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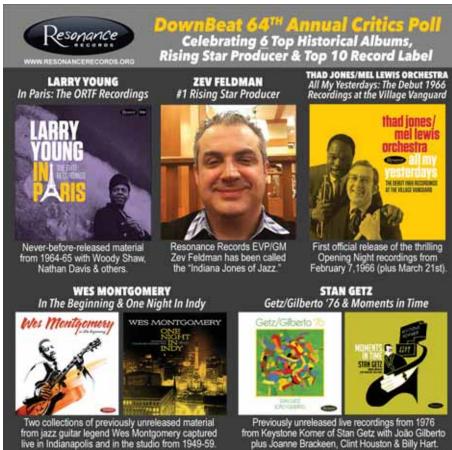
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DOWNBEAT

AUGUST 2016

VOLUME 83 / NUMBER 8

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SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION: Send orders and address changes to: DOWNBEAT, P.O. Box 11688, St. Pad., MM SSTIH-OSBS. Inquires U.SA. and Canada if 277 904-5299; Foreign (651) 251-9682. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Please allow six weeks for your change to become effective. When notifying us of your new address, include current DOWN-BEAT label showing oil address.

DOWNIEAT ISS no 1012-5768! Volume 83, Number 8 is published monthly by Maher Publications, 102 N. Haven, Elmhurst, It. 60126-2970. Copyright 2016 Maher Publications, All rights reserved. Trademark registered US. Patent Office. Great Britain registered trademark No. 719.407. Periodicals postage paid at Elmhurst, IL. and at additional mailing offices. Subscription rates: \$34.95 for one year, \$59.95 for two years. Foreign subscriptions rates. \$56.95 for one year, \$103.95 for two years.

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POSTMASTER: Send change of address to: DownBeat, P.O. Box 11688, St. Paul, MN 55111–0688. CABLE ADDRESS: DownBeat (on sale July 19, 2016) Magazine Publishers Association.









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The Wilco guitarist and arranger MICHAEL LEONHART assembled 23 musicians for an expansive double-album featuring originals, American Songbook standards and songs by SONIC YOUTH, ARTO LINDSAY, JIMMY GIUFFRE and others.



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KANDACE SPRINGS SOUL EYES

The singer and pianist makes her full-length debut with an album that touches upon soul and pop while channeling her jazz influences and her Nashville upbringing. Produced by Grammy-winner LARRY KLEIN and featuring guests including trumpeter TERENCE BLANCHARD and quitarist/songwriter JESSE HARRIS.



GREGORY PORTER TAKE ME TO THE ALLEY

Grammy-winning vocalist solidifies his standing as his generation's most soulful jazz singer-songwriter with the the much anticipated follow-up to his internationally acclaimed million-selling Blue Note debut Liquid Spirit.



MARCUS STRICKLAND'S TWI-LIFE NIHIL NOVI

The saxophonist teams with producer MESHELL NDEGEOCELLO and draws upon a world of music from Fela to Dilla to Mingus for his Blue Note/Revive debut featuring singer JEAN BAYLOR, bassist PINO PALLADINO, drummer CHRIS DAVE, and pianist ROBERT GLASPER.

AUGUST 2016

ON THE COVER

20 Randy Weston

Hall of Fame

BY TED PANKEN

On the occasion of his induction into the DownBeat Hall of Fame, and about a month after his 90th birthday, the pianist spoke of his life and career while following his usual practice of stating a central motif, then fleshing it out with theme-and-variations of increasing complexity and depth.

Annual Critics Poll. See page 50

Cover photo of Randy Weston shot by Jimmy and Dena Katz at The New School in New York City on April 27.

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Miroslav Vitous Music of Weather Report

Miroslav Vitous double bass, keyboards Gary Campbell soprano & fenor saxophone Roberto Bonisolo saxophones Aydin Esen keyboerds Gerald Cleaver, Nasheet Walts drums



Jack DeJohnette Ravi Coltrane Matthew Garrison In Movement

Jack DeJohnette drums, piano, electronic percussion Ravi Coltrane fenor, soprano & sopranino saxophones Matthew Garrison electric bass.



Golfam Khayam Mona Matbou Riahi Narrante

Golfam Khayam guiter Mona Matbou Riahi clarinet



Markus Stockhausen Florian Weber Alba

Markus Stockhausen flugelhom, trumpet Florian Weber piano



Glauco Venier Miniatures

Glauco Venier piano, percussion



Ferenc Snétberger In Concert

Ferenc Snetberger guitar



Dominique Pifarély Quartet Tracé Provisoire

Dominique Pifarély violin Antonin Rayon piano Bruno Chevillon double bass François Merville drums



Jon Balke Warp

Jon Balke piano, sound images



Wolfert Brederode Trio Black Ice

Wolfert Brederode piano Gulli Gudmundsson double bass Jasper van Hulten drums



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First Take > BY BOBBY REED



Enshrining the Giants

WITH THIS ISSUE, WE PROUDLY WELCOME RANDY WESTON AND Hoagy Carmichael (1899-1981) into the DownBeat Hall of Fame.

As longtime readers of our magazine know, there are three ways that an artist can gain entry into the hallowed Hall: via the Readers Poll, the Critics Poll or the DownBeat Veterans Committee, whose job is to honor elite musicians who, for various reasons, have little chance of being elected by the readers or by the general Critics Poll.

Weston, a pianist who stands tall in both the figurative and literal sense, was voted in via the Critics Poll. (Complete results in all categories begin on page 50.) For more than 60 years, Weston has traveled the world, playing innovative, expressive music that illustrates the connections between jazz and older musical forms that originated in Africa. Weston has expanded the boundaries for jazz, and he remains a popular draw on the festival circuit. This summer he will play the Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland (July 2) and the Charlie Parker Jazz Festival in New York City (August 27). At the youthful age of 90, Weston continues to make music that entertains, inspires and educates listeners.

Our other inductee, songwriter Hoagland Howard "Hoagy" Carmichael, was elected by the Veterans Committee. See John McDonough's insightful essay on page 26 to learn more about the composer of such standards as "Stardust," "Georgia On My Mind," "Rockin' Chair" and "Lazy River."

The history of "Skylark" (composed by Carmichael with lyrics by Johnny Mercer) reveals the enduring quality of his compositions. That tune has been recorded by everyone from Anita O'Day to Glenn Miller to Bob Dylan, who croons it on his latest album, Fallen Angels.

If you want to see a fine example of Hoagy's work as an actor and musician in a compelling film, check out 1950's Young Man with a Horn. There's a haunting, unforgettable scene of Hoagy's character ("Smoke") glancing back at the depot as his train pulls out of the station. That scene gets to me every time.

On film, on record, and now as a member of the DownBeat Hall of Fame, Hoagy Carmichael will live forever.



Chords & Discords



Perdomo's View

Reviews, good and bad, are a matter of personal taste, and they don't define an artist's path or musicianship. However, I would like to comment on the 2½-star review of my CD *Montage* (Hot Tone Music) in your July issue. The reviewer, Bob Doerschuk, completely missed the point of the CD and dismissed it using very questionable arguments.

To begin with, he unfavorably compares the CD to a YouTube video of one of my "burning" solos from a concert with a quintet 14 years ago. These are two completely different settings!

I came up under the tutelage of pianists who emphasized a well-stated melody, tone quality, voice leading and restraint when needed—which was my main focus when recording *Montage*. The album's short incidental pieces were improvised, designed to convey certain emotions and visual passages related to me, and were strategically placed in the track sequence to create a storyline. But the reviewer offered bogus descriptions of them.

Based on Doerschuk's use of words and phrases like "my guess," "perhaps" and "slender evidence on which to base any conclusions," he should have either chosen not to write this misleading review, or simply contacted me and I would have clarified any questions. If, after the clarification, he still disliked the CD, at least his opinion would have been based on correct info, and I'd be OK with that.

In this case, however, I have to call him on his BS.

LUIS PERDOMO NEW YORK CITY

Miles' Enduring Aura

I recently purchased a copy of *The Miles Davis Reader* and on page 301 I read Fred Bouchard's review of Miles' album *Aura*, originally published in the February 1990 issue of DownBeat. I read the review while I was listening to the album.

Would you consider writing a new review for this album? *Aura* is one of my favorite Miles Davis albums. I read in his autobiography that Miles called it a masterpiece, and I agree. The album is influenced by contemporary classical music, and it holds a unique position in Miles' discography.

Unfortunately, the DownBeat review is really negative and the album received only 2½-stars. This album deserves more.

Please, write a new review of *Aura* and update its rating. We all change some of our opinions in time. It's always great to read a review that totally captures the soul of an album.

DR. BILGEHAN BOZKURT ISTANBUL, TURKEY

Shoulders of Giants

I have some thoughts on the growth, history and progress of jazz.

I was a teenager when my father, a good amateur jazz pianist, began hiring jazz greats like Hank Jones, Ben Webster, Roy Eldridge and many others to perform at my family's home in Connecticut for special parties. Many neighbors were invited to these concert-like jazz parties, and the atmosphere and energy was quite exciting and definitely inspiring.

I was hearing people like Coleman Hawkins perform in my own living room! I was especially attracted to pianist Barry Harris, who is almost an enlightened being—at least to me.

Being exposed to this level of musical genius, I began preparing to become a jazz musician—despite my father's strong objections.

At 20 years old I moved to Cleveland, Ohio, to attend Case Western Reserve University. Soon I met and was playing with many good jazz musicians there. Some of them, like Pharoah Sanders, Ernie Krivda and Joe Lovano, were already famous or would later become famous.

The highlight of my playing in Cleveland included 12 nights working with Sonny Stitt. Playing with him was by far the greatest, most satisfying music I ever did. Looking back on my time with Sonny, it seems almost like playing jazz in heaven in the presence of God.

Because of these exceptional experiences, I feel a strong need to speak out about the great heritage of jazz. And it's why I find it so disappointing to see a great musician like Miles Davis now being remembered as a commercialized pop star, instead of the incredibly sensitive and creative jazz soloist that he was in the earlier part of his career.

I would love to see a real rebirth and resur-

rection of jazz—from the mediocre state it's in now to the glory and magic that it was when people like Charlie Parker, Bud Powell, Lester Young and John Coltrane thrilled thousands of listeners with music that was almost part of another dimension.

RAMAKUMAR JONES FAIRFAX, CALIFORNIA

O'Day's Day?

Congratulations, critics: You finally pulled your heads out of the sand and elected Lee Konitz into the DownBeat Hall of Fame in the August 2015 issue. The honor was 25 years late, but what the hell.



For an encore, you should do the same for Anita O'Day, an artistic peer of Billie, Sarah, Ella and Carmen. Anita sang her butt off her entire career, always in a jazz setting, never compromising, until her death on Nov. 23, 2006, at age 87. She's more deserving than many you've elected.

BRUNO BOIN BVBOIN@GMAIL.COM

Seeking a Monk

Today we get so many albums, so many forgettable tunes. They're played once and never heard again. Where is the next Monk? It's been too long since we've had another jazz Beethoven.

ED WALTERS NAPLES, FLORIDA

Correction

Due to a production error in the print edition of the July issue, the review of the Ralph Peterson Trio album *Triangular III* (Onyx/ Truth Revolution Records) did not include the star rating, which is 4 stars. An updated review is posted at downbeat.com and more info is at ralphpetersonmusic.com.

Have a Chord or Discord? Email us at editor@downbeat.com or find us on Facebook & Twitter.



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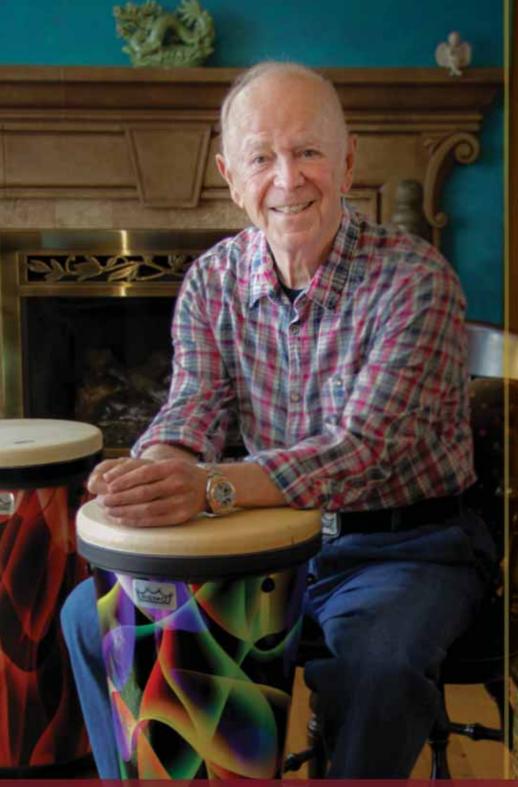
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Unheard Bird Presents Newly Found Tracks

ans, scholars and musicians who want to study the work of Charlie Parker (1920–'55) can now dig into a collection of previously unreleased tracks on *Unheard Bird: The Unissued Takes* (Verve/UMe).

The two-disc set, released July 1, includes 58 studio takes recorded by the alto saxophonist between 1949 and 1952. The set was co-produced by Phil Schaap, a Parker expert and eminent jazz historian who serves as a curator for Jazz At Lincoln Center.

The newly discovered takes were found in a cache of materials owned by a former associate of Norman Granz, the founder of Verve Records and producer of the sessions. In his liner notes, Schaap provides overview, session-by-session history and track-by-track analysis, further illuminating the creative process of Bird's genius.

"These previously unknown takes are a blockbuster, providing here-tofore-unheard Bird improvisations, and in high fidelity," Schaap said.

Originally issued on Mercury and Clef, but ultimately housed on Verve, the original Parker/Granz studio collaborations were conceived to display Parker's talents in a variety of contexts. These included his four- to six-piece ensembles (both working and pickup groups); Latin jazz efforts, some of which were labeled "South of the Border"; orchestral projects including his masterpieces with strings; standard big band; and Parker's prescient view of the Third Stream.

From the Latin side, there are five tracks with Parker as the featured soloist with Machito and his orchestra. Additionally, there are 13 "South of the Border" tracks that feature a rhythm section of Walter Bishop, Teddy Kotick and Roy Haynes or Max Roach, along with Jose Mangual and Luis Miranda on bongos and congas, respectively, joined on a pair by trumpeter Benny Harris.

Also included are 10 tracks from a Cole Porter project that was never completed due to Parker's failing health and untimely passing. Backed by a big band that included such titans as Oscar Peterson, Freddie Green, Flip Phillips and Ray Brown, Parker digs into three Porter classics: "Night And Day," "What Is This Thing Called Love" and "Almost Like Being In Love."

More than half of the package features Parker in the small-group hardcore bop settings for which he was best known. This features a reunit-



ing of Parker's quintet, referred to as The Golden Era BeBop Five, the only Granz-produced recordings by this ensemble. These 14 tracks feature Kenny Dorham, Al Haig, Tommy Potter and Max Roach. They are joined for four more by trombonist Tommy Turk and conguero Carlos Vidal.

Dizzy Gillespie joins Parker for 10 tracks, along with Thelonious Monk, Curley Russell and Buddy Rich. The all-Parker program includes complete run-throughs of "An Oscar For Treadwell," "Bloomdido" and "Mohawk." A quartet setting brings Hank Jones, Ray Brown and Buddy Rich to the bandstand for explorations of the Raye/DePaul gem "Star Eyes" and Parker's "Blues (Fast)."

Verve will celebrate its 60th anniversary throughout 2016 with the release of numerous other historic reissues and new collections from its archives. These include recordings by Billie Holiday, Count Basie, Oscar Peterson, Bill Evans, Wes Montgomery, Louis Armstrong, Jimmy Smith, Stan Getz and Ella Fitzgerald.

The new digital collection *Verve 60* features 60 tracks by 60 different artists from throughout the label's history, spanning from Fitzgerald and Peterson through Wayne Shorter and Herbie Hancock to Diana Krall and Christian McBride.

Riffs)



Historic Residency: Chick Corea will perform the most elaborate birthday residency in jazz history this fall when he appears at The Blue Note in New York over the course of eight consecutive weeks. The pianist/keyboardist, who turned 75 on June 12, will celebrate the milestone with 80 live performances from Oct. 19 to Dec. 12. He'll play two shows each night (at 8 p.m. and 10:30 p.m.). The residency, which will feature at least 15 bands, begins Oct. 19–23 with a series of shows by the Chick Corea Elektric Band, featuring the leader on keyboards alongside saxophonist Eric Marienthal, guitarist Frank Gambale, bassist John Patitucci and drummer Dave Weckl. That will be followed by an Oct. 26-30 stint that celebrates the music of Miles Davis with Kenny Garrett, Wallace Roney, Mike Stern, Marcus Miller and Brian Blade.

More info: bluenote.net/newyork

Vinyl Freaks: Austria-based Trost Records has announced discaholic.com, a new platform for rare avant-garde vinyl that's the result of a collaboration between freejazz musician and fanatic collector Mats Gustafsson and the record store Substance in Vienna. In addition to a plethora of "outside" material, the site offers LPs by Glenn Miller, Herbie Mann, Gary Burton and Ella Fitzgerald. Check for inventory updates the first Friday of every month.

More info: discaholic.com

PAS Director: Joshua Simonds has been named executive director of the Percussive Arts Society, effective Aug. 1. Simonds is the executive director of Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestras, and he currently sits on the Youth Orchestra Division Board of the League of American Orchestras. He has also served as an instructor of performing arts management at DePaul University, and is active in local and national arts advocacy. Simonds holds a master's degree in arts management from American University in Washington, D.C., and a bachelor of arts in percussion from California State University, Long Beach. More info: pas.org



Grimes Celebrates Lifetime of Achievement at Vision Festival

AS A YOUNG NEW YORK MUSICIAN during the early 1960s, Henry Grimes was at the epicenter of the then burgeoning avant-garde scene. An active collaborator, the bassist recorded or performed with a diverse array of musicians, including Cecil Taylor, Amiri Baraka, Don Cherry, Steve Lacy, Pharoah Sanders, Archie Shepp and Albert Ayler.

After relocating to Los Angeles in the late '60s, where work was slim and connections tenuous, Grimes fell off the map, doing odd jobs far from the spotlight.

Decades passed, and many in the jazz world thought Grimes was dead, but in 2002, he was found by social worker Marshall Marrotte. Word of Grimes' "rediscovery" quickly spread. William Parker donated a bass (dubbed "Olive Oil" for its green color) and soon Grimes was back in New York City. Since then, Grimes has played over 600 concerts in 30 countries, published a book of poetry, conducted workshops and recorded numerous albums.

The bassist's evening-long Vision Festival tribute, held June 7 at Judson Church in New York, featured Grimes in various configurations, with the exception of the opening invocation, an original piece entitled "Breath Breathe Free," which was performed by poet/vocalist Patricia Nicholson, percussionist Hamid Drake and drummer Whit Dickey. As a large overhead screen projected photos of a young Grimes with Sonny Rollins, Don Cherry and McCoy Tyner, Nicholson danced and sang, issuing gospel calls and impassioned poetry.

Nicholson introduced the next lineup: Grimes, pianist Geri Allen, cornetist Graham Haynes and drummer Andrew Cyrille. Grimes picked up Olive Oil off the floor, and as Allen and Haynes began playing, the bassist walked the instrument's neck, searching for familiar ground. He eventually went to his bow, and Haynes' long notes continued as Cyrille and Allen cajoled the music into many directions.

Vocalist Lisa Sokolov led the next ensemble: a choir consisting of Karma Mayet Johnson, Dwight Trible and and Lee Mixashawn Rozie, joined by Grimes (on bass) performing "Poems Of Henry Grimes."

The quartet bellowed deep harmonies and fluttering ideas informed by whistles, hollers, calls and vocal cacophony, Grimes sawing into their sounds with screeching violin.

But the highlight of the night was the Henry Grimes Septet with saxophonist Rozie, viola player Melanie Dyer, flutist Nicole Mitchell, cellist Tomeka Reid, guitarist Marc Ribot and drummer Chad Taylor.

The septet hit warp speed like an improvisation-powered airliner, fired primarily by the twin energies of Ribot and Rozie. Reid and Taylor also stoked the furnace, but the dialogue between Ribot and Rozie was particularly intense, the guitarist playing blistering, Hendrix-like solos but also supplying sound effects and deep tones. As the ensemble heaved to and fro, the collective squall eventually took shape, heading to climax.

Three songs were performed in similar manner, each one wilder than the previous one. One song recalled wild interactions, the next an elegiac setting. But every number was infused by Grimes' presence. Shifting from bass to violin, his concentrated stare never changed, even as he was joined by different musicians. His spirit was as strong and undeniable as his performance.

—Ken Micallef



Moers Festival Gives Jazz Artists Opportunity to Branch Out

THANKS TO ITS ADVENTUROUS ANNUAL music festival, the northwestern German town of Moers has built up a legendary status over the past 45 years, with a reputation for free-blowing improvisation and uncompromising sounds.

Nowadays, jazz certainly remains the programming core, but there are frequent strays into the realms of rock, folk, electronic and contemporary classical. Such was the case for the festival's 2016 edition, which ran from May 13–16.

Singer Cassandra Wilson was found here in her most unusual and toughened element, closing out the festival's Saturday night in cahoots with the ensemble Harriet Tubman, a long-running trio of Brandon Ross (guitar and banjo), Melvin Gibbs (electric bass) and J.T. Lewis (drums). The set opened with the trio establishing an atmosphere best described as "downhome miasma," akin to Jimi Hendrix, as played by Santo & Johnny.

The weekend's best set was a masterful illustration of sculpted freedom. Warped Dreamer is a collaboration between players from Belgium and Norway, featuring Teun Verbruggen (drums), Jozef Dumoulin (piano), Stian Westerhus (guitar) and Arve Henriksen (trumpet), with all four utilizing electronics. The quartet's strong suit is its rapid shuttling of soundscapes and styles, from minimal introspection to explosive rage. Henriksen was in an unusually freaky mood, a key influence over the band's urgent shape-shifting invention. His small wooden flute blended seamlessly into altered trumpet tones, followed by a deranged gospel-blues rant.

The festival, however, ended on a downer. A few months prior there had been problems with the local government, relating to the guaranteeing of funding, with the Moers weekender in danger of being cancelled. In the end, the event was saved, but this led to the artistic director of 11 years, Reiner Michalke, announcing his intention to resign from the position, which was set to last until 2020.

Whether Michalke will remain, a new director will be appointed or the Moers Festival will cease to exist, is still undecided. But given the fact that the entire weekend was virtually sold out, there are certainly plenty of local businesses and residents who want the fest to continue—and thrive.

—Martin Longley



Michel & Miles

"THE FIRST JAZZ ALBUM I MADE WAS with Miles, and the last album he made was with me," said Michel Legrand during a recent interview. The Grammy- and Oscar- winning composer was referring to his 1958 album *Legrand Jazz*, and Miles Davis' 1991 album, *Dingo*, the soundtrack he and the trumpeter made for the movie of the same name shortly before Davis died on Sept. 28 of that year.

Legrand was in Kalamazoo, Michigan, in May to receive an honorary doctorate from Western Michigan University as part of his first visit to the 2016 Irving S. Gilmore International Keyboard Festival. The pianist, singer and producer played two trio shows (on May 8) and performed a commissioned world premiere, Concerto For Piano And Orchestra, with the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra and Legrand as the featured soloist (on May 14).

Despite all his tremendous accomplishments (including composing the iconic scores to *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* and *The Thomas Crown Affair*), Legrand's musical life includes some tantalizing what-could-have-beens.

In Paris, during the 1960s, Nat "King" Cole initiated a collaboration with Legrand, whom he admired. Alas, it came to naught as Cole seemingly forgot his proposal with him. On another occasion in the '60s, Legrand and Stan Getz had rehearsed an ambitious project for saxophone, symphony and big band. A full house at Paris' Le Palais de Chaillot was eager to hear the piece. Sadly, after a quick dinner with the maestro, Getz showed up strung-out and the concert was canceled.

Legrand also had planned to do a project with pianist Bill Evans in 1980, and to perform a concert with saxophonist Phil Woods last year, but in both cases, the musicians passed away before the plans could come to fruition.

Indeed, the still-vibrant 84-year-old virtuoso has outlived many of his friends. DownBeat caught up with him in Kalamazoo.

WHAT WAS THE ORIGIN OF LEGRAND JAZZ?

The Americans, they wanted me to do an album about Paris, with all the orchestration. They asked, "Would you be interested?" Unfortunately, there was no money, no royalties. Two hundred dollars, and that's it. I said, "Fine, I don't care." It would be a good try for me. So I made the album [*I Love Paris*, 1954], and it sold eight million copies.

In a year or two, they have a big party, and Columbia says to me, "We would like to give you a present. Tell us [the kind of] album you want to make, and we'll pay for it, and you'll do it." So I said, "I want to do a jazz album—with Miles Davis, John Coltrane, and I named all the jazz musicians on the album. And they said,



"Let's do it." So, in 1958, I went to New York with my orchestration, Ben Webster, Herbie Mann, Jimmy Cleveland, and all the others [including Ernie Royal, Phil Woods and Hank Jones].

SO WHAT HAPPENED?

Miles wanted to talk to me before the session. He says, "Can you play for me?" So I played the orchestration on piano and he said, "Fine, OK, good." All the musicians in New York had said [things like], "Be careful with Miles, because he's such a character." "He arrives at the session 15 minutes late, on purpose." "Miles will open the door to the studio, and stand at the door and listen to the orchestra. If he likes it, he comes in, sits down, he has his trumpet. If he does not like it, he gets out of the studio, closes the door, and you never hear from him anymore." And I thought, "Oh my gosh!" I was 26 years old.

And, that's exactly what happened at the first session, with Miles and his group with John, Paul Chambers and Bill Evans. Miles opens the door, about 15 minutes late, still at the door, and then, he gets in, closes the door, settles down, opens his case, and starts to play. And after the first session, Miles came to me, and he said [imitating Davis' raspy voice], "Michel, do you like the way I play?" I said, "Miles! I'd never manage to tell you how you play. I'm so happy you're on my first jazz album. You're a genius, and if there's anything ... you know, "Open the skies"

TELL US ABOUT MAKING DINGO IN 1991.

Miles calls me: "Michel, you need to bring your fucking ass to Los Angeles." I said, "Miles, don't worry. You want me, the next day I'll take the train to Los Angeles." He said, "Michel, there's a film, and I want to do it with you." So, on the first day, I'm in the area.

On the second day, we talk a lot. We go swimming. We drank a lot. It was a Saturday,

and we were supposed to record the following Wednesday. So I said, "Miles, we're supposed to compose it together. We should start to work." He said, "Work! I don't want to. Who gives a shit about the film?"

I tell Miles, "We said we were going to do it. This isn't about you, or your Grammys." He said, "Fuck off! Who gives a shit about this, man?" I recall [a musician had] said, "The way Miles works is this: He goes into the studio with his musicians and—Miles is the laziest man on earth—comes afterwards and puts his trumpet up and overdubs."

So, I see he's expecting me to do the same. So, I said, "Miles, I have an idea. I'll go to my hotel now. I will write everything, the complete orchestration. I will record on Wednesday, all the charts. Come Thursday to the studio and take your trumpet and play." He said, "Michel, I knew you were a genius." I record all day Wednesday, and then, the next day, Miles comes. I loved that man. So generous, so strong and very open at the same time.

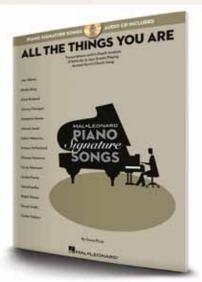
CAN WE GO BACK TO 1958?

OK. When we finished the album in New York, Miles said, "I'm playing at the Newport festival. Come with me." I said, "Great, fine." I remember I had a 16-millimeter camera. While we're having dinner at the festival, in comes [festival founder/director] George Wein. He says, "Hey Miles, don't forget that tomorrow, it's a tribute to Duke Ellington." And Miles says, "Forget it. I hate Duke's music. I will never play his music."

[The next day] they all go up on stage, and they start to play. Miles has his trumpet is in his hand; he stands near the piano. He never blows his trumpet once, but he was on stage. The musicians play, but he never puts his trumpet to his lips.

So, Miles was very important in my life. Extremely important. — John Ephland

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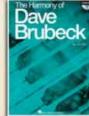


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VINYL / BY KEN MICALLEF



Blue Note Vinyl: Past & Present

In early February 2014 Blue Note Records working in post-production to add com-President Don Was announced the label's "75th Anniversary Vinyl Initiative," a campaign to reissue 100 albums, five titles per month, from the label's legendary catalogon vinyl. Art Blakey's Free For All, John Coltrane's Blue Train, Eric Dolphy's Out To Lunch, Wayne Shorter's Speak No Evil and Larry Young's Unity were the first five releases.

"They've sold really well," Was replied when asked about the success of the vinyl-only promotion. "Somewhere around 200,000 records. It's hard to sell 200,000 jazz albums whether it's on CD or digital files or streams. That's a lot of jazz albumsand sold only on vinyl. It's staggering."

Sales of vinyl albums have accelerated at an amazing rate over the last decade, enjoying a consistent 30% increase yearly. New vinyl sales reached 12 million in 2015 (counting sales of used LPs might double that figure). Boosted by Millennials raised on inferior-sounding downloads and streaming services now turning to classic analog technology, vinyl fever has captured every music genre, straining pressing plants to keep up with popular demand.

Was explained the format's broad appeal. "If you can imagine a mix having depth and a back wall," he said, "vinyl moves that back wall forward so you lose some depth. But it also connects everything and melds it all together. There's a feeling to what [original Blue Note engineer] Rudy Van Gelder did that we wanted to keep intact in the reissues. We wanted to keep the back wall as far back as it is; it's balancing depth with the energy of vinyl. Speak No Evil was the first reissue we were really happy with. Wayne Shorter signed the vinyl in the deadwax."

Was said that Van Gelder mixed live as the music was performed and recorded,

pression or EQ. Van Gelder's hot-rodded Scully lathe was another important element in the classic Blue Note sound.

"We listened to the master tapes," Was recalled. "I got choked up hearing Joe Henderson's Mode For Joe [Was' first Blue Note purchase]. The tapes sounded beautiful, but they lacked some of the power I remembered from the records. We felt that the first pressings, which Rudy and [Blue Note co-founder] Alfred Lion closely supervised, probably came closest to the artist's intentions We tried to match the feel of the original pressings, but we always sourced from the original tapes."

Based on reader's comments to a New York Times article covering the 75th Anniversary series, the latest Blue Note vinyl reissues comprise vocalist Sheila Jordan's Portrait Of Sheila, trumpeter Blue Mitchell's The Thing To Do, keyboardist Big John Patton's Let 'Em Roll, saxophonist Ike Quebec's Blue And Sentimental and saxophonist Sam Rivers' Fuchsia Swing Song.

Forthcoming Blue Note vinyl releases include new albums from guitarist Nels Cline, keyboardist Robert Glasper and drummer Chris Dave. Plus, as long as the plants keep pressing, Blue Note will reissue its beloved back catalog.

'We always planned to continue reissuing titles," Was confirmed. "No one foresaw vinyl's popularity. There's such a logiam at the pressing plants and in the Universal warehouses that we've had to slow down. Now we're doing five reissues, quarterly. The next five will fit a theme, 'Rare Grooves,' and will include Bobbi Humphrey's Blacks And Blues, Donald Byrd's Fancy Free, Dr. Lonnie Smith's Think!, Lou Donaldson's Alligator Boogaloo, and John Scofield's Hand Jive."



NEA Jazz Masters Announced

The National Endowment for the Arts has announced the 2017 Jazz Masters Fellows: vocalist Dee Dee Bridgewater, bassist Dave Holland, pianist Dick Hyman, organist Dr. Lonnie Smith and writer/educator Ira Gitler.

The NEA Jazz Masters fellows are recognized for their lifetime achievements and contributions to the advancement of jazz. Each will receive a \$25,000 award and be honored at a tribute concert on April 3, 2017, produced in collaboration with the Kennedy Center.

Bridgewater, a Tony- and Grammywinning vocalist, has performed and recorded with such giants as Dizzy Gillespie, Sonny Rollins, Max Roach and Dexter Gordon. Her 2015 album, Dee Dee's Feathers (OKeh/ Sony/DDB), is a lively collaboration with New Orleans-based trumpeter Irvin Mayfield.

Equally accomplished is bassist and bandleader Holland, whose nearly five-decade career encompasses collaborations with Miles Davis, Anthony Braxton, Chris Potter, Kenny Barron and many more.

Hyman is a piano virtuoso who helped launch the acclaimed Jazz in July series at the 92nd Street Y in New York, where he served as the series' artistic director for 20 years.

Smith's career as a jazz organist spans more than 50 years, during which the soul-jazz pioneer has been featured on more than 70 jazz, blues and r&b recordings.

Journalist Gitler, a former associate editor for DownBeat, is the recipient of the 2017 A.B. Spellman NEA Jazz Masters Award for Jazz Advocacy, which is awarded to an individual who has made significant contributions to the appreciation and advancement of jazz.

"I am pleased to welcome these five individuals, with their artistry, energy and commitment to jazz, to the NEA Jazz Masters family," said NEA Chairman Jane Chu.

—Brian Zimmerman



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DOWNBEAT HALL OF FAME

We Have To Go All the Way Back' S T S BY TED PANKEN | PHOTO BY JIMMY & DENA KATZ

When DownBeat last spoke to RANDY WESTON in the summer of 2014, the master pianist-composer, then 88, was planning to issue *The African Nubian Suite*, a recent opus he'd recorded in concert at NYU's Skirball Center in April 2012. For that occasion, documented on a self-released double CD that dropped in June, Weston convened an array of distinguished Afrocentric artists—including an expanded, five-horn version of his African Rhythms ensemble; various percussionists, string players and singers; and the late Jayne Cortez intoning a commissioned poem in her singular argot—to illuminate a text narrated by Wayne B. Chandler, author of *Ancient Future: The Teachings and Prophetic Wisdom of the Seven Hermetic Laws of Ancient Egypt*. As historian Robin D.G. Kelley accurately observes in the program notes, "In one single work, Weston manages to pay tribute to the ancient tombs of Sidi Bilal in Aswan, the Sufi tradition, the holy city of Touba in Senegal, China's great Shang dynasty, African folk music, the timeless history of the blues, and the unity of humankind." Weston dialogues with each participant in notes and tones, and emcees from the piano bench, revealing exhaustive knowledge of how the traditions intersect.



n the occasion of his induction into the DownBeat Hall of Fame—and about a month after his 90th birthday—Weston discussed this summational piece over brunch in the art-filled dining room of his home in Brooklyn's Clinton Hill neighborhood. He inherited the house from his father, who ran a restaurant on the premises from 1946 until the 1970s. Sitting with impecable posture at the head of the table, Weston, who appears not to have lost an inch from his 6-foot 8-inch frame, followed his musical practice of stating a core motif, then fleshing it out with theme-and-variations of gradually increasing complexity and depth.

"My dad told me, 'Listen, we are older than corruption, we are older than colonialism, we are older than slavery; for you to understand me and your mother better, you've got to go back to Africa," Weston said. "So when I was a boy, I'd go to libraries and museums to read about Nubian civilization, the great Egyptian civilizations before there was a West Africa."

Weston originally conceived *The African Nubian Suite* as a large ensemble project. "That changed because of Jayne Cortez," he said. Weston explained that he'd seen a CNN piece on Ardi (*Ardipithecus ramidus*), the 4.5 million-year-old female hominid skeleton unearthed in the Ethiopian desert in 1994, and "wanted to honor that this lady is our original mother." He asked Cortez (1934–2012) "to write a poem about women, in particular the African woman, going all the way back. I wanted her to do it with African drums. She agreed. Then she called to say she wanted me to play piano behind her.

"I started to think about what magical process happened when the African came in contact with a European instrument. For example, I told Howard Johnson to describe on tuba how he imagined Ardi walked through the forest. I asked everybody to do the same with each individual instrument. For us to go ahead, we have to go all the way back, and find out how our ancestors created all this music. They were greater than us. It's an amazing story."

Weston's own amazing story is comprehensively documented in his 2010 autobiography African Rhythms (with co-author Willard Jenkins) and in a lengthy chapter in Kelley's 2012 book Africa Speaks, America Answers: Modern Jazz in Revolutionary Times. Weston's achievements will be further illuminated after the summer, when he transfers his extensive archives-containing 70 years' worth of manuscripts, recordings and printed ephemerato Harvard University. But as his latest album indicates, Weston enters his 90s with no intention of shifting into retrospective gear. In his forward-looking attitude to musical production, he embodies the "ancient future" paradigm practiced by jazz icons such as Max



Roach, Thelonious Monk and Dizzy Gillespie all of whom were hands-on mentors during his formative years—and early heroes like Duke Ellington, Coleman Hawkins and Count Basie.

As we spoke, Weston was preparing to fly to Morocco, his second home since 1967, to play with African Rhythms at the Gnaoua World Music Festival in Essaouira, to be followed by summer festival appearances at Spoleto, Montreux, Jazz à Vienne and Detroit. In January, he attended the Panama Jazz Festival, which dedicated this year's edition to him in recognition of his father's Panamanian roots.

On April 28, Weston assembled African Rhythms for the fifth and final public concert he'd curated during 2015-'16 as the first-ever artist in residence at the New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music. The series began with a retrospective of Weston's life and career moderated by Kelley. It continued with separate events at which Weston played and spoke with traditional Gnawa musicians from Morocco and master drummers from Senegal, and a symposium on the evolution of the drum through the African diaspora, in which Lewis Nash interviewed drummers from Guadeloupe, Haiti, Trinidad, Morocco and Cuba who each spoke about their village, picked a song and played it with a specific rhythm.

Weston was far from blasé about his entrance into the DownBeat Hall of Fame. "I'm overwhelmed," he said. "I am so happy that I can't express it. See, the old people would say: 'Your destiny has already been written. You've been given certain powers at a certain time.' They said, 'The Creator will give you this, and the Creator will take it away. But what you deal with is music.' So I tried to take the best of everyone I heard. This is Randy Weston, who the piano teacher gave up on completely! I cut music class at Boys High School. I didn't become a professional until I was 29, because I

had no confidence that I could even touch the feet of Tatum and Hines and these people I love with a passion.

"I don't know how all this happened. I kept doing the same thing, telling the truth about our people." He mentioned his dear friend and musical alter-ego, Melba Liston (1926–'99), who extrapolated the harmonies and voicings of Weston's compositions for big bands and combos on such classic albums as *Uhuru Afrika*, *Tanjah*, *The Spirits Of Our Ancestors, Volcano Blues* and *Khepera*. "We had that same quiet pride in Grandma and Grandpa, always liking to go back. Most people today don't know to go back. But I tell them the real power is the root of the tree. Not what you see. What's under the ground. Which is Mother Africa."

Weston paused, and said, "Also, I don't know anything!"

It was impossible not to respond, "Well, you know something."

He leaned forward. "But that something is so small when you're dealing with the magic of Africa, the magic of Cuba and Haiti," he said. "How all these Africans were taken away, and went like this"—he placed his large hands in front of him as though manacled-"and did this"—he splayed his long, tapered fingers downwards, addressing an imaginary piano-"and did this"-moved his hands in a silent drumbeat—"and did this"—cupped his hands around his mouth as if blowing into a horn. "How did that happen? When I first went to Nigeria, I said, 'Do you know how blessed I am? My ancestors, my great-great-grandmother, came over on a boat from Africa, in chains.' Next week I'm going to Africa in an airplane. I can put myself in that slave ship. I can go back thousands of years. I can see myself before slavery. I can see myself before corruption. I can see my mother a queen. My father a king."

Weston has never traced his personal gene-





alogy to an African location. His father, Frank Edward Weston, born in 1894, descends from Jamaican Maroons who emigrated to Panama for employment during the construction of the Panama Canal. During the 1910s, he moved to Cuba from Balboa, his hometown; in 1924, he sailed from Havana to New York. He settled in Brooklyn, where he met Weston's mother, Vivian, who had recently migrated from southeastern Virginia. Weston depicted the milieu of his formative years in the brilliant tune "African Village Bedford Stuyvesant," which concluded the recent New School concert, framing the harmonic language of Gillespie and Monk with Nigerian highlife beats.

"I'm a combination of my parents," Weston explained. "My father, with his Panamanian-Jamaican roots—cooking, music, discipline, pride. My mother was quiet power—by example with the black church. They broke up when I was little. I'd be with my father during the week, and learned about Marcus Garvey, about Africa. On the weekend, my mother would take me to the movies, and on Sunday, take me to the black church, the most swinging place of all. We had calypso dances, blues groups on the corner. We could get lessons on piano or trumpet or violin in black institutions. Our parents took us to hear Duke, and Mary Lou Williams with Andy Kirk, and Jimmy Lunceford."

He was 13 when Coleman Hawkins' iconic "Body And Soul" recording hit the streets. "I bought three copies, and kept two in cellophane," Weston said. "I tried to play his solo on the piano. He's the real deal for me. How do you go from Mamie Smith to Monk? I also tried to play like Basie. But only Basie had that sound, that touch, that when-not-to-play. He was also a stride pianist—like Monk was a stride pianist,

but they created something different. 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."

What also characterizes Weston, in pianist/keyboardist Marc Cary's view, is an alchemical ability to put tone, texture and rhythm at the service of his stories. "I put Randy with Duke and Earl Hines, coming out of them into some futuristic stuff," Cary said. "He knows so much piano history, he can play whatever he wants. What he chose to be as a pianist fits what he's trying to do. He's not flamboyant. He approaches the instrument to communicate, through the language we know as jazz and beyond. And his left hand is always creating; all his songs have a dope bass line."

Danilo Pérez, who hosted Weston at the Panama Jazz Festival this year and in 2006, said he admires his "orchestral approach, so connected to the drums and the flow of rhythmic development." Pérez continued: "There's always a dance to his playing; he completely controls the motion of the groove. There's also the gravity of his sound, like nobody else. You can copy one of his chords, but it doesn't sound the same. Like Monk and Duke, he creates compositions that stay with you, that feed his persona as an improviser, and always sound like a blues song. His music is so inclusive; you feel like you're in a tribe."

Unlike most of his generational peers, Weston steered away from bebop. "I loved Bud Powell, but not to play like him," he said. "That wasn't my way. I was closer to blues pianists. I adored Nat Cole, too." After hearing Monk's recorded debut on a 1944 Hawkins quartet recording, Weston said he "realized that Monk was the direction I wanted to go, and back to

Ellington, back to Basie. Lester Young always said, 'What's your story?' That's the African-American tradition. These giants had maybe four bars or eight bars to take a solo, but they had to tell a story, like the phrase Prez played on 'One O'Clock Jump' with Basie's band—or Freddie Webster, when he did 'You're Not The Kind' with Sarah Vaughan—but what a story!"

In 1944, Weston was a recent graduate of Brooklyn's Boys High School, playing local calypso dances and jump-band gigs. Then he was drafted into the Army. After an eventful tour of duty in which he rose to Staff Sergeant, he returned to Bed-Stuy in 1947 to take over his father's first restaurant, Trios, on Sumner Avenue, where he maintained a jukebox filled with everything from Satchmo to Stravinsky.

Max Roach, also a Boys High alum, lived nearby, and Weston took frequent breaks to visit. George Russell, then convalescing from tuberculosis in Roach's house, was working on "Cubana Be, Cubana Bop" for Gillespie's recently formed big band, sometimes joined by Gillespie himself and trailblazing Cuban conguero Chano Pozo. Russell introduced Weston to Schoenberg's Pierrot Lunaire, which struck him as "interesting but kind of cold," and also to the corpus of Alban Berg, which affected Weston deeply.

Concurrently, Weston started to compose tunes, earning validation on an occasion when Roach, hosting Charlie Parker, his employer on 52nd Street, asked Weston to "play something for Bird," who responded favorably.

"I'd sit and absorb what these giants said," Weston said. "I had no idea I'd be a musician. My father, God bless him, wanted me to be a businessman. He wanted his son to be independent. Pop was fully aware of the racism in New York—in America, period. Segregation was serious! Even in Manhattan, we couldn't go to restaurants. But Mom and Pop kept that spirit."

Another transformative breakthrough occurred in 1951 at the Music Inn in the Berkshires, where Weston took a summer job as a breakfast chef. After completing his daily obligations, he played piano in the evenings. "Three older ladies told me they were having a recital, and wanted me to play," he recalled. "I told them I didn't play Bach or Beethoven, but they said, 'No, we want to hear what you play at night.' Then I realized I had something to say on the piano. But I was still very shy."

Not long thereafter, Weston met the pioneering jazz historian Marshall Stearns, a bespectacled Caucasian professor of English with degrees from Harvard and Yale who specialized in medieval literature. Stearns conducted colloquia at the Music Inn that offered a university-level education in the threads that connect jazz to the traditional music of the ethnic groups and regional styles of West Africa. "Marshall was the squarest-looking guy you'd

want to see," Weston said. "But he was Pan-African. He encouraged me to listen to older pianists like Jimmy Yancey and Meade Lux Lewis, who approached their instruments in a way closer to Africa. He brought in Macbeth the Great, a famous calypso singer, and I heard the French quadrille, which inspired me to start writing waltzes. He brought in John Lee Hooker and Jimmy Rushing, and did a 15-minute interview with Mahalia Jackson on African spirituality in the black church."

On another occasion, Stearns arranged for a presentation by ethnomusicologist Willis James, who played field hollers that proceeded in 5/4 time; dancers Asadata Dafora and Katherine Dunham presented possibilities for sounds in motion; drummers Babatunde Olatunji and Candido authoritatively executed the rhythms for all to see and emulate.

Eventually, Stearns invited Weston to accompany his popular lecture demonstrations. After he suffered a heart attack in 1958, he asked Weston to deliver them. On Stearns' recommendation, the U.S. State Department recruited Weston—who had visited and played in Nigeria in 1961 and 1963—to bring a group to tour in West Africa and North Africa at the beginning of 1967. "That's when I realized I was an ambassador," Weston said. "Marshall died before I had a chance to thank him. He taught me how to do the history of jazz."

It could be said that, circa 2016, Weston—lineally connected to a timeline spanning Eubie Blake and Luckey Roberts to Ornette Coleman and David Murray—embodies the history of jazz in his own person. After soundcheck for the final New School concert, he stretched out on a sofa in the compact dressing room, listening to saxophonist/flutist T.K. Blue, bassist Alex Blake, percussionist Neil Clarke and tenor saxophonist René McLean trade stories about Slugs' Saloon and the dangers of navigating Manhattan's Lower East Side during the '60s and '70s. When directly addressing Weston, they called him "Chief."

"It's not something he claims," Clarke said of the designation. "Randy is a chief by acclamation. He's so generous, so inquisitive, so unflinching in his love and respect and appreciation for Africa. He'll tell you the story of the creation of every single one of his songs, and the approach shifts. You don't play licks or patterns. You participate in telling that story."

Clarke has propelled African Rhythms for 20 years, sometimes within a uniquely configured percussion setup assembled from congas, djembe, cymbals and tambourine, sometimes playing alongside a drum kit player, sometimes not, always in uncanny synchronicity with Blake, whose approach to the bass evokes the guembri, a low-tuned Gnawan lute.

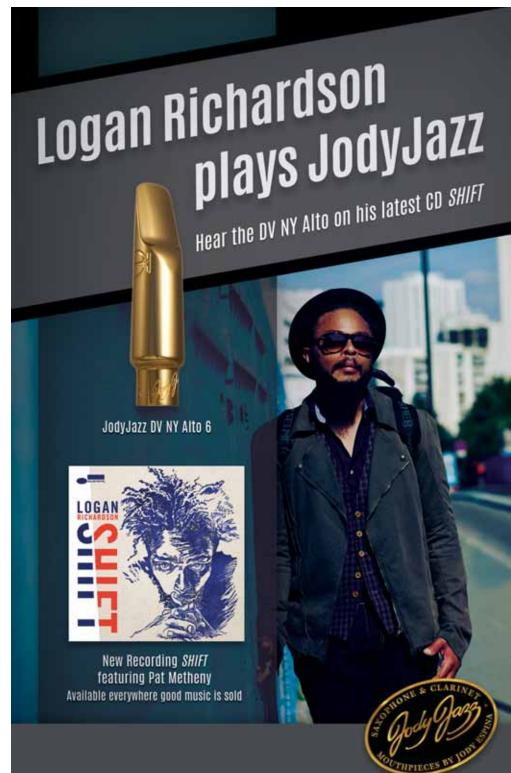
Weston told Pérez that using Clarke as sole percussionist provides him space to create har-

monic color. "They all have digested the language, and that raises the level of freedom," Pérez said. "When I hear the trio, I sometimes don't know who's soloing. They break down any preconceived idea about interaction, and connect it to the experience of the African neighborhood."

Indeed, it is impossible not to notice how spontaneous and unpredictable Weston is, how rarely he repeats himself. He was asked how he sustains this optimistic, fresh perspective. He pointed to Fatoumata Weston, his Senegaleseborn wife, whom he met in Paris in 1996.

"Why me?" she asked him. "What did I do?"
"Every minute, I'm in Africa with her,"
Weston said. "Everything she does—what she
thinks, what she cooks, the clothes she makes
for me—is African. And she's from a spiritual
family. I have a Senegalese family. Her daughter's children treat me as Grandpa. So even if
I try to go off the path, I can't, because there's
my wife. She's constantly giving. I can't overemphasize the importance of that. Dizzy would
give. Eubie Blake. Duke. Max. Always giving.
We got married in Nubia. The Creator said,
"This is your wife.' And I go with the flow."

DB





Immortal By John McDonough CONPOSER

This spring I gave a final exam in Jazz History to 18 cream-of-the-crop students at a major university. Here's the surprise: Fourteen of these 19 to 25-year-olds (mostly musicians and jazz majors) could not identify a Lester Young recording of "Stardust." How could one hit 21, I thought, and not know one of the most pervasive songs to sweep the 20th century?

ut maybe I was wrong. This is the 21st century. In a time when an eight-bar line has become too much for the modern attention span to bear, the most fundamental mnemonic of a song—melody—is endangered, along with the kind of composers once able to discover such treasures buried among that ascending pile of 88 piano keys. Among them was Hoagy Carmichael, the man who found "Stardust" in that pile and who now takes his place in the DownBeat Hall of Fame.

It is long overdue that the Hall of Fame shift its attention from musicians—whose composing has been done largely as a self-serving avocation—to the full-time, professional songwriters who wrote for the world. They are the hidden second front of jazz history—the heroes who worked alone, found their inspiration behind the scenes and provided those musicians with the unique literary inventory on which they erected many of their greatest performances.

Carmichael is an ideal composer to open this second front. More than anyone, he wrote popular music from a jazz sensibility, which may be why "Stardust" still endures. According to the Tom Lord Jazz Discography, it has been recorded 1,520 times since October 1927 and that includes only the jazz recordings, not the thousands of "popular" versions by artists as varied as Nat "King" Cole, Willie Nelson, Ringo Starr and Rod Stewart, and Billy Ward and the Dominos. Other Carmichael classics at home in any jazz set include "Georgia On My Mind" (1,019 recordings), "The Nearness Of You" (828 recordings), "Skylark" (804 recordings), "Lazy River" (466 recordings) and the traditional Dixie favorite "Riverboat Shuffle."

Many of the early recordings of these standards have been interred with their time, interesting now as quaint artifacts trapped in the

grooved amber of a vanished chic. They stand forever where they were planted in time, as tastes and styles move merrily along. But the work of a great composer is never finished, only latent. It slides through cycles of swing, bop, doo-wop, soul, gospel, country and come-whatmay, embracing, then shedding, the characteristics of fashion like a literary Leonard Zelig. Such songs exist in the future, not the past, patiently awaiting a new generation.

"Without being specific," says Hoagy Bix Carmichael, the composer's son who manages the estate, "I can tell you that the catalog still turns over a good seven figures a year in performance royalties, even today when Spotify and the others are giving music away."

Consider Carmichael's "Georgia On My Mind." After its introduction in 1930, it steadily entered the repertoire of jazz musicians as diverse as Fats Waller and Django Reinhardt. Ten years later Billie Holiday, Glenn Miller and others reshaped it to swing era specifications, in part because it was one of the few important American standards not caught in the ASCAP war with radio. ("Georgia" was a BMI song.) Another 20 years went by and rock 'n' roll had largely displaced Carmichael and his generation of writers. But "Georgia On My Mind" was bigger than ever. Ray Charles had recreated it for a generation that knew little of Miller, Waller or even Carmichael. It now had a life of its own. Jump-cut ahead 50 years, and surprisingly "Stardust" is no longer the catalog's biggest earner. "Now it's 'Georgia," says son Hoagy Bix. "Just this year for a commercial during the Masters Tournament, it earned a generous midfive-figure fee in one week. It's our biggest song, all still because of Ray Charles."

But "Stardust" remains Carmichael's signature magnum opus. He first recorded it 89 years

ago. Musicians recognized its potential from the beginning. It was so steeped in jazz, they hardly needed to tinker with it. Many of its most famous performances (Louis Armstrong, Benny Goodman/Charlie Christian, Artie Shaw, Art Tatum, Lionel Hampton, John Coltrane) have been simple variations, not improvisations. Its first 16 bars still float from the horn like a freshly minted Bix Beiderbecke solo. It meanders its hill-and-dale melody without repeating itself once. Yet, in a more patient and less distracted age that was then, this lengthy and complex melodic narrative embedded itself deeply into the popular musical language. Once heard, its logic seems ineluctable.

"I've recorded "Stardust" twice," says singer Roberta Gambarini, whose latest album, Connecting Spirits (Groovin' High), is a partnership with another musician-cum-composer, Jimmy Heath. "I did it with Hank Jones and also with the Dizzy Gillespie band in an arrangement by Slide Hampton. I used to do it as a duet with Clark Terry, too. It was one of his warhorses. The greatness of the song lets us reinvent it each time. That's what makes Carmichael's work worth revisiting. There's so much in it contemporary artists can work with in interesting ways. The problem is that those songs are not part of the life of many younger listeners today, and most of the pop songs that are offer very little to the jazz artist."

Carmichael came by his jazz instincts near their source, which in the 1920s was Chicago, where the best musicians of New Orleans and the Midwest were converging. Born in Bloomington, Indiana, Nov. 22, 1899, he came of age in the early '20s as Gennett Records in nearby Richmond began recording the first important records in jazz history—Jelly Roll Morton, the King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band



with Louis Armstrong, and the Wolverines with Bix Beiderbecke. Carmichael's first composition, "Riverboat Shuffle," was recorded for Gennett by the Wolverines in May 1924. He soon felt the impact of the Beiderbecke horn and personality (so much so that he briefly tried to play the cornet).

In the mid and late '20s Carmichael might have chosen any one of three careers. He had a law degree from Indiana University; he led a small territory band called the Collegians; he was recording often as pianist and singer; and he was finding in himself a knack for creating droll, out-of-the-box melodies such as "Washboard Blues," which became his own debut record as a performer in 1925.

His destiny was decided in Richmond in October 1927 when he recorded a peppy original called "Star Dust" (compounded soon afterward into the one-word title "Stardust"). Irving Mills, who had published "Riverboat Shuffle," signed him to a contract and printed the first sheet music run of the song as a piano piece. A Mills staff writer, Mitchell Parish, added the famous lyric—"Sometime I wonder why I spend the lonely night ... "-in 1929. But early recordings persisted in treating it as a jazzy tune, and Carmichael resolved to leave the music business for investment banking after the market crash. Then, in 1931, Bing Crosby and Armstrong recorded their versions of "Stardust" as fullblown love songs with the Parish lyric. Crosby

provided the romance. Armstrong gave it fire. From that point forward, Carmichael's path as a composer was clear, and few jazz artists from Ben Webster to Archie Shepp have dared tamper with the soul of "Stardust." Today, both the song and its composer endure. "After careful study," musicologist Alec Wilder wrote in 1973, "I think it is unquestionable that Hoagy Carmichael has proven himself to be the most talented, inventive, sophisticated, and jazz-oriented of all the great craftsmen."

Carmichael's privileged place in jazz immortality was cemented when Armstrong introduced his song "Rockin' Chair" in 1929 and featured Carmichael in a vocal duet, then followed up his record of "Stardust" with stunning classics of Carmichael's "Georgia On My Mind" and "Lazy River," which would stay in the Armstrong repertoire for the next 40 years.

Unlike most of the great composers of his generation, Carmichael wasn't shaped by the razzle-dazzle of New York. Neither was Cole Porter, also a native of central Indiana. But whereas Porter deployed sophistication in the cause of sophistication, Carmichael used it to undermine such values by wrapping his songs in a regional vernacular, a bucolic drawl that often reflected both the wit and nostalgia of a fading Main Street America. He regarded himself as a professional songwriter for hire, ready to deliver on any assignment. He wrote from his imagination, not his autobiography. Yet, with

his lean and laconic Gary Cooperish persona, he became the first great songwriter of the 20th century not only to perform his own music widely, but to personify it, shape it and bestow it with a sense of first person authenticity.

"I think of him as an icon," says Gambarini, "whose music is kind of an extension of himself and where he came from. He had a public persona, even in a cartoon. Google the episode of *The Flintstones* where he sings 'Yabba-Dabba-Doo' on his 'Stoneway' piano."

Carmichael thus became the premature matrix for the modern singer-songwriter that found its contemporary identity decades later in Bob Dylan—"who just recorded 'Skylark' on his new album [Fallen Angels]," Hoagy Bix adds. "When Dylan was in Bloomington, Indiana, last fall for a concert, he visited dad's gravesite."

Carmichael died Dec. 27, 1981. But his amiable folksiness survives on solo and duet recordings with Armstrong, Beiderbecke, Crosby, Ella Fitzgerald, Jack Teagarden and others; on his many radio shows; and most memorably in the low-key character parts he played and sang in such Hollywood classics as *Topper* ("Old Man Moon"), *To Have and Have Not* ("Hong Kong Blues") and *The Best Years of Our Lives* ("Lazy River"). He understood his film character better than anyone: "The hound-dog-faced old musical philosopher," he called it, "noodling on the honky-tonk piano."

Some noodling!

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VIJAY

By Dan Ouellette Photo by Jos L. Knaepen

Embracing IXER It All

VIJAY IYER is a moving target—a condition he vows to curb a bit in the coming year as he takes a leave from his tenured senior professor position at Harvard University. "I was working there one to three days a week, which means I was away a lot," Iyer said, chilling on a couch in the music room of his Harlem home, where he was surrounded by a wall of CDs, a Steinway piano and various stacks of sheet music. "I've put in two-and-a-half years, and it's been a real blitz. I was on committees and we had a lot of meetings. We're changing the curriculum, and I did get to hire Yosvany Terry—a real artist with a vision and depth of creativity—to be a senior lecturer and director of the Harvard Jazz Bands. I'll be keeping tabs. But I need a little time to get away and breathe and be with my family and write a lot of music."

ut, at the moment, Iyer isn't exhibiting the concept of slowing down. After his Harvard students gave their final recitals this spring, he immediately flew to Europe and toured with his trio for two-and-a-half weeks. He landed in New York yesterday and tomorrow he's got jury duty.

So on a Sunday night after dinner, he's got a rare slice of time to pause and reflect on his DownBeat Critics Poll win as Jazz Artist of the Year—his third time so honored—as well as his past accomplishments. One of the most artistically significant milestones was his daunting stretch touring with Roscoe Mitchell in 2001, which he said "changed my life in learning how to improvise, how to interact, how to create space." It's an experience that continues to inform his blossoming future.

At Iyer's apartment, dinner was winding down while the stereo system played Prince's *Purple Rain* LP at a low volume. It's apropos. After all, this year's top jazz artist listens to a diverse array of music, composes works informed by a variety of genres and frequently talks about how his artistic vision goes far beyond the sometimes narrow constricts of jazz.

As is typical of Iyer, his plate is filled with musical activities, including being the director of the jazz and creative music program at the Banff Center in Alberta, Canada, and gearing up as the artistic curator for the 2017 Ojai Music Festival in Southern California (Peter Sellars served as music director this year).

Additionally, there are several compositions that he's been commissioned to write, plus upcoming dates with his namesake trio with bassist Stephan Crump and drummer Marcus Gilmore in support of the acclaimed 2015 album *Break Stuff* (ECM). Also, there's a sprinkling of high-profile dates with iconic trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith celebrating this year's spiritual and mysterious duo collaboration, *A Cosmic Rhythm With Each Stroke* (ECM). Praising the album with a 4½-star review in the June issue of DownBeat, Hot Box contributor Paul de Barros wrote, "If you want to hear two hyperaware musicians respond to each other in real time, this soundscape has your name on it."

Iyer got to know Smith over the years through his interest in the AACM. Following a duo concert the trumpeter performed with Anthony Braxton at the now-defunct Lower East Side cultural space Tonic (released on the 2003 Pi disc *Organic Resonance*), Smith invited Iyer to link up in the near future. "I'll never forget it," Iyer recalled. "Wadada told me that he really liked my playing: 'I want us to play together.' Then he thumped me on my chest. It was like I was being anointed."

Iyer went on tour with Smith's Golden Quartet (along with bassist John Lindberg and drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson) in 2005, an association that lasted several years. Their first concert together, at the Banlieues Bleues Festival in Paris, was filmed and released on DVD—of which Iyer laughingly said, "I look scared

because I didn't know what I was doing; but in the course of the tour I got the dynamics and the different facets of Wadada's music."

"Vijay is a great artist, a great composer and a great thinker," said Smith, who has known the pianist since the 1990s, when he was playing avant-garde music at places like the old Yoshi's in Oakland (on Claremont Avenue), where the youngster would be in the audience. "The creative thing comes from another zone," Smith added. "Vijay has great compassion for the musical community. He's not afraid of working with the elders and he's open to the younger guys. He embraces it all. Over the years that I've known him and seen his artistic development, I see how sympathetic he is to artistry, and we've become very close."

After relocating from the Bay Area to New York, Iyer evolved into a major player on the scene. An early break came when jazz scholar Gary Giddins caught him at Sweet Rhythm in 2000 and lauded the newcomer to the city in his "Weather Bird" column in The Village Voice. It proved to be a pivotal moment for Iyer—an early blessing in his career is how he described it. Fast-forward to 2014, a year after he was honored by the MacArthur Foundation with a fellowship (aka the "genius grant"). At the time, Iyer said, "I'm already starting to see it make a difference—giving me a larger stand and increased visibility. People are paying attention

and promoters are getting hyped up."

One case in point: Iyer played at the Harvey Theater stage in December 2014 as part of the BAM Next Wave Festival in Brooklyn, delivering a mesmerizing show that included the shimmering, percussive, pensive, furious score to director Prashant Bhargava's Radhe Radhe: Rites of Holi, performed with the 12-piece International Contemporary Ensemble. (Iyer's original score can be heard on the DVD.) The most poignant portion of the evening was a commissioned piece that was planned to be a solo piano spotlight, but because of "the urgency of the time" (due to protests in response to the police killings of African Americans in Ferguson, Baltimore and Staten Island), Iyer invited several dancers and non-dancers to stage a die-in. "Really, it wasn't supposed to be art but an action," Iyer said. "So we started the evening by not starting."

In his still ascending role as an intelligent, highly creative artist who draws attention from far outside the jazz world, Iyer has been invited to bring innovative music to spaces not typically known for adventurism. In 2015, he was called upon to be artist in residence of the new Met Breuer space (part of the Metropolitan Museum of Art), where he staged more than 100 shows at various times of the day during the month of March. "I did everything I wanted to do," he said, noting that he actually played in 60

of the shows. "We were doing anywhere from four to six sets a day for the whole month. We really occupied that space for a solid four-anda-half weeks. We made it ours." The musicians played Radhe Radhe almost every day and used many of the performances as workshops for potential future projects (including several sets featuring Patricia Brennan on marimba, Linda Oh on bass and spoken word by Nigerian-American writer and art historian Teju Cole).

But the climax came when Iver and Smith performed A Cosmic Rhythm With Each Stroke, which had only recently been released. The heart of the recording and performance is a suite based on the works of Indian abstract artist Nasreen Mohamedi that are riveting in their simplicity and obsessive in their complexity. "There are patterns of rhythms in her work," Iyer said, pointing to examples in a book on his living room table. "And there's a lot of silence in her work but still a life force behind it that is mysterious."

As for the poetic sensibility that Iyer and Smith created in their improvisation-fueled work, the trumpeter says, "It's almost like a dialogue-Plato and Socrates-where we're looking at big issues and their impact on society. The suite on Mohamedi was a mental, intellectual, spiritual experience. After talking about her work and its impact, we set up in the recording studio, and the first piece just popped out. It

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was so right that everyone in the studio got excited. The rest came out due to how close we are. We blended in such a way that we produced something great."

Iyer noted that working together intuitively on the piece was an "uncanny" experience, adding, with a laugh, "When you spend any time with Wadada, the uncanny is always what happens."

While fully pleased with his honor as DownBeat's Jazz Artist of the Year, Iyer wondered if the term *jazz* is really appropriate for what innovators are doing now with the music. "It's never a comfortable term with me because for so long the word has been used by the business to categorize the music," he said. "But the music is overlapping and interconnecting and marrying into new forms and new ways of expression. Most of the people I played with coming up—like Steve Coleman, Butch Morris, Roscoe Mitchell, George Lewis, and today, Robert Glasper—don't bother using the word. I like to see it as relating in human terms and not be stuck in a mentality of labeling the music into narrow categories to try to sell it efficiently."

Iyer, who performs more than 100 concerts worldwide each year, explained that for him, sharing the music is an intimate, visceral endeavor. "There's no substitute for having a shared experience where you can hear an entire room of people all breathing together," he said. "I hear it all the time. It happens in the course of making music. It brings people into the ritual of oneness. It's a real thing. Every musician knows this. It has nothing to do with genre or style. It's basically the humanity that binds us all together."



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Robert Glasper Alreays Moving By Dan Quellette Photo by John Collins

ROBERT GLASPER launched his career playing acoustic piano, but quickly opened himself up to electric keyboards, given his spirited connections to the realms of hip-hop, neo-soul and r&b. It was a smart, organic move that enabled the Houston native to develop his unique voice beyond the strictures of mainstream jazz. He has matured into a deeply versatile artist who can play grooving, straightahead tunes with his piano trio or gracefully stretch into the funk-meets-r&b zone on electric keys with his plugged-in group, the Robert Glasper Experiment, which, as its name suggests, is an adventurous, genre-blending machine.

do things against the grain, totally," said Glasper, who primarily records for Blue Note but recently completed a couple of special projects for Columbia/Legacy.

Glasper served as co-producer of the soundtrack to *Miles Ahead* (Columbia/Legacy), the cinematic exploration of Miles Davis by director/actor Don Cheadle. On the recording, in addition to Davis tracks, Glasper delivers five originals, including the end-credit tune "Gone 2015" with rapper Pharoahe Monch. "Don told me that in some scenes he wanted to get the sound of the time period," Glasper explained. "But at the same time, he wanted me to sound like Glasper."

Plus, the keyboardist recently released another Davis-related project, *Everything's Beautiful* (Columbia/Legacy), which could be the album of the summer thanks to its sunny r&b grooves, silky soul, hip-hop thunder and jazz lightning. Glasper as producer reimagines Davis' music and archival outtakes in new, soul-infused contexts.

"It's so 2016 musically," Glasper said. "I'm making new music with old music. You can hear Miles in the samples, but it also sounds like the future. I'm championing how Miles played the language of the time. He was always moving, knowing that if you don't move, the music is dead."

Everything's Beautiful—which is officially credited to Miles Davis & Robert Glasper—features the keyboardist creating new sound-scapes with a diverse team of creative artists, ranging from r&b singer Erykah Badu and funky vocalist Ledisi to rappers Illa J and Phonte to soulsters such as Laura Mvula and Stevie Wonder (on harmonica). The track "I'm Leaving You" features guitarist John Scofield—an artist who actually played with Miles.

The catalyst for both projects was Davis' nephew Vince Wilburn, who not only toured and recorded as the drummer in his uncle's bands in the '80s but also helps to oversee Miles Davis Properties alongside other family members. Wilburn served as a co-executive producer for Cheadle's film soundtrack. "I've known Vince for years," Glasper said. "He has been super-supportive. He was on the sidelines and told me to keep doing my own shit. He was instrumental in having me do the movie and the new album. He wanted someone young, hip, respected and who knew the history of jazz. He championed me."

Once Glasper started working on *Everything's Beautiful*, he quickly realized he didn't want to do a tribute album. "No throwback stuff,"

he said. "Miles influenced me when I was younger to keep things fresh." (He noted that he's well aware of Bill Laswell's 1998 remix project, *Panthalassa: The Music Of Miles Davis 1969–1974*, but "purposely didn't listen to it so as not to be influenced by that in any way.")

"Most of Miles' fans over the age of 50 will probably hate *Everything's Beautiful*," Glasper said. "It's so today musically, and there's not much trumpet. People talk about Miles and it's all about the trumpet. 'If the trumpet's not there, then Miles is not there.' But I refuse to submit everything down to the trumpet. Miles is much bigger than the instrument. So, I figured if I make all the older people happy, I'm not doing my job. It's what happens in every era, like Miles. When you introduce something new and groundbreaking, it's going to make some people angry."

However, Glasper does concede that one track, the hip-grooved "Milestones," may be one tune that the Miles Davis police would like. Georgia Ann Muldrow, whom Glasper knew in college, sings it. "I'm a big fan of hers, so I called her up and asked her to be on the album," Glasper recalled. "I said, 'Choose a song and how you want to do it.' I didn't play keyboards a lot on the album because of the samples, but I did do a piano solo on top of Georgia singing."

Derrick Hodge, Glasper's bassist in his Experiment band, appears on a few tracks on *Everything's Beautiful*. "Robert didn't talk much about how to manifest what he was thinking about for the album," he said. "It was whatever happens, happens. He respects all the artists he's brought into the project." As for Glasper being voted the top keyboardist in this year's Critics Poll, Hodge said, "That is one of the biggest compliments in that it recognizes how identifiable he is and how influential he is in my era."

Hodge added that the Robert Glasper Experiment is starting to work on new material for a Blue Note project, but he didn't reveal many details—except to say that it'll be an album where Glasper comes across honestly, without any contrived playing. "That's the great thing about Robert," Hodges said. "He plays his music and says, 'This is me."

The new Experiment album, which will arrive later this year or early 2017, is still being shaped. "Expect something different" is all Glasper would say about it—which means the keyboardist will indeed be committed to going against that grain, which is a good thing for jazz's future.





KAMASI WASHINGTON

The Epic (BRAINFEEDER)

151

Recorded over a creatively dense month with a dozen musicians, including vocalists and a string section, *The Epic* is the ambitious album that launched saxophonist Kamasi Washington into the international spotlight. The three-disc, three-hour-long program conveys a taut yet relaxed energy that has turned new listeners toward the lure of jazz.



MARIA SCHNEIDER ORCHESTRA

The Thompson Fields (ARTISTSHARE) 110

The Thompson Fields reflects Schneider's keen interest in nature, with songs inspired by specific types of birds and butterflies. The CD is housed in an elaborate hardback book with extensive liner notes, photographs, maps, fold-out pages and Audubon illustrations of birds, and the music features lovely pastoral moments that play like a nature documentary in the listener's mind.



CÉCILE MCLORIN SALVANT

For One To Love (MACK AVENUE)

Salvant follows her acclaimed breakout album, WomanChild, with the intimate For One To Love, which won the vocalist a Grammy Award in the Best Jazz Vocal Album category. The album features Salvant alongside her unfailingly solid working unit: Aaron Diehl (piano), Lawrence Leathers (drums) and Paul Sikivie (bass).



HENRY THREADGILL'S ZOOID

In For A Penny, In For A Pound (PI) 47

Winner of the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for music, *In For A Penny, In For A Pound* is the latest installment in saxophonist/flutist/composer Threadgill's ongoing exploration of integrating composition with group improvisation. It offers an exhilarating collage of improvised lines free of constraints imposed by chords or melodies.



STEVE COLEMAN & THE COUNCIL OF BALANCE

Synovial Joints (PI)

Coleman's 2013 album Functional Arrhythmias (Pi) yielded analogies to bodily systems. What that album did for flow, Synovial Joints does for musical momentum and connectivity. The work was composed for a group he calls the Council of Balance, which features 21 musicians from jazz, Latin and contemporary classical circles.



CHARLES LLOYD

I Long To See You (BLUE NOTE) 4

For this sumptuous album, Lloyd enlisted the rhythmic core of his stalwart New Quartet ensemble—bassist Reuben Rogers and drummer Eric Harland—and invited top-tier collaborators including guitarist Bill Frisell and pedal steel guitarist Greg Leisz. The fare ranges from traditional hymns to anti-war protest songs to re-envisioned originals that appeared on his earlier recordings.

For more of the year's top jazz albums, see page 50.

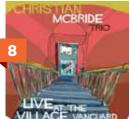


TOM HARRELL

First Impressions (HIGH NOTE)

20

Trumpeter Harrell has a jazzman's understanding of grooves, and his handling of texture and structure is a balm throughout this program, which reimagines themes by Debussy and Ravel. Augmenting his working quintet with flute, guitar, violin and cello, Harrell offers a triumph of jazz composition.

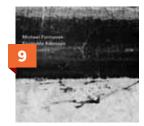


CHRISTIAN MCBRIDE TRIO

Live At The Village Vanguard (MACK AVENUE)

37

This album is the fruit of McBride's long association with the Village Vanguard, where he first appeared as a leader in 1995. The bassist's solo on "Cherokee," an album highlight, won the 2016 Grammy Award for Best Improvised Jazz Solo.



MICHAEL FORMANEK'S ENSEMBLE KOLOSSUS

The Distance (ECM)

35

Formanek's *The Distance* showcases texturally rich compositions for 18-piece big band. Channeling sounds from classic to modern, he wrote for individual soloists in the Ellington tradition. The musicians manage to sound cohesive and present, even as they roar to and fro.



CHARLES LLOYD

Wild Man Dance (BLUE NOTE)

34

The live album *Wild Man Dance* marks Lloyd's return to Blue Note Records after 30 years. Commissioned for the 10th anniversary of the Jazztopad festival in Wroclaw, Poland, the resulting program is broad and majestic, quiet and personal, exotic yet familiar.

11. John Scofield, <i>Past Present</i> (IMPULSE!) 34 12. Tony Bennett & Bill Charlap, <i>The Silver Lining: The Songs Of Jerome Kern</i> (COLUMBIA) 31
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MILES DAVIS Historical Album Miles Davis At Newport: 1955-1975, The Bootleg Series Vol. 4



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DR. LONNIE SMITH

Organ

GARY BURTON Vibraphone

GARY SMULYAN Baritone Saxophone HAMID DRAKE Percussion

JACK DEJOHNETTE Drums

JOE LOVANO Tenor Saxophone

JOEY ALEXANDER Rising Star Piano

JOEY DEFRANCESCO Organ KENNY BARRON Piano

KU-UMBA FRANK LACY Rising Star Male Vocalist

LUQUES CURTIS Rising Star Bass

MADS TOLLING Rising Star Violin

MARK GUILIANA Rising Star Drums MARQUIS HILL Rising Star Trumpet

PAT BIANCHI Rising Star Organ

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JOHN COLTRANE

A Love Supreme: The Complete Masters (IMPULSE!)

This Complete Masters "Super Deluxe" 50th anniversary edition of the saxophonist's most important album includes the original 33 minutes plus unreleased session reels and alternative versions, as well as a live recording of the famous suite from a July 1965 festival performance in France.



THAD JONES/MEL LEWIS ORCHESTRA All My Yesterdays (RESONANCE) 13'

A glorious chapter in orchestrated jazz began when trumpeter/composer Jones and drummer Lewis combined forces to form their historic New York big band. This two-disc set captures the group's first night at the Village Vanguard, its spiritual home.



ERROLL GARNER

The Complete Concert By The Sea (SONY LEGACY)

This collection expands an LP that originally ran 40 minutes into a triple CD that now lasts two hours longer. The first two discs reproduce the complete concert; the third offers the original LP plus an interview with the virtuoso pianist, bassist Eddie Calhoun and drummer Denzil Best.



LARRY YOUNG

In Paris: The ORTF Recordings (RESONANCE)

Sourced from the Office de Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française archives, this two-CD set features sessions from radio studio performances and concert dates the organist did (circa 1964–'65) in several settings while living in the City of Lights.



SONNY ROLLINS QUARTET WITH DON CHERRY

Complete Live At The Village Gate 1962 (SOLAR)

Professionally recorded over the course of a historic four-night engagement with Rollins, Cherry, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Billy Higgins, this crisp-sounding six-CD box includes exceptional performances of classic jazz tunes as well as long, loose improvisational suites.

For more of the year's top historical albums, see page 50.

O YEAR SOLOLIVE

MEHLDAU BRAD MEHLDAU

10 Years Solo Live (NONESUCH)

With this four-disc set (also available as eight LPs), the pianist has earned his place in the pantheon of jazz recitalists. His intensity draws from Cecil Taylor, and his lyricism reflects Keith Jarrett's sensibility. The pianist seems to pursue one mission throughout all this music: to explore, as deeply as he can, that place where sorrow and beauty meet.

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WEATHER REPORT

The Legendary Tapes: 1978–1981 (LEGACY)

This four-CD package, culled from previously unheard board tapes, documents the band's classic lineup of Joe Zawinul, Wayne Shorter, Peter Erskine and bassist Jaco Pastorius (sometimes with the addition of percussionist Robert Thomas Jr., who joined in 1980) at the peak of their creative powers in live settings.



STAN GETZ/JOÃO GILBERTO

Getz/Gilberto '76 (RESONANCE) 4

Recorded at San Francisco's Keystone Korner in May 1976, when Getz was 49, these previously unheard live tracks document a rare reunion between the saxophonist and the Brazilian guitarist/singer who together had changed the sound of jazz a dozen years earlier.



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JOHN ABERCROMBIE

The First Quartet (ECM)

The guitarist is joined by pianist Richie Beirach, bassist George Mraz and drummer Peter Donald on this collection, which compiles his albums *Arcade* (1978), *Abercrombie Quartet* (1979) and *M* (1980). Abercrombie found superb kindred spirits with this band, which demonstrates a distinctly collaborative vibe.

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KAMASI WASHINGTON LA LUMNARY By Josef Woodard Photo by Paul Wellman

Considering KAMASI WASHINGTON'S bold, dramatic ascendancy on the international jazz scene over the past year, it comes as no surprise that the saxophonist would scoop up three wins in this year's Critics Poll: top Jazz Album, for *The Epic* (Brainfeeder); Rising Star–Jazz Artist; and Rising Star–Tenor Saxophone. But, despite his strong new presence, galvanized by bookings on the jazz festival circuit, the club scene, and, most significantly, at massive rock festivals (such as the Coachella, Bonnaroo and Pitchfork fests), Washington isn't an "overnight sensation," as many people might think.

ashington, a 35-year-old native of Los Angeles, emerged as a valued sideman for artists in r&b (Chaka Khan, Lauryn Hill) and hip-hop—including as an improvising voice on rapper Kendrick Lamar's Grammy-winning hip-hop masterpiece *To Pimp A Butterfly* (Aftermath). Washington's long jazz pedigree includes work with two L.A. legends: He was in Gerald Wilson's big band, and he explored the avant-garde world with Horace Tapscott and his Pan-Afrikan Peoples Arkestra.

So why has Washington soared into the higher reaches of jazz now? It's all about *The Epic*. Washington's ambitious, critically lauded three-disc album, recorded with a group of tight allies from his West Coast Get Down coalition, was released in May 2015, but the music gestated for a long time, with the origins of some tracks going back more than 10 years. The album presents a jazz statement running in multiple directions, including proudly

backward in time and style, with liberal nods to the worlds of heroes Pharoah Sanders and John Coltrane, and with choral and string parts that can suggest the work of Donald Byrd or Alice Coltrane (whose grand-nephew, the poetic hiphop maestro known as Flying Lotus, signed Washington to his Brainfeeder label).

In an interview near his home in Los Angeles, Washington spoke about his newfound life in the spotlight. "There is certainly an 'other side of the fence' feeling," he said. "Doing shows and festivals under your own name, it's a surprisingly big difference compared to playing with someone else. There is a lot of responsibility. Playing with someone else, really you are responsible for your part of the music—and that's it. It gives me more respect for the [band-leaders] I've played for over the years."

One important aspect of Washington's story is the geocultural significance of this background. He is one of the greatest phenoms in jazz history to have come out of Los

Angeles—while remaining very much rooted in that city. Charles Mingus, Eric Dolphy and even Ornette Coleman were at one time or another based in Los Angeles, but those titans gained legendary status after they left the city.

Washington, along with many of the players in his extended musical family, grew up in the fertile environment in the Leimert Park neighborhood, aka South Central, turf associated with "gangsta" rap and stereotypical ideas about criminal activity comin' outta' Compton.

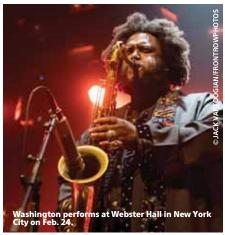
Washington and his friends honed their chops at various local venues, including the revered World Stage club, owned by drummer Billy Higgins (1936–2001). It was at the World Stage that an impressionable young Washington first heard saxophonist Sanders. It changed his life.

"From there on," he recalled, "I always loved that sound that Pharoah put out. It was a hub. Right there, in South Central L.A., two blocks in either direction, you're right in the

middle of the 'gang war.' But [at the World Stage], it's peaceful and with nothing but positive energies. People demonize these young people who are called 'gangsters' and are made out to be heartless monsters. They're really not. They're people who have a negative self-image, who don't have a clear understanding of the opportunities in front of them, so they make some bad decisions."

Much has been made of Washington's debt to Coltrane, and similar energy and power on tenor, but as he explains, "The first people I was into were Art Blakey and Wayne Shorter. Then I got into Eric Dolphy, and Pharoah. Actually, I got into Miles Davis, which led me to Trane. Trane is like a really bright light. If you hadn't looked at it before, it's hard to see it. But once you can see it, you don't want to see anything else. It definitely changed my musical brain, especially with the intensity that I played with. With Trane, it feels like every time he plays, he's putting his whole being into it. There's nothing held back."

While playing in jazz band at Hamilton High School, Washington also studied classical piano, which he says led him into classi-



cal music, the works of Ravel, Stravinsky and Debussy. Following up on Coltrane's interest in Indian music, he tapped into that world, and chose ethnomusicology as his major at UCLA.

"I started studying music from around the world," he said. "That's when I started to open myself back up to things I was into before I got into jazz. I never thought John Coltrane was superior to James Brown. He was just all I wanted to listen to, because I liked that music so much. It wasn't that I didn't like Dr. Dre; I was just very focused on jazz.

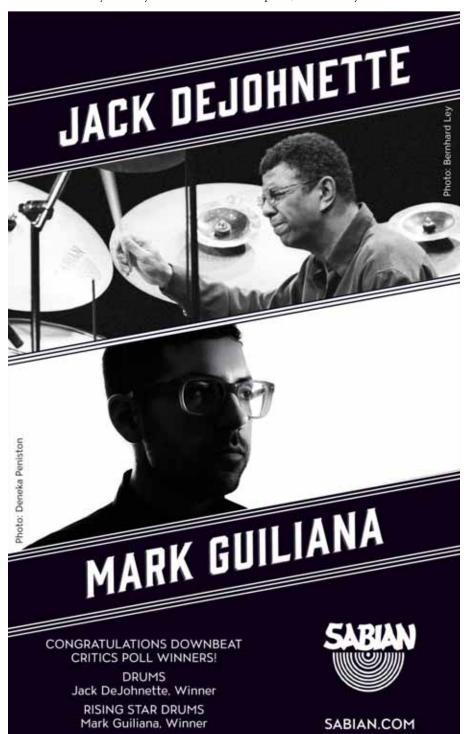
"Especially coming from Leimert, we felt that freedom and the avant-garde jazz sound, when you get into it, and you stay in it. A lot of times, that's the last destination, because it just feels good. It's hard to leave that. We were into this heavy avant-garde jazz and ended up with a lot of r&b, hip-hop and rock 'n' roll gigs that we would play. What we do is to bring all of that into one thing—in a way that happens with a purpose."

Washington's music is generally acoustic, with tentacles in hard-bop, Afrocentric jazz of the '70s and spiritualized modal group jams. Yet he believes it is an implicit but palpable ensemble "groove" that makes the strongest impact on listeners—whether they're veteran fans or novices with little connection to jazz (except maybe such incidental encounters as the solos on *To Pimp A Butterfly*).

Asked whether certain members of his audiences were perhaps responding to a type of groove that they hadn't previously encountered in a concert setting, Washington replied, "They sense it, and feel it. When they connect, it all comes together. Then, they start getting these other things: the chords, improvisation, the other stuff in there."

And does the band's overall energy make those new listeners more receptive to Washington's sometimes atonal sax solos?

"Yeah," he nodded. "I don't really know why, but I've seen that over the years. In the past, sometimes, they were not convinced. Now, I feel like they are convinced."







Perched atop a peak high in the Peruvian Andes after a long climb, **CHRISTINE JENSEN**—never one to waste a moment of inspiration—whipped out her ever-present notebooks and scribbled a melody, a bass line and a bit of harmonic material for possible future use.

"There was a beautiful blue sky," said Jensen, who won two categories in the 2016 Critics Poll: Rising Star– Arranger and Rising Star–Big Band (for the Christine Jensen Jazz Orchestra). "We were above the clouds. I had this sense of peace." he climb was a side trip during a visit to Lima in 2008, and the notes sat unused until 2012, when Jensen drew on them to fulfill the Robin McBride Jazz Commission at Amherst College. The result was the breathtaking chorale that opens "Blue Yonder," a highlight of her second big-band album, 2013's *Habitat* (Justin Time).

Opening chorales are part of Jensen's modus operandi—meditative setups for the swinging, multilayered excursions that typically follow. In the case of "Blue Yonder," the excursion, like the chorale that precedes it, draws on Jensen's surroundings—specifically, the milieu of the Lima street where, during her 2008 visit, she absorbed the *festejo* rhythms that ended up pulsating through the body of the piece.

Real-world inspiration is integral to Jensen's work. Look no further than the rich and shifting colorations that suffuse "Treelines," "Dancing Sunlight" and "Vernal Suite"—evocative titles from *Habitat* and her inaugural large-ensemble album, 2010's *Treelines* (Justin Time), both of which won Canada's Juno Award for Contemporary Jazz Album of the Year.

For all of Jensen's erudition—she holds a master's degree in jazz performance from Montreal's McGill University, where she teaches composition and leads ensembles—she is a composer whose growing notice hinges as much on her appreciation of the visceral as of

the cerebral. No ivory tower for her.

"I tell my students if you want to have an understanding of creativity and beauty, you need to leave your office," she said.

Jensen's penchant for mining her environment is a byproduct of her upbringing in Nanaimo, a town in British Columbia not far from a vast wilderness. Amid the expanse, narrow inlets bounded by high cliffs fostered in the youthful Christine a love of nature and a desire to translate it into the language of jazz.

The skills with which she could make that leap were nurtured at home, which was filled with all manner of jazz, from the piano trios of Oscar Peterson—a native of Montreal, where she is now based—to the big band of Tommy Dorsey. Jensen said she related to the material mainly on an emotional level.

"I wasn't one of those people who say, 'I've got to dissect this,'" she explained. "That part didn't interest me as much as grabbing onto the excitement in the music."

Not that Nanaimo didn't provide plenty of opportunity for hard analysis. Its schools offered a grounding in theory and practical skills, while its churches gave Jensen, who accompanied choirs on piano—her main instrument before she took up the saxophone at age 12—the opportunity to delve into the kind of four-part harmony that would prepare her for orchestrating those signature chorales. "It's

the basis of my voice as a writer," she said.

These days, that voice is being heard with the Christine Jensen Jazz Orchestra and another large ensemble, the Orchestre National de Jazz de Montréal, as well as in small-group contexts like Nordic Connect, with her sister, trumpeter Ingrid Jensen.

Christine, 46, is five years Ingrid's junior, a gap she said had precluded serious collaboration when they were youngsters. But since then, they have become close musically, with Ingrid adding a unique voice and moral support to Christine's endeavors.

Their collaborations often start with small-group vehicles, which Jensen transforms into episodic works for 18 pieces. Even on the wider canvas, though, the works retain the flexibility of her small-group efforts—a trait Jensen said reflects her background as a saxophonist, which influences the way she deals with form.

"Some of my pieces begin with a lead sheet and then expand into big band," she said, "as opposed to more contemporary writing, where you have a small theme or idea and start manipulating that."

Jensen singled out "Blue Yonder" as a piece well suited to adaptation, whatever the scale of the intended product. "It has enough counterpoint that I can play it solo, duo, trio, quartet, big band," she said. "That's really fun when I get a piece like that under my belt."

CHRISTIAN MCBRIDE

BASS

Christian's strings of choice: Helicore Hybrid - HH610 3/4M XL Nickel Wound Bass - EXL170

LUQUES CURTIS

RISING STAR BASS

Luques' strings of choice: Zyex Bass - DZ610 3/4M Helicore Hybrid - HH610 3/4L

DAddario CONGRATULATES DOWNBEAT'S 64TH ANNUAL CRITICS POLL WINNERS



The title of trumpeter MARQUIS HILL'S major-label debut—*The Way We Play* (Concord)—is as boldly declarative as Ornette Coleman's iconic 1961 release, *This Is Our Music*.

lthough Hill, a 29-year-old Chicago native, said Coleman wasn't on his mind when he settled on the title for his fourth disc, he agreed that this recording with his band, the Blacktet, makes a similarly definitive statement.

"I wanted this album to put our own twist on standards," he said. "I hope the title tells people that the whole continuum of this great black tradition influences me."

Much of the material on *The Way We Play* (his fifth leader project) reflects the music Hill played and studied as he developed his sound, in particular his teenage devotion to Donald Byrd. The late Detroit trumpeter is represented by a fluid version of "Fly Little Bird Fly" that showcases a lithe rap by Harold Green III. Fellow Chicagoan Herbie Hancock and Horace Silver are also represented, and the depth of Hill's expansive knowledge of post-bop jazz trumpet reveals itself in a cover of "Beep Durple," a composition by the largely forgotten Kansas City musician Carmell Jones.

"I discovered Carmell in high school about the same time I fell in love with Donald Byrd," Hill said. "I was hearing that stuff and learning to play it, and at the same time I was being influenced by the Spinners and other things my mom played around the house. Keeping my ears open, keeping my music relevant, is the exciting part of what I'm doing. I'm influenced by everything that happens around me."

As much as *The Way We Play* announces that Hill's inspirations extend from Gigi Gryce to hip-hop, it also expresses his strong allegiance to his hometown, opening with a medley that includes the instrumental music the Chicago Bulls used when the team hit the court in the 1990s. And, just as the announcer introduced Michael Jordan, Scottie Pippen and their Bulls teammates to cheering crowds at the United Center and the old Chicago Stadium, Hill enlists Chicago r&b singer Meagan McNeal to intone the names of the Blacktet: alto saxophonist Christopher

McBride, vibraphonist Justin Thomas, bassist Joshua Ramos and drummer Makaya McCraven. It's a powerful affirmation of Hill's commitment to his four-year-old band.

"We all came up together in Chicago," said the trumpeter, who now splits his time between there and New York. "We honed our sound together. I always knew I was going to strive to keep them together, and now I hear their voices when I'm composing."

While major labels often pressure young artists to recruit established stars to lend marquee credibility to debut albums, Hill said there was no question that the Blacktet would be featured on *The Way We Play*—his reward for winning the 2014 Thelonious Monk International Jazz Trumpet Competition.

"Concord was super cool about it," he said. "I see this album as a big part of the band's growth and progress, and I want to keep pushing it to the limit."

After a handful of U.S. dates this summer, the band heads to Europe in October for its first international tour. Beyond that, Hill has plans to fold the Blacktet into a larger ensemble, his first opportunity to write for a big band and one component of his work as curator of the 2017 Hyde Park Jazz Festival in Chicago.

"That's still very much in the planning stage," he said, "but I know I want to include some African dance and visual arts elements, featuring artists I've encountered in Chicago and Los Angeles."

While the sudden gust of fame that accompanies victory in the Monk competition can be anticipated, Hill expressed surprise at his win in DownBeat's Rising Star–Trumpet category.

"It's crazy," he said. "Very humbling. I mean, I check out who's in that category every year. I look up to all the people who have won, and now I can't believe it's me."

His incredulity belies a strong work ethic and a sense of self-determination. He sees himself getting into record production in the future and starting his own label one day.

"Right now, I'm taking this great opportunity with Concord and learning all I can from it," he said. "I've always been my own boss, and it's been that way since Day 1. I tell myself that if I take care of my music, it will take care of me."



Grace Telly 'Jazz Is a Mixable Genre'

By Phillip Lutz | Photo by Taso Papadakis

Sporting streaks of green in her hair, an ebullient **GRACE KELLY** burst into a Queens tea cafe in May with bright lights on her mind.

elevision networks, it seemed, were vying for the saxophonist's services. Just as a five-month stint with the house band on CBS' *Late Night With Stephen Colbert* had ended for the moment—summer beckoned and a possible re-upping with the band loomed in September—a gig with the band on the new NBC variety show *Maya and Marty* was about to begin.

Last August, Kelly had filmed an appearance on the Amazon detective series *Bosch*, which depicted her onstage at the Catalina Jazz Club performing her insinuating theme "Blues For Harry Bosch." Versions of that tune appear on her 10th and latest album, *Trying To Figure It Out* (Pazz), a singing-and-playing effort she recorded before the *Late Night* gig began in December.

Her movie life has also been humming. Kelly, 24, has contributed to at least six films, among them the powerful 2014 documentary *Sound of Redemption: The Frank Morgan Story.* In it, she played for inmates in California's San Quentin State Prison, where saxophonist Morgan, whom she got to know before he died in 2007, had done time. The experience inspired the moody "He Shot A Man," which won an ASCAP Young Jazz Composers Award and appears on the new album.

Amid all the activity, she has continued to book club and concert engagements—and, to boot, garnered her first victory in the DownBeat Critics Poll, as Rising Star–Alto Saxophone.

The seemingly charmed musical life of this preternaturally gifted artist—she cut her first record at age 12 and, while still a teenager, earned her jazz bona fides recording with alto giants Lee Konitz and Phil Woods—is a bit more complicated than it might initially appear.

"The thing that's a little bit difficult to hear is, 'You're spreading yourself too thin,'" Kelly said. While the albums with Konitz (*GRACEfulLEE*, from 2008) and Woods (*Man With The Hat*, from 2011), both on Pazz, constituted milestones in her introduction to the jazz world, she felt that they may have created some false expectations.

"Some people didn't look at my full history," she said, "because ever since I was 12 I was writing and playing pop songs, singing, doing all these things—something I call 'jazz and beyond'—and melding genres.

"I didn't know I was going to become a jazz musician. I actually wanted to be a Broadway actress. That was my dream."

Growing up in Brookline, Massachusetts, she was singing, dancing and acting. Her first public appearance, which drew on her debut album, *Dreaming* (Pazz), found her onstage at a rented church, a 12-year-old prodigy playing and tap-dancing to Charlie Parker's "My Little Suede Shoes." The experience was a revelation.

"There was a moment when a light went off in my head and I thought, 'This could actually be a thing. I could do this for the rest of my life,'" she said.



Half a young life later, a direct line can be drawn between that performance and a video fashioned from the Bosch experience in which she engages in some interactive choreography with her saxophone—even as the music, a sultry mix of sparse horns and ambient sounds, grabs hold of the listener.

An expanded version of "Blues For Harry Bosch," complete with smoke and video projections performed to a click track, is planned for live performance, she said. All of which brings her closer to what she wants to say.

"I think there's a big difference," she said, "between finding one's voice completely through the instrument and improvisation and finding one's voice through the setting."

If the occasional purist worries that the "beyond" part of her concept will obscure the "jazz" part, those who have worked with her express no such concerns. Pianist Jon Batiste, who leads the *Late Night* band and takes a turn on *Trying To Figure It Out*, rated Kelly "a highly accomplished musician with a charismatic and contagiously uplifting stage presence."

Drummer Terri Lyne Carrington—a mentor at Berklee College of Music who recruited Kelly for her latest leader project, *Love And Soul* (Concord)—praised the saxophonist's "unique statement based on her life and experiences thus far."

Veteran pianist Monty Alexander, who like Kelly mixes show-business savvy with musical substance—melding infectious Jamaican beats with a deeply rooted jazz language—applauded her ability to bring a fresh sensibility to the standard repertoire. "She's got the goods," said Alexander, citing her compelling reading of "Here's That Rainy Day" at a tribute to Frank Sinatra he hosted at Jazz at Lincoln Center in February.

Kelly, meanwhile, explained her expansive view by invoking no less a jazz stalwart than Woods. "He told me, 'Jazz is a mixable genre," she recalled. "The more I've been thinking about my identity as a player, I realize I have to highlight all the things I do really well."



Luques Curtis Pursuing Positivity

By Ted Panken | Photo by Gulnara Khamatova

On a Tuesday afternoon in mid-May, LUQUES CURTIS was enjoying a restful day at home, having just completed a European tour with trumpeter Christian Scott, his one-time roommate at Berklee College of Music. Curtis was spending quality time with his toddler, but also tweaking a new Sendel baby bass into playing shape for a Saturday concert in Harlem's Marcus Garvey Park with Eddie Palmieri, revisiting the pianist's 1971 album *Harlem River Drive*. It would be Curtis' third gig in four days, following hits on Friday with the Orrin Evans Quartet at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and on Wednesday with David Weiss' Point of Departure Quintet at Fat Cat in Greenwich Village.

We've been in the studio two months," Curtis said, referencing Palmieri's forthcoming big band CD, *La Luz Mayor*. He joined Palmieri's Afro-Caribbean Jazz Octet a decade ago via trumpeter Brian Lynch, a frequent employer. Soon thereafter, he began participating in Palmieri's salsa projects.

"Eddie gives me all the freedom in the world," Curtis said.
"When he solos, he trusts we can go to the clouds and come back together. I go to Eddie's house, he turns me on to old Cuban records, like Orquesta Aragón, stuff I've heard before, but hadn't focused on transcribing the bass lines."
Curtis mentioned Andy González—an early mentor for Curtis and his older brother, pianist Zaccai—who played electric bass on one track of *Harlem River Drive*. "Andy showed us this stuff in our teens, but I wasn't absorbing the information the same way."

Even so, the brothers attained sufficient familiarity with clave codes to motivate Chucho Valdés to invite their Hartford kid band to play in Cuba in 1997, when Luques was 14. Now 32, he upholds González's legacy as a

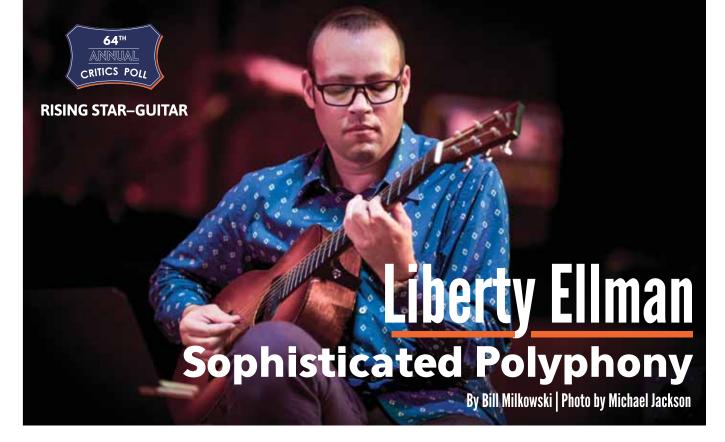
fluent, bilingual practitioner of Afro-Caribbean dialects and the roots and branches of hardcore, swinging jazz. In the former arena, Curtis has subbed for González in the Fort Apache Band, and appears regularly with percussionist Ralph Irizarry's Timbalaye and pianist Bill O'Connell's Latin jazz projects. Curtis absorbed bebop and post-bop vocabulary during formative years at Jackie McLean's Artists Collective in Hartford, inspired by bassist Dave Santoro's hands-on tutelage.

After Berklee, Curtis toured with Scott behind the trumpeter's first two recordings, and also with saxophonist Donald Harrison and trumpeter Brian Lynch. These days, Curtis plays in multiple bands led by Evans, their simpatico burnished over five albums and numerous gigs with trumpeter Sean Jones since 2006, a year after the three connected in drummer Ralph Peterson's sextet.

"All the bands I'm in allow me room to create, and do what I feel fits the band," Curtis said. "I approach each one, whatever the style, in exactly the same way—with the goal of making everything feel good."

Szyzgy, which drops in late summer, is the Curtis Brothers' fourth album on Truth Revolution, the imprint they founded in 2007. Joined by Richie Barshay on drumset and Reinaldo De Jesus on percussion, they navigate bebop, boogaloo, urban, bolero, bomba and rumba grooves on repertoire spanning Bud Powell ("Hallucinations"), Dizzy Gillespie ("Bebop"), Horace Silver ("Quicksilver"), Wayne Shorter ("Yes And No"), Charlie Palmieri ("Start The World") and Mongo Santamaria ("Afro Blue") as well as r&b and Tin Pan Alley material. Luques' syncopation, time feel and note choices refract the essence of such Atomic Era jazz heroes as Paul Chambers, Oscar Pettiford and Wilbur Ware through a tumbao lens informed by González, Bobby Rodriguez and Cachao.

"I think our ability to combine those different sounds into our own thing—blessed by the elders, you could say—is unique," Curtis said. He referred to the aspirational message of the "Truth Revolution" imprimatur: "It means being a free mind, doing something musically or spiritually positive. That's our goal."



Although it's hard to think of 45-year-old guitarist LIBERTY ELLMAN as a "Rising Star"—he's been a member of Henry Threadgill's Zooid for 15 years, appearing on six potent albums, including 2015's Pulitzer Prize-winning *In For A Penny, In For A Pound*—it was his fourth leader project, the sextet album *Radiate* (Pi Recordings), that prompted many DownBeat critics to consider him a talent deserving of wider recognition. That brilliant album was a refinement of the kind of sophisticated polyphony that Ellman had been dealing with since his 1998 self-produced debut, *Orthodoxy* (Noir Records), and subsequent acclaimed recordings for Pi—2003's *Tactiles* and 2006's *Ophiuchus Butterfly*.

sextet project featuring his Zooid bandmate Jose Davila on trombone and tuba, Steve Lehman on alto saxophone, Jonathan Finlayson on trumpet, Stephan Crump (Ellman's bandmate in the Rosetta Trio) on bass and the tremendous young drummer Damion Reid fueling the proceedings, *Radiate* reflects the influence of Threadgill on several of its through-composed pieces.

One can also hear the influence of Steve Coleman (whom Ellman jammed and gigged with while living in the Bay Area in 1996 before moving to New York in 1998) on the grooving opener "Supercell." Throughout *Radiate*, the guitarist stretches considerably more on his instrument than on previous outings, revealing hints of Pat Martino's influence in his precisely picked staccato solos on tunes like "Rhinocerisms," "A Motive" and "Vibrograph." The effects-laden "Enigmatic Runner," which concludes the album, portends things to come for Ellman.

But *Radiate* is just one of many things that may have won over critics in this year's poll, considering the flurry of activity that Ellman had in 2015. In addition to his celebrated work with Threadgill and his own fourth recording as a leader, he recorded and toured with pianist-com-

poser Myra Melford in support of her 2015 Enja/Yellowbird release *Snowy Egret* (including a triumphant week at the Village Vanguard in March), toured with saxophonist Joe Lovano in a band that will be documented on an upcoming live Blue Note release and made select appearances with percussionist/composer Adam Rudolph's Go: Organic Guitar Orchestra (which includes Nels Cline, Joel Harrison, David Gilmore, Jerome Harris, Rez Abbasi and others) in support of its 2015 Cuneiform release *Turning Towards The Light*.

The London-born guitarist attributes his open-mindedness to his unorthodox upbringing. While his mother personally knew Jimi Hendrix, his father (drummer Kevin Ellman) played in Todd Rundgren's Utopia. Between their classic rock record collection and his own burgeoning interest in jazz, Ellman's ears were wide open in his formative years. "When I was learning to play jazz harmony and chord voicings, I was getting it from a few friends and a couple of teachers out there who were not really pushing me to only play bebop vocabulary," he recalled. "So along with listening to Coltrane and Miles, Jimi Hendrix and Led Zeppelin, Muddy Waters and T-Bone Walker, I was also hip to what was coming out of the East Coast in terms of modern jazz, like the Dave Holland Quartet with Kevin Eubanks. It all affected me. But I was really interested in people who wrote music and had their own sound for their band and weren't just about seeing if they could blow over some changes. Everything they did regarding leading their band was unique. And that had a huge effect on the way that I see music."

Considering that nine years passed between the releases of *Ophiuchus Butterfly* and *Radiate*, one wonders when the next one will drop. "I admit that, for me, writing is a slower process than it is for some other people," he said. "But that isn't why I didn't put out a record for so many years. It had more to do with the fact that I was enjoying being busy in other people's projects and learning a lot. I was just feeling like, 'Let me see what I can gain from that experience. And when I feel like I have enough bottled up, then it'll be time to put something out."

Currently, Ellman has a lot bottled up. He has plans for a solo guitar-with-effects recording, a guitar trio project and a follow-up to *Radiate*. "When I make a record, I want it to be a piece of art that lasts," he says. "I want it to be special enough that when people clear out their CD collection, that mine can stay."



We are proud to present the results of the 64th Annual DownBeat International Critics Poll, which includes Jazz Album of the Year (page 36) and Historical Album of the Year (page 38).

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INSTANT COMPOSERS POOL

Restless in Pieces is the newest CD from Amsterdam's half-century-old ICP Orchestra. With new member Guus Janssen at the piano, guest vocalist Mattijs van de Woerd on two tracks, and the standard handful of stalwart Downbeat Critics Poll honorees on board, the band the New York Times calls "scholars and physical comedians, critics and joy-spreaders", pinballs their way through Monk and Nichols standards, a Charles Ives medley, and a pop song (!) written by Misha Mengelberg dating back to the late 1960s...

"***...the album comes to life over and over again with their typical zeal...each track brings the expectedly unexpected." -DOWNBEAT







Below are the 142 critics who voted in DownBeat's 64th Annual International Critics Poll and some of the publications to which they have contributed. In the poll, critics distributed up to 10 points among up to three choices (but no more than 5 points per choice) in each of two groups of categories: Established Talent and Rising Stars. (Note: The asterisk [*] denotes a Veterans Committee voter.)

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

- * Don Albert: Artslink
- * Frank Alkyer: DownBeat

Larry Appelbaum: JazzTimes, Let's Cool One, WPFW-FM

Bridget Arnwine: Beets and Bebop Media

Glenn Astarita: All About Jazz **Mark R. Bacon:** Gatehouse Media

Chris J. Bahnsen:

DownBeat, Smithsonian, Rio Films

Bradley Bambarger:DownBeat, Listen

Michael Barris:

DownBeat

Peter Bastian: Jazzthetik

Angelika Beener:DownBeat, Alternate Takes

Bill Beuttler: DownBeat, Esquire, JazzTimes, The Boston Globe

Nick Bewsey: ICON Magazine, WRTLorg

Eric Bishop: DownBeat, The

New York Times

Edward Blanco: All About Jazz

Ross Boissoneau: Jazziz, Progression, MyNorth.com

- * Fred Bouchard: DownBeat, The New York City Jazz Record, Berklee Online, The Boston Musical Intelligencer
- * Michael Bourne: DownBeat, WBGO.org
- * Herb Boyd: DownBeat, New York Amsterdam News, The Network Journal

Shaun Brady: DownBeat, JazzTimes, Philadelphia Inquirer

Jon Bream: Minneapolis Star Tribune

Gigi Brooks: JazzTimes

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

Andrea Canter: Jazzink, iazzpolice.com

* Aaron Cohen: DownBeat Sharonne Cohen: DownBeat, JazzTimes

Thomas Conrad: Stereophile, The New York City Jazz Record, JazzTimes **J.D. Considine:** DownBeat, Revolver, The Globe and Mail

Owen Cordle: JazzTimes, The News & Observer

Michael Cote: Blues Music Monthly, New Hampshire Union Leader

* Paul de Barros: DownBeat, The Seattle Times

Coen de Jonge: JazzBulletin NJA, Jazzism

Anthony Dean-Harris: DownBeat, nextbop.com, KRTU-FM

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

Matthew Dicker: JazzTimes John Diliberto: Echoes Bob Doerschuk: DownBeat, Drum!, Keyboard, Acoustic Guitar, Rolling Stone Country

Laurence Donohue-Greene: The New York City Jazz Record

Alain Drouot: DownBeat, WNUR-FM

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

City Jazz Record, Hot House

José Duarte: RTP Radio

Shannon J. Effinger: Down-Beat, Ebony, NPR, JazzTimes, Caribbean Beat

- * Ed Enright: DownBeat
- * **John Ephland:** DownBeat, Drum!, All About Jazz, Relix

Steve Feeney: Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram

David Franklin: Cadence
Philip Freeman: Jazziz, The

Wire, Burning Ambulance **Jon Garelick:** DownBeat, The Boston Globe, Jazziz

Dustin Garlitz: jazztalent.com **Richard Gehr:**Village Voice, Rolling Stone

* Ted Gioia: The Daily Beast Kurt Gottschalk: DownBeat, The New York City Jazz Record, WFMU-FM, The Wire, Time Out New York

Steve Greenlee: JazzTimes **George Grella:** The Brooklyn Rail, NewMusicBox, Music & Literature

* Frank-John Hadley: DownBeat, X5 Music Group

Carl L. Hager: Jazz (Jazzers Jazzing), The Big Small Business Review

* **James Hale:** DownBeat, SoundStage!

Robert Ham: Rolling Stone, Pitchfork, FACT

Eric Harabadian: DownBeat, Music Connection, Progression, Jazz Inside

George W. Harris: Jazz Weekly **Dave Helland:** grammy.com

Andrey Henkin: The New York City Jazz Record

Lee Hildebrand: San Francisco Chronicle, Living Blues, Oakland Magazine

Geoffrey Himes: Down-Beat, The Washington Post, JazzTimes

Eugene Holley, Jr.: Down-Beat, Hot House, Publishers Weekly, Playbill

C. Andrew Hovan: All About Jazz

Tom Hull: tomhull.com
Peter Hum:

The Ottawa Citizen

Tom Inect:

Lincoln Journal Star

Eric Jackson: WGBH-FM **Michael Jackson:** DownBeat,

Chicago Sun-Times, Jazzwise **Robin James:** DownBeat,

Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder

* Willard Jenkins: Open Sky Jazz

Jeff Johnson: DownBeat, Chicago Sun-Times, BloodHorse

Richard Kamins: steptempest.blogspot.com

Fred Kaplan: Stereophile,

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

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

Larry Kelp: KPFA-FM **Elzy Kolb:** Hot House

Jason Koransky: DownBeat

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

Jeff Krow:

Audiophile Audition

David Kunian:

DownBeat, Oxford American, Louisiana Cultural Vistas

Will Layman: PopMatters.com

Angelo Leonardi: All About Jazz Italia

Bruce Lindsay: All About Jazz, Jazz Journal **John Litweiler:** Point Of Departure, Encyclopaedia Britannica

Martin Longley: DownBeat Christopher Loudon: JazzTimes

Phillip Lutz: DownBeat, The New York Times

- * Jim Macnie: VEVO
- * Howard Mandel: DownBeat, The Wire, NPR
- * John McDonough: DownBeat

Peter McElhinney: Style Weekly

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

* **Ken Micallef:** DownBeat, Stereophile, Electronic Musician, Modern Drummer

Virgil Mihaiu: DownBeat, Steaua/Jazz Context, JAM (JazzMontenegro)

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

* Dan Morgenstern: Jersey

Allen Morrison: DownBeat, JazzTimes, The Guardian

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

Russ Musto: DownBeat, The New York City Jazz Record

Michael G. Nastos: Hot House, Pulp

Ron Netsky: City Newspaper (Rochester, NY)

Jon Newey: Jazzwise
Sean J. O'Connell:
DownBeat, KPCC, LA Weekly

- * Jennifer Odell: DownBeat, JazzTimes, Offbeat, MSN.com, GoNOLA.com
- * **Dan Ouellette:** DownBeat, ZEALnvc
- * Ted Panken: DownBeat Thierry Peremarti: Jazz News (France)

Terry Perkins: DownBeat, St. Louis Post-Dispatch

j. poet: DownBeat, Magnet, SOMA, Relix

Jeff Potter: DownBeat, Modern Drummer, TDF Stages **Bob Protzman:** DownBeat,

Norman Provizer: DownBeat, KUVO/KVJS-FM

* Bobby Reed: DownBeat

* Howard Reich:

Chicago Tribune

Tom Reney: New England Public Radio

Guy Reynard: JazzHot

Derk Richardson: The Absolute Sound, Acoustic Guitar, AFAR Media, KPFA-FM, Deep Roots, Peghead Nation

Alex Rodriguez: Papeles de Jazz

* Gene Santoro: DownBeat

Phil Schaap: DownBeat, philschaapjazz.com, Verve

Areif Sless-Kitain: DownBeat

* **Thomas Staudter:**DownBeat, Croton Gazette

W. Royal Stokes: JJA News, wroyalstokes.com

Otakar Svoboda:

Czech Radio

*Jean Szlamowicz: DownBeat, Spirit of Jazz

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

Robin Tolleson:

DownBeat, Modern Drummer

Mark F. Turner:

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

Ken Weiss:

Jazz Inside. Cadence

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

Kevin Whitehead: Fresh Air

Carlo Wolff: DownBeat, Cleveland Jewish News

- * **Josef Woodard:** DownBeat, Los Angeles Times, Santa Barbara News-Press, The Santa Barbara Independent
- * Scott Yanow: DownBeat, The New York City Jazz Record, Jazziz, Los Angeles Jazz Scene, Jazz Rag, Syncopated Times

Zoe Young: DownBeat, Oakland Tribune

* **Brian Zimmerman:**DownBeat









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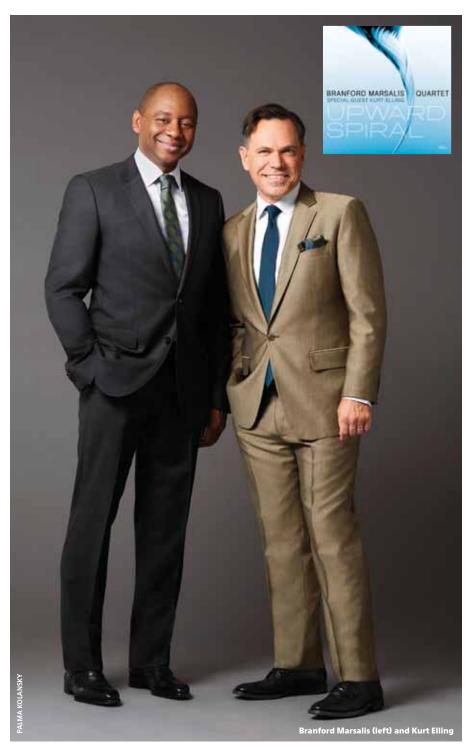




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Branford Marsalis Quartet with Kurt Elling Upward Spiral

MARSALIS MUSIC/OKEH 8898530688

****1/2

What a magnificent and original album this is—and what a lovely surprise, too, coming from two sympatico musicians not known for their immunity to excess. Though the album begins and ends in the upbeat spirit of its title, *Upward Spiral* is an autumnal work that ponders loss, pain, dashed expectations and accommodation to all three. The tune choices are unusual, varied and smart, with many of the tracks tending toward art song, whether they're rooted in jazz, folk or just plain poetry.

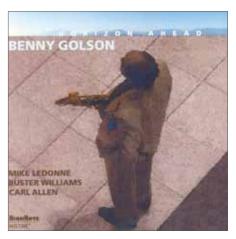
The album opens with the punchy, exuberant "There's A Boat Dat's Leavin' Soon For New York." Elling quickly tags Gershwin's anticipation with a cynical hustler's street patter and Marsalis, in his solo, introduces the downside of such a departure with a sly allusion to "If I Should Lose You." From there, it's a quick slide into azure moods. On "Blue Gardenia," Marsalis offers tenor saxophone harmonies that blend so beautifully with Elling's rich, tender baritone that it sounds like a vocal duet at first. "Blue Velvet" brings on more regret-in the noir, David Lynch vein, not Bobby Vinton treacle—with Elling bringing the volume down to a Chet Baker whisper while never losing his essential robustness. Even the quick-footed Jobim bossa "Só Tinha De Ser Com Você," which Elling sings in Portuguese, invokes the blues of unrequited love, with the lyrics "Yes, you are made of blue/ You make me live in this depression." Marsalis invests the song with a bluesy, bittersweet swagger of his own.

When the albums ends, your first thought may well be, When are these guys going to do this again? Soon, I hope. —Paul de Barros

Upward Spiral: There's A Boat Dat's Leavin' Soon For New York; Blue Gardenia; From One Island To Another; Practical Arrangement; Doxy, I'm A Fool To Want You; West Virginia Rose; Só Tinha De Ser Com Você; Momma Said; Cassandra Song; Blue Velvet; The Return (Upward Spiral). (66:18)

Personnel: Branford Marsalis, tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone; Kurt Elling, vocals; Joey Calderazzo, piano; Eric Revis, bass; Justin Faulkner, drums.

Ordering info: marsalismusic.com



Benny Golson *Horizon Ahead*

HIGH NOTE 7288

When an 87-year-old makes an album called *Horizon Ahead*, he's telling you something specific: He won't be resting on his laurels.

In the extraordinarily thoughtful notes to this disc, tenor saxophonist Benny Golson ponders recent changes to his sound, a propensity for a softer, less cutting approach—it's a tone you might rightly call mellow. "Some might like it, whereas some might not," he says, with the nonchalance of

someone who has seen it all come and go.

With his longstanding band featuring Mike LeDonne on piano, Buster Williams on bass and Carl Allen on drums, he's got a great vehicle for these late-night rides.

Williams has a giant, ampy sound often associated with '70s bassists, but he uses it to his advantage, and with an unfailing sense of swing, with the understated Allen propelling magically with a gentle touch.

Much of *Horizon Ahead*'s non-Golson repertoire is familiar, with a few neat originals that remind what an essential composer he is.

Golden moments include a duet for tenor and bass on "Lulu's Back In Town," Golson fluttering around in the upper register sweetly, and the leader's cool, almost Monkish "Jump Start," with some challenging changes. There's no endgame off-pitch action, and if the adjustments he's made are age-related, he is convincingly deep into them.

Here's Golson, pushing 90 with a new thing, looking into the future.

—John Corbett

Horizon Ahead: Don't Get Around Much Anymore; Jump Start, Horizon Ahead; Mood Indigo; Domingo; Lulu's Back In Town; Night Shade; Three Little Words; Spoken Introduction; Out Of The Darkness And Into The Light. (55:00)

Personnel: Benny Golson, tenor saxophone; Mike LeDonne, piano: Buster Williams, bass: Carl Allen, drums.

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com



René Marie Sound Of Red MOTÉMA 194

***1/2

Life lived to excess—"the sound of red"—is the topic that binds this suite of 11 songs written and sung by René Marie on her fourth Motéma album. Not all the material fits readily into this thematic package, but there are touches of cleverness to lighten the sometimes grim load. "If You Were Mine" is a jazzy finger-snapper, and "Many Years Ago" is a rumination on the innocence of childhood—definitely a different color than "red."

But the CD's main premise pivots on the longest, darkest and most ambitious of the songs: "Lost," which describes a wayward life of running wild. The careful structure and performed bravado are pure theater. It's the sort of snappy, multi-layered showstopper that Marie can use to freeze a cabaret audience in its seats. But it needs her charismatic presence to close the deal.

Marie's most appealing melodies tend to cling because they borrow from familiar genres. "Blessings" has a rich vein of gospel, and "Colorado River Song" is a catchy tune with light lyrics, but its debt to "Green Eyes" and particularly "When You're Smiling" is transparent. "Certaldo" and "Go Home" are the least derivative. The former is about falling in love in Italy.

The latter is a compassionate inquiry into the art of breaking up with civility. It's very smart and probably the best lyric of her 11 songs.

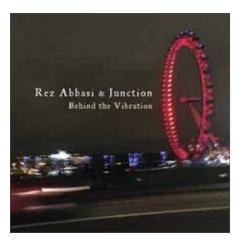
Marie mostly sings in proportion to her material. She underplays her formidable vocal instrument and rarely oversells a lyric for effect. There are many fine singers out there these days, and Marie is one of the best.

—John McDonough

Sound Of Red: Sound Of Red; If You Were Mine; Go Home; Lost; Stronger Than You Think; Certaldo; Colorado River Song; This Is Not A Protest Song; Many Years Ago; Joy Of Jazz; Blessings. (64:34)

Personnel: René Marie, vocals; Etienne Charles (2, 10), trumpet; Sherman Irby (1), alto saxophone; Romero Lubambo (6), guitar; John Chin, piano; Elias Bailey, bass; Quentin Baxter, drums; Shayna Steele (8, 11), background vocals.

Ordering info: motema.com



Rez Abbasi & Junction *Behind The Vibration*

CUNEIFORM 424

***1/2

Guitarist Rez Abbasi's new electric group, Junction, is a pugilistic outfit, throwing rhythmic punches and applying physical feints to inject its rock-influenced music with shrewd give-and-take.

The fervent nature of their playing style—former heavy metal drummer Kenny Grohowski and keyboardist Ben Stivers add a spark—is key to the action on *Behind The Vibration*. It's a post-fusion album that battles its way towards a gnarled eloquence.

The band may explode around him, but it's the leader's articulation that shapes several of these escapades. Last time out, on *Intents And Purposes* (Enja), Abbasi went the unplugged route, interpreting a series of overlooked items from the classic fusion pantheon in an acoustic setting. Here, he flips the script. *Behind The Vibration* is a program of original pieces with jazz-rock DNA and an amped-up attitude, and the guitarist seems fiercer than usual. The solo he unfurls in "Groundswell" is one of his most aggressive in memory.

Abbasi's foil is Mark Shim, whose squalls on tenor sax and MIDI wind controller bolster the album's atmosphere of agitation. Shim's horn also brings an earthiness to the action, tempering the keys and electronics with a gritty r&b texture (check him on "Matter Falls"). Ditto for Strivers' B-3 organ in "Inner Context." Along with the funeral drone of "And I You," the song provides a balance to the frenzied stuff.

With whiffs of Pakistani roots music, Mahavishnu transcendence and nu-bop fluidity, Abbasi manages a cultural mélange that goes hard while distilling its myriad elements.

—Jim Macnie

Behind The Vibration: Holy Butter; Groundswell; Inner Context; Uncommon Sense; And I You; Self-Brewing; New Rituals; Matter Falls. (58:00)

Personnel: Rez Abbasi, guitar; Mark Shim, tenor saxophone, MIDI wind controller; Ben Stivers, keyboards, Hammond B-3 organ, Fender Rhodes; Kenny Grohowski, drums.

Ordering info: cuneiformrecords.com



Critics	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	Paul de Barros
Marsalis Quartet/Kurt Elling Upward Spiral	*** ¹ / ₂	***	***	****½
Benny Golson Horizon Ahead	***	***	***1/2	***½
René Marie Sound Of Red	***1/2	***	***1/2	★★ ½
Rez Abbasi & Junction Behind The Vibration	**	***1/2	***1/2	★★ ½

Critics' Comments

Branford Marsalis Quartet with Kurt Elling, Upward Spiral

The spiral is mostly down, not up. After launching with such dynamic promise, the music turns starkly morose. Still, the album gives Elling's chameleon-like vocals room to dissolve into Marsalis' tenor. The result is often striking, but the mood is overplayed. -John McDonough

Adore the arrangements. Marsalis is magisterial, Elling is as buttery and soulful as could be. When he sings, I swoon. But his quips and asides lose the buzz. -John Corbett

There's a shared yen for drama here: Branford likes his heartache and Elling has bumped up his expressionistic chops. Still, I prefer "Doxy" to some of these elaborate art songs. -Jim Macnie

Benny Golson, Horizon Ahead

A fine Golson album promising fewer notes and more space. But this is not news. His recent CDs have found him relaxed, mellow and disinclined to blow in dense, twisting surges. With bass only, "Lulu" has a soft-spoken intimacy, as does most of this CD.

It reminds me of those albums of the late '80s, where a venerable master is done right by a wise producer. The sound of Golson's horn is to die for, and his forever-bluesy inventions remain

Bravo to Golson for keeping his hand in the game, though this album feels more like it belongs to pianist Mike LeDonne, who sparkles throughout. Golson's title tune plays like an old standard, and his conversational, melodic solos are the essence of simplicity. -Paul de Barros

René Marie, Sound Of Red

The task of adding to the Great American Songbook in a meaningful way? Well, that's a tall order. Marie's ambitions are no smaller, and she's got an admirable success rate. Nothing false or tricky, these are songs of experience marvelously sung. -John Corbett

She had me with the Eartha Kitt tribute a couple years ago, and on this one it feels like she's upping her game. Savvy arrangements, plenty of swag and a sumptuous voice that's always ready to strut. —Jim Macnie

Marie is a wonderful, soulful singer, but she seems to be in a permanent identity crisis. Last time out, she was Eartha Kitt. This time, when she's not being self-consciously "jazzy," she overshares with therapeutic, singer-songwriter confessionals. —Paul de Barros

Rez Abbasi, Behind The Vibration

Abbasi has virtuosity in abundance. But this is modern jazz armed with technological weaponry. Its audience lies beyond jazz in the open borders of existential music that's shy about identity. -John McDonough

Tracks not driven by overdriven fusion power, like "And I You" or the slinky "New Rituals," show Abbasi's strengths as a composer and guitarist—supple sense of line, unexpected formal turns, nice timbral combinations. The gonzo flash is less compelling.

Crackerjack guitarist Abbasi, who applies a blues-rock edge and twang to his harmonically oblique excursions, brings together jazz, rock, experimental and world influences for an album that is indisputably well-played but somehow feels like an exercise. -Paul de Barros



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Carla Bley/Andy Sheppard/Steve Swallow Andando El Tiempo

ECM 2487

It's no accident that jazz's major composers tend to work with equally important improvisers. Nothing complements a memorable melody more than an equally striking solo, which is why albums by Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk, Charles Mingus and Ornette Coleman are often celebrated as much for the strength of the sidemen as for quality of the compositions.

At 80, Carla Bley fits handily into this cate-

Eli Degibri Cliff Hangin' BLUJAZZ 1007

Like bassist Avishai Cohen, whom he succeeded as co-artistic director of the Red Sea Jazz Festival, Jaffa-born Eli Degibri has returned to Israel after distinguishing himself at Berklee College of Music and the Thelonious Monk Institute and serving significant stretches in Herbie Hancock's sextet and Al Foster's band. Now a leader in his own right, he's assembled a meaty quartet of young compatriot musicians, including remarkable 20-year-old pianist Gadi Lehavi, drummer Ofri Nehemya and longtime collaborator Barak Mori.

What makes Degibri outstanding is his inner flame, which is allied to virtuosic melodic purity. Take the killing title track: It begins like a threnody and steadily grows febrile, the first section of the leader's solo trailing off with a trademark ghosted glissando and then gaining pace with controlled momentum. The solo shifts into double-time before climaxing with an audacious altissimo note, approached with the determination of an experienced alpinist. Holding ropes underneath is Lehavi, who gradually reveals his own mountaineering chops.

"Even Bees Do It," like "Ocean View," is a contrastingly joyful soprano feature demongory. With a catalog that ranges from indelibly catchy jazz tunes to a time-warping opera, Bley has worked with a consistently stellar group of musicians, from Charlie Haden to Ursula Oppens, Gary Burton to Jack Bruce. But this trio with saxophonist Andy Sheppard and bassist Steve Swallow is in some ways the most appealing of her various ensembles.

Andando El Tiempo is all fresh work. The title composition is a three-part suite that Bley's liner notes describe as being about a friend's former struggle with addiction, while "Naked Bridges/Diving Brides" was composed for Sheppard's wedding. No wonder the playing seems so emotionally engaged.

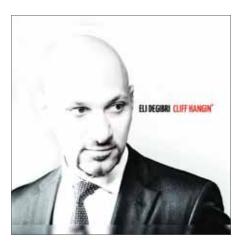
As ever, Bley's sense of melodic line and thematic structure drives the music, whether through the Spanish-tinged narrative of the title suite or the witty allusions of the Mendelssohnesque wedding tune. And she more than fulfills her improvisational duties, emphasizing her often-underused gifts as a pianist. Indeed, her playing is so strong that there are times when the music feels not so much charted as collectively improvised.

—I.D. Considine

Andando El Tiempo: Andando El Tiempo (Sin Fin; Potación De Guaya; Camino Al Volver); Saints Alivel; Naked Bridges/Diving Brides. (47:16)

Personnel: Carla Bley, piano; Andy Sheppard, tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone; Steve Swallow, bass.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com



strating Degibri's impressive breath control and quasi-classical poise. His 11 originals all engage without pretension, though some are feistier than others (the tensile "Shesh Besh" is a nice vehicle for Nehemya). The way the group plays pretty and simple—then cranks through the gears—makes for an exhilarating trip.

-Michael Jackson

Cliff Hangin': The Troll; Cliff Hangin'; Even Bees Do It; Kind Of Blues; Suki The Cat; Twiced; Ocean View; Shesh Besh; Momento Fugaz; The Unknown Neighbor; What Am I Doing Here. (48:38)

Personnel: Eli Degribi, tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone; Gadi Lehavi, piano; Barak Mori, bass; Ofri Nehemya, drums; Shlomo Ydov wozeke guitar (9).

Ordering info: blujazz.com



Marquis Hill The Way We Play CONCORD JAZZ 36810

When Marquis Hill won the 2014 Thelonious Monk Institute Jazz Trumpet Competition, he knew that, in order to land the sizable scholarship and a recording contract with Concord Jazz, he only had to impress six people: Quincy Jones, Randy Brecker, Arturo Sandoval, Jimmy Owens, Roy Hargrove and Ambrose Akinmusire. He did so with a solo performance of "Polkadots And Moonbeams" that held the judges in awe.

He returns to that solo performance at the midpoint of *The Way We Play*, though the song is now part of a much wider canvas. From the Chicago skyline on the album's cover to the very last note played by a fading upright bass, Hill goes for a warm metropolitan sophistication in every corner. The set list covers many familiar tunes but gives them a contemporary pulse. Herbie Hancock's "Maiden Voyage" rumbles and crashes moodily, while Horace Silver's "Moon Rays" boasts a frenetic introfrom drummer Makaya McCraven.

Surrounded on this album by his long-running band, the Blacktet, Hill is consistently strong, commanding the spotlight with nimble runs and an enviable sense of navigation. Saxophonist Christopher McBride and Hill seem locked into the same breath on the boppish "Beep Durple" and a spry version of "Minority" that surfs on the waves of Justin "Justefan" Thomas' vibraphone.

This is an impressive major-label debut from a trumpeter with a strong respect for tradition but an affinity for the here-and-now.

-Sean O'Connell

The Way We Play: Welcome/Bulls Theme; The Way We Play/ Minority, Prelude; Moon Rays; My Foolish Heart; Polkadots And Moonbeams; Fly Little Bird Fly; Maiden Voyage; Straight, No Chaser; Beep Durple; Juan's Interlude; Smile. (45:41)

Personnel: Marquis Hill, trumpet, flugelhorn; Christopher McBride, alto saxophone; Justin "Justefan" Thomas, vibraphone; Joshua Ramos, bass; Makaya McCraven, drums; Juan Pastor, percussion; Vincent Gardner, trombone (9); Christie Dashiell (5), Meagan McNeal (1), Harold Green III (2), vocals.

Ordering info: marguishill.com

Compositions Más Grande

Musical ambition comes in many flavors. The adage fits Latin music as much as any other genre. What would, say, the pioneering Cuban conguero Chano Pozo (who died in 1948) say if he could sample the spectrum of today's far-reaching variations of Afro-Cuban and Puerto Rican musical fare? We'll never know, but it's always worthwhile to check in on how Latin music has profoundly influenced jazz and vice versa. Some recent releases point to several directions, as well as affirming some of the root elements.

Composer/arranger Hector Martignon leads his Banda Grande through mostly original orchestrations on The Big Band Theory (Zoho 201608; 71:31 ★★★★½). The former Ray Barretto pianist is a harmonically adventurous writer whose multi-leveled pieces on this ambitious collection don't read as standard salsa. Vocalist Brenda Feliciano sings it straight on Bach's "Erbarme Dich," while the ensemble undulates with silken currents of strings and horns.

Martignon's "Trombone Chorale" was inspired by German street brass, and the take on Bill Evans' "Interplay" is far afield from his Nuyorican roots. But a clave beat will kick in on something like Bruno Martino's "Estate" and we're in the middle of a sea of sweaty bodies, dancing at a summer street fair in New York. It would take a concert hall to accommodate the orchestra here, but the audience would most certainly crave a dance floor.

Ordering info: zohomusic.com

Socrates Garcia's musical memoir, Back Home (MAMA 1050; 52:39 $\star \star \star \frac{1}{2}$). recalls his youth in the Dominican Republic with fondness, gusto and introspection. His horn sections punch, counterpunch, interlock and float to the merengue rhythms. Pianist Manuel Tejada leads the churning rhythm section, but also adds pastel to lyrical tunes like "Celebration Of The Butterflies" and the title track

This is also concert fare that's full of dance music sections and flourishes. Garcia's three-part "Dominican Suite For Jazz Orchestra" has some filigreed reed section work that is at once orchestral yet full of folkloric echoes. Like Martignon, he's a writer with substantial potential.

Ordering info: summitrecords.com

South Bronx bass master Andy **González** shows that he can dial the whole Puerto Rican ensemble esthetic down to small configurations on Entre Colegas (Truth Revolution 538872; 50:12 ****) without losing any of the essence. This album is a personal statement with



plenty of low-key yet quietly intense playing. Whether it's the sacred-heart marriage of tres, bass and conga, a horn-stoked lineup or the amiable two-bass dialog with Lugues Curtis (on "The Addams Family Theme"), these combinations pulsate and swirl with life.

González and his colleagues are full of surprises: Manuel Alejandro Carro's soulful vocals on the plaintive bolero "Sabor A Mi" sets the table for "Dialysis Blues," a guitar-driven jam whose title refers to the leader's health challenges of late. The rhythmic conflagration "Inspiración De Cachao" is an exciting percussive buffet, and Carlos Adabie's out-of-tempo trumpet feature on Billy Strayhorn's "A Flower Is A Lovesome Thing" is an intimate statement that veers from desultory to dejection.

Ordering info: truthrevolutionrecords.com

Chano Pozo definitely would have dug the roiling rhythms on Mac Gollehon & The Hispanic Mechanics (True Groove; 53:41 $\star\star\star$ 1/2), though possibly not the textures. This Molotov cocktail of electronica, clave, Bitches Brew funk and flat-out brass playing is intelligent disco.

Gollehon, a trumpeter and trombonist, has cleverly assembled pungent, rhythm-rooted dance music from start to finish, made on what sounds like every gadget at The NAMM Show. He displays a fat tone, saucy ideas and a touch of Echoplex on the comparatively mild "Exito Obscuridad," then duets with himself on a tape loop on "Dale Jamon." It might not be everyone's cup of tea, but Gollehon always goes for it, never playing it safe.

Ordering info: truegroove.nyc

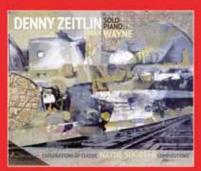


CARLOS FRANZETT ARGENTUM

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The musical world of composer/pianist Carlos Franzetti is vast but his love and appreciation of the music of his birthplace, Argentina, has led him to become one of the foremost experts and exponents of tangos, chacareras, zambas and other Argentinean folkloric forms. His new recording, Argentum, showcases his adept handling of the various types of music from a diverse cast of Argentinean composers, including a few compositions of his own, all in intimate combo

For Argentum, Franzetti has arranged a number of pieces written by well known composers, such as Astor Piazzolla, as well as works by lesser known composers, all for small ensembles led by his own exemplary piano playing.



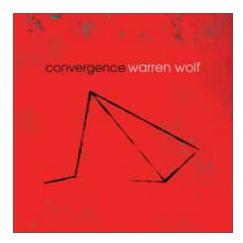
DENNY ZEITLIN EARLY WAYNE

EXPLORATIONS OF CLASSIC WAYNE COMPOSITIONS SSC 1454 - IN STORES July 8

It was an opportunity for a live solo performance that inspired Zeitlin to focus on Wayne Shorter's music for this project. Zeitlin chose to play some of Shorter's early compositions for his December 5, 2014 performance at the esteemed Piedmont Piano Company in Oakland, California. The majority of the pieces come from the early 1960s, with "Ana Maria" coming from the 1970s. The performance was recorded, preserving Zeitlin's intriguing takes on these classic compositions.







Warren Wolf Convergence MACK AVENUE 1105

***1/2

In a lot of ways, Warren Wolf's Convergence evokes nothing so much as the Blue Note aesthetic of the 1960s. Not that the sound is especially retro, but it's hard to mistake the form: lots of blowing space, especially for mallet percussionist Wolf; a penchant for soulful groove tunes and/or r&b covers; and a number of big names in supporting roles. In this case, that list includes pianist Brad Mehldau, bassist Christian McBride and drummer Jeff "Tain"

Dave King Trucking Company Surrounded By The Night SUNNYSIDE 1449

While he's known as a jazz percussionist these days, The Bad Plus drummer Dave King has never abandoned his love for rock music, an ongoing adoration that was always plain in his group Happy Apple. But in recent years he's found a true sweet spot for blending the direct emotional drive and melodic concision of rock with the group interplay and improvisation of jazz in his archly named Dave King Trucking Company.

The group's terrific third album, *Surrounded By The Night*, wastes little time in reaching out with a tender, catchy melody: "Delta Kreme" conveys a bittersweet strain of Americana, with the crabbed guitar strumming of Erik Fratzke carving out space for the unison tenors of Chris Speed and Brandon Wozniak. The piece functions as a kind of *amuse bouche* with no improvisation, but conveys a masterfully etched mood to set the tone for what follows.

The rock vibe comes charging in on "Parallel Sister Track," with a plangent reed melody floating over an out-of-sync groove until the rhythm section hits the gas and lays down a rockish "choogling" pattern that sounds like it's

Watts, with guitarist John Scofield sitting in on two tracks.

Unfortunately, as was often the case back then, a stellar rhythm section doesn't always equate to a strong band feel. Despite some exceptional moments —the churning "Cell Phone" is a notable standout—Wolf's A-list playmates don't always bring their "A" game. Punching chords throughout "Soul Sister," Mehldau is session-ace competent but little more, while McBride's Latin-tinged pulse in "Montara" is as steady as it is anodyne. Only Watts, with his constant flow of prodding accents and counter-rhythms, seems "on" all the time.

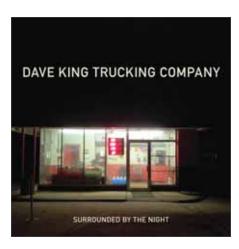
Still, when things do click, *Convergence* roars. "Cell Phone" is a real barnburner of a piece, with angular harmonies and a hard-swinging post-bop groove that keeps Wolf and the rhythm men on their toes. Scofield's sly, understated solo helps put the soul into "Soul Sister," and when Wolf and McBride trade licks at the end of "King Of Two Fives," it's hard not to feel like cheering.

—I.D. Considine

Convergence: Soul Sister, Four Stars From Heaven; King Of Two Fives; New Beginning; Cell Phone; Montara; Havoc; Tergiversation; Knocks Me Off Of My Feet; A Prayer For The Christian Man; Stardust/The Minute Waltz. (67:51)

Personnel: Warren Wolf, vibes, marimba (5, 6, 9–11), Fender Rhodes (2, 9), piano (9); Brad Mehldau, piano (1, 2, 4, 5, 7); John Scofield, guitar (1, 7); Christian McBride, bass (1–3, 5–10); Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums (1, 2, 5–10).

Ordering info: mackavenue.com



on the verge of becoming the Steppenwolf classic "Magic Carpet Ride."

King's "Glamour Shot" borrows pop chord patterns from bands like the Cure and New Order, but the melody line is far more sophisticated, and Speed and Wozniak chew it up. King doesn't use the rock element cheaply—but he never lets the improvisational element and the jazz vocabulary play second fiddle.

-Peter Margasak

Surrounded By The Night: Delta Kreme; Parallel Sister Track; You Should Be Watching (Art) Films; Blue Candy, Glamour Shot; That Isn't Even Worth Selling; Don't Be Suspect Of A Gift. (36-25) Personnel: Dave King, drums; Erik Fratzke, guitar; Chris Morrissey, bass; Chris Speed, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Brandon Wozniak, tenor saxophone.

Ordering info: sunnysidezone.com



Robert Glasper Everything's Beautiful SONY LEGACY 888751578128

From hard-bop to *Doo-Bop*, the only predictable thing about Miles Davis was his mercurial unpredictability. He disregarded categories—experimenting with rock, funk, African music, electronic sounds and rap—and caused consternation for critics and fans. But, as keyboardist Robert Glasper writes in his liner notes, "Miles didn't have one audience ... his music traveled."

For this remix project, Sony gave Glasper access to the Davis catalogue, including recorded outtakes and in-between-takes patter. A trumpet line or familiar keyboard pattern may surface in places, but mostly Glasper let his collaborators use them as the basis for creative reinvention.

"Ghetto Walkin" and "They Can't Hold Me Down" are powerful r&b protest songs based on "The Ghetto Walk," an outtake from Davis' 1969 *In A Silent Way* sessions. Glasper drops a funky drum loop onto the original rhythm track to set up a simmering vocal from Bilal, who describes modern life in the inner city with two sharp verses. Glasper's keyboard eases into the coda, featuring a rap full of defiant pride from Illa J. Elsewhere, future-soul group Hiatus Kaiyote softens the unnerving drone of "Little Church" and Stevie Wonder lays down an impressive harmonica solo on "Right On Brotha." His last note harmonizes with the Davis sample that takes the tune, and the album, home.

-John Ephland

Everything's Beautiful: Talking Shit; Ghetto Walkin'; They Can't Hold Me Down; Maiysha (So Long); Violets; Little Church (Remix); Silence Is The Way; Song For Selim; Milestones (Remix); I'm Leaving You; Right On Brotha. (46:57)

Personnel: Miles Davis, vocals, trumpet; Robert Glasper, piano, keyboards, percussion; Derrick Hodge, bass; Blal, Erykah Badu, Phonte, Laura Mvula, King (Amber Strother, Anita Bias, Paris Strother), Georgia Anne Muldrow, Illa J. Ledisi, Bianca Rodriguez, vocals; John Scofield, Kyle Bolden, guitar; Stevie Wonder, vocals, harmonica; DJ Spinna, electronics; Chris Rob, piano, Fender Rhodes, synthesizers; Daniel Leznoff, keyboards, guitar; Braylon Lacy, Burnis Earl Travis II, bass; Rashad Smith, percussion; Lakecia Benjamin, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone; Brandee Younger, harp, Hiatus Kaiyote (Naomi Saalfield, guitar, vocals; Paul Bender, bass; Simon Mavin, keyboards; Perrin Moss, drums, percussion).

Ordering info: legacyrecordings.com

Doin' the Mess Around

Professor Longhair, Live In Chicago (Orleans 2915; 29:14 ★★★½) Four years into a career rejuvenation, the one and only Fess Longhair tickled the ivories as a radio station's tape recorder spun at the University of Chicago's Folk Festival in 1976. His patented whistling and pitch-imperfect singing are also on imperial display. Seven songs, including old standbys "Big Chief" and "Got My Mojo Working," find him served by French Quarter guitarist Billy Gregory and others and a serviceable rhythm section. Live In Chicago is better than several other live albums but not quite the equal of must-haves Live On The Queen Mary (One Way) and The Complete London Concert (JSP)

Ordering info: orleansrecords.com

Aziza Brahim, Abbar El Hamada (Glitterbeat 117592; 38:29 ****½)
Brought up in a West Saharan desert refugee camp and now living in Spain, Aziza Brahim uses her airy and beautiful voice to express all the hopes and frustrations of the exiled Sahrawi people. No knowledge of Arabic is needed to feel what she sings. A relentless sense of motion accompanies Western and African instruments as the music traverses colors. Listening to Brahim's fifth and best album in a single sitting is to experience its sweeping grace.

Ordering info: glitterbeat.com

Dave Steen & Jailhouse Tattoo, Town Full Of Secrets (Latersville Music 2218; 44:36 ***½) This exuberant Nebraskan band has singer-guitarist-keyboardist Dave Steen and his band with two saxophonists providing satisfying shake-it-on-the-dancefloor entertainment. Over the years, Steen has penned likable songs for Coco Montoya, Solomon Burke and others, and here he presents a cache of little gems of various stylistic cuts: tremolo-drenched blues, Texas shuffles and r&b suitable for either Southside Johnny's Jersey Shore or the Texas-Mexico borderland.

Ordering info: davesteen.com

Tommy Schneller Band, Backbeat (Timezone 1036; 48:12/26:41 ★★★) Tommy Schneller, based in Germany, has gumbo in his voice, and must use the same recipe as Dr. John. It makes for a commendable sound when the song is worth his time and when his colleagues work up the right interfusion of blues, rock, Dixieland and modern jazz. Five of 10 originals measure up.

Ordering info: timezone-records.com

Mike Wheeler Band, Turn Up!! (Delmark 845; 66:04 ***/2) Part of the Chicago scene since the mid-1980s, Wheeler on his third album pours his heart and soul



into straight blues and blues-funk of varied tempos and moods. His singing, not unlike Jimmy Johnson's, operates efficiently without pretense or overdetermination. Much of the pleasure of hearing Wheeler's guitar comes from its individualized tone and from its flowing articulation (especially noteworthy are "Nothing Lasts Forever" and "A Blind Man Can See"). He has telepathic communication with his band, even during the rancid rock tune "Brand New Cadillac."

Ordering info: delmark.com

Mark Hummel/Anson Funderburgh, Golden State Lone Star Blues Revue (Electro-Fi 3448; 57:17 ★★½) Little Charlie Baty and Anson Funderburgh have mastered the alpha and beta of guitar playing, but vocals here by Mark Hummel lack the joy of invention sprung by those guitars and his harmonica. So-so Hummel songs neutralize a wise selection of classic material like Gatemouth Brown's "Midnight Hour" and Lowell Fulson's "Check Yourself."

Ordering info: electrofi.com

Terrie Odabi, My Blue Soul (Self Release; 64:50 ★★★½) Terrie Odabi is a strong-throated vocalist in the Bay Area who has twice reached the semi-finals at the International Blues Competition. She strives for intimate connection with lyrics on the importance of individuality and other topics. Despite spells of unconvincing emoting, her impassioned honesty wins out. Highlights are hyper-carnal "When You Love Me" and, poles apart, a religious sojourn titled "Hold Up The Light."

Ordering info: artistecard.com/terrie



BLACK ART JAZZ COLLECTIVE PRESENTED BY THE SIDE DOOR JAZZ CLUB

SSC 1441 - IN STORES July 22

BAJC is a collaborative ensemble comprised of Jazz's finest rising stars. Each member is a leader in his own right and has also been an integral part of groups led by pioneers of the music including Tom Harrell, Bobby Hutcherson, Wayne Shorter, Ron Carter, Louis Hayes, Al Foster, Freddie Hubbard and many, many others. The founding members Wayne Escoffery, Jeremy Pelt, Johnathan Blake and the late bassist Dwayne Burno decided to form a collective of likeminded musicians from the same generation dedicated to celebrating African American cultural and political icons, as well as preserving the historical significance of African Americans in Jazz. Most of the compositions on this recording are inspired by one of these many icons.



PETER ELDRIDGE DISAPPEARING DAY

SSC 1458 - IN STORES July 22

On Disappearing Day Peter Eldridge merges an eclectic mix of styles ranging from jazz to alternative to country, showcasing his inexhaustible musical fluency. The album is comprised of seven original tunes written or cowritten by Eldridge and five song arrangements from some of his favorite artists, including Paul McCartney, Leonard Bernstein, Luciana Souza, The Magnetic Fields and Frank Sinatra.

Disappearing Day draws listeners into Peter's artistic sphere through a variety of musical settings and textures.





One For All The Third Decade SMOKE SESSIONS 1605

Now in its 21st year, One For All is modeled on the classic lineup of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. And, like the Messengers during the band's heyday, it's a slick machine. When all six members are cooking, the band purrs as it races down the highway.

The harmonic blends and soulful grooves of hard-bop make it popular to play among musicians of a certain age, but while there is no shortage of Horace Silver, Lee Morgan and

Cyrus Chestnut *Natural Essence*

HIGHNOTE 7283

★★½

It's neither a good nor bad thing when musicians get together to jam, even in the studio. Magic can still happen. But there are two approaches to this practice: One challenges participants to push themselves in an effort to come up with something new; the other is simply coasting.

This leads us to *Natural Essence*. Here we have three truly extraordinary artists, each with a stellar history and a secure place in jazz annals. Apparently, they've picked option 2 for this project, judging by the fact that, aside from a few arranged moments, they appear to breeze through each track as if working from a lead sheet. Again, nothing wrong with that—but it makes for some less than inspired music.

For instance, someone in the trio must have decided to open "I Cover The Waterfront" with a little drum intro, which Lenny White plays on brushes. There doesn't seem to be a reason why; it could easily have been a bass riff from Buster Williams. Or they all could have hit the first note together. They did decide to accent the first three notes of bars one, three, five and seven together on the bridge, but that's the extent of their

Blakey cover bands around, few can capture the spark and effortless momentum like One For All. Fewer still feature a cast of players who can also compose as effectively in the idiom. The Third Decade—the band's 16th release—is the first to include originals by all six members. In addition to trombonist Steve Davis' "Easy" and his equally steaming "Daylight," the spirit of the soulful, brass-led sextets is represented by a pair of loping compositions by trumpeter Jim Rotondi, the funky boogaloo of bassist John Webber's "Babataytay" and the purposeful strut of drummer Joe Farnsworth's "Hey Stevie-D," his shout-out to his bandmate.

If the band has an MVP, it's Farnsworth. Aside from Blakey, hard-bop bands were powered by lithe, inventive timekeepers—from Mickey Roker to Louis Hayes—and Farnsworth fills the role elegantly, powering the band with both subtlety and creativity. His occasional, disruptive cymbal accents constantly keep things interesting.

This is a genre that calls on musicians to step up and bring everything they have, and everyone here is up to the challenge.

—James Hale

The Third Decade: Easy; Buddy's; It's Easy To Remember; Daylight; Ghost Ride; For Curtis; Ruth; Babataytay; K-Ray; Frenzy; Hey Stevie-D. (66:01)

Personnel: Jim Rotondi, trumpet; Steve Davis, trombone; Dave Wakefield, French horn (5); Eric Alexander, tenor saxophone; David Hazeltine, piano; John Webber, bass; Joe Farnsworth, drums.

Ordering info: smokesessionsrecords.com



arrangement; the rest is an airy, carefree stroll. It's agreeable, but hardly epochal.

There are brighter moments: On "Minority" Chestnut unleashes a fleet, high-register solo that explodes into a grand swoop down the keyboard. Williams delivers a nice intro to his tune "Toku-Do." Yet these only hint at what the musicians *might* have done throughout *Natural Essence* if they'd decided on option 1.

-Bob Doerschuk

Natural Essence: Mamacita; It Could Happen To You; Faith Amongst The Unknown; I Cover The Waterfront; I Remember; Dedication; My Romance; Toku-Do; Minority. (63:08)
Personnel: Cyrus Chestnut, piano; Buster Williams, bass; Lenny White Arims

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com



The Hot Sardines French Fries & Champagne DECCA B002485802

Swing is experiencing a surge of popularity, and New York City's Hot Sardines are experts at making hot jazz sizzle. On their second album, the set list includes obscurities from the Great American Songbook, inspired takes on modern tunes and a trio of originals that show off the band's eclectic range.

"Running Wild," a tune from the '20s, was included in the film *Some Like It Hot*, with Marilyn Monroe supplying sultry lead vocals. The Sardines execute it with a snappy Djangomeets-Monroe arrangement with Evan Palazzo's piano and Evan Crane's bass setting the pace for Elizabeth Bougerol's spirited vocals. The band moves "People Will Say We're In Love" from Oklahoma to Argentina, turning it into a crisp tango with Mariachi horns and a ska-like pulse. Bougerol adds French lyrics to "La Fille Aux Cheveux Roux (Weed Smoker's Dream)," a tune by the Harlem Hamfats played with a burlesque backbeat supporting Nick Myers' delirious sax.

The r&b ballad "Here You Are Again" is an original by Bougerol with a hint of New Orleans in its step. Palazzo's bright, brittle piano supports Bougerol's delivery of the ironic lyric. The piano intro to the title track, another band original, has hints of the "Pink Panther Theme," and that lighthearted vibe carries over to the rest of the tune. Mike Sailors plays a frisky cornet solo to support a Dixieland horn arrangement that gives the music a buoyant lilt, providing a nice contrast to Bougerol's melancholy sermon on the limitations of happiness.

—j. poet

French Fries & Champagne: Running Wild; People Will Say We're In Love; When I Get Low I Get High; Addicted To Love; Sweet Pea; Comes Love (L'amour S'en Fout); Here You Are Again; Until The Real Thing Comes Along; French Fries & Champagne; La Fille Aux Cheveux Roux (Weed Smoker's Dream); Gramercy Sunset. (41:45) Personnel: "Miz Elizabeth" Bougerol, vocals; Evan "Bibbs" Palazzo, piano, organ; Jason Prover, trumpet; Nick Myers, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Mike Sailors, valve trombone, cornet; Sam Raderman, guitar; Evan Crane, bass, tuba; Alex Raderman, drums, percussion; Eddie Francisco, tap; Alan Cumming, vocals (3).

Ordering info: universalmusicclassics.com

Keb' Mo' Live: That Hot Pink Blues Album

KIND OF BLUE MUSIC



Keb' Mo' was first noticed at the dawn of the 1990s for portraying a Delta bluesman in a Los Angeles play called Rabbit Foot. Now, with his musical career encompassing a dozen albums, he enjoys permanent lodging in the blues-pop marketplace.



Mo's second concert album, consisting of 16 original songs recorded on a national tour last year, is one big thank-you to his fans. The guitarist sings of the human experience in typically warm tones, keeping his phrasing deliberate and his rhythm section easygoing. But mildly disconcerting to objective listeners is the strain heard in his voice every so often, like during his bid for urgency in "She Just Wants To Dance."

Elements of contented sweet-talking dominate Mo's blues guitar work, yet he proves his gritty mettle on the Muddy Waters-inspired "Dangerous Mood" and a couple more. Mo', indeed, likes to play it cool, but glad to say he seldom slides into torpor or sappy sentiment. "A Better Man" is far and away the catchiest tune.

-Frank-John Hadley

Live: That Hot Pink Blues Album: Disc One: Tell Everybody I Know; Somebody Hurt You; Henry; Life Is Beautiful; She Just Wants To Dance; The Worst Is Yet To Come; Government Cheese; The Door. (39:13) Disc Two: Come On Back; France; More Than One Way Home; A Better Man; The Old Me Better; Rita; Dangerous Mood; City Boy. (39:38)

Personnel: Keb' Mo', vocals, guitar, kazoo, harmonica (8); Michael B. Hicks, keyboards, vocals; Casey Wasner, drums, vocals; Stan Sargeant, bass.

Ordering info: kebmo.com

Raul Agraz Between Brothers

OA2 22127

Passion, confidence and an unshakable commitment to groove are the ingredients for great Latin jazz, and Venezuelan trumpeter Raul Agraz exhibits them in abundance on his solo debut. For this ambitious project, Agraz convened a summit of New



York's best session players, with special seats reserved for a few titans of Latin jazz: vibraphonist Dave Samuels, reedist Paquito D'Rivera, pianist Luis Perdomo and percussionist Luisito Quintero.

An athletic trumpeter with a warm, supple tone, Agraz wrote four of the 10 tracks on this album, including "One Day At A Time," a master class in tenderness and melodic purity. The song embodies the trumpeter's sophisticated yet simple compositional style, and features brief, energetic passages that expand with self-generating momentum. The closing "Concone #6" revels in a more austere kind of splendor. Played sumptuously and without frills, its slow, determined melody reveals a musician at peace with his own sound.

—Brian Zimmerman

Between Brothers: Obsesión: Between Brothers: BossAgraz: A Song For You (Canción Para Ti): FDB: In A Sentimental Day; One Day At A Time; Sentimiento De Canción; Beautiful Diana; Concone #6. (50:09) Personnel: Raul Agraz, John Walsh, trumpets; Ivan Renta, Dan Willis, Javier Olivencia, Felipe Castro, Paquito D'Rivera (2), woodwinds; Doug Beavers, Luis Bonilla, Mark Miller, Randy Andos, Max Seigle trombones; Jake Ezra, guitar, Ruben Rodriguez (1, 7, 9), Oskar Cartaya (3, 8), Rodner Padilla (2), Dave Phillips, (4, 5, 6), bass; Jon Werking (4, 5, 6), Ricky Gonzales (8), Axel Laugart (2, 3, 9), Luis Perdomo (1, 7), piano; Roberto Quintero, Luisito Quintero, percussion; Cliff Almond (1, 3, 7, 8), Sean McDaniel (4, 5, 6), Anderson Quintero (2), drums; Antoin Silverman, Encho Todorov, violins; Jonathan Dinklange, viola; Ania Wood, cello.

Ordering info: originarts.com

The Power Quintet High Art

HIGHNOTE 7290

High Art is the kind of all-star session that jazz labels used to delight in, bringing together a group of leaders from their stable to blow through a collection of ballads and burners. With the heyday of the record labels long since passed, this date is more



artist-centric, initiated by bassist Peter Washington and designed as a collective with the unique trumpet-and-vibraphone front line of Jeremy Pelt and Steve Nelson and the taut rhythm section of Washington, pianist Danny Grissett and drummer Bill Stewart.

The result is a solid set that showcases the members' skills without necessarily striving to advance their art. Most of the tunes come from the pens of the band. Pelt's "Look At Here" kicks thing off at a bluesy, loping gait that wrings a terse, stentorian solo from Washington and a round of last-call dissonance from Grissett.

The medium-tempo churn of the pianist's "Heard's Word" shows off Stewart's agility at combining solid swing with coloristic accents, while "Mr. Wiggleworm" roils with a Latin accent that sparks a bold, fiery turn from Pelt.

High Art: Look At Here; Heard's Word; Sage; Mr. Wiggleworm; But Beautiful; Ascona; Tincture; We

Personnel: Danny Grissett, piano; Jeremy Pelt, trumpet; Steve Nelson, vibraphone; Peter Washington, bass; Bill Stewart, drums

Ordering info: iazzdepot.com

Eric Revis Trio Crowded Solitudes

CLEAN FEED 363

The second record by Eric Revis' trio could not be more aptly named. On Crowded Solitudes the bassist, whose CV includes sojourns with Branford Marsalis, Betty Carter, Lionel Hampton and Peter Brötzmann, strives to sustain paradoxical states.



There is no mistaking who is in charge here. Throughout the record, Revis' tone is as imposing as his fingering is fleet. But his accompanists aren't cowed. Pianist Kris Davis darts into "Arcane 17," alternating brief, halting phrases with quick continuous runs, while drummer Gerald Cleaver quietly encircles the bass-piano confrontation with discrete streams of sound. The song's intensity is then undercut by a child's voice cheerily chirping non-English syllables, which proves an unsteady foundation on which to build a short foray into energetic music. It's a relief when they ease back for the next piece, a quietly lyrical performance of Paul Motian's "Victoria." Once more the bass-piano dialogue holds the foreground, while Cleaver introduces subtle instability by quietly playing around the beat. The tension between clearly drawn lines and artfully smudged ones persists throughout the record. Their coexistence is consistently rewarding to behold.

-Bill Meyer

Crowded Solitudes: Arcane 17; Bontah; Victoria; QB4R; D.O.C.; Crowded Solitudes (For B.K.); Vertical Hold; Anamnesis—Parts I & II (For Tamir And Ms. Bland). (54.28) Personnel: Eric Revis, bass: Kris Davis, piano: Gerald Cleaver, drums.

Ordering info: cleanfeed-records.com



Hilary Kole The Judy Garland Project MIRANDA MUSIC

***1/2

Paying homage to Judy Garland can be a tricky business. As immense as her musical legacy may be, her status as a cultural icon can easily tip even the most heartfelt tribute into the realm of camp. There's the heartbreak, the melodrama, the hard-won innocence, the tragic end.

There's also the songs, and that's where Hilary Kole keeps her focus. Blessed with a voice as suited to cabaret singing as to jazz, she has no trouble putting the "show" in these show tunes, from the gimmicky boy-meets-girl lyrics of "The Trolley Song" to the post-divorce melancholy of "A Cottage For Sale." But the songs she gravitates toward tend to be more from the jazz side of the canon, and Kole swings so hard on tunes like "Stompin' At The Savoy" and "Just In Time" that the Garland connection almost seems incidental to her performance.

Where the Garland influence comes through most clearly is in Kole's sense of restraint. Instead of torching it up, she prefers to let "The Man That Got Away" smolder, while her a cappella opening on "Embraceable You" is delivered with agile grace. Even the string-laden "Over The Rainbow" manages to avoid the usual over-the-top theatrics. And while Garland fans may miss the Broadway brashness of the Summer Stock version of "Get Happy," Kole's scat-fueled rendition—particularly when she trades fours with drummer Aaron Kimmel—has a charm all its own.

—J.D. Considine

The Judy Garland Project: Zing!; The Boy Next Door; Just In Time; You Made Me Love You; Stompin' At The Savoy; The Man That Got Away; A Cottage For Sale; If Wish I Was In Love Again; Look For The Silver Lining; The Trolley Song; Get Happy; Embraceable You; As Long As He Needs Me; It Never Was You; Over The Rainbow. (54:56)

Personnel: Hilary Kole, vocals; Paul Gill, bass; Aaron Kimmel, drums; John DiMartino, piano; Joel Frahm, tenor saxophone; Christiana Liberis, Juliette Jones, violin; Stephanie Matthews, viola; Reenat Pinchas, cello.

Ordering info: hilarykole.com

Danny MixonPass It On

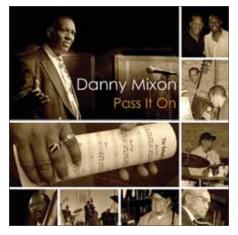
SELF RELEASE

***1/2

To non-New Yorkers, pianist Danny Mixon's name is one that may not immediately register. These fans may have heard of his reputation—through associations with Betty Carter, Frank Foster and Hank Crawford—without having seen him live. Well, consider this album a curriculum vitae for a veteran pianist with an impressive range of style and vocabulary.

Mixon is a mainstream player with a Red Garland-like feel for the blues. But his talents are numerous. He showcases some invigorating locked-hand chords on Wayne Shorter's "Yes Or No," solemn ballad readings ("Infant Eyes" and "The Very Thought Of You") and fine chord work throughout. He also has an incredible grasp of stride, as exhibited on Eubie Blake's perennial "Memories Of You." These are all qualities one might expect of a good journeyman pianist, but alas, Mixon isn't able to erase the lounge connotations from "On A Clear Day"—even when taken as a bossa.

Conspicuous above the other selections is a quietly gorgeous "Single Petal Of A Rose," Duke Ellington's neglected late-period piano gem. Mixon gently turns the introspective



theme this way and that, revealing new facets of the reverent melody.

The liner notes don't specify which rhythm section players appear on which tunes, but Fred Staton's tenor saxophone is buttery on "That's All" and Ghanniyya Green turns in a husky vocal advertisement for Harlem in "At Minton's."

-Kirk Silsbee

Pass It On: Blue Monk; Infant Eyes; On A Clear Day; Memories Of You; Up Jumped Spring; The Very Thought Of You; Yes Or No; My Blues; The Simple Way; Single Petal Of A Rose; That's All; Minton's. (4):39)

Personnel: Danny Mixon, piano; Fred Staton, saxophone (11); Marcus McLaurine, Bryce Sebastien, Paul Ramsey, bass; Rudy Lawless, Damon Duewhite, McClenty Hunter, drums; Ghanniyya Green, vocals (12).

Ordering info: dannymixonsounds.com



Jacknife The Music Of Jackie McLean PRIMARY SLOO2

***1/2

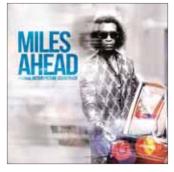
The thoughtful Bay Area reedist Steven Lugerner has already forged a career defined by sharp left turns. Although his playing is clearly rooted in jazz tradition, he's developed a string of rigorous projects that stand in stark contrast from the one that preceded it. His two-volume Gravitations project was a series of introspective, through-composed duets with the likes of pianist Fred Hersch, and his superb quartet with Myra Melford drew compositional ideas from the Torah on For We Have Heard. His new quintet Jacknife represents another radical shift. It's a repertory project, albeit one focusing on artist whose oeuvre is too rarely revisited these days: alto saxophonist Jackie McLean.

Lugerner focuses on material McLean recorded between 1959 and 1965, a key period for the saxophonist. Jacknife doesn't limit itself to McLean compositions—the album also includes tunes written for the band by trumpeter Charles Tolliver and drummer Jack DeJohnette, but there's no missing McLean's aesthetic. The quintet doesn't try to recontexutalize the material as much as it divines energy and soul from the original arrangements, letting Lugerner's hungry, young combo feast on the themes, whether it's trumpeter JJ Kirkpatrick dropping a sly Gershwin quote into "On The Nile" or pianist Richard Sears unleashing propulsive runs on "Melody For Melonae," the opening gem from McLean's 1962 album Let Freedom Ring. While Lugerner plays a full complement of reeds in most of his projects, he sticks with alto here, and though he doesn't try to emulate McLean's tart tone, he does impart the same kind of deep blues feeling.

—Peter Margasak

The Music Of Jackie McLean: On The Nile; Das Dat; Cancellation; Climax; Melody For Melonae; Hip Strut. (40:52) Personnel: Steven Lugerner, alto saxophone; JJ Kirkpatrick, trumpet; Richard Sears, piano; Garret Lang, bass; Michael Mitchell, drums.

Ordering info: stevenlugerner.bandcamp.com





Various Artists

Miles Ahead: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack COLUMBIA/LEGACY 89853 06672

Various Artists

Born To Be Blue: Music From The Motion Picture RHINO 554159

As a soundtrack to the movie, *Miles Ahead* comes across as an interesting collage of the trumpeter's career, encompassing numerous styles. The listener might feel some motion sickness as one track moves toward the next. Early bop shifts suddenly to modal jazz, only to be followed by the kind of late-'60s fusion that defined the rest of Davis' musical life: a blend of rock, funk, soul and pop.

It's the soundtrack as a kind of speed-dial through Davis' various movements, not unlike a Greatest Hits collection. Only, in this case, the music has been tweaked to adhere to the soundtrack's requirements, which include editing longer songs so that main actor Don Cheadle could add some obligatory narration from the film itself. So we hear the original "Miles Ahead" and "So What," along with excerpts and edits of "Nefertiti," "Go Ahead John" and "Back Seat Betty." New material written performed by Cheadle, keyboardist Robert Glasper, trumpeter Keyon Harrold, former Davis mates Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter, among others, remind us that we are listening to a soundtrack, and not a Miles Davis recording.

The same might be said for the soundtrack to the Chet Baker biopic Born To Be Blue, but in a slightly different way. The music stays pretty close to home, rolling out more like an album, less like a soundtrack. For the average listener, it might be more appealing. The 14 tracks here seem to suggest the mood of the movie—romance—and the tragic tone is more implied than stated. Being West Coast jazz, it's easy on the ears, with none of the angst that was the canvas of Baker's personal life. The credible trumpet imitation comes courtesy of Kevin Turcotte.

—John Ephland

Miles Ahead: Miles Ahead; Dialog: "It Takes A Long Time"; So What; Taylor Made; "Listen, You Talk Too Goddam Much"; Solea (Excerpt); Seven Steps To Heaven (Edit); "If You Gonna Tell A Story"; Nefertiti (Edit); Frelon Brun; "Sometimes You Have These Thoughts"; Duran (Take 6, Edit); "You Own My Music"; Go Ahead John (Part Two C); Black Satin (Edit); "Be Musical About This Shit"; Prelude, Pt. 2; "Y'All Listening To Them"; Junior's Jam; Francessence; Back Seat Betty (Excerpt); "I Don't Like The Word Jazz"; What's Wrong With That?; Gone. (76:06)

Personnel: Don Cheadle, voice; Robert Glasper (19, 20, 23, 24), Herbie Hancock (23), keyboard; Keyon Harrold, trumpet (19, 20, 23); Burniss Earl Travis II (19, 24), Vicente Archer (20), Esperanza Spalding (23), bass; Kendrick Scott (19), E.J. Strickland (20), Al Foster (21), Antonio Sanchez (23), drums; Marcus Strickland (19), Bill Evans (21), Wayne Shorter, saxophone (23), saxophones; Elana Pinderhughes, flute (20); Barry Finnerty (21), Gary Clark Jr. (23), Mike Moreno (24), guitar; Sammy Figueroa, percussion (21); Pharoahe Monch, vocals (24).

Ordering info: legacyrecordings.com

Born To Be Blue: My Funny Valentine; Over The Rainbow; Let's Get Lost; Ko-Opt; Could Have Been; I've Never Been In Love Before; Once Away; Blue Room; Haitian Fight Song; Bowling Alley Boogie; Go Down Sunshine; Tequila Earworm; A Small Hotel; Born To Be Blue. (47:14)

Personnel: David Braid, piano; Kevin Turcotte, trumpet; Steve Wallace, bass; Terry Clarke, drums; Ethan Hawke, vocals (1, 6); Mike Murley, baritone saxophone (4, 8); Ted Quinlan, guitar (12); Kelsey Grant, trombone (12); Epoque Orchestra Prague (5, 7); Charles Mingus band (9); Odetta, vocal (11).

Ordering info: rhino.com

Melody Parker Archipelago SELF RELEASE

SELF NELEAS

***1/2

Melody Parker creates multilayered soundscapes that start with her cultural roots (her father is from Louisiana Cajun country, her mother from the rural Philippines), branching out to include circus-like instrumentation, girl-group vocals and mythical tales.



Her latest album is an exploration of the resiliency of the human spirit, with a free-flowing, buoyant quality that's equally contemplative and dance-oriented. The composer, singer, producer and acoustic engineer conjures her inner Laurie Anderson and Brian Eno, backed by members of tUnE-YaRds and Naytronix, along with other San Francisco jazz players. Parker says *Archipelago* was created "with mourning and celebration for this watery home we know—and for the paradoxical richness of our experience with it." This might sound pretentious, and certainly lacking the churchgoing brand of spirituality, but Parker has the vision to pull it all together in joyous harmony.

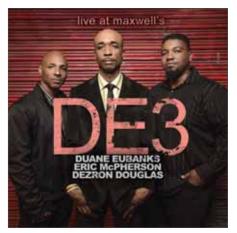
—Ieff Iohnson

Archipelago: Love; The Prophet And The Profiteer; Upon The Dune; Vertigone; Bold As The Bayous Heave; Archipelago; Plenty; Everything To Sing About. (37:48)

Personnel: Melody Parker, voice, accordion, piano, bells; Cory Wright, clarinet, flute, saxophone; Jacob Zimmerman, saxophone; Theo Padouvas, trumpet; Rob Ewing, trombone; Misha Khalikulov, cello; Andrew Conklin, Guillermo Garcia, guitar; Mark Allen-Piccolo, guitar, bass, bells; Nate Brenner, bass; Michael Coleman, keyboards; Mark Clifford, vibraphone; Jordan Glenn, drums, percussion; Sam Ospovat, drums, percussion; Robert Lopez, percussion.

Ordering info: soundsmelodious.bandcamp.com





DE3 *Live At Maxwell's*SUNNYSIDE 1448

Live At Maxwell's is a change of pace for trumpeter Duane Eubanks. Though he normally records with his working quintet, on this disc he has chosen to pare his group down to just two members, bassist Dezron Douglas and drummer Eric McPherson, who offer stimulating accompaniment and interaction. When asked about the group's name, Eubanks said, "DE3 stands for Dezron, Eric—and I'm three."

The first part of the opener, "Brainfreeze," recalls Don Cherry with the original Ornette

Coleman Quartet, but soon it is obvious that Eubanks has his own approach and sound. He has more technique than Cherry and does not engage in as much tonal variation.

Eubanks makes concise statements that are both spontaneous and logical, changing the moods and often floating above Douglas' bass patterns and McPherson's percussive comments.

Eubanks contributed four of the seven originals on this disc, while Douglas brought in "A Slight Taste." Two songs ("Saturday Moanin" and "Ebony Stick") were improvised on the spot. It is a measure of the trio's relaxed freedom that the free improvisations sound as if they were composed ahead of time. While often free, the music is not atonal. Rather, it is full of melodic improvising and often swings in its own way.

Among the highlights are the counterpoint between Eubanks and Douglas on "A Slight Taste," the straightahead playing on "Little Johnny C Blues" (Eubanks' tribute to his teacher, the late Johnny Coles), the dramatic trumpet solo on "Stokish" and the somewhat danceable "Ebony Stick."

-Scott Yanow

Live At Maxwell's: Brainfreeze; A Slight Taste; Little Johnny C Blues; Saturday Moanin'; Strokish; Ebony Stick; Little Rock. (41:59) Personnel: Duane Eubanks, trumpet; Dezron Douglas, bass; Eric McPherson, drums

Ordering info: sunnysidezone.com

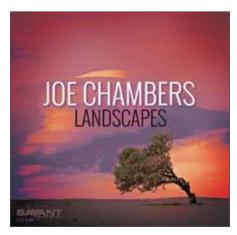
Joe Chambers Landscapes SAVANT 2140 ★★★★

The reviewing equivalent of this publication's Blindfold Test is to listen to an album knowing only the title and name of its leader. Taking that approach with veteran drummer Joe Chambers' *Landscapes*, one is introduced to a vibraphone-driven four-piece unit à la the Modern Jazz Quartet. It's a lush ambiance, full of complexity and color.

A slinky version of Monk's "Epistrophy" opens this dynamic album, and is followed by Horace Silver's "The Outlaw," which showcases a thoughtfully developed piano solo. The sustained vibraphone on "Never Let Me Go" emphasizes the lyrical themes of holding on and the potential pain of loss.

Chambers' strength as a composer is reinforced on "Samba De Maracatu," which boasts standout solos by Chambers himself. Paul Arslanian's lovely "Pas De Trois," Sonny Rollins' "Airegin," another Silver number ("Ecaroh") and Karl Ratzer's "Underground System"—rechristened "Underground (Railroad) System"—follow. Chambers generously allows the pianist to conclude the album with a solo reading of the title track.

Upon delving into the accompanying mate-



rial, the big reveal is that this is actually a trio date with Chambers overdubbing the tuned percussion as well as all the other non-rhythm section instruments. And the nearly 10-minute solo piano number? That's Chambers, too.

Landscapes sounds like the fluid live studio recording of four or more musicians, so it's impressive on multiple levels.

—Yoshi Kato

Landscapes: Epistrophy; The Outlaw; Never Let Me Go; Havana; Samba De Maracatu; Pas De Trois; Airegin; Ecaroh; Underground (Railroad) System; Landscapes. (59:58)

Personnel: Joe Chambers, drums, congas, bongos, vibraphone, marimba, synthesizer, piano (10); Rick Germanson, piano (1–9); Ira Coleman, bass (1–9).

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com



Dominick Farinacci Short Stories

MACK AVENUE 1112

Melody, nuance and a romantic sensibility fuel Dominick Farinacci's Mack Avenue debut, a largely mesmerizing collaboration between the gifted young trumpeter and veteran producer Tommy LiPuma.

Recorded at the Tommy LiPuma Center for Creative Arts at Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland (both LiPuma and Farinacci are natives of the city), this triumph of sound and sequencing is a seamless blend of jazz, world music, rock and bebop. Featuring a supporting crew of bassist Christian McBride, keyboardist Larry Goldings, arranger Gil Goldstein, drummer Steve Gadd and Clevelander Jamey Haddad on percussion, *Short Stories* hooks from the jump, with Farinacci's saucy rendering of the Gipsy Kings' "Bamboleo" suggesting a novel genre one might call Neapolitan Dixieland.

As for the rest of the disc, the song selection is judicious and tasteful, and the arrangements are largely impeccable. Standout tracks include Farinacci's "Doha Blues," a tribute to the cultural mash-up he encountered in Qatar as a Global Ambassador for Jazz; his gorgeous "Afternoon In Puebla"; and an elegant reading of Dianne Reeves' "Tango," featuring Goldings' florid piano and plush strings.

That's not to deny the pleasures of other tracks, particularly a driving interpretation of Cream's "Sunshine Of Your Love" boasting stunning Dean Parks guitar and a reverent take on "Soldier's Things" by Tom Waits, a favorite of both Farinacci and LiPuma.

-Carlo Wolff

Short Stories: Bamboleo; Señor Blues; Soldier's Things; Doha Blues; Sunshine Of Your Love; Tango; Somebody That I Used To Know; Afternoon In Puebla; Black Coffee; Parlour Song. (55:42)

Personnel: Dominick Farinacci, trumpet, flugelhorn; Gabriel Bolkosky, violin; Jacob Collier, vocals, electronics; Leah Ferguson, viola; Steve Gadd, drums; Larry Goldings, celesta, organ, piano; Gil Goldstein, accordion; Jamey Haddad, percussion; Mike Massy, vocals; Mark Mauldin, trombone; Christian McBride, bass; Dean Parks, guitar; Thomas Reed, bass clarinet; Heidi Ruby-Kushious, alto flute; Brianne Sharkey, bass flute.

Ordering info: mackavenue.com



Danielsson/Neset/LundSun Blowing

ACT 9821

***1/2

The rare and challenging art of the so-called "chordless" trio—sans such standard chordal tools as piano, guitar or organ—has been gaining traction of late, as confirmed by the recent triumph of Jack DeJohnette's trio with bassist Matthew Garrison and saxophonist Ravi Coltrane

Another intriguing and successful take on the lean trio context comes from Nordic climes, courtesy of potent Norwegian (and Copenhagen-based) saxophonist Marius Neset, Danish drummer Morten Lund and Swedish bassist Lars Danielsson.

Spontaneity was a key mandate for their new album, *Sun Blowing*, recorded on a free day in the studio. The album springs to life on the first track, Danielsson's perky, bluesy "Little Jump," which immediately demonstrates Neset's flowing improvisational prowess.

Diversity enhances the layout. The title track's loose pensiveness capitalizes on the setting's spaciousness; "Folksong" folds its folky theme into a natural-sounding 5/4 meter, and "Blå" (the name of a famous club in Oslo, translating to "blue") is a smart, harmonically lithe number. Neset's sole original tune here, a departure from his more complex compositional notions, is the understated ballad "Salme" (Psalm), with echoes of Norwegian sax legend Jan Garbarek. Fittingly, the session comes to a close with the late Don Grolnick's ruminative "The Cost Of Living."

The common tributary denominator is the late saxophonist Michael Brecker, who both Lund and Danielsson played with, and who exerted a deep influence on Neset's own approach.

—Josef Woodard

Sun Blowing: Little Jump; Sun Blowing; Up North; Salme; Folksong; Evening Song For B; Blà; The Cost Of Living. (44:08) **Personnel:** Marius Neset, tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone; Lars Danielsson, bass; Morten Lund, drums.

Ordering info: actmusic.com

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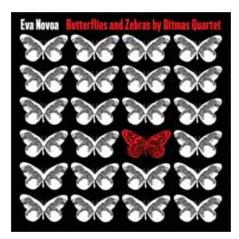


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Eva Novoa Butterflies And Zebras By Ditmas Quartet

FRESH SOUND NEW TALENT 492

On her striking new album, pianist-composer Eva Novoa, aided and abetted by quartet members (Michaël Attias on alto saxophone, Max Johnson on bass and Jeff Davis on drums), offers up further evidence of the current surge of creative energy coming out of Brooklyn. This is a shining example of 21st-century contemporary jazz, balancing individual spotlighted glories with a strong ensemble identity.

Phronesis Parallax EDITION 1070

***1/2

Imagine if Chick Corea and Stanley Clarke convened a modern edition of Return to Forever that opted for acoustic instrumentation instead of electric, while retaining the high-velocity improvisational jousting and flair. Such impressions casually make their way onto Parallax, the sterling new disc from the Danish/ British jazz trio Phronesis. It's difficult not to think of Corea's fleet finger-work and labyrinthine improvisations on the zigzagging opener "67000 MPH" or Clarke's sinewy pulse and supple essays on the suspenseful "Ayu." Pianist Ivo Neame and bassist Jasper Høiby bring plenty of full-throttle dialgue, but Phronesis isn't so beholden to the iconic fusion band that its own voice never emerges.

Anton Eger's skittering drum patterns, forward-leaning momentum, wily rhythmic displacements and sudden bursts of combustion provide a good measure of the trio's differenitating characteristics. For all its virtuosic resources, Phronesis doesn't allow pyrotechniques to obscure the cogency of its compositions. Delicacy, dynamics and spatial awareness play strong factors in this music.

Opening with a sturdy declaration of sound and intent, the record begins in an emphatic yet slippery way, with the snaky Ornette-esque melody of Davis' tune "Spicy Water." On that tune and beyond, Attias' alto—adroit and artful—serves as a potent voice. Elsewhere, he shows solid, curiosity-fueled impulses on the aptly nerve-buzzing "Pre-Nerve Scale" and the angular "La Part Maudite."

A bold and restless pianist, moving easily between acute precision and painterly fervor, Novoa is also in command of compositional strategies, conveying a discernible creative voice. Half the album consists of her originals: The quasi-minimalist piece "The Drone," built on a hypnotically looping cascade of lines, contrasts with the short, punch-drunk shuffle "Jack Nicholson" and the Carla Bley-ish ballad "Coffee Stain."

Looping back around to the cohesive group at hand, the album closes with a shout-out from the pianist-leader to the drummer. "For Jeff" is a fairly mesmerizing, slow-growing crescendo of a tune. Clearly, this is a band—and a record—to bend an ear toward.

—Iosef Woodard

Butterflies And Zebras By Ditmas Quartet: Spicy Water, The Drone; No Direction; Justin; Pre-Nerve Scale; Jack Nicholson; Coffee Stain; Chinese Shingles; La Part Maudite; For Jeff. (61:00) Personnel: Eva Novoa, piano, Fender Rhodes (3, 8); Michaël Attias, alto saxophone; Max Johnson, bass; Jeff Davis, drums.

Ordering info: freshsoundrecords.com



Given that this trio has been together for 10 years, it comes as no surprise that the accord among the three musicians is striking; melodies and improvisations unflold without announcing themselves too forcefully. In addition, each member contributes fetching compositions that don't become showcases for their chosen instruments but rather protean platforms for a multifacted yet likeminded unit.

—John Murph

Parallax: 67000 MPH; OK Chorale; Stillness; Kite For Seamus; Just 4 Now; Ayu; A Sliver Moon; Manoc Maniac; Rabat. (56:47)
Personnel: Ivo Neame, piano; Jasper Høiby, bass; Anton Eger, drums.

Ordering info: editionrecords.com



Keefe Jackson/ Jason Adasiewicz Rows And Rows

DELMARK 5024

***1/2

The potent improvised music scene in Chicago is built around bands, usually with each member filling a prescribed role, which is just one reason this intimate duo recording between reedist Keefe Jackson and vibraphonist Jason Adasiewicz stands out.

On a deeper level, this pair really is a band, albeit a small one. Although the two actually shared a living space in the early years of the 2000s, they haven't played in many bands together. Apart from their work in drummer Frank Rosaly's Cicada Music and cornetist Josh Berman and His Gang, their new album *Rows And Rows* stands as their first bona fide collaboration. Regardless, it's impossible to miss their significant rapport as players and friends.

The chattering, tightly wound "Caballo Ballo" sets the high standard for this album; every line each player unfurls fits around the other with dazzling logic. This intimacy can't be faked. There's a tender, old-school ballad feel at the heart of "Questioned, Understood, Possessed," due in no small part to the velvety finish of Jackson's tenor sound. Once the pair veers off into the improvisation, however, a flinty friction scuffs up the veneer. The opposite holds true for Jackson's tart bass clarinet lines on "Where's Mine," which are softened by the resonant glow of Adasiewicz's lush, metallic overtones.

Patience, empathy and a deep affinity radiate from every track, like two good friends getting together to shoot the breeze. Most pals don't speak with such Shakespearean elegance.

—Peter Margasak

Rows And Rows: Caballo Ballo; Questioned, Understood, Possessed; Where's Mine; A Rose Heading; Swap; Rows And Rows; Putting It On, Taking It Off; Cannon From The Nothing Suite; Thunder Cooker. (42:04)

Personnel: Keefe Jackson, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet; Jason Adasiewicz, vibraphone.

Ordering info: delmark.com

New Dimensions in Neo Soul

It's difficult to craft anything like a concrete definition of neo soul. In general, it's music rooted in traditional r&b but open to absorbing just about anything else into its fabric. It's a vibrant and creative strain of modern pop music, distinct from the more straightforward revivalism of Eli "Paperboy" Reed and Sharon Jones.

Laurin Talese's approach on Gorgeous Chaos (Self Release; 54:07 ★★★½) is spacious and focused on the voice, with a heavy jazz influence. On "Cry Me A River," her crystalline singing is accompanied only by Christian McBride's bass, highlighting her range. Bigger arrangements on "Winter" and "Same Mistake" complement her more typical vocal style, which combines breathy intimacy with sharp clarity; the former has an arrangement that never quite settles into a groove but still finds its way forward.

Ordering info: laurintalese.com

On **Soul Eyes** (Blue Note 602547873705; 42:45 ***), Kandace Springs also favors acoustic arrangements that foreground her expressive voice, a change from her more hip-hop-oriented debut EP. Jazz looms large in her sound, though pinning her to any specific influence is difficult. When accompanied only by piano, as on "Rain Falling," she sounds as though she'd be right at home in an early '60s nightclub, while "Novocaine Heart" puts a more contemporary spin on things with its bubbling bass line and instantly memorable chorus.

Ordering info: bluenote.com

England's **Corinne Bailey Rae** is well past the beginning of her career, having sold millions of albums and pocketed Grammy awards. In many ways, her approach on *The Heart Speaks In Whispers* (Virgin 3147; 55:31 ***\(^1\)2) is similar to that of Springs, with economical arrangements that leave plenty of space for her voice to roam, but the sonics are decidedly more modern. The stunning coda to "The Skies Will Break" recalls Kate Bush, keyboards rising to push the music upward, while "Horse Print Dress" slingshots through verses into more laid-back passages.

Ordering info: virginrecords.com

Xenia Rubinos takes the modern sounds further with her buzzy, eclectic sophomore album, Black Terry Cat (Anti-87471-2; ★★★∜2), on which she sounds equally at home rapping and wielding a melody. The electro sound takes a turn into heavy post-punk territory on "Just Like I," and "Mexican Chef" is



brilliantly punky rap that offers a bracing tour of the indignities visited on black and brown Americans, punctuating it with the line "we build the ghettoes then we tear them down."

Ordering info: anti.com

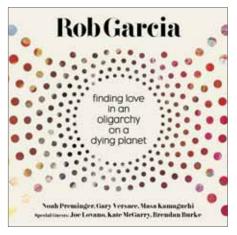
Anderson .Paak's Malibu (OBE/Steel Wool/Art Club/Empire; 61:02 ****) is similarly engaged with current events but makes more of a party out of it, balancing passing references to grandfathers who were shot with absurdly danceable numbers like the one-two punch of "Put Me Thru" and "Am I Wrong." .Paak, winner of the Grulke Prize for Developing US Act at the 2016 SXSW Festival, brings a strong voice to this outing, but his true strength may lie more in his chameleonic array of different approaches, which range from sinewy rapping to lover-man soul crooning.

Ordering info: andersonpaak.com

The party is pretty much the whole point on **Boulevards'** *Groove!* (Captured Tracks 245; 40:38 ****½), which earns its exclamation point with one emphatically rhythmic track after another. Jamil Rashad is the whole band, and opens the album with the aptly named "Set The Tone" by directly referencing James Brown. From there, it's off to the funky races, and it's almost impossible not to move to something like "Patience," with its four-on-the-floor beat, squiggling keyboards and talk-boxed first verse.

Ordering info: boulevardsfunk.bandcamp.com





Rob Garcia Finding Love In An Oligarchy On A Dying Planet

BJU 058

***1/2

Despite the wordy title, drummer/composer Rob Garcia insists that his latest album is not exactly protest music. The central theme actually foregoes working for a solution in favor of a mixture of hope and resignation. His thesis seems to be that, in the face of environmental crisis, political divisiveness and stratification of wealth, it's best to find what happiness you can—particularly in other people.

That's the gist of "People Are Everything," a

Bill Laurance
Aftersun
GROUNDUP MUSIC

★★★½

Amid the fleet of musicians that fill out the band Snarky Puppy, the keyboardists could form their own basketball team.

Bill Laurance has stepped out from that polished court with this solo release, a nine-track opus that ranges from sweaty electric disco-funk to smooth acoustic jams, usually bouncing through those disparate vibes from track to track. Opening number "Soti" could light up a dancehall. Percussionist Weedie Braimah is a whir of jingle-jangle over bassist Michael League's frenetic pulse, and the band seizes a tremendous groove with Laurance working various fuzzed-out keyboards. But when the acoustic piano steps in, a lot of that sweat evaporates.

Tunes like "The Pines" and "Madeleine," though propelled by the same four musicians, dance on the New Age fringe, with Laurance leaving little room for the piano to breathe. Recorded over the course of a week, this album is well polished, but maintains an organic feel through compact instrumentation and open-ended arrangements.

There is less competition for space on the

pleading ballad featuring Kate McGarry's insistent, hopeful vocals. The issues of modern life are expressed in tunes like the barbed, tense "Terror, Fear And Media," with appropriately frenetic solos by tenor saxophonist Noah Preminger and pianist Gary Versace; and the dirgelike "Guns Make Killing Easy," which swathes Masa Kamaguchi's aching bass solo in an ethereal lament. Joe Lovano adds his trademark husky tenor to three tracks, parrying with Preminger on the bustling "Greenland Is Turning Green" and exhibiting a mournful breathiness on "Precious Lives."

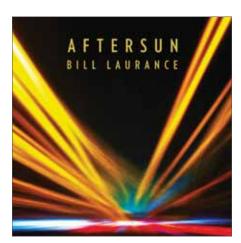
The album is a dense and scattershot provocation, capturing the frustration of a mind reeling in the face of injustice and intolerance. Lest this seem like an expression of hopelessness, however, Garcia opens the disc with a reimagining of Stephen Foster's "Beautiful Dreamer," allowing an assertion of optimism to hover over the remainder of the album. If that's not protest, it's at least an act of musical defiance.

-Shaun Brady

Finding Love in An Oligarchy On A Dying Planet: Beautful Dreamer, People Are Everything, Terror, Fear And Media; Precious Lives; Mac N Cheese; Act Local No. 1; Finding Love In An Oligarchy On A Dying Planet; The Journey Is The Destination; Guns Make Killing Easy; Greenland Is Turning Green; Johnny Has Gone For A Soldier, Whatever Gets You By; Act Local No. 2. (58:04)

Personnel: Rob Garcia, drums; Noah Preminger, tenor saxophone; Gary Versace, piano; Masa Kamaguchi, bass; Joe Lovano, tenor sax (4, 8, 10); Kate McGarry, voice (2, 8); Brendan Burke, spoken word (5).

Ordering info: bjurecords.com



Afro-Caribbean-flavored tunes that reach for a state of ecstasy. They're propulsive, and remain in service to the groove over the acrobatics of instrumental prowess. Nonetheless, Laurance has an effective arsenal of sounds programmed into his synthesizers, ranging from chicken-scratch guitars to rumbling strings.

-Sean J. O'Connell

Aftersun: Soti; The Pines; Time To Run; Madeleine; Bullet; Aftersun; First Light; Golden Hour; A Blaze. (53:48)

Personnel: Bill Laurance, piano, Fender Rhodes, davinet, Prophet 8, Moog Voyager, Roli Seaboard, mellotron, Hammond B-3 organ, Korg MS2000, percussion, Michael League, bass, Moog bass; Robert "Sput" Searight, drums, percussion, Moog bass, Hammond B-3 organ; Weedie Braimah, percussion.

Ordering info: groundupmusic.net



Yelena Eckemoff Leaving Everything Behind L& H PRODUCTION

On her website, Russian-born pianist Yelena Eckemoff lists her albums under three headings: Classical, Original and Jazz. This raises a question about her criteria, since *Leaving Everything Behind* hardly represents what most people would classify as jazz.

Of course, maybe it questions our preconceptions, too. After all, she has recruited three stellar jazz artists for this project. And there is plenty of improvisation on these 11 tracks.

At the same time, those improvisations often don't unfold in anything resembling a jazz format. Her piano seldom comps chords or plays clearly through changes. Sometimes she splashes dissonances in the background, as during violinist Mark Feldman's solo on "Coffee & Thunderstorm."

More often, Eckemoff plays linearly, not so much while switching soloist and accompanist hats but as if lacing a thread through extemporized fabrics with various degrees of prominence in the mix. Always, her pedaling is subtle and expressive, her tone liquid or, as Chopinists like to say, "pearly."

Eckemoff, who is also a painter, presents *Leaving Everything Behind* as a visual artist might show in a gallery. Each title evokes some element of her life from her perspective as an émigré. Her works nod occasionally toward literalism—drummer Billy Hart's chugging hi-hat at the top of "Love Train" is one of the few compositions in 4/4 among her preferred 6/8 meter.

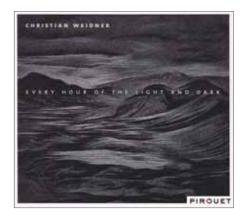
More often, her music is abstract, suggesting rather than depicting deep currents of emotion, always with candor and originality.

-Bob Doerschuk

Leaving Everything Behind: Prologue; Rising From Within; Mushroom Rain; Coffee & Thunderstorm; Spots Of Light; Love Train; Leaving Everything Behnid; Hope Lives Eternal; Tears Of Tenderness; Ocean Of Pines; A Date In Paradise. (79:43)

Personnel: Yelena Eckemoff, piano; Mark Feldman, violin; Ben Street, bass; Billy Hart, drums.

Ordering info: yelenamusic.com



Christian Weidner Every Hour Of The Light And Dark

PIROUET 3093

German alto saxophonist Christian Weidner has spent the last few years developing a sharp, sympathetic quartet. Every Hour Of The Light And Dark is his second Pirouet release with pianist Achim Kaufmann, bassist Henning Sieverts and drummer Samuel Rohrer after 2012's enchanting Dream Boogie. Sieverts and Rohrer were with Weidner even before that, giving the rhythmic interplay an intuitive feel. Moreover, Kaufmann—an ambitious leader in his own right—has a voice all his own, his deceptively cool playing like a blue flame, darting and glowing whether in a solo or support.

Weidner took the album title from Walt Whitman's *Poem of Perfect Miracles* and its rapt line, "To me, every hour of the light and dark is a miracle." The new album's pieces range aptly from the relatively light ("Fuzzy Membership") to the purposefully dark ("In Memoriam"). The warm, full sonic quality captures the scope of the compositions, especially on such moments as Rohrer's rumbling, rustling intro to "Dance Fantasm" or Kaufmann's echoing solo prelude for "Weightless."

With his compositions, Weidner was chasing a vocal muse, citing such inspirations as avant-chanteuse Annette Peacock, electronica artist James Blake and a muezzin heard in Istanbul. But voices have a subjective appeal, and the niggling issue with this album is Weidner's tone, which has thinned, with an unappealing squeal in the top register, employed often; for all the dynamism of the band and the aspiration of the writing, this limits the saxophonist's expressive allure, at least to these ears.

— Bradley Bambarger

Every Hour Of The Light And Dark: Tethys; Every Hour Of The Light And Dark: Fuzzy Membership; Weightless; Dance Fantasm; In Memoriam; Fairy Tale Friends; As Long As Now. (43:36) Personnel: Christian Weidner, alto saxophone; Achim Kaufmann, piano; Henning Sieverts, bass; Samuel Rohrer, drums.

Ordering info: pirouet.com

Historical / BY TED PANKEN

Pres & Count

Like its 162 predecessors on Mosaic Records, the newly released *Classic 1936–1947 Count Basie & Lester Young Studio Sessions* (MD8-263; 67:10/66:12/65:41/70:03/67:05/78:03/69:03/63:59; *****) can be thought of as a beautifully curated museum retrospective, where an iconic artist's evolution unfolds, painting by painting, as the viewer strolls through the galleries.

A similar process transpires as you absorb the 173 tracks on the eight CDs constituting Mosaic's latest mega-exhibit, culled from the holdings of Universal Music and Sony Music, including all of Basie's recordings for Decca between Jan. 21, 1937, and Feb. 4, 1939.

The material complements Mosaic's 2009 four-CD box *Columbia, Okeh And Vocalion Lester Young With Count Basie (1936-1940)*, now out of print. The single overlap is Young's Nov. 9, 1936, recording debut for Vocalion, included here to present alternate takes of "Evenin," "Boogie-Woogie" and "Oh, Lady Be Good."

One can also find on the new box set an unearthed alternate of "Honeysuckle Rose" from the debut Decca session that introduced the Count Basie Orchestra's breatheas-one, riff-based ensemble concept; the airy 4/4 Southwest lope that would imprint as the default beat signature of 20th-century jazz; and Basie's spare distillation of Harlem stride, heartland blues and boogie-woogie styles to which Thelonious Monk, among others, paid close attention.

The remasterings match Mosaic's customary high standard. For example, the Decca recordings—rendered flat on two iconic combo dates for Keynote in 1943 and 1944 and remastered sharp on previous issues—are speed-corrected to proper pitch. The accompanying booklet contains a comprehensive discography, high-resolution photos and a 30,000-word exegesis by Loren Schoenberg, whose prose, like the musical tales of his hero, is chock-a-block with original ideas and devoid of cliché.

This review is not the place to litigate the wonders of "Old Testament" Basie or the otherworldly magnificence of Young's playing during the decade in question. Let it be said, though, that Young was just barely 27 years old when he uncorked the solo on the master take of "Lady Be Good" that changed the course of 20th-century jazz expression.

He declaims with a huge sound—full, breathy and gauzy—across the range of the tenor saxophone. He wove standard chord sequences and blues structures into bold, cohesive canvases, applying to the task an unparalleled technique and time feel, a



Tatum-esque harmonic knowledge, a dry wit and an unsurpassed ear for deploying saxophone onomatopoeia and note placement as dramatic devices. He was the poet laureate of swing, preaching individuality above all else, as expressed by his bon mot: "You can't join the throng until you play your own song."

Charlie Parker heard Young's message, and analyzed "Lady Be Good" in the process of developing his own historic voice. Other acolytes included Dexter Gordon, John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, Sonny Stitt, Gene Ammons, Lee Konitz, Warne Marsh and Stan Getz—indeed, just about every one of the best-and-brightest saxophonists who came of age during the mid-20th century.

Aside from Young and Basie, observe how the singular comping of electric quitarist Eddie Durham—whose arrangements for Basie during 1937-38 codified the band's sound—shapes the flow of Young's idiosyncratic clarinet voice and trumpeter Buck Clayton's declarative elegance on a Sept. 28, 1938, Kansas City Six Commodore record. Focus on the phantasmagoric trombone inventions of Dickie Wells on the 1943 and 1944 records; the abundant pianism of Nat Cole on a sui generis 1946 trio recital with Buddy Rich on drums; the propulsive vocals of Jimmy Rushing and Helen Humes; and, throughout, the extraordinary array of beats and timbres generated by Jo Jones, whose impact on the shape of jazz to come was comparable to Young's.

Most of the music contained herein will be lingua franca to jazz devotees; they and neophyte listeners alike can easily find much of this material, though far from all of it, via digital streaming or downloading.

But Mosaic's attention to sonic and discographical detail, its contextual presentation and historical provenance—and the opportunity to hear the evolution of Young's effervescent style—make this collection well worth the investment.

La Vie de Levey

Even jazz devotees may respond to the title **Stan Levey: Jazz Heavyweight** (Santa Monica Press) with skepticism. Levey—wasn't he on some bebop records? And later active on the West Coast? But author **Frank R. Hayde** makes a strong case in this "authorized biography" for his subject as one of bop's founding fathers and a major player on the Los Angeles-area scene. (That title? It's a pun on the weight class in which Levey boxed professionally to supplement his gigging income.)

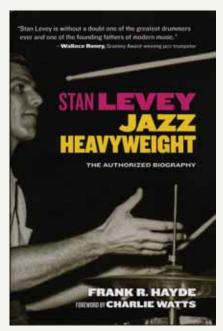
Indeed, Hayde depicts clearly and vividly what it took for a high school dropout, son of a crooked Philadelphia fight promoter and an alcoholic mother, to make a mark in jazz modernism. Interspersing career-spanning bits of interviews with Levey amid succinct yet comprehensive contextual material, *Jazz Heavyweight* sheds light on the era during which jazz went from being America's popular sound to its art music to the foundation of commercial pop.

Born in 1926 as Adolph Stan Levey, his Jewish parents always called him by his middle name. In childhood he was enraptured by music on the radio and inspired after seeing drummer Chick Webb lead his orchestra. Levey's mother encouraged him to pursue music, and he received his first drum kit at age 10. A 6-foot 2-inch, 178-pound teenager, Levey started boxing as a heavyweight, partly to win his father's attention.

"Throughout his life, the hulking drummer gave off an impression of hugeness that was universally intimidating," Hayde writes. He also exuded the charm to gain Dizzy Gillespie's mentorship after sitting in at a rehearsal. At 16, Levey was launched into a brief gig with Benny Goodman, and later entered the spheres of local up-and-comers like John Coltrane, Philly Joe Jones and the Heath Brothers.

Levey was also skirting trouble. He was introduced to drugs, became an addict and committed street crimes. A run-in with a local plainclothes policeman sent him running to New York City, where he worked on 52nd Street with clarinetist Barney Bigard, recorded with pianist Art Tatum and was soon rooming with Charlie Parker. He had not yet turned 20.

Although white, Levey was accepted by top black beboppers. He was also welcome in Woody Herman's band and Stan Getz's combo. He married, had a son, divorced and met the woman who became his second wife. He was riding high until, in 1949, sax-ophonist Sonny Stitt set him up for a bust, resulting in a 19-month sentence in federal prisons.



Levey got clean while incarcerated, and in 1952 made his comeback in Stan Kenton's orchestra with Lee Konitz, Zoot Sims and Frank Rosolino playing arrangements by Gerry Mulligan, Bill Russo and Bill Holman, as well as Bob Graettinger's monumental "City Of Glass." In early '55, Kenton's tour ended in Los Angeles and Levey was in the airport about to fly home when he was paged to pick up a call. It was drummer Max Roach, asking Levey to replace him in Howard Rumsey's All-Stars at the Lighthouse in Hermosa Beach.

Levey grabbed the opportunity to relocate. From then on, he earned his nickname, "Mr. Consistency," working constantly at the Lighthouse and in Hollywood's studios. In 1958 he opened a photography business, which didn't keep him from rejoining Benny Goodman, touring with Peggy Lee or backing Ella Fitzgerald at President John F. Kennedy's 1962 birthday celebration at Madison Square Garden—which he surreptitiously filmed. He worked through the '60s, usually uncredited, with Bobby Darin, the Supremes, Pat Boone, the Beach Boys and Frank Sinatra.

After recording the soundtrack for the movie *Rosemary's Baby*, Levey stopped drumming cold turkey in 1973. He concentrated on photography and sending his sons to medical school. In 1988 he developed cancer, which he survived. Levey died in 2005, after being befriended by Rolling Stones drummer Charlie Watts, who wrote the introduction to *Jazz Heavyweight*—one hitmaker to another, appreciating how it was.



Eric Clapton *I Still Do*

BUSHBRANCH/SURFDOG

**1

It was a bittersweet moment for Cream fans when Eric Clapton's 1960s supergroup put out its breakup disc, *Goodbye*. If Clapton's 23rd solo album, *I Still Do*, proves to be his swan song, as has been widely rumored, it's hard to imagine it inspiring that same degree of emotion.

First the similarities: Just as *Goodbye* featured a terrific Skip James cover ("I'm So Glad"), *I Still Do* delivers a rollicking "Cypress Grove" that does the Bentonia, Mississippi, blues legend proud. And Clapton again displays his talent for reinterpreting the Delta blues masters with Leroy Carr's "Alabama Woman Blues" and Robert Johnson's "Stones In My Passway."

Producer Glyn Johns was at the controls for some of rock's most iconic discs, including *Who's Next* and Led Zeppelin's first album, but he paints Clapton into a gentle pop corner with his production values, arrangements and song selection.

Clapton says his previous album, *The Breeze: An Appreciation of JJ Cale*, inspired him to play more rhythm guitar and less leads this time. Second guitarist Andy Fairweather Low is a tasteful, versatile player, but it's hard to imagine Clapton fans clamoring for more Low solos.

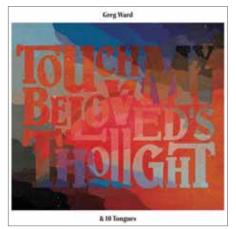
Slowhand likes to display his vocal chops, but there must be a more suitable showcase than with standards such as "Little Man, You've Had A Busy Day" and "I'll Be Seeing You." The number one talking point for *I Still Do* is whether guest artist Angelo Mysterioso is really George Harrison making a posthumous appearance on tape. Clapton says no way; I say, "Who cares?"

—Ieff Johnson

I Still Do: Alabama Woman Blues; Can't Let You Do It; I Will Be There; Spiral; Catch The Blues; Cypress Grove; Little Man, You've Had A Busy Day; Stones In My Passway; I Dreamed I Saw St. Augustine; I'll Be Alright; Somebody's Knockin'; I'll Be Seeing You. (54:07)

Personnel: Eric Clapton, guitar, tambourine, vocals; Henry Spinetti, drums, percussion; Dave Bronze, bass; Andy Fairweather Low, guitar, vocals; Paul Carrack, organ, vocals; Chris Stainton, keyboards; Simon Climie, keyboards, guitar; Dick Powell, accordion, mandolin, backing vocals; Walt Richmond, keyboards; Ethan Johns, percussion; Michelle John, Sharon White, vocals; Angelo Mysterioso, acoustic guitar, vocals (3).

Ordering info: surfdog.com



Greg Ward Touch My Beloved's Thought **GREENLEAF MUSIC 1050**

★★★½

Even though the aesthetic of reinterpretation and renewal is built into the DNA of jazz, it's a daunting task to take on one of the music's pinnacles. Greg Ward has done just that with Touch My Beloved's Thought. It takes its name from a line of verse quoted on the front cover of Charles Mingus' The Black Saint And The Sinner Lady, and its music is inspired by that LP, which stands as a peak achievement of one of the greatest talents in jazz.

Mingus said in his liner notes, "I wrote the music for dancing and listening." But he never got around to staging that union of music and dance, so Ward and choreographer Onye Ozuzu have picked up the challenge. Rather than try to perform a piece that can never be truly recreated, they built a new one on Black Saint's foundations. The music and dance collaboration premiered at Chicago's Millennium Park in 2015.

This CD was recorded around the same time at Constellation, a smaller venue also located in Chicago. Ward's orchestration, honed in several bands of his own as well as the cross-generational ensemble People, Places & Things, favors seamless surfaces and sharp corners. Thus when the full ensemble is in play, even the most impassioned horn solos, such as Ward's turn on the opening "Daybreak," feel like part of a solid wall of sound.

Anyone remotely interested in this work would do well to seek out Ozuzu's Vimeo channel, which currently hosts a performance of the piece with dancers as well as musicians.

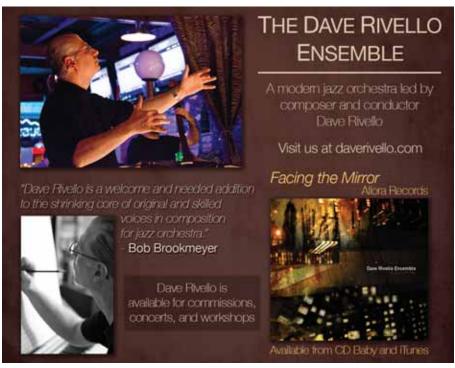
-Bill Meyer

Touch My Beloved's Thought: Daybreak; Singular Serenade; The Menacing Lean; Smash, Push, Pull, Crash; With All Your Sorrow, Sing A Song Of Jubilance; Grit; Round 3; Dialogue Of The Black Saint; Gather Round, The Revolution Is At Hand. (50:59) Personnel: Greg Ward, alto saxophone; Tim Haldeman, tenor saxophone: Keefe Jackson, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone: Ben LaMar Gay, cornet; Russ Johnson, trumpet; Norman Palm, trombone: Christopher Davis, bass trombone: Dennis Luxion, piano: Jason Roebke, bass; Marcus Evan, drums.

Ordering info: greenleafmusic.com









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Bach to Basics I: Shedding the Inventions

hen Johann Sebastian Bach was alive, he wasn't a household name like he is today. His abilities as an organist were more of a nuisance than a blessing, especially in the mindsets of churchgoers who wanted to hear more straightforward renditions of hymns. But their complaints regarding Bach's wild improvisations during services are incredibly useful to improvising jazz musicians today.

The goal of this article is not to point out techniques of Bach's music that are newly discovered, but to use some of his strategies in the practice room. From melodic sequences and harmonic progressions to creative phrase rhythm, we can learn from Bach's wisdom to be quick on our feet, and how to become better improvisers in any context.

MELODIC SEQUENCES

One of Bach's more obvious gifts, motivic sequencing can help us develop melodic variation. There are direct relations to jazz with respect to practicing patterns in all 12 keys to develop our internal hearing and technique. As a saxophone player, I often think monophonically, so Bach's 15 Inventions are perfect for isolating these patterns. They were originally written for students to approach the first stage of composing—as he wrote, "to acquire a strong foretaste of composition." Jazz musicians Lennie Tristano, Ron Carter and members of the Modern Jazz Quartet have also been known to use these pieces in their practice routines.

Bach takes this a step further by inverting, augmenting (by rhythmic value) and transposing patterns in his compositions, which we can use as a strategy in our own practice sessions. There's a clear example of this in Invention 1 in C. The initial motif is inverted later in the piece, in the upper voice alongside an augmentation (from 16th notes to eighth notes) of the first four notes of the original motif. A couple bars later, he took what was in the upper voice and put it in the lower voice, and vice versa—a technique that theorists call "invertible counterpoint." It's also interesting to note that by this halfway point, he already implied several different keys by transposing the motif or parts of it from C major to G major/E minor, through A7,9 to D minor. (See Examples 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d.)

The masters improvised like this, too. Listen to John Coltrane's solo on "Giant Steps," or Sonny Rollins' first chorus on "Tenor Madness." There's motivic inversion, augmentation and transposition all over these solos. Invent a pattern, play it forwards, play it backwards, augment its rhythm, use octave displacement to create an intervallic variation—these are all melodic concepts that you can use to make any improvisation sound good, all by fairly simplistic means.

HARMONIC PROGRESSIONS

There's a theory that Bach's views on harmony were mysteriously influenced by Johannes Kepler's laws of planetary motion. In a few words, the planets revolve around the sun, but not in circular motion; rather, the orbits are ellipses that never quite travel the exact same way. The same can apply to harmony: Bach's parts imply "changes," but it is the contrapuntal interaction between the independent lines that give rise to a *perception of harmony*. In many ways, that is part of our goal when improvising over changes in jazz: At any given moment, there may be so much going on that the chord isn't really played but more so implied.

Broadly speaking, Invention 1 takes us from implied C major to G major, then from D minor to A minor, and finally from F major back to C—another direct relationship to our jazz language: Much of our standard repertoire is based on circle-of-fourths relationships like iv-VII-



iii–VI–ii–V–I, or variants of that progression. So, in essence, one might borrow some melodic language from these pieces to practice the changes melodically. Invention 13 is full of arpeggios that imply all kinds of harmony—a great rendition of this from the jazz world is by Warne Marsh and Gary Thomas on Marsh's album *Ne Plus Ultra*. In this passage, Bach implies Amin7–D7–Gmaj7–Cmaj7–B7–Cmaj7–Amin7. The first four chord changes are akin to those in "Autumn Leaves," or hosts of other standards we play all the time. This arpeggio sequence could be used as an exercise to strengthen this harmonic progression. (See Example 2a.)

There are more non-standard implied progressions in Bach's music. He gives us some slick harmonic maneuvers in Invention 11, kind of like when you look the other way and miss that special moment. The piece is in G minor, but by the second bar he has already modulated. In the fourth bar, the voices imply C minor to C7 to D minor to D7 back to G minor, although this is only one interpretation, because any chord involving notes in that particular diminished triad could work. This could be a way for us to practice getting back to the home key: iv–IV7–v–V7–I on any tune.

Another quick sleight of hand happens at the end of this Invention. We are heading back to G minor via melodies implying D7 and C minor, but Bach extends once more with the voices suggesting A7 $_{\flat}$ 9, then D7 back to G minor (V7 of V to V7 to i). I've transposed this last passage into all 12 keys and practiced it all over my horn with octave displacement and it sounds fresh every time. This kind of practice relates directly to improvising as it uses individual pitches related to underlying chord structure. (See Example 2b, 2c.)

PHRASE RHYTHM

Phrase rhythm is a theoretical term for how the music breathes: How are the phrases connected, and are the phrase lengths equal? It gives us our perception of meter, since meter doesn't truly exist anywhere but in our minds. From my personal practicing of the Inventions, I hear a lot of overlapping of phrases, creating that sense of flow from one idea to the next. The ones I recognized almost instantaneously come from two of

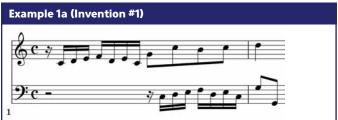
the most frequently played Inventions: #8 in F major and #4 in D minor. They also both happen to be in meters based on groupings of 3.

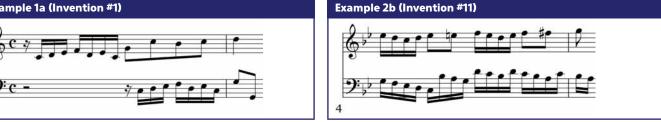
In Invention #8 Bach presents an idea, and creates rhythmic tension by repeating the same phrase on beat 2. People may hear different meters here; for example, it could make sense for these two bars to be in 4/4, but however you hear it, there's no doubt that it interrupts the strength of 3/4. This is a close-up view of how shifting the placement of a phrase can change our perception of meter, like when we talk about soloists "playing over the bar line" in the jazz world. There are countless examples of this in jazz, so one way to practice would be to incorporate other meters into our practice of 4/4.

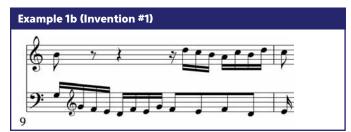
There are many examples of asymmetrical phrasing in jazz; Charlie Christian and Billie Holiday were masters at this. In Invention 4, the top voice starts with a four-bar phrase, then starts a new idea for a six-bar phrase, while the bottom voice joins in with a four-bar phrase, overlapping the top voice's four-bar phrase. A new idea then starts in the upper voice for four bars, and then turns around for two bars to cadence in F major. It's as if the two voices are waiting for each other to finish their last phrase, so Bach lengthens by a couple bars to make everything line up. This strategy has helped me to practice uneven phrase lengths to add variety, especially in the context of tunes with symmetrical phrase length. (See Examples 3a, 3b.)

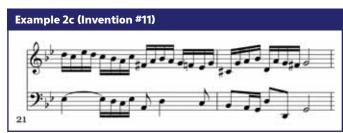
This is really just the beginning. There are hundreds of sequences, progressions and phrases in these Inventions alone on which I could write a book. I haven't even touched upon one of the things that Bach taught me to practice—how to change keys in the middle of a line—but this should be fairly straightforward if you play through one of his pieces. In general, these examples should stir some interest in music that may seem ancient but in fact provides jazz musicians with something fresh.

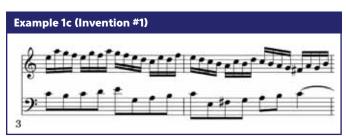
Mobile since her birth in Singapore, saxophonist Caroline Davis now lives in New York. Aside from leading her own groups, she has shared musical moments with a diverse group of artists, including Matt Wilson, Ellis Marsalis, Matt Mitchell, Randy Brecker, Bobby Broom, Greg Saunier, Ron Miles and Billy Kaye. In addition to being featured as a sidewoman, her recent album, Doors: Chicago Storylines, was released by ears&eyes Records in 2015. As an educator, Davis brings her unique knowledge of music and psychology to her teaching, as she completed a Ph.D in Music Cognition at Northwestern University in 2010. She has been on the faculty at Litchfield Jazz Camp for the past 10 years, and has been an adjunct faculty member at several universities in Chicago (DePaul, Northwestern and Columbia) prior to making New York her home, where she now teaches for Jazz at Lincoln Center. Contact her at carolinedavismusic@gmail.com or visit carolinedavis.org



















Seeing Music, Hearing Images

usic was the ultimate form of escapism for me while I was growing up. School was a rather dull experience, and classes seemed grey and endless. Music had the power to bring colors to a world that otherwise seemed void of interest, and was literally the soundtrack to my existence. It put a filter on everything around me, instantly turning life into something altogether more emotionally relatable. This was the first, and most visceral way in which I related to this art form. That entrancing feeling left in me a permanent impression of liberation and transcendence. This probably explains the cinematic quality that permeates my writing today. It goes back to that simple concept of music acting as the "extraordinary" soundtrack to an "ordinary," everyday life.

I was raised surrounded by paintings. My grandfather, Édouard Collin, or *Grand Collin* as we called him, was an artist. His work covered the walls of the house I grew up in, and I was exposed to visual arts long before I started playing the piano, at age 6. Édouard Collin studied at the prestigious École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and went on to receive the highly coveted Grand Prix de Rôme at age 22. The painting that earned him this prize, a large oil on canvas completed in a mere couple of days, depicts a religious scene of Jesus and Mary.

Édouard was also a great teacher, and he shared with me invaluable pieces of wisdom about art in general, and painting in particular. He believed that no matter the amount of technique involved in the creative process, the final result should first and foremost reach the viewer on a purely sensory and guttural level—or else the art was essentially flawed, or "lying." A solid foundation in the fundamentals of painting technique—volumes, proportions, lines, colors and tones—was all but a means to ultimately creating an emotional experience for the viewer. Art, he felt, was the transformation of impressions into expression. It was a means to communicate emotions, rather than a vehicle to promote intellectual, cognitively driven technical artifacts.

Given this background, it should come as no surprise that the visual arts often inform my compositional process, and that my music in turn conveys imageries to my audiences. The albums I put out with my trio have also led to a significant amount of film scoring work, which has further shaped my compositional instincts when writing for my group. Here are a few ways in which I have used movies, photographs and paintings to spark that elusive, unconscious burst of creativity called inspiration. I hope those principles, applied to visual arts and beyond, will help enrich the reader's creative process.

STIMULATING THE SENSES

Our senses are interconnected. Opening the channel to one sense will tend to stimulate the others. As professional musicians, we often experience "hearing overload." After performing, composing and going out to check out even more music, my ears are often taxed to a point of desensitization. When that happens, listening to more music usually won't open the doors to creativity. I find that being visually stimulated helps reopen the vault of primal inspiration. Being engaged with sight actually makes me hear things in a unique and peculiar way, in turn helping me gain a fresh perspective on music, and sounds in general. When that happens, sounds and images seem to morph into one another, creating a dynamic universe with its own implied momentum and storyline. For that reason, going to the museum, taking long walks or



late-night drives around the city all have become an integral part of my creative process when making a record.

ALL ART FORMS RELATED

All art forms—from filmmaking to painting, from dance to music—share the same fundamental dimensions and building blocks: form, climax, tension-and-release, texture, rhythm, variation on a theme, etc. When studying a painting, I subconsciously equate colors and tones to musical dynamics, texture to orchestration, proportions and volumes to form or rhythm, and the main subject matter of the painting to a melodic theme. This allows me to get inspired in a "peripheral" manner, rather than drawing inspiration directly from another piece of music. Picasso's abstract rendering of a portrait might provoke me to explore non-functional harmony, or broken rhythms. The narrative of Chagall's fantastical scenes, with their bold and uniquely contrasting tones, might inspire a strong melodic line supported by lush diatonic cluster chords. The aesthetics of Bacon's work might motivate me to explore darker textural soundscapes.

I also find that studying the approach of different painters to a common subject can be very informative when looking for new ways to rearrange an already existing piece of work, such as a jazz standard. A mother holding her child, or a vase of flowers on a wooden table, are both classic subject matters in the art world, much like the blues and "Rhythm" changes are pillars in the jazz idiom. How are these subject matters treated by Van Gogh, Matisse, Klimt or El Greco? Each artist will use vastly different techniques to manifest their conceptual and expressive intention. The resulting aesthetics might range from naturalistic and representational to narrative, abstract or symbolistic—all of which potentially urge me to explore an arrangement from a new perspective.

STORYTELLING & EMOTIONS

There are two things that I learned from working as a film scorer. Firstly, a strong plot is absolutely fundamental for a movie to be effective. There is no hiding behind a flawed script. If the plot is poorly conceived and lacks focus, the film won't keep your attention. A script should have an overarching storyline propelled by a causal chain of events, with a

carefully crafted rhythm of tension, release and climax. I find that principle to be of paramount importance in musical composition, and constantly ask myself: Is this tune telling a compelling story? Is the new section I am working on truly a development of the narrative of the section that precedes it? In essence: Is this composition a meaningless fabrication of disconnected notes, or is it pulling the audience in what feels like a coherent, self-contained micro-universe?

Secondly, the momentum of a film is propelled by the emotions experienced by each character throughout the movie. A film score should, in turn, be the most vivid and accurate musical expression of these emotions, so as to give the viewer a window into the characters' hearts and minds. The actual choice of notes in film music matters much less than the overall emotional response it triggers in the audience.

When writing for my group, I often base a composition on a photograph, a painting, a movie or a documentary. It provides the piece with emotional purpose and focused storytelling. In script writing, it is often said that a story meanders whenever the writer loses touch with its central character. Likewise, the main melodic theme of a song is its main character. It carries the central emotion of the piece, it dictates what kind of story is being told and how the composition should develop. If stuck in the middle of a piece, I always go back to that main theme: What is it telling me? What is the thematic and emotional core of this tune? Referring back to the movie or artwork the composition was inspired by also helps stay true to its original message.

LISTENING BACK

Once a composition is complete, l play it back looking at images, or city scenes. If the piece tells a compelling story, the images seem to take a life of their own. A photograph will appear sharper, its colors bolder, its lines seemingly moving ever so slightly, in an almost three-dimensional way. At this point, it is the music that gives life to the image, not the other way around. When that happens, I know I wrote a good song.

Our musical instincts can be nurtured by keeping our minds open to all art forms—from sculpture to architecture, from fashion design to gastronomy, from filmmaking to dance. Getting our senses stimulated by a masterful work of art in any field can help spark creativity, overcome writer's block and gain a greater sense of focus and direction in our musical endeavors.



Romain Collin, described by NPR as "a visionary composer, an extraordinary jazz pianist and a very bright young rising star in the jazz world," recently released his third album, *Press Enter* (ACT, 2015). Originally from France and currently based in New York, Collin graduated from the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz and has performed/recorded with the likes of Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Marcus Miller, Terence Blanchard and John McLaughlin. Collin performs with his group at major festivals and venues internationally. In addition, he has written scores for award-winning shorts and feature documentaries. More information: romaincollin.com; booking: stephan@sgentnation.com.





Jeff Coffin's Tenor Saxophone Solo on 'Tall And Lanky'

any people know Jeff Coffin from his work with the Dave Matthews Band. Others may be familiar with him from his time as part of Béla Fleck and the Flecktones. But the multi-reedist also leads his own group: the Jeff Coffin Mu'tet. In 2001, Coffin released Go-Round, a collection of self-penned compositions, including the 24-bar blues "Tall And Lanky." He certainly likes to give himself a challenge. First of all, the song is in E, which is not a very sax-friendly key. Then he puts in two measures of 3/4, but not next to each other.

In spite (or maybe because) of these obstacles, Coffin delivers a rocking tenor sax solo over three choruses. Part of the very rock 'n' roll attitude comes from Coffin's use of the E blues scale (E-G-A-B-B-D). This scale works over the chords, and is a common means of soloing in rock and blues. When Coffin deviates from

this scale, it's almost always when the V chord appears (measures 18, 42 and 66). In fact, he goes outside the blues scale at this point in every chorus. In all three instances, Coffin emphasizes the pitches D# and F#, the third and fifth of the B7 chord. This brings out the sound of the underlying chord, and by doing it in the same place every time, he creates a sense of consistency and development in his improvisation. In the third chorus, he even inserts a C#. This makes the B7 sound more "majory" in bar 66 and relates to the C# he'd played on the E chord back in measure 56, where it created a dorian flavor, tempering the blues sound.

This C# reoccurs in bar 68, this time on an A7 chord. It makes sense on multiple levels, as it is the third of the underlying harmony, but also connects the B and D in the blues scale.

Coffin also continues this motion by playing a D# passing tone to get to E, from there continuing in the blues scale.

Coffin's intervalic choices are important as well. The majority of his improvisation is up and down the scale, which makes the larger intervals he occasionally employs stand out, especially when it's a tritone. The flatted fifth exists in the blues scale, and in bar 22 Coffin jumps from that Bb, up to E after what had been a step-wise ascent through the scale. In measure 40 he varies this idea by climbing through the scale to E and then abruptly dropping to Bb, from where he starts a scalar descent. And in bar 70, we hear another variation. He moves up the scale to E, as in measure 22, but instead of dropping he jumps up to the Bb, and then descends through the scale. He uses these inter-

vals like a master chef uses spices, just the right amount to make it flavorful.

Coffin effectively builds drama in this solo by masterfully exploiting the extended range of the tenor saxophone. He spans from a concert D an octave below the bottom of the staff (low E on the tenor) up to a concert D one octave above the staff (a high E in the tenor's extreme altissimo range; not many players can navigate here so fluently). That's a full three octaves.

Only once does Coffin climb to the high D (measure 56), but he zig-zags back and forth between the high B and low D a number of times. The low D first appears fairly early, in bars 5 and 6. Coffin then waits four bars before jumping up into the high range for A and Bb in measure 11, but he's shown us the majority of the range he'll be using in the first half of the first chorus. He then spends six bars working his way back down to the basement (in measure 17) and proceeds to spend even more time climbing back to the ceiling (the high B in mea-

sure 34). This up-and-down motion continues as Coffin works his way back down to the low D in bar 41 and back up to the high B in bar 50. At this point he deviates from this back-and-forth idea and stays in this upper register until the climax in measure 56. Then it's a long descent again until we hit bottom in bar 64, at which point he resumes his ping-ponging and climbs back up to a high Bb (bar 70). Though Coffin does start working his way back down from here, he doesn't reach bottom again, but decides instead to end his solo on a B in the middle of the horn's natural range.

Starting in the middle and then undulating back and forth between the extremes and ending in the middle again produces a sinewave kind of motion through Coffin's solo.

Concurrent with the rhythmic energy he's creating throughout, there's also a gentle rise-and-fall to his solo.

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





Toolshed >

DW Mini-Pro Solid Kit, Small Footprint

he initial idea of the DW Mini-Pro was to offer it as a high-end drum set for children—but after receiving much positive feedback, the company has now released the Mini-Pro as part of its Design series.

The Mini-Pro comes in two configurations with two finish options. The first configuration is 12/10/13/16 inches (snare, tom, floor tom, bass), and the second is 13/10/13/18 inches. The two finishes are Black Satin and a gloss lacquer Tobacco Burst. All shells in the Design series consist of North American maple with no re-inforcement hoops.

I play-tested the 18-inch-kick configuration with the Tobacco Burst finish, and in true DW fashion, first looks were impressive. The beautiful finish and the highly detailed marriage of hardware and wood were instantly recognizable as DW. But, my first impression of such an undersized kit was, "Sure it's a beautiful DW kit, but how can I use this in all of my various gigs?" In my first outing with the kit, I brought my favorite 14- by 6.5-inch snare to switch out after I had given the 13-inch DW snare a good run-through, because I wasn't really sure what to expect. I didn't realize until I was packing up at the end of the evening that it never occured to me to switch back to my regular "go to" snare.

The Mini-Pro's 13- by 5-inch snare had an even, full sound at all volume levels but was never overly bright or biting. The one thing I have always loved about DW snares (besides their great throw-offs) is the evenness with which the drum responds at all volume levels. There is never a quiet or loud stroke where the snare bed fails to respond in proportion to the volume being played. Listening back to recordings from that first night, I noted that the snare had a bright edge to it due to the maple, but was never overwhelming, or thin, as I have heard with other maple snares. During a couple of outings, I cranked up the snare to where you'd think a 13-inch snare should be tuned, and it sang with a "crack" and a full-bodied voice.

I left the pinstripe head on the toms during the duration of my runthrough, and they were far deeper sounding than than their sizes would suggest. I have to assume it is due to the mass of wood in the drums.

The bass had a tight punch that was never overbearing. It ships with a

lifter that facilitates the attachment of the pedal to an undersized bass drum. Even with all the various hardware accommodations that this kit offers (kick adapter, long bass drum spurs, long tom legs), the setup was solid, and I didn't experience any shifting/moving of the drum placement no matter the volume level of the gig.

For jazz gigs, the kit was completely appropriate, and for louder funktype gigs it would be hard to beat for its category. The price point is very friendly when compared to the DW line as a whole. Anyone looking for a kit with a smaller footprint should strongly consider the Mini-Pro.

I also received hardware from DW's 6000 series that featured the flushbase single-brace design. I used two booms, a snare and a hi-hat stand. I have always been a big fan of the retro flat-based design, but it can be hard to do in a modern context that is lightweight yet tough enough to tighten all the connections without fear of stripping. This hardware was very solid considering its petite footprint.

The DW 6000 nylon pedal was also perfect for the kit. I swapped out soft-felt beaters for the jazz gigs and kept the included plastic/hardfelt beater for the higher volume gigs, and it performed flawlessly.

-Matt Kern

Ordering info: dwdrums.com

Zildjian Avedis Cymbals Capturing the Classic 'A' Sound

he latest addition to the Zildjian "A" family is the Avedis series, created to emulate the classic sound of Zildjian A's during their golden period in the 1940s-'60s. Their sound is closely associated with well-known jazz recordings featuring drummers such as Max Roach, Connie Kay and Buddy Rich. It is also featured on countless pop hits of the '50s and '60s, as it was favored by drumming legends Ringo Starr and Hal Blaine.

Being a huge fan of vintage Zildjian A's (I own several), I was more than eager to try out the Avedis range. I play-tested a 21-inch crash/ride, an 18-inch crash/ride and a pair of 14-inch hi-hats. The vintage A's I own are the same size and weight as the new Avedis models, so I was able to do a direct comparison between new and old. Needless to say, the experience

was a considerable amount of fun.

The new Avedis series comes with an "aged patina" finish to give them a vintage look. The profiles of the 21-inch and the 18-inch are almost spot-on with my vintage A's. Hammering is relatively light but with much larger depressions than the typical A, giving the cymbals a more complex sound. Zildjian describes them as having a "played in" feel, which I completely agree with. All Avedis cymbals are listed as crash/rides. Jazz drumming great Mel Lewis always said that a good cymbal should do both, not one or the other, and Zildjian has executed that beautifully.

The 21-inch Avedis ride plays fantastically. The cymbal responds instantly to any dynamic you ask of it. It has an excellent balance of stick definition and controlled wash, just like most vintage A's, and it shares many of their sonic characteristics. My test cymbal had relatively harsh, pitched overtones that built up with the wash, but that could have been unique to that particular cymbal. The bell is clear and powerful when necessary, but musical at the same time.

The 18-inch crash/ride was my favorite of the set. It truly hits the mark and captures the sound and feel of some of the best vintage 18s I've heard. It works perfectly as a left-hand ride in quieter situations, but it has enough body and weight to serve duty as a true crash cymbal. Its relative thinness makes it very responsive and easy to play, but stick definition is good and doesn't suffer. The bell is very clean and cutting. It was well matched to the 21-inch ride I tested. This is a versatile cymbal that would work in a very wide variety of musical situations.

The 14-inch hi-hats are a good modern take of the classic New Beats from the '50s and '60s. They have a really nice balance of complexity and darker characteristics, but retain an excellent "chick" sound and cutting power if needed. They are effortless to play, and like the other two cymbals, they respond instantly to any dynamic you throw at them.

This is, indeed, a special line of cymbals that Zildjian is producing. According to the company website, you can order any Avedis cymbal within a particular gram weight range. From what I can tell, this is the only line in the entire Zildjian catalog that allows you to do that. This gives you a lot more control over desired characteristics you want to get from a cymbal.

Overall, I think Zildjian has done a great job of capturing the classic A sound. If you're a fan of vintage A's like me, these are definitely worth a look.



Yamaha Custom EXII Alto Saxophone Sonic Improvements, Enhanced Playability

he Yamaha YAS-875 EXII Custom series alto saxophone is ready to impress.

The concept driving this enhanced new model—a redesigned version of Yamaha's Custom EX alto—is to deliver stress-free playability to produce the best tool for expressing one's personal musical voice, according to Scott Yousey, Yamaha product specialist for wind instruments. The positive results will be obvious to saxophonists looking for an outstanding, versatile instrument.

Ergonomic innovations include adjusted key shapes and angles for the sake of more comfortable performance. Key locations were redesigned to fit performers' varying hand sizes. The palm keys are especially well located for helping to create an overall relaxed feeling when fingering.

> Sonic improvements in the Custom EXII include quicker response and a warmer tone quality. Yamaha's designers chose to reduce the diameters in the low C and low D tone holes and move them just a bit higher on the horn. The new bottom bow has been treated with

Yamaha's proprietary acoustic annealing process, which involves a heat-treating that alters the grain shapes of brass molecules. The above design changes result in a very responsive low range with excellent intonation.

The body of the Custom EXII features postto-rib construction. Key posts and the adjustable right-hand thumb rest are soldered to a separate bar of metal called a "rib," which is then soldered to the body of the saxophone. This process increases the strength of the construction and the added weight enhances richness of sound and resonance. The key spatulas are conveniently located, and the rollers work smoothly between fingerings. The springs move the keys with a feeling of smoothness and precision.

Playing the Custom EXII was a joy. The instrument felt comfortable from the start. The keys are in great

locations, and quick response was there for me with my Claude Lakey mouthpiece and the supplied Yamaha Custom 4CM.

Altissimo notes were especially good for me, and the redesigned front-F key felt great when heading upstairs and back. The altissimo G was remarkably easy and in tune. The especially easy response of the low notes let me relax more during play, and intonation was great throughout the instrument. Even multiphonic fingerings were well tuned. I found I could pay more attention to creative pursuits with the Custom EXII. Tone quality was warm and vibrant, and articulation was responsive.

The Custom EXII includes a high-F# key and redesigned front-F key. The neck piece is a Yamaha Custom V1. It can be ordered in three finishes: lacquer, black lacquer and silver-plated. Key buttons are mother of pearl, and the hand-engraved bell exhibits a lily design. The instrument comes in a luggage-style case with backpack straps and a spacious zippered storage pocket on top. It has an MSRP of \$5,739 and a limited five-year warranty.

The Custom EXII is an excellent saxophone and should be considered by professionals and serious students desiring more stress-free performance experiences.

—Bruce Gibson

Ordering info: usa.yamaha.com

Toolshed > GEAR BOX

1. Elite Double-Domer

Audio-Technica's Artist Elite AE2300 dynamic cardioid instrument microphone features the company's double-dome diaphragm for improved high-frequency and transient response. With a rugged brass construction and low-profile design, the AE2300 is a versatile performer with the ability to capture sound from amps, brass, woodwinds, drums and percussion.

More info: audio-technica.com

2. Sweet Spot

Pearl's 3D Cajon features a visually striking graphic element that's CNC-cut through each side of the instrument with contrasting wood inserts completing the design. Inside, the snare wires have been shortened and raised to create a larger bass strike zone so players won't need to lean over as far to hit the sweet spot. A clear lacquer is applied to the inside front faceplate to punch up snare response.

More info: pearldrum.com

3. Grip Enhancer

Vater's Tacky Sack contains a grip-enhancing rosin powder that absorbs moisture and provides added control of the player's drum sticks while performing in humid and sweaty conditions. Players need only to gently clap hands on the Tacky Sack to apply rosin to their palms.

More info: vater.com

4. Follow the Leader

Playing Lead Trumpet (Alfred/Belwin Jazz) is an instructional DVD that features Wayne Bergeron discussing the essential aspects of lead playing. A first-call lead player, Bergeron demonstrates a variety of concepts and techniques using tunes from the Gordon Goodwin's Big Phat Band Play-Along Seires: Trumpet, Vol. 2. The DVD is accessible to trumpet players at all levels from student to professional.

More info: alfred.com

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5. Computer Entryways

M-Audio's M-Track recording/monitoring series of interfaces gives composers and musicians of any level the ability to participate in computer-based recording. Of the five models in the series, four have full 24-bit audio performance, while the top-end M-Track 1212 USB-C high-speed interface features 32-bit/192kHz



Pearl

4

Belwin JAZZ



Jazz On Campus >



Mintzer Mentors High Schoolers on Tour

FOUNDED IN 1861, SAINT PATRICK HIGH School is the oldest all-male high school in Chicago. Its jazz program is considerably younger, though, having been launched at the turn of this century.

Saint Patrick's student musicians have already made their mark in a little over a decade-and-a-half. In 2004, the Saint Patrick Honors Jazz Band became the first high school group to perform at the Chicago Jazz Festival. Every other year, the school's jazz students take a spring-break trip, which has included visits to New Orleans, New York and Colorado. In March, 50 of the program's jazz instrumentalists and vocalists traveled to Southern California, where the Saint Patrick Honors Jazz Band performed at the San Diego Heritage Festival and participated in a clinic with acclaimed saxophonist Bob Mintzer, who leads his own big band and is a member of Yellowjackets.

For its Heritage Festival set, the Honors Jazz Band performed four numbers under the direction of their teacher, Austin O'Brien. A John Denton arrangement of "Theme From M.A.S.H." and a Lennie Niehaus arrangement of "Laura" were nice nods to Southern California's show-biz legacy, with a Dave Barduhn chart of "(Back Home Again In) Indiana" and a Sy Johnson arrangement of Charles Mingus' "Moanin" rounding out the set

The highlight of the trip was working with Mintzer, the Buzz and Barbara McCoy Endowed Chair in Jazz at the University of Southern California's Thornton School of Music. "Our band was able to play some of the literature that they had been working on this year," O'Brien said of the experience. "It was very interactive between student and clinician. Bob told the rhythm section how they could blend and play together. And he gave some great ideas on transcribing and finding different ways to be able to better yourself and improve your listening.

"He also led them through some of the tunes that they were playing at the Heritage Festival and gave them some pointers on playing behind the lead player, always listening back to the lead trumpet and blending to that sound, and making sure that everything is layered underneath that."

Mintzer's clinic demonstrated the effectiveness of encouraging students to make simple alterations in their approach to the music. By playing examples on his saxophone and doing call-and-response with the band, Mintzer was able to teach by example.

"The kids learned some specific practicing techniques from him," O'Brien said, noting that Mintzer was generous with his time. "Often you don't have a lot of time with clinicians, and they end up breezing over some big ideas—and not talking about the nitty-gritty things.

"But the funny thing is that students end up hearing a lot of the same things that *I've* said before. But hearing it from a fresh face, someone who's as experienced as Bob Mintzer, really puts it in perspective."

—Yoshi Kato

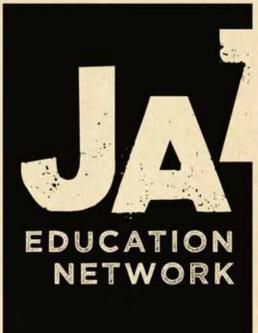
School Notes



Sandoval's Honorary Degree: Jazz and classical musician-composer Arturo Sandoval received an honorary degree from the University of Notre Dame during the school's 171st commencement ceremony. Pictured above with Sandoval (center) at the May 15 event are Notre Dame President Fr. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C. (left), and Richard C. Notebaert (right), chairman of the university's Board of Trustees. nd.edu

Rites of Spring: During this year's commencement season, numerous degrees (many of them "honorary") were bestowed upon jazz musicians and celebrities associated with the art form. Trumpeter-composer Wadada Leo Smith received an honorary doctor of arts degree from California Institute of the Arts. Until his retirement in 2013, Smith was a faculty member in the Performer-Composer Program of The Herb Alpert School of Music at CalArts. Actor Don Cheadle, who directed and starred in the film Miles Ahead, was also honored during CalArts' May 13 commencement. ... Composer and multi-instrumentalist Anthony Braxton received an honorary doctor of music degree from New England Conservatory on May 22. ... Providence College presented George Wein, NEA Jazz Master and founder/producer of the Newport Jazz Festival, with an honorary doctorate degree on May 15. ... Former New York Yankees center fielder Bernie Williams lined up with more than 200 other graduating Manhattan School of Music students on May 13 to receive his bachelor of music diploma. Williams, 47, spent the last four years studying jazz guitar at the school.

Final Bar: Jazz trumpeter, composer and music educator Paul Smoker, who served on the faculty at Nazareth College in Rochester, New York, died May 14 at age 75. Smoker held full-time positions at the University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh, University of Iowa and University of Northern Iowa, as well as Coe College. In 2001, he was appointed to coordinate the jazz studies program at Nazareth, where he directed the jazz ensemble and combo and taught jazz history, jazz theory and improvisation. naz.edu



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Blindfold Test > RY TED PANKEN

Dan Weiss

fter sitting for his first Blindfold Test, drummer Dan Weiss offered, as a comparison to the repertoire he listened to, his star ratings for Miles Davis' Relaxin', Cookin' and Workin' (4.8 or 4.9), or Miles' Nefertiti (5), John Coltrane's Crescent (5), anything Thelonious Monk did with Frankie Dunlop (4.5 or 4.6), Monk's Brilliant Corners (4.2), and Ornette Coleman's Change Of The Century (4.25) and Science Fiction (4.5). Known for his expert extrapolation of tabla ideas to the drumset, and for consequential sideman work with David Binney and Rudresh Mahanthappa, Weiss has recently made two large ensemble records, Fourteen and Sixteen (Drummers Suite), both on Pi.

Chick Corea Trio

"Work" (Trilogy, Concord/Stretch, 2014) Corea, piano; Brian Blade, drums; Christian Mc-Bride, bass.

It's a Monk tune. I'm blanking on the name. The first thing that struck me was the beautiful sound quality. I enjoyed the whole track. Is the drummer Eric Harland? Willie Jones? He or she is coming out of the tradition, very fresh, beautiful touch and feel. The piano player had the command and aggressiveness of Benny Green, but then I thought Aaron Goldberg. I like the interplay between everybody. It's none of those people? I'm stumped. 3.7 stars. [after] It seemed too obvious, but the cymbals sounded like Brian. That's the straightest I've heard him play in a long time.

Jack DeJohnette/Ravi Coltrane/Matthew Garrison

"Alabama" (In Movement, ECM, 2016) DeJohnette, drums; Garrison, electric bass; Coltrane, tenor saxophone.

That's got to be Jack. Got to be Pat Metheny. Not Pat? It sounds like Michael Brecker to me. No? [Jan] Garbarek? [Chris] Potter? I liked the tenor player a lot. I second-guessed myself on Jack midway through because of how the hi-hat sounded. But the flow, the China cymbal and elasticity was a giveaway. I like how they kept the mood the whole way through. 3.8 stars. Jack is one of my all-time favorite drummers. He's so fresh in any context, so musical in every situation.

Kneebody + Daedelus

"Drum Battle" (Kneedelus, Brainfeeder, 2015) Nate Wood, drums; Ben Wendel, tenor saxophone; Daedelus aka Alfred Darlington, Monome, processing; Shane Endsley, trumpet; Adam Benjamin, keyboards; Kaveh Rastegar, electric bass.

That's Kneebody-Daedelus. The guys in Kneebody are all good friends and tremendous musicians. Nate Wood is one of my favorite musicians. I have his solo CDs, which Dave Binney turned me on to. Those are masterpieces—he sings, plays drums, plays bass, plays guitar, and he produced, mixed and mastered them. Kneebody has a very distinctive, forward-thinking sound. I'm a fan of Daedelus, too. That track had equal balance between the acoustic and electronic elements; really one entity, as opposed to two. 3.9 stars.

One For All

"Frenzy" (The Third Decade, Smoke Sessions, 2016) Joe Farnsworth, drums; Eric Alexander, tenor saxophone; Jim Rotondi, trumpet; Steve Davis, trombone; David Hazeltine, piano; John Webber, bass.

Sounds like Billy Higgins to me. Louis Hayes? Billy Hart? [laughs] [Ed] Blackwell? Oh, it's a living drummer. Victor Lewis? The Cookers? The first break sounded directly like Philly Joe Jones, and the drummer didn't alter the ride cymbal at all, as Billy did, which is why I didn't think it was him until the last third of the tune. Then the sound of the drums, the cymbals, the vocabulary sounded like Higgins. To me it felt like they're older musicians who maybe did



their thing better earlier in their career. 3 stars.

Ches Smith

"Wacken Open Air" (The Bell, ECM, 2015) Smith, drums; Craig Taborn, piano; Mat Maneri, viola.

I liked the composition, the in-head, and I liked the piano-drum duet. But the first improvisation for me lost the essence of the tune. I liked the drummer's choices, and I especially liked the textures in the piano duet. The drummer is drawing upon a big palette, and definitely navigates the harder structures with ease. I don't know who it is. 3.2 stars. [after] I'm a big fan of Ches and Craig and Mat.

Milford Graves

"Know Your Place" (Grand Unification, Tzadik, 1998) Graves, percussion.

Very unique voice. Definitely African-drumming-influenced, and, from what I heard, a logical extension of where Blackwell could have gone. When you play solo drums, you've got to try to have something to say and make a statement to hold people's interest; this grabbed me from the first couple of notes. 3.7 stars. [after] I had a feeling it was Milford. I've loved his playing ever since I heard the New York Art Quartet. It's funny how much he reminded me of Blackwell.

Allison Miller's Boom Tic Boom

"Hoarding The Pod" (Otis Was A Polar Bear, Royal Potato Family, 2016) Miller, drums; Myra Melford, piano; Todd Sickafoose, bass; Jenny Scheinman, violin; Kirk Knuffke, trumpet; Ben Goldberg, clarinet.

I really like what the pianist was doing in the composition. But the energetic atmosphere that was created in the head—the gestures that were happening in the melody—wasn't held over in the improvisation, and then it kind of lost me. 3 stars.

Matt Wilson's Big Happy Family

"No Outerwear" (Beginning Of A Memory, Palmetto, 2016) Wilson, drums; Terell Stafford, trumpet; Joel Frahm, tenor saxophone; Gary Versace, piano; Martin Wind, acous-

The drummer was very clear, and told a great story throughout. The time felt great. The pulse felt great. I enjoyed the drum solo. It was very clear and very straightahead; the first China cymbal crash and the second cymbal crash were really well-timed. The China cymbal made me think Billy Hart. 3.7 stars.

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.



