it's important for a promoter to develop something, to do long-term things, and that's what I'm doing here." —Michael J. West



Guest trumpeter Sean Jones (left) performs with the Temple University Jazz Band, directed by Terrell Stafford during a 2017 concert.

Philly Scene Reflects Temple's Expanding Jazz Program

FEW JAZZ PROGRAMS EMBRACE THE CITY

in which they're located with the enthusiasm that Temple University's Boyer College of Music and Dance shows for Philadelphia.

"Temple is a cornerstone of Philadelphia," said trumpeter Terrell Stafford, Boyer's chair of instrumental studies and director of jazz studies.

"Philadelphia has a great history and jazz scene," added Dick Oatts, the veteran saxophonist who has been a faculty member for 11 years. "Temple is like a family, and all the students, no matter what their level, are a part of that family."

Of course, with New York City just 90 minutes away by road or rail, Temple students and faculty members frequently make the commute, either to play a gig or to take in a show. "There is a lot of interaction [with faculty]," Stafford said, "and that really helps give our students a representative view of what music is really like."

In addition, Temple's 125 jazz majors and 20 master of music students also have an opportunity to experience the music scene in the Netherlands, through an exchange program with the Amsterdam Conservatory of Music.

"I've had over a 20-year relationship there as an artist-in-residence," Oatts said, "and it's been a thrill for Temple students to listen to jazz students on a global level. There are over 60 countries represented at the conservatory, and our Temple students always return home with such a determination and resolve."

With high-profile faculty like Stafford, Oatts, Bruce Barth and Tim Warfield, Temple prides itself on its emphasis on one-on-one training.

"This amazing faculty represents a togetherness and one primary goal: to serve the student," Oatts said. "Students at Temple have a wide variety of options in teachers, and can focus on core values in sound, technique and history that help them evolve in becoming an instrumentalist,

composer or teacher."

While the traditional emphasis has been on large ensemble work—resulting in six big bands within the program—the number of smaller groups has burgeoned to more than 30.

"Now, we have everything from organ trios to string ensembles," Stafford said. "And while our main concentration is on straightahead jazz language, our students explore many areas outside the mainstream."

The growth of Temple's three bachelor of music programs—in jazz instrumental performance, jazz vocal performance and jazz composition/arranging—has led to a two-year, 30-credit M.M. program with an emphasis on career development and entrepreneurial techniques.

"The name of the game in our master's program is collaboration," Stafford said. "We're drawing students from different schools, and that really opens up the opportunities for us and for our students."

"The maturity of the students and the experience they bring to Temple is a great 'add' to the overall jazz program," Oatts said. "Our undergraduate students can see firsthand what a difference a few years of study can make. The M.M. students definitely encourage and embrace this evolution."

As he looks to the future, Stafford can see a time when the growth of jazz within Boyer College will influence some administrative decisions. "Right now, we're not capped and it's not impossible for students to get in, as long as they can make the grade at Temple as an institution," he said. "We've grown from 20 students to 145 in a relatively short time, and we have a super-supportive administration. So, I can safely say that we'll continue on our current path to deliver a really great educational experience."

—James Hale



Kurt Elling

ANNA WEBBER

Juilliard Jazz in Season: Juilliard Jazz, under the leadership of Wynton Marsalis, director, and Aaron Flagg, chair and associate director, has announced its 2018–'19 season featuring the Juilliard Jazz Orchestra, Juilliard Jazz Ensembles and the Juilliard Jazz Artist Diploma Ensemble. Several of the concerts will feature guest vocalists in anticipation of the launch of Juilliard Jazz's new voice master's degree program to begin in fall 2019. Jazz artists Carla Cook, Kurt Elling, Hilary Gardner, Lenora Helm, Carmen Lundy, Dianne Reeves and Charenée Wade are on the advisory committee. In other Juilliard news, saxophonist Roxy Coss has been hired as an ensemble coach in the Juilliard Jazz program. juilliard.edu

Frink Grants: The co-winners of the 3rd Laurie Frink Career Grant are trumpeter Giveton Gelin, who is studying at Juilliard, and trumpeter Aaron Mutchler, who is a student at the University of Miami's Frost School of Music. The mission of the grant is to offer a young brass player an opportunity for serious study or to undertake a creative project. It is named in honor of trumpeter and educator Laurie Frink (1951–2013). lauriefrink.com

Player-Composers: *When Day Slips Into Night*, the new album from the University of Toronto 12tet, is a compilation of original compositions and jazz standards reflecting the musical aesthetic and artistic sensibility of the school's jazz students and faculty. The album centers on material written and/or charted exclusively for the 12-piece band by students in the school's composition/arranging program. Bandleader Terry Promane contributes two additional arrangements. uoftjazz.ca

Texas Tradition: The One O'Clock Lab Band at University of North Texas, under the direction of Alan Baylock, has released *Lab 2018: The Rhythm Of The Road*. The album features arrangements and compositions by students and faculty, including drummer John Sturin, saxophonist Brandon Moore, trombonist Brian Woodbury and UNT professor Rich DeRosa. jazz.unt.edu

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Ben Williams

Bassist Ben Williams, a native of Washington, D.C., who graduated from the city's Duke Ellington School of the Arts, took his first DownBeat Blindfold Test in front of an audience in the Education Village area of the DC Jazz Festival on June 17.

In addition to his leader albums on Concord—*State Of Art* (2011) and *Coming of Age* (2015)—Williams has recorded with the Next Collective, Pat Metheny, George Benson, Carmen Lundy, Etienne Charles, Marcus Strickland and Jazzmeia Horn.

Williams served as the DC Jazz Festival's first artist-in-residence this year, and he premiered his social-justice opus, "I Am A Man," during a June 16 festival performance with a 13-piece ensemble.

Weather Report

"Three Views Of A Secret" (*Forecast Tomorrow*, Sony Legacy, 2006; recorded in 1980) Joe Zawinul, keyboards; Wayne Shorter, saxophones; Jaco Pastorius, bass; Chester Thompson, drums; Alex Acuña, percussion.

That's Jaco Pastorius, one of my biggest influences as an electric bass player. You can't even begin to play that instrument without going through Jaco Pastorius. I'm kinda spacing on the title of that song ... "Three Views Of A Secret," which Jaco wrote.

Jaco is almost like the Charlie Parker of electric bass. He's someone who took the instrument's possibility to an entirely different level that one can say we're all still trying to chase. But I don't think we talk enough about Jaco the composer. He wrote some amazing, beautiful tunes. This song is one of those tunes I wish I had written. It's just so perfect—classic!

Rosa Passos & Ron Carter

"Feito de Oracao" (*Entrée Amigos*, Chesky, 2010) Passos, vocals; Carter, bass; Lulu Galvao, guitar; Paulo Braga, percussion.

Not sure who the vocalist is, but she has that natural feel. ... I love Brazilian music and how relaxing the groove is. The vocalist sounds like Camilla Meza, who has a similar voice; I don't think it is her, though I know she does a lot of Brazilian music.

The bass player reminds me of Charlie Haden; he did a couple of things I don't think Charlie would do, but he's playing in a really low register, as Charlie did. [after] That's Ron? No wonder it sounds so good.

Return to Forever

"No Mystery" (*The Anthology*, Concord, 2008; recorded in 1975) Chick Corea, piano; Stanley Clarke, bass; Al Di Meola, guitar; Lenny White, drums.

Is that Chick? Miroslav? I know this era of Chick, but not the composition. Beautiful arco bass playing! [after a particular passage] Stanley! Yeah, Return to Forever could do this acoustic playing, as well as their electric—that's how versatile they were.

Dave Holland

"The Empty Chair" (*Prism*, Dare2, 2013) Holland, bass; Craig Taborn, keyboards; Kevin Eubanks, guitar; Eric Harland, drums.

Is that Scofield? Wow, the guitar player has a Scofield vibe. It sounds like a newer recording, something I haven't heard yet. It's killin'. Beautiful bass solo. [after] I love some Dave Holland!

Christian McBride Big Band

"The Shade Of The Cedar Tree" (*The Good Feeling*, Mack Avenue, 2011) Christian McBride Big Band.

Christian McBride Big Band. We talked about Jaco earlier ... [and] Christian did the same thing with the acoustic bass, and he's a great electric bass player as well. I remember the first time I heard McBride: It was a turning point in my life. If I've gotta do like that ... I don't know [laughs].



DAVID TODD MCCARTY

Bassist Ben Williams sat for a DownBeat Blindfold Test at this year's DC Jazz Festival.

Everything is so identifiable with him in the sound. A lot of people are so wowed by his technique, but he has such a beautiful tone as well. I tell students all the time, "You get your views from the chops, but it's the tone and the sound that makes people want to call you." The way Christian supports the ensemble is so strong and clear.

Charles Mingus

"G.G. Train" (*Mingus Ah Um*, Sony Legacy, 1999; recorded in 1959) Mingus, bass; John Handy, alto saxophone; Booker Ervin, tenor saxophone; Horace Parlan, piano; Dannie Richmond, drums.

That sounds like Cannonball Adderley on the alto for a second. John Handy! [after] I'm going to have to get that. I love Charles Mingus. He's another one of my favorite composers. I can definitely hear his writing style in this.

I guess what threw me off is that Mingus doesn't sound the same on each record. It's almost as if he assumes different personalities sometimes. His writing is so Duke-ish. One of the first records that really turned me on to jazz was his *Blues & Roots* [1959]. Mingus has this gravitational pull that wills the ensemble to do what he wants.

Butch Warren

"A Little Chippie" (*Butch's Blues*, Butch Warren, 2012) Warren, bass; Michael Thomas, trumpet; Nasar Abadey, drums; Robert Redd, piano.

I'm not quite sure who this is. It's hard to swing quite like that at that tempo, having that sense of urgency. A lot of people really are not playing like this. It sounds so easy, but it is really hard to capture that feeling and not have it sound forced. That tempo is one of those "in the crack" tempos: It's not slow, and not really fast, but this sounds great.

It's definitely the bass player's record. [after] This is Butch's record! Talking about the lineage of great bass players in D.C., sometimes we forget about Butch Warren, maybe because he wasn't playing for a while when he lived here his last few years. But he's on so many classic records. I've heard a ton of Butch Warren, but not as a leader.

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.

A man with short, light brown hair and a slight smile is leaning against a blue metal wall. He is wearing a dark blue patterned button-down shirt over a grey vest and blue jeans. He is holding a large, polished brass flugelhorn with both hands. The background is a blue wall with a large, faint, stylized 'B' logo.

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