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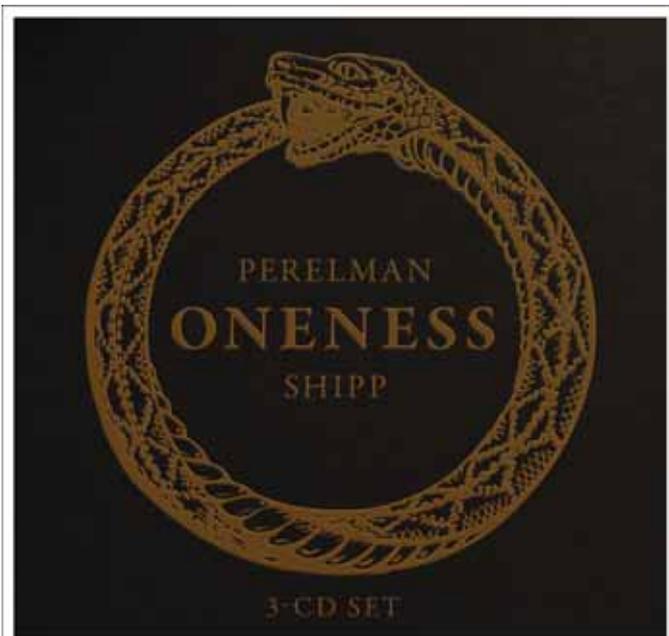
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11-time Grammy-nominated pianist **KENNY BARRON** emerges with his new quintet consisting of drummer **JOHNATHAN BLAKE**, bassist **KIYOSHI KITAGAWA**, saxophonist **DAYNA STEPHENS** and trumpeter **MIKE RODRIGUEZ**. Eight years after becoming an **NEA Jazz Master**, Barron, whom *Jazz Weekly* hailed as "the most lyrical piano player of our time," continues striving for new creative heights.



MARCUS MILLER LAID BLACK

Bassist extraordinaire **MARCUS MILLER** follows up *Afrodeezia*, his expansive exploration of music from the African diaspora, with a return to funk on his vibrant new album *Laid Black*. Marcus brings the party with special guests including **TROMBONE SHORTY, KIRK WHALUM, and TAKE 6**.



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ROBERT GLASPER X KAYTRANADA THE ARTSCIENCE REMIXES

3-time GRAMMY-winner Robert Glasper joins forces with producer **KAYTRANADA** on *The ArtScience Remixes*, an 8-track EP that reimagines the songs from Robert Glasper Experiment's acclaimed 2016 album *ArtScience*. The set features cameos by **TALIB KWELI, ALEX ISLEY** and **IMAN OMARI**, and takes the Experiment's trailblazing blend of R&B, Hip-Hip, and Jazz into new sonic realms.

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ON THE COVER

30 Terence Blanchard

'We Are All Humans'

BY AARON COHEN

Trumpeter Terence Blanchard's new release is a concert disc that chronicles his dynamic band, The E-Collective. Titled *Live*, the album documents concerts in three U.S. cities that have been scarred by racial tension and fatal gun violence. We caught up with the Grammy winner to discuss the intersection of jazz and social commentary.



Grant Green performs at Oil Can Harry's in Vancouver, Canada, in September 1975.

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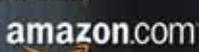
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Terence Blanchard

Analyzing Artistic Intent

JAZZ ISN'T CREATED IN A VACUUM. A WORK OF ART OFTEN IS shaped by sociopolitical forces that have influenced its creator. In some situations, the artist isn't consciously pondering those forces. In other situations, the artist focuses on them and crafts a work acknowledging those influences. (Abel Meeropol's protest poem "Strange Fruit" is one particularly important, harrowing example.)

Analyzing creative impulses is a topic that can be a thorny one for singer-songwriters to discuss in interviews. Many musicians never want to discuss with journalists the highly personal "intent" involved in composing a lyric. All these issues become even more complex when we consider them in relation to instrumental composers.

The July 2017 issue of *DownBeat* contains journalist Geoffrey Himes' excellent feature on saxophonist Bobby Watson, who talked about his album *Made In America* (Smoke Sessions). The disc pays tribute to African American pioneers whom Watson feels have been underappreciated, such as actress Butterfly McQueen and jazz guitarist Grant Green.

In the feature, Himes examines this question: "How can an instrumental composition convey specific information to the listener?" Watson's composition "The Aviator" salutes military pilot Wendell O. Pruitt, who directly inspired the song. But how does Watson let the reader know that? In his tune, Watson includes a musical quote from "The U.S. Air Force Song" (aka "Off We Go Into The Wild Blue Yonder"), and on the back of the CD, right beside the song title "The Aviator," is this phrase: "for Wendell Pruitt."

Trumpeter Terence Blanchard, the subject of this month's cover story (page 30), has spent a lot of time pondering gun violence, and his new album, *Live*, partially was inspired by his thoughts on this deeply troubling subject. This concert album was recorded with his band, The E-Collective, at shows in cities that have been scarred by gun violence.

But the album doesn't feature sung lyrics or song titles that nod to specific incidents in any type of blatant way. So how do Blanchard's fans know what the album is "about," per se? Well, at Blanchard's concerts, he often talks to the audience about the issues that inspired a certain song.

Blanchard incorporates a powerful quote from Thomas Jefferson in the liner notes to *Live*, and the album's closing track, "Choices," features a brief but potent spoken-word performance by Dr. Cornel West. Both elements greatly contribute to our appreciation of the adventurous music.

As two letters in this month's Chords & Discords section illustrate, some readers don't want to read about political views in *DownBeat*. However, we want the musicians we profile to express their thoughts on whatever topics are important to them. And we definitely want our readers to do the same. All of us, as jazz musicians and fans, should make the effort to listen to one another. Nobody learns anything by exclusively listening to those who share their opinions. Dialogue is healthy. Let us know what you think by sending an email to editor@downbeat.com. **DB**



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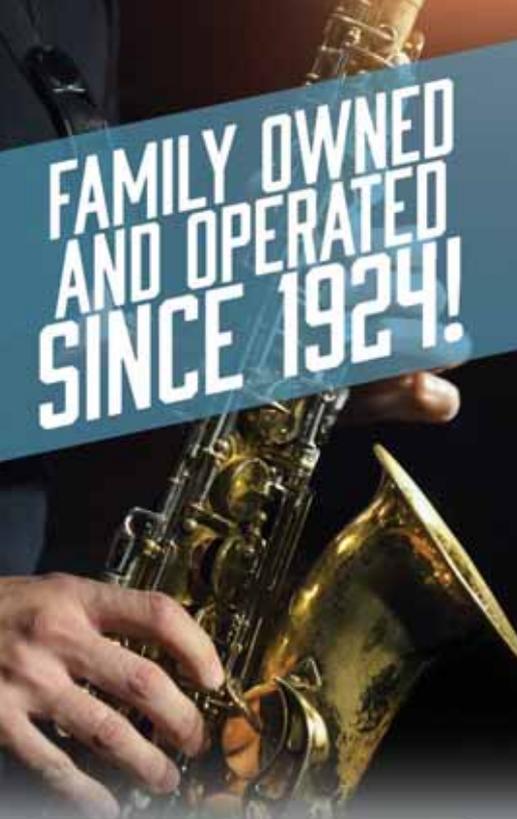
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Treatment for TDS

I've been a reader of DownBeat since 1980 and a subscriber for the past several years. I cannot remember a time when your magazine has been so obsessed with politics. One of my favorite, relatively recent examples was in the March 2017 issue's feature on the Jensen sisters: Ingrid Jensen expresses fear for the safety of her daughter because of Trump's election. *Really?* I know that our music's epicenter, New York, is a liberal/Leftist hotbed, but for God's sake, give it a rest!

I decided during the Clinton era that the quality of my life and what I would accomplish would not be determined by who held political office. As a political conservative and a jazz fan (the two are not mutually exclusive), this attitude served me well during the Clinton years and especially through the



Dee Dee Bridgewater (left), Esperanza Spalding, Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, President Obama and Kurt Elling celebrate International Jazz Day during an April 29, 2016, concert on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, D. C.

Obama administration. You should try adopting it, and maybe it would help you recover from TDS (Trump Derangement Syndrome).

JOSEPH IRIANA
SANFORD, MAINE

A Touch of Malaise

From under what rock did you extract Allen Morrison, the poor wretch who interviewed Kurt Elling for your June 2018 issue? Morrison's political whining in his article is insufferable: "the fate of America in the age of Trump," "the nation's current malaise." To which "malaise" is he referring? The roaring economy, tax reform, the robust stock market, the tumbling unemployment rate, deregulation?

I suspect that Morrison's malaise is his own, and he would do well to withhold his political bleating from his interviews and spare your readers his petulant rhetoric.

JOHN LIEBERMAN
CINCINNATI

Craft a Powerful Tune

There is a scene in *Downton Abbey* where the Dowager Countess, upon hearing some jazz of the day, makes this wry quip: "Are they playing the same tune?" Although the context is different, I find myself wondering something similar. For the fictional matriarch, the joyous spontaneity of early jazz was no doubt foreign to her Victorian constitution. For me, listening to some contemporary jazz today, it's more a matter of, "Are they playing a tune at all?"

Before the reader gets enraged, let me explain. This is not a blanket indictment of all contemporary jazz artists. Nor is this a critique of anybody's playing. What I'm talking about is *composition*. When I hear new jazz that underwhelms, it's almost always because the tunes are weak or not really tunes at all; they're sonic thingies with improvised bits on top.

I'm not seeking music that provides instant gratification. I love challenging music that continues to reveal itself on repeated listens. And I'm not suggesting new music should be constrained by some arbitrary structure from the past. I once read an interview with Pat Metheny where he explained his reasoning

for becoming a composer: He wanted to write music that he could explore as an improviser. And Metheny has created a catalog of fantastic music that goes far beyond just providing a bunch of utilitarian canvases for him to blow over. When I hear his ballad "Is This America? (Katrina 2005)," I'm emotionally moved long before we get to Christian McBride's deeply soulful bowed solo. I hear a beautiful piece of music that stands on its own, but also has some evocative playing on top of it.

Much of today's jazz is amorphous and plodding. I'm not being taken on a journey. I'm not hearing joy or sadness or even something in the middle, like melancholy.

To today's younger jazz artists I have this message: Please, please, don't try to become a leader and release your own music until you've really dug deep inside yourself and written some great music that stands on its own. But once you do, I want to hear it.

STEWART ELLIS
TORONTO

Corrections

- In our June issue, a student's name was misspelled in the results of the DownBeat Student Music Awards (SMA). In the category Blues/Pop/Rock Soloist, in the division Junior High School Outstanding Performances, the guitarist studying at Caleb Chapman's Soundhouse is Nathan Shen.
- In our June print edition, in the SMA category Vocal Jazz Soloist, one listing did not identify the correct educator. In the High School Winners division, the educator for co-winner Emma Hedrick (of Carmel, Indiana) is Erin Benedict.

DOWNBEAT REGRETS THE ERRORS.

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Beat

Politics Skirted in Saint Petersburg

Amplifying cultural exchange and diplomacy more than igniting heated sociopolitical debates has become an unspoken rule of International Jazz Day since the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz and UNESCO initiated the event in 2011.

Only part of that was true for 2018's edition of the main event, held in Saint Petersburg, Russia, on April 30. From an American perspective, especially considering the frequency with which jazz is equated with democracy, the decision of choosing Saint Petersburg as the host city raised some eyebrows. The word "democracy" never was uttered during various speeches about the transformative, peace-making potency of jazz, and neither were "collusion" or "Chechnya."

Before the concert began inside the Mariinsky Palace, Herbie Hancock, the event's ambassador and co-artistic director, exalted, "April 30th has become known as the day where people of all ages, genders and ethnicities come together and prove that our similarities are stronger than our differences."

Throughout the evening, and at several music workshops and panel discussions prior, the same message was echoed.

"The role of arts, the role of creation and especially of jazz, which has this tradition of bringing people together, is more important than ever in these challenging times," said Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO's director general.

In November 2017, tenor saxophonist Igor Butman, this year's co-artistic director, spearheaded Jazz Across Borders, an industry event aiming to introduce the Russian scene to the rest of the world. The two-day conference, in some ways, served as a prelude to this year's IJD. The April 30 concert—which included musicians from the United States, Brazil, Germany, Mali, Israel, Japan, Panama, Cuba, Australia, China,



Ben Williams (left), Branford Marsalis, James Morrison and Igor Butman perform in Saint Petersburg, Russia, to celebrate International Jazz Day.

Italy and Morocco—allowed several esteemed Russian talents, including Butman, to display their remarkable musicianship.

The Moscow Jazz Orchestra ably accompanied the Manhattan Transfer during its razzle-dazzle rendition of "Birdland," pianist/vocalist Natalia Smirnova shined during her take on "My One And Only Love" and pianist Anatoly Kroll displayed his mastery of the Brazilian samba during Luciana Souza's billowing "Eu Vim Da Bahia." Butman, though, is one of Russia's biggest jazz stars and demonstrated why during his solo on Hancock's treatment of Stevie Wonder's "You Got It Bad Girl."

Like much of the discourse, the music was more congenial than confrontational. Under the direction of American pianist and composer John Beasley, the concert kept it safe by focusing on apolitical material. It's a move that some

could argue was a bit jarring, given how much discussion has been focused on jazz's diplomatic power and how it helped imbue African Americans with a sense of dignity against endless tides of racism. Sociopolitical classics by John Coltrane, Max Roach, Abbey Lincoln and Nina Simone conspicuously were absent in favor of tunes like the traditional "Down By The River Side" and the standard "Too Close For Comfort." Even weeks after the 50th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, Hancock opted for his "Actual Proof" instead of his homage to King, "I Have A Dream."

Malian singer/guitarist Fatoumata Diawara, however, filled the void as one musician inclined to perform pointed songs. Her surging performance of "Sowa," a song touching on women's rights and forced pregnancy, provided a much-needed jolt in the concert. —John Murphy



Robert Glasper

MATHIEU BITTON

Hitting the Blue Note: Grammy-winning pianist/keyboardist Robert Glasper, along with Terrace Martin, Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah, Derrick Hodge, Taylor McFerrin and Justin Tyson, have founded the all-star collective R+R=Now, which will release its first album, *Collagically Speaking*, on June 15 through the Blue Note label. ... Bassist Marcus Miller is set to issue *Laid Black*, his first album in three years. The album, which is also on Blue Note, is scheduled for a June 1 release. Miller's guests include Trombone Shorty and Kirk Whalum in a program that merges jazz with musical influences from Africa, the Caribbean and South America.

More info: bluenote.com

Raise a Voice: More than a dozen female musicians, composers and scholars have developed a code of conduct sought to be implemented across venues, studios and media in an effort to create safer spaces for creative endeavors. We Have Voice, the new organization, outlined its initiative in an open letter to the jazz world and has had festivals, venues and labels sign on in a show of support.

More info: wehavevoice.org

Road Trip to Rhode Island: The Newport Jazz Festival will be held Aug. 3–5 in Newport, Rhode Island. This year, the lineup includes a tribute to Bill Withers by vocalist José James, as well as performances by Jane Bunnett & Maqueque, Charles Lloyd, Gregory Porter, Jon Batiste, Grace Kelly, R+R=Now, George Clinton and others.

More info: newportjazz.org

Final Bar: Jazz singer, pianist and arranger **Bob Dorough**, who reached generations of fans with his compositions for the *Schoolhouse Rock!* educational video series, died April 23 in Mt. Bethel, Pennsylvania, according to his wife, Sally Shanley Dorough. He was 94. ... **Charles Neville**, the saxophonist who won a Grammy alongside his siblings in the Neville Brothers, died on April 26 at the age of 79. In January, the New Orleans native revealed that he had been battling pancreatic cancer.



Eddie Henderson frequently eschews original compositions on his albums, opting instead for interpretations to create a "collective portrait."

JIMMY KATZ

Henderson's Cool Collective

IN 1970, WHEN EDDIE HENDERSON JOINED Herbie Hancock's Mwandishi band as a substitute trumpeter, he was the least experienced member of that groundbreaking group. As a result, he was subjected to some mild hazing to test his mental toughness.

"They called me 'rookie of the year,'" he said in April as he relaxed in his suburban New York home. "They wouldn't let me see the music."

But Henderson, who had just become a practicing psychiatrist, was up to it. In fact, his cool sound and creative brilliance so impressed Hancock that the gig, which was supposed to end after a week, lasted until the band broke up in 1973. By that time, Henderson was launched on an illustrious career that, at age 77, shows few signs of slowing down.

"That one week turned into the rest of my life," Henderson said.

These days, Henderson, who looks 20 years younger than his age, is an active member of The Cookers, an all-star collective that includes Mwandishi's drummer, Billy Hart, as well as trumpeter David Weiss, saxophonists Billy Harper and Donald Harrison, pianist George Cables and bassist Cecil McBee.

The Cookers have produced five swinging albums, most recently 2016's *The Call Of The Wild And Peaceful Heart* (Smoke Sessions). But he finds his work as a leader equally satisfying. The most recent manifestation of that work is his new quintet album, *Be Cool* (Smoke Sessions).

Like most of his recorded output, the album—Henderson's 30th as a leader—eschews his own tunes. "I'm not really a composer as such," he maintained. Rather, he prefers that his albums become forums for others' compositions. "That way I can create a collective portrait." (His previous album on Smoke Sessions appropriately is titled *Collective Portrait*.)

Of the 12 tunes on *Be Cool*, three are by members of the band: "Smoke Screen," by pia-

nist Kenny Barron; "Loft Funk," co-written by drummer Mike Clark; and "The Sand Castle Head Hunter," by Harrison, whom Henderson recruited from The Cookers.

Two tunes are by family members: the title track, by his wife, Natsuko Henderson, and "Nightride," by Henderson's daughter, Cava Menzies. And two are by iconic trumpeters who were both friends and influences: "Franchise" by Miles Davis, and "The Moontrane," by Woody Shaw.

While the songs on *Be Cool* vary widely in tone and temperament, they do not stress elasticity of form. At the same time, the arrangements reveal a penchant for reimagining.

For example, Henderson's first recording of John Coltrane's "Naima"—on 1989's *Phantoms*, which also featured Barron—was decidedly meditative. But on the new album, the meter shifts and the piece becomes a more kinetic exercise.

"I thought this would be a different flavor to it, in 3/4," he explained. "It would have that loping feeling, giving it forward motion."

In contrast, the standard "After You've Gone," typically performed with an animated kick, surprises by its almost mournful stillness. Henderson said he first played the tune last year for a woman in Hawaii who had recently lost her husband. Like that rendering, the one on the album proves that, for all its coolness, Henderson's horn can plumb the emotional depths.

"I was fighting back tears," Clark said, recalling how the take unfolded in the studio.

Clark, a veteran of Hancock's Head Hunters band who appeared on Henderson's *Heritage* in 1976, said the bond he and Henderson formed in those fertile days remains strong—and it comes through loud and clear on *Be Cool*.

"Eddie's one of those people you have an understanding with that never goes away," Clark said. —Phillip Lutz

Taking Satchmo to Heart

WHEN YOU'RE IN LOVE, IT'S EASY TO LOSE yourself in the allure of your beloved. Just ask Roberta Donnay: The San Francisco-based chanteuse has been infatuated with Louis Armstrong for much of her life. So, when she decided to record a tribute album, *My Heart Belongs To Satchmo* (Blujazz), her priorities were clear.

"Honestly, I wanted to copy him as much as I could," Donnay explained. "I'll copy not just his phrasing, but the actual notes he sang. You can't go wrong in copying him as either a singer or an instrumentalist, because he swings."

Through her apprenticeship as a singer with Dan Hicks & His Hot Licks, Donnay intensified her empathy with and insights into older repertoire. Producer Orrin Keepnews took her under his wing and helped shape her style. Eventually, she formed The Prohibition Mob Band, with whom she recorded the new album, as well as *A Little Sugar* (2012) and *Bathtub Gin* (2015).

Those earlier albums drew from the sound and spirit of early jazz. So does *My Heart*, though with a focus exclusively on one artist whose legacy is vital and recognizable.

Donnay and co-producers/co-arrangers Sam Bevan and Matt Wong chose some tunes that frequently have been recorded—such as "Sweet Georgia Brown" and "On The Sunny Side

Of The Street"—as well as "I'm Shootin' High," "That's My Home" and other relative obscurities.

With her languid vocal delivery, Donnay doesn't evoke her hero's rough timbre. Plus her range made it necessary to change keys from his original versions.

"Armstrong had this very rhythmic orientation with a lot of personal-isms," said Wong, 19, a jazz composition major at the Manhattan School of Music. "Because of that, the arrangements on his records are a little edgier. Roberta's phrasing is much more relaxed and behind the beat; she sings where a horn player might play the melody behind a singer."

The band's goal was to stay close to a classic jazz aesthetic. "I said to the horn players, 'Please don't play too many notes,'" Donnay said. "I said, 'Go back to the first time you listened to jazz, back when you were a kid. Come to this music from *that* place. Also, when you're taking a solo, you can't quote anything from after 1939.'"

One track, though, does deviate from the Armstrong aesthetic. "Pennies From Heaven" opens with trumpeter Rob Armstrong playing the four-bar theme in free time, after which Bevan comes in on bass. That's the entire instrumentation, as Donnay sings within and in front of harmonies she layered with Annie Stocking.



San Francisco-based vocalist Roberta Donnay pays tribute to Louis Armstrong on her new album.

EDDY BEE IMAGES

"Dan Hicks wrote the alternative lyrics and the arrangement," Donnay said, referring to the bandleader who died in 2016. "We worked on it, but I don't think we ever performed it. We never recorded it. Then Sam said, 'Let's just do bass and trumpet.' The first half is completely Dan's arrangement, and we rewrote it for the second half."

"It's an honor and a privilege to sing such great music. Plus, I figured I wouldn't make any money as a songwriter. So," she concluded, "I might as well sing jazz and have fun."

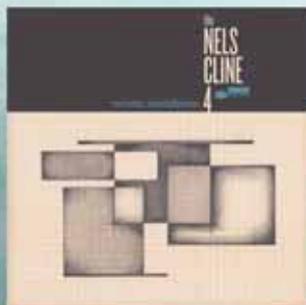
—Bob Doerschuk



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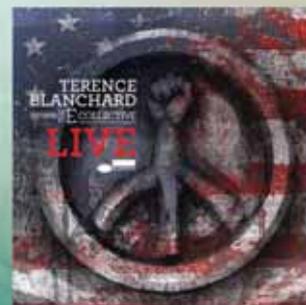
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COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

When visiting Cerreto Sannita, the village in Italy where his grandfather grew up, guitarist Al Di Meola was greeted with a celebratory dinner in his honor.

Di Meola Writing from a Place of Contentment

AS HE APPROACHES HIS 64TH BIRTHDAY in July, guitarist Al Di Meola remains a road warrior.

Last fall, he went out with his electric group as part of the *Elegant Gypsy* 40th anniversary tour to celebrate his explosive 1977 sophomore outing. In May, he began the second leg of his *Opus* tour, hitting the road with guitarist Peo Alfonsi and accordionist Fausto Beccalossi in an all-acoustic setting to mark his latest recording on the Hamburg-based earMUSIC label; *Elegant Gypsy Live* is expected to be released in June.

"It's no relation to *Opus*," Di Meola said over the phone from his Miami home. "It's all fireworks."

After a performance of Di Meola's acoustic trio in February at Infinity Hall in Hartford, Connecticut, where he played tunes from *Opus*, he talked about the new album, new label, new marriage and new lease on life.

YOU'VE SAID THAT *OPUS* WAS THE FIRST ALBUM THAT YOU

RECORDED WHEN YOU WERE REALLY HAPPY.

Yeah, the record before, *Elysium*, came during a dark period, when I was going through a long and difficult divorce.

PLUS, YOU WERE COMING OUT OF A CONTENTIOUS SPLIT WITH RETURN TO FOREVER, FOLLOWING THE 2008 REUNION TOUR.

So actually, I was going through two divorces at once. And it was like being in a dark tunnel. But just sitting with my instrument and writing whatever came out of my head was a deterrent for the gloom I was in during that period. And *Elysium* came out of that.

With this particular record, *Opus*, I had already been on the other side of that dark period when I began working on it. I had met someone new and now I'm in a really great marriage, and have a baby daughter. I was actually afraid I couldn't write anything at all unless I was a little bit pissed off or upset over something. In the past, I did really well with all those records when I was in relationships that were less than

perfect. So, you know, I disproved that whole theory with *Opus*.

A HIGHLIGHT OF *OPUS* IS "CERRETO SANNITA," WHICH IS THE NAME OF THE VILLAGE IN ITALY WHERE YOUR GRANDFATHER GREW UP. YOU VISITED THERE, RIGHT?

My wife, Stephanie, arranged with the town council of this little village a visit last June, the day after our show in Napoli. And I had zero expectations, only a curiosity to see where my grandfather grew up ... a man that I had never gotten to know, because he died before I was born.

So, we went up into the hills of Campania and when we pulled up to Cerreto Sannita, we saw both sides of the street loaded with people, and there was a sign hanging down that read: "Welcome Home."

I get out of the car and people are going crazy and then one after another, people are coming up and hugging me. And almost everyone was a Di Meola. I found out that my grandfather had 16 brothers and sisters, but only two—him and his brother—went to the United States to start a family. The rest of them stayed behind and had kids, and those kids had kids.

I received an honorary citizenship, which was a ceremony in the town court that was not to be believed. Then they had a big dinner in my honor that night and an Al Di Meola tribute band played, and I got up and played a little bit with them. And to have my wife there and my baby girl running around, I felt like I was in a scene from *The Godfather*.

The next day we had a tour of the village and they took me to where my grandfather actually lived. And on the door of this place was this amazing coat of arms, which had been in the Di Meola family for generations. Symbolically, this was the door that my grandfather had left to go catch the ship to Ellis Island and start a family in New Jersey. So, we took a picture of that door, which became the back cover of *Opus*. And that Di Meola coat of arms is on the front cover in gold against a black background. It's stunning.

YOU'VE LANDED IN A GOOD PLACE.

It's better than I could have ever dreamed. The label is great, Stephanie and I have been together for five years now and every day it's been pleasurable ... no stress at all. And I'm loving being a dad again at my age.

We do a lot of things together as a family, and they travel with me a lot. So, a lot of good things have happened since I've been married to Stephanie. She's a great team player and she helps out a lot with my career. It's nothing like what I've experienced in past relationships. I always saw that kind of thing happening from afar with other musicians who had wives that got involved in their husband's career, and I was always kind of envious of that. So, it's just the way it should be now. It's beautiful.

—Bill Milkowski

ECM

Nik Bärtsch's Ronin Awase

Nik Bärtsch piano
Sha bass clarinet, alto saxophone
Thomy Jordi bass
Kasper Rast drums

"Awase", a term from martial arts meaning "moving together" in the sense of matching energies is a fitting metaphor for the dynamic precision, tessellated grooves and balletic minimalism of Nik Bärtsch's Ronin.



Elina Duni Partir

Elina Duni voice, piano, guitar,
percussion

Albanian singer Elina Duni's voice and pared-down arrangements locate a common thread of longing that runs through folk songs, chansons, singer-songwriter songs of love, loss and leaving.



Kristjan Randalu Absence

Kristjan Randalu piano
Ben Monder guitar
Markku Ounaskari drums

Estonian pianist Kristjan Randalu makes his ECM debut with a striking album of his own music, with guitarist Ben Monder and drummer Markku Ounaskari. As an improviser of prodigious technique, Randalu's affinities are with the jazz musicians, but the forms and dynamics of his pieces also reflect a discerning sense of structure. Monder and Ounaskari are outstanding colourists and textural players, and they bring out much of the fine detail implied in Randalu's writing with inspired improvising.



Arild Andersen In-House Science

Tommy Smith tenor saxophone
Arild Andersen double bass
Paolo Vinaccia drums

Third album from Arild Andersen's powerhouse trio. "If ever there was an ensemble whose essence is captured in live performance, then it is Andersen's trio with Tommy Smith and Paolo Vinaccia (...) In-House Science is unquestionably their best recorded work thus far." - Jazzwise



Jakob Bro Returnings

Palle Mikkelborg trumpet, flugelhorn
Jakob Bro guitar
Thomas Morgan double bass
Jon Christensen drums

"Danish guitarist Jakob Bro creates magical music, impossible to categorize", wrote Downbeat of his album Streams. On Returnings, the magic is intensified as Bro and musical soulmate Thomas Morgan join forces with two distinguished elders of European jazz, trumpeter Palle Mikkelborg and drummer Jon Christensen.



Steve Tibbetts Life Of

Steve Tibbetts guitar, piano
Marc Anderson percussion, handpan
Michelle Kinney cello, drones

One-of-a-kind guitarist and record-maker Steve Tibbetts has an association with ECM dating back to 1981, with his body of work reflecting that of an artist following his own winding, questing path. This is his first new release, since Natural Causes eight years ago, described by JazzTimes as "music to get lost in."

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BOB WEIDNER
Sherrie Maricle (middle row, wearing pink T-shirt) poses for a portrait with the members of the DIVA Jazz Orchestra.

DIVA Celebrates 25 Years

BUDDY RICH USED TO BILL HIMSELF AS THE World's Greatest Drummer. Sherrie Maricle would not disagree. Chatting in a Carnegie Hall anteroom before an April performance with the New York Pops, the drummer recalled seeing Rich for the first time in 1974 at the Forum in Binghamton, New York. She was 11.

"I remember my jaw dropping," she said. "I was awestruck."

That experience served as motivation in her percussion studies, from her undergraduate career at SUNY Binghamton through her days as a doctoral student at New York University. And its effects are evident today in every swinging stroke of her drum stick as she propels the DIVA Jazz Orchestra into its second quarter-century.

The orchestra was the brainchild of Rich's longtime manager, the late Stanley Kay, who, aware of Maricle's ability to channel Rich's sensibility—and eager to help rectify the lack of opportunities for women in jazz—suggested to her that they form an all-female big band.

Under her musical direction, the band has over the years cooked up a muscular mix of swagger, soul and intense lyricism. The orchestra's impressive longevity can be attributed partially to the aesthetic clarity with which she guides the band.

"I like tunes with melodies," Maricle said. "For lack of a better term, 'straightahead' and swinging all the way."

Those were the guidelines Maricle gave the band members when they wrote material for the DIVA Jazz Orchestra's *25th Anniversary Project* (ArtistShare). Unlike the band's nine previous albums—which featured compositions and arrangements by genre stalwarts—the new album consists solely of tunes by the band's members.

"This recording represents the next chapter of DIVA," said trumpeter and band manager Jami Dauber, who joined in 1995.

Within Maricle's parameters, the tunes are a varied lot. They range from unadorned swingers, like baritone saxophonist/bass clarinetist Leigh Pilzer's opener, "East Coast Andy," to Maricle's closer, "The Rhythm Changes."

In between, the tunes invoke the sounds of Latin America and the Middle East. And they explore personal themes, as on Maricle's exquisite ballad "Forever In My Heart," a piece about love and loss, whose major minor seventh chords, she said, "embody the message of the song."

While the band rarely has departed from its prime directive to swing, it has experimented harmonically—combining with the New York Pops for Rolf Liebermann's 12-tone "Concerto For Jazz Band And Symphony Orchestra." The piece brought 95 musicians to the Carnegie Hall stage.

"It was an amazing experience," Dauber said. "I'd love to do it again."

The combined forces have tackled other extended works, among them Tommy Newsom's arrangement of "Ding Dong, The Witch Is Dead." But DIVA's 400 big band charts remain its bread-and-butter. At the band's annual March gig at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola in New York, the group emphasized those charts, highlighted by the material on the new album. The engagement featured guest appearances by two former DIVA members: clarinetist Anat Cohen and trumpeter Ingrid Jensen.

The band continues to schedule concerts at top venues. Last year, it played the Hollywood Bowl for the third time. In August, DIVA will make its debut at the Newport Jazz Festival. But other spots remain unconquered, prime among them the London landmark Ronnie Scott's. As the site of one of Maricle's favorite albums, 1980's *Buddy Rich Live At Ronnie Scott's*, the Soho club holds a special place among her aspirations.

"It's on my bucket list," she said.

—Phillip Lutz

Polish Jazz, Worldwide

In May 2015, Warner Music Group acquired the massive catalog of Polskie Nagrania, the old state-run Polish label of the Communist era that amassed about 40,000 tracks in every conceivable genre of music between 1956 and 1989.

The endeavor went bankrupt, thanks in part to poorly anticipating technological shifts: As the compact disc was becoming ascendant, the company invested money in its own vinyl-pressing plant. During its initial run, the label was arguably the most important outlet for Poland's vibrant jazz scene, and by the time it stopped producing new titles, the Polish Jazz series had released 76 titles, several of which are undeniable classics of European jazz, such as Krzysztof Komeda's epochal 1966 recording *Astigmatic* and a handful of early statements by the brilliant trumpeter Tomasz Stanko.

Last year, Warner Music launched an ambitious reissue program overseen by the veteran Polish jazz journalist Pawel Brodowski, longtime editor of *Jazz Forum*. According to Piotr Kabaj, the president of Warner Music Poland's management board, "We wanted to present the history of Polish jazz not only in Poland, but worldwide," noting that the extensive new liner notes are in both Polish and English. Every reissue is available both on CD—for most of the catalog, this is the first time the music has been made available in the format—and 180-gram vinyl.

As impressive as the reissue program is, the relaunch of the label is doubly notable because new recordings also are being produced. Two such titles were released last year, including *Polish Jazz—Yes!*, by veteran saxophonist Zbigniew Namysłowski, who appeared on many titles in the label's history under his own name, as well as a member of the Polish Jazz Quartet and as sideman for the likes of Komeda and Stanko. But the imprint also demonstrated a commitment to the future with *Another Raindrop*, the debut from a 23-year-old alto saxophonist named Kuba Wiecek, who was born six years after the Polish Jazz series came to a halt.

"To be honest, I didn't know so much of them," he said when asked about the influence the label had on him, although he added that the sounds of Komeda and Stanko are in his blood. He only started playing jazz at age 17, and soon after finishing high school moved to Copenhagen to study at the prestigious Rhythmic Conservatory, where fellow students introduced to him all sorts of other sounds. And it was there that



Kuba Wiecek

FILIP BLA BOWSKI / WARNER MUSIC POLAND

he fell in love with American jazz, absorbing the atmosphere that once brought the likes of Dexter Gordon and Kenny Drew to settle in Copenhagen. It also led to an admiration for contemporary artists like Jim Black, Chris Speed and Chris Cheek.

There are plenty of non-jazz influences on his album—cut with the veteran rhythm section of bassist Michał Baranski and drummer Łukasz Zyta—from the trip-hop feel of Massive Attack on "Szkodnik" to the folkloric dance rhythms in "Forest Creatures' Night Ritual."

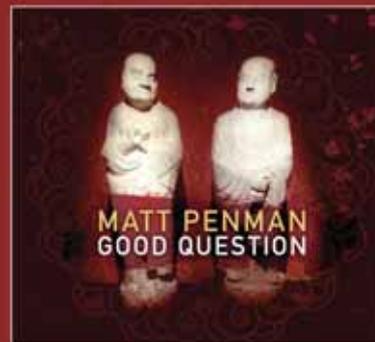
"I strongly believe that a concert and CD experience tell different stories, so I don't want to make the album the way we play live," Wiecek said. "Also, I like listening to songs that are [just] long enough."

Indeed, most of the 13 tracks on *Another Raindrop* are notable for their concision, and he said that a tune like the three-minute swinger "The Wheels You Can't Stop (Although You Try)" usually expands to a 20-minute workout live.

According to label product manager Anna Zajac, "Polish Jazz is not only a label, but it's synonymous with the best quality of music. It's extremely hard to choose the right artists who bring the series back to life after 27 years. Because of that, it's not the decision of one person. We have a group of opinion-forming jazz lovers outside and inside the company, and the final word belongs to Kabaj and Brodowski."

The series recently issued an album by pianist Piotr Wylerot, featuring the American saxophonist Dayna Stephens, and on the horizon is a double album by the Ptaszyn Wróblewski Sextet, which deals with Komeda's music.

DB

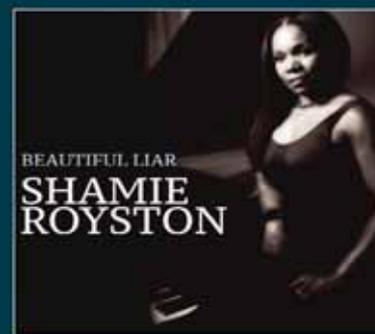


MATT PENMAN GOOD QUESTION

SSC 1513 - IN STORES NOW

Bassist/composer Matt Penman has spent much of the past decade developing and presenting music for the illustrious SFJazz Collective and the fantastic James Farm collective. That had left a gap between solo recordings that he felt it was time to abate. The result of his efforts are presented here on *Good Question*.

The ensemble that Penman assembled features not only the top musicians in jazz but also his regular collaborators and friends, including saxophonist Mark Turner, pianist Aaron Parks and drummer Obed Calvaire. There are also guest appearances by guitarist Nir Felder, saxophonist Will Vinson and percussionist Rogerio Boccato.



BEAUTIFUL LIAR SHAMIE ROYSTON

SHAMIE ROYSTON BEAUTIFUL LIAR

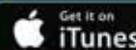
1510 - IN STORES NOW

Originally from Denver, Colorado, Shemie Royston has been an integral part of the New York jazz scene as a performer and educator. Her contributions as a pianist can be heard alongside celebrated leaders like Tia Fuller, Ralph Peterson, Sean Jones and Terri Lyne Carrington.

On *Beautiful Liar*, the core sound is that of the piano trio, embellished by one or two horns for different sonic possibilities. Drummer Rudy Royston provides a strong rhythmic foundation when paired up with bassist Yasushi Nakamura. Saxophonist Jaleel Shaw serves as a perfect voice for Royston's compositions. Royston also adds trumpet player Josh Evans, who ignites a sound of juxtaposing harmonies into *Beautiful Liar*.



iTunes.com/MattPenman
iTunes.com/ShemieRoyston
www.sanitaryrecords.com



Charles Lloyd performs at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival on April 28.



ADAM MCCULLOUGH

New Orleans Fest Hosts Generations of Talent

WHEN ALL THE GUMBO'S BEEN DIGESTED following seven days of music at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, it seemed that the music fell into three camps that might oppose each other, but actually trace the century-old music's history.

The most obvious camp was the veterans and true jazz warriors, who have stomped on stages around the world and still have something to say. On Saturday, April 28, Charles Lloyd and the Marvels started out bluesy with a distinctly African tinge, as Greg Liesz's pedal steel took the band in a rock direction, before slipping back into jazz. The band also

would veer into a spacey groove, before Lloyd returned the ensemble to Earth with a couple of lines. Midway through the set, the bandleader introduced Lucinda Williams, who presented a few of her songs, bringing the audience to its feet. She sang with power and ferocious passion, especially when named-checking several Louisiana towns on "Joy," taking Lloyd back to musical territory suited to Memphis, where he spent time playing in r&b bands.

The following day, it was Kidd Jordan and the Improvisational Arts Quintet with fellow octogenarian Alvin Fielder on drums that passed down hard-won jazz wisdom. The

band also featured Jordan's sons, Marlon on trumpet and Kent on flute and piccolo. The music ebbed and flowed with powerful group improvisations, leading into solos that hinted more at conventional jazz and gutbucket r&b. Jordan, 83, blows a little more carefully now, but still with control and a spirituality that proves post-Coltrane/Ayler music continues to have something deep and thrilling to communicate.

Another camp passing down jazz knowledge, besides the octogenarians, included players working with the traditional jazz music of New Orleans. Even though much of it has been standardized, it still speaks to the beauty and uniqueness of New Orleans 300 years after the city's founding. Banjoist Don Vappie put together a band of hip, contemporary players to do a great set of King Oliver tunes. These songs always have meaning in the Crescent City, and it was great to hear cats younger than 50 play this material with verve and excitement. The compositions might be old to the rest of the world, but in New Orleans, they still are a part of daily vernacular.

On Monday, in the Economy Hall tent, trombonist David Harris played blues in a duet with pianist and vocalist Cynthia Girtley. The pair's rendition of a Billie and De-De Pierce favorite, "Lonesome Road," resulted in some of the deepest and most profound music to be heard that day.

The final camp represented at the festival comprised a younger set of musicians, who brought electronica and many other musical techniques to their performances. Whether it was Nicholas Payton starting his set with a dark Miles Davis-vibe that turned into several songs of contemporary r&b-inflected jazz, or Terrace Martin reworking Donny Hathaway in a 21st-century fashion, there were innumerable sets displaying a contemporary feel. Christian Scott Atunde Adjuah performed with an attentive band capable of speaking in the many tongues of modernity. Even Terence Blanchard added some dense electric textures and digital effects to his set on the festival's last Sunday in the jazz tent.

One of the strongest sets at the festival was the Sean Jones Quartet closing out the jazz tent at the fairgrounds on the final Saturday of the 49-year-old event. It was a great, straight-ahead session, as Jones played with a pure and beautiful tone on trumpet and flugelhorn. His songs moved subtly, so that by the end of the performance, listeners were in an unexpected but not unrecognizable place.

It demonstrated that one strength of the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival—and the city in general—is the ability to showcase all facets of the music with both seriousness and uninhibited joy. —David Kunian

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Horse Orchestra performs April 20 at Kulturzentrum Schlachthof as part of jazzahead! in Bremen, Germany.

JENS SCHLEIKER / MESSE BREMEN

Global Community Connects at jazzahead!

“THIS IS THE MOST USEFUL TOOL FOR INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING in Europe,” said Cyril Moshkow, board member of the Russian Jazz Research Center, as he was greeting jazzahead! attendees at the trade show on April 19 in Bremen, Germany. “It’s not just the free booze.”

The industry gathering, which was founded 12 years ago, has become a fixture of the European jazz scene, drawing high-profile performers from the continent and beyond. The 2018 edition featured well-known American acts, like vocalist Jazzmeia Horn, but also European players, like German-based drummer Shinya Fukumori.

Sybille Kornitschky, project manager of jazzahead!, spoke eloquently about the divides being bridged in Bremen, as well as what the event’s longevity has meant for planning.

“There’s a lot of routine in organizing everything—structural things that do not change,” she said. “But then, as we put a partner country at the center of the festival and trade fair, you have to deal with a new country—they all work differently. It’s wonderful to understand this, but sometimes it feels like we are starting from scratch.”

She went on to say that word-of-mouth has been beneficial to drawing new performers, label representatives, agents and others to jazzahead!, which counted 17,000 attendees April 6–22.

On April 19, eight groups from Poland, this year’s jazzahead! partner country, performed in a pair of halls at Messe Bremen, the expansive convention center where exhibitions are held, as well as at the Kulturzentrum Schlachthof. The Kuba Wiecek Trio, led by its namesake saxophonist, gamboled through inventive compositions, aiming at various times to mimic a glockenspiel or solidify whatever it means to be a new-millennium Euro-based ensemble indebted to jazz’s history and pop music’s populism.

The event’s European Jazz Meeting featured more than a dozen acts, including party band Horse Orchestra and Estonia’s experimental-leaning Kirke Karja Quartet; the German Jazz Expo spotlighted Markus Stockhausen’s Quadrivium; and Overseas Night showcased Sweden’s Freedoms Trio, whose music hued close to singer-songwriter conventions.

By the end of jazzahead!, Norway had been named the festival’s 2019 partner country. It’s a step to showcase the rich—and somewhat unappreciated—history of that nation’s music.

“I think that the birthland of jazz took a long time to realize that there’s a lot of wonderful jazz music outside of the United States. They did not realize that there was a strong and diverse jazz scene elsewhere,” Kornitschky said. “What’s really important for me is to let them know what wonderful jazz productions they can expect when coming here—or what they should read about and listen to.”

—Dave Cantor



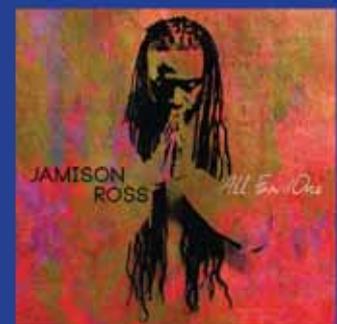
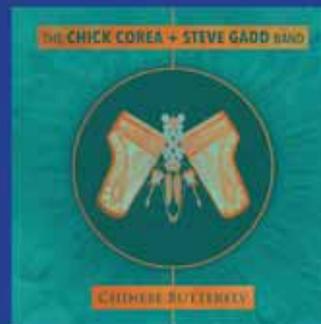
JAZZMEIA HORN – A SOCIAL CALL

Jazzmeia Horn, winner of both the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Vocal Competition and Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition, presents her GRAMMY-nominated debut recording *A Social Call*, an album that reveals a talent ready to take its place alongside the best headlining jazz vocalists of today.

ELIANE ELIAS: MUSIC FROM MAN OF LA MANCHA

“A Brazilian pianist of richly shaded harmonies, Ms. Elias is equally influenced by Bill Evans and bossa nova. She is about to release *Music From Man of La Mancha*, which finds her immersed in the songs of an old American Broadway production based on the story of Don Quixote. Recorded in the 1990s but never released until now, the album is full of frothy repartee between Ms. Elias and two rhythm sections.”

—*The New York Times*



THE CHICK COREA + STEVE GADD BAND: CHINESE BUTTERFLY (double album)

“[Chinese Butterfly] should not go unnoticed... stick around for the extraterrestrial electric keyboard work from Mr. Corea near the end, bringing it all to a phantasmagoric close.”

—*The New York Times*

JAMISON ROSS – ALL FOR ONE

“On the title track from the second album, he covers a little-known New Orleans R&B gem, superimposing the whirlpool syncopation of an Elvin Jones beat onto what was once a perky doo-wop tune. His vocals verge into a deep croon, betraying influences from all over the map: the jazz singer Gregory Porter, the gospel star Marvin Sapp, and a singing drummer from an earlier era, Grady Tate.”

—*The New York Times*



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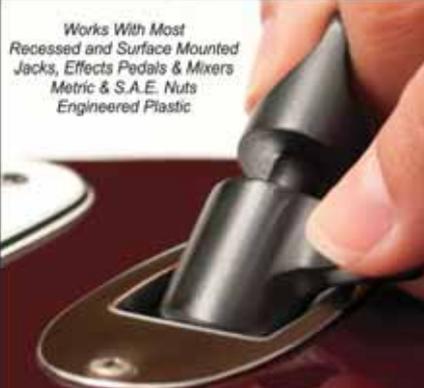


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Todd Marcus is a musician and community organizer in Baltimore.

COURTESY OF ARTIST

Marcus Merges Jazz, Activism

WHEN IT COMES TO MELDING SOCIAL CON-sciousness with art, Todd Marcus walks the talk. On his new album, *On The Streets (A Baltimore Story)*, the 42-year-old community organizer and bass clarinetist delivers a poignant portrait of his Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood.

In 2015, Baltimore erupted in riots after the death of 25-year-old African American Freddie Gray, who was arrested by police in Sandtown on April 12, fell into a coma while in a police van and subsequently died from spinal injuries.

The music on the album, which mainly was inspired by life in Sandtown, reflects a variety of moods, from the raucous "Ground Zero (At Penn. & North)" to the lurking "Fear Of The Known" to the blues-laden "PTSD In The Hood."

For 20 years, Marcus has worked in Sandtown for the nonprofit organization Intersection of Change. Gray's death and its aftermath had a big impact on him. "It was scary, because we didn't know how bad the riots were going to be," Marcus said. "Immediately, they evoked thoughts about the riots in 1968 after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr."

But Marcus didn't only want to focus on his neighborhood's simmering tension. At various points, *On The Streets* exudes tenderness and joy, particularly on the gospel-tinged "I Surrender All" and the gorgeous ballad "It Still Gets Still."

"Freddie's death brought a lot more national attention from the press to our neighborhood, and most of that was negative," Marcus said. "I know the challenging realities that we face, but I also felt like this was an opportunity to offer a more complete portrait of our community."

Born to an American mother and an Egyptian father who emigrated to the States in 1962, Marcus grew up in northern New Jersey. When he arrived in Baltimore in 1994 as a political science major at Loyola University Maryland, he immersed himself in the Sandtown commu-

nity by volunteering every Saturday for a local chapter of Habitat for Humanity.

One Saturday, Marcus showed up to volunteer but there was no work. Nevertheless, he had a surreptitious encounter that would shape much of his professional and personal career. "A guy rolled up in a pickup truck and said, 'I'll put you to work.' And it was [the Rev.] Elder C.W. Harris, the founder of Intersection of Change," Marcus explained. "We went down Pennsylvania Avenue and worked on this vacant building that they just acquired. I said, 'Look, I'm here every Saturday. Can I work with you?'"

Marcus splits his professional time between being a musician and serving as the executive director of Intersection of Change. The organization assists with the renovation of buildings, offers arts classes, provides safe havens for women struggling with substance abuse and homelessness, and maintains an urban farming program utilized by former inmates.

Within jazz circles, Marcus has built a reputation as an expert practitioner of a relatively unheralded instrument—the bass clarinet. As evidenced by a March concert at Baltimore's An Die Musik, where he commandeered an intrepid orchestra, Marcus possesses a deep velvet tone and deft improvisational prowess. He's also a noteworthy composer. The orchestra focused on music from his 2015 disc, *Blues For Tahrir*, which touched upon the 2011 upheaval in Cairo's Tahrir Square.

Trombonist Alan Ferber, a member of the orchestra, appreciates the transportive pull of Marcus' compositions. "The thing that I like most about Todd's music is that it really feels like jazz," Ferber enthused. "As a composer, sometimes you take the band away from what the spirit of jazz really is. Even though his music is highly composed, it tends to dip into the folk elements of jazz."
 —John Murph

Jazzkaar Marks Genre's Breadth

IT CAN TAKE A FEW DAYS FOR A FESTIVAL'S character to emerge, with settings and shows gradually collecting into a distinct impression. Not so with the Jazzkaar Festival's 29th edition, held April 20–29 in Tallinn, Estonia. The opening night of the Baltics' largest jazz fest offered a swift initiation into Estonian culture and suggested the shape of jazz to come during the next 10 days.

In celebration of the nation's centennial of independence, a special performance called "The Story of One Hundred" gathered festivalgoers in shipyard hangars to watch a black-and-white film. Onscreen, 100 ordinary citizens gazed unwaveringly at the camera, or moved meditatively through natural environments of bogs and beaches, as if roaming into ECM album covers.

That sort of aspirational culture continued in Jazzkaar's main venues within Telliskivi Creative City, where factory buildings have been repurposed into a street-art-anointed wonderland of shops, bars, restaurants and clubs. Twenty- and thirtysomethings drank martinis among upcycled décor, before heading to festival performances. Those shows brought in American artists like Cory Henry and Ambrose Akinmusire, along with Euro acts like Ellen Andrea Wang and Sons of Kemet. But Estonian jazz was stronger than ever this year.

On the smaller Punane Maja stage, an Estonian showcase night started with the Avarus Trio, an enchanting chamber group of flute, bass and vibes. Doubling flute and bass framed the vibes' colorful harmonies, all with a pulsing momentum. Over in the larger Vaba Lava black box theater, one of the most anticipated acts was hometown hero and pianist Kristjan Randalu, who's promoting his first ECM release, *Absence*. With American guitarist Ben Monder and Finnish drummer Markku Ounaskari, Randalu showed a command of musical languages that begs comparison to Keith Jarrett's. Demanding and lyrical, he plays as if stretching inspiration between the world's cultural capitals and Estonia's storybook forests.

With so much competent amateur singing in the culture, professionals can sing to part the heavens, and are equipped for variable conditions: Tenor Mikk Dede, for example, was as impressive performing contemporary sacred songs with Vox Clamantis during Estonian Music Days as he was the following week in Jazzkaar's Estonian Voices show. Estonian Voices, a showy sextet cut from the cloth of Manhattan Transfer, premiered jazz-arranged Baltic folk songs, making child's play of tight harmonies and interlocking rhythms.

Of Jazzkaar's 26,000 attendees this year, only

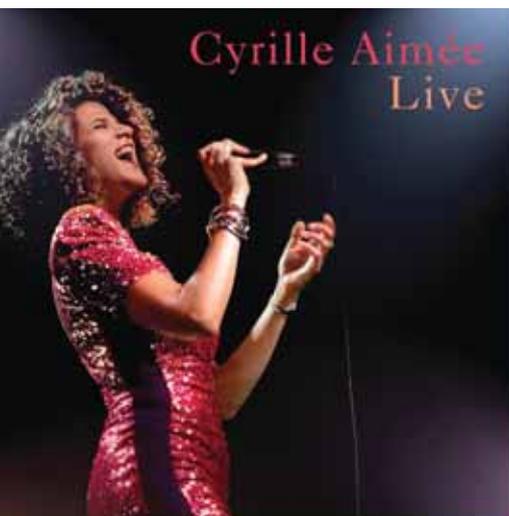


The Avarus Trio performs at the Jazzkaar Festival's Estonian showcase in Tallinn, Estonia.

about half bought tickets. Free and ticketed concerts are held throughout the country, with an Urban Space Project taking emerging musicians into streets, trams, schools and airports.

The eclectic programming always has relied on the highly cultivated tastes of director Anne Erm, who in her 70s still travels widely to attend 200 scouting concerts each year. Erm mentioned that she might retire after next year's 30th anniversary festival, which raises questions about its future artistic direction.

Catching five of Jazzkaar's 10 days, I found Estonian jazz flourishing, developing both erudite and popular styles—all with an alluring undercurrent of risk, the inadvertent gift of its Soviet occupation days. —Michelle Mercer



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Jonathan Barber's debut album is titled *Vision Ahead*.

GULNARA KHAMATOVA

JONATHAN BARBER

Maximizing His Craft

Jonathan Barber sits atop the drum throne in trumpeter Jeremy Pelt's and saxophonist Marcus Strickland's touring bands. Over the past several years, he has worked as a sideman with some of the top names on the New York scene, including Jimmy Greene, Wallace Roney, JD Allen, Kenny Barron, Harold Mabern and Stefon Harris. But the 28-year-old's greatest accomplishment to date is his debut as a leader, *Vision Ahead*.

Barber's concept with *Vision Ahead* is shapely and sure, fortified with youthful energy, yet tempered by mature skills. His compositions are solid, his performance grounded, full of dance feel, and one with a future. For the recording, he assembled a band that consists of fellow alumnae from University of Hartford's Hartt School of Music: pianist/keyboardist Taber Gable, guitarist Andrew Renfro, alto saxophonist Godwin Louis, bassist Matt Dwonszyk and vocalists Denise Renee and Sasha Foster.

Currently living in Harlem and performing all around the city, Barber reflected on the importance of moving to the Big Apple from Connecticut after completing his university

studies. "Being in Manhattan is about maximizing my potential, maximizing my gift, maximizing my craft and realizing the fullness of what I want to do: be a working musician and tour and travel," he said the morning after an appearance at Smoke, where he performed with the Nicholas Payton Quartet. "Things are definitely going according to plan."

But Barber said that he had to overcome some early misconceptions of the New York scene.

"I wondered, 'How do you make a living in New York as a musician?' he recalled. "Living in Connecticut with my parents, expenses were low. I had some gigs, but I didn't understand New York. 'What do you do during the day?' [laughs] But once I moved here—I didn't have a plan, I just did it—I realized you find a rhythm within your career, as far as linking up with other musicians. You learn how to budget and save money. I give some private lessons, and I can practice in my apartment. That's a plus."

Barber plays with keen technique, insightful interpretative skills and an outward sense of determination and dedication. His M.O. always is to be prepared, know the music and

be ready for anything—like invitations to work with high-profile artists, such as Pelt and Strickland.

"My work with Jeremy, including his latest album, *Live In Paris*, came through a recommendation from my drum teacher at Hartt, Eric McPherson," Barber noted. "But I'd been checking out Jeremy's records and was already in love with his music and his band. I knew the set order and all the music. So, when he reached out to rehearse—which we did as a duo only—I didn't need sheet music. He was impressed that I knew his music. That was a good indication that I was serious and reliable. He can count on me to deliver and know his music."

Regarding his introduction to Strickland's Twi-Life group, Barber said, "Marcus just reached out. We're all in the scene and we float around the same people. I'd played with him and bassist Ben Williams at Dizzy's [Club Coca-Cola] when I was subbing for Charles Haynes. I thought it was a one-off. Then Marcus emailed me about dates in Europe, which I realized I could fit around Jeremy's schedule. You never know who is checking you out. Sometimes you get the call."
—Ken Micallef

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Mayu Saeki, who has a new leader project, previously played in Chico Hamilton's band.

GULNARA KHAMATOVA

MAYU SAEKI

Soul Searcher

Mayu Saeki moved from her native Japan to New York in 2009, carrying little but her flutes and the fervent hope of playing jazz. Three months later, she was doing just that. A musician she had befriended brought her to drummer Chico Hamilton's weekly jam, where her talents immediately stood out.

"Right after we played, Chico called his manager in Los Angeles and told him, 'We have a flute player,'" Saeki said over tea in a Manhattan

patisserie. Not long after that, she appeared in her first New York show—a trial-by-fire gig with Hamilton at the Jazz Gallery—and pulled it off. Ultimately, she held the flute chair in Hamilton's sextet until his death in 2013.

During her tenure with the band, Saeki appeared on the three albums Hamilton recorded, all on the Joyous Shout! label: *Euphoric*, *Revelation* (both released in 2011) and *The Inquiring Mind* (released posthumously in 2014).

Those albums set the stage for Saeki's debut recording, *Hope* (Brooklyn Jazz Underground), recorded in September 2015 and released on March 16.

"If I didn't have these CDs," she said of the Hamilton recordings, "I couldn't have made my own CD. I got ideas of what I play music for—why I'm in New York, why I play jazz, what I can offer to people who love the music."

What she offers, said pianist Aaron Goldberg, who appears on three of the six tunes on the album, is a "rich, beautiful sound," colored by the hardships of a peripatetic upbringing in Hiroshima and other Japanese cities. "She's a soulful person, with deep feeling, and you hear that in her playing."

Of the six tracks on the album, none is more heartfelt than her arrangement of "Soshu-Yakyoku." It's a love song from the 1940s that deals with the fraught relationship between the Chinese and Japanese cultures. On it, Saeki improvises an intro and outro on the *shinobue*, a traditional Japanese flute, with a poignant dose of melancholy.

"The song comes from my soul," she said.

Equally soulful—but coming from a different place, geographically—are "Libertango" and "Oblivion." Both tunes, by Argentine tango master Astor Piazzolla, are set in a jazz environment, with pianist Nori Ochiai joining bassist Joe Sanders and drummer John Davis in the rhythm section. But the environment is not allowed to obscure Piazzolla's melodies, which Saeki, on flute and piccolo for "Oblivion," articulates with a delicate clarity.

A respect for melody is present throughout the album, not least on the three tunes Saeki wrote that Hamilton included on his albums: "Dilemma," "Do You Know ... ?" and the title track, a spirited waltz on which her shimmering vibrato and sweeping glissandi display an easy confidence that reflects her years of classical training in Japan.

When recording her own tunes, Saeki took an approach that was different from Hamilton's. The piano replaces the guitar, rendering the harmonic environment a more percussive one. Gone also are the saxophones, leaving the flute as the undisputed melodic lead.

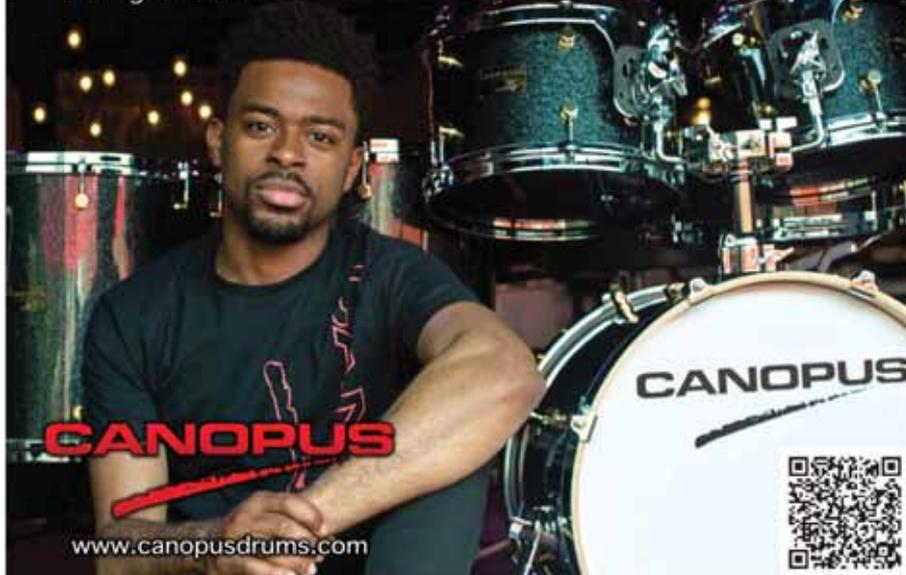
And banished are the rigid time constraints. On *The Inquiring Mind*, "Hope" runs less than three minutes, with no flute solo; on *Hope*, it runs more than seven—allowing Saeki's voice a full measure of expression.

Saeki's live performances of the music have been well received, from New York's Kitano (in 2011 and 2013) to The Nash in Phoenix. Saeki is anticipating a return to both clubs leading her own band and performing in a duo with Warren Wolf on piano at An Die Musik in Baltimore. More preliminarily, she's looking toward making an album with strings. "I have a lot of things to say," she said. —Phillip Lutz

JONATHAN BARBER

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Josh Lawrence leads the band Color Theory.



JOSH LAWRENCE

Visual Inspiration

When New York trumpeter and composer Josh Lawrence created his Color Theory ensemble and concept, his intention was to move away from the narrative, topical nature of his previous works in favor of more evocative, elusive ones. He wanted fellow musicians and listeners to rely more on their imaginations to interpret the meanings of his songs. "It was really just about taking primary colors," said the 35-year-old Lawrence, referring to the group's self-titled 2016 debut on Posi-Tone.

Armed with gladiator-like technical prowess and a flaring tone, Lawrence steered his ensemble of pianist Orrin Evans, alto saxophonist Caleb Curtis, drummer Anwar Marshall, trombonist Brent White, bassist Madison Rast and keyboardist Adam Faulk through a dazzling set of modern post-bop originals on *Color Theory* (Posi-Tone). Compositions such as the surging "Red!" or the lovely "Purple (4 Prince)" crackled with melodic ingenuity, rhythmic panache and vigorous interaction. "I'm a very visual person," Lawrence said, "but I don't see color so much when I play; I see a lot of shapes and I feel the music as colors."

For a follow-up, Lawrence wanted to expand upon his idea. He'd gone to the Guggenheim Museum and absorbed inspiration from a Wassily Kandinsky exhibition. Those large-scale paintings, marked by vivid splashes of colors and geometrical shapes, motivated Lawrence to compose songs based upon them.

He began writing with support from a Chamber Music America grant. Then life threw him a curve. Right before he and his wife, Ola

Baldych, moved from Philadelphia to New York in 2016, Lawrence's brother-in-law, Grisha, died suddenly; he was 29. That jarring experience, paired with Lawrence's exploration into Kandinsky's works, inform Color Theory's new kaleidoscopic disc, *Contrasts* (Posi-Tone).

Color Theory now showcases a slightly different lineup. Bassist Luques Curtis and pianist Zacchai Curtis replace Rast and Faulk, while David Gibson now handles the trombone part. The first half of *Contrasts* focuses on Lawrence's impressions of Kandinsky works, such as the coruscating "Dominant Curve," which is animated by a side-winding melody, and the Afro-Cuban inflected "In The Black Square," which connects a 1923 Kandinsky painting of the same title with New Orleans' historic Congo Square.

Contrast shifts focus midway toward more narrative songs with specific meanings. The rattling "Blues On The Bridge" was partially inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King's 1965 Selma to Montgomery march. The menacing "Gray" and the brooding ballad "Brown" pay homage to Freddie Gray (of Baltimore) and Michael Brown (of Ferguson, Missouri), two African Americans whose deaths at the hands of police sparked national outrage.

"It's hard seeing injustices like that," Lawrence said. "For someone to lose their life because they are in a systemic situation which they are born into, it's hard to not let it affect you."

Lawrence will tour throughout the year, including an Oct. 29 show at Dizzy's in New York.

—John Murph

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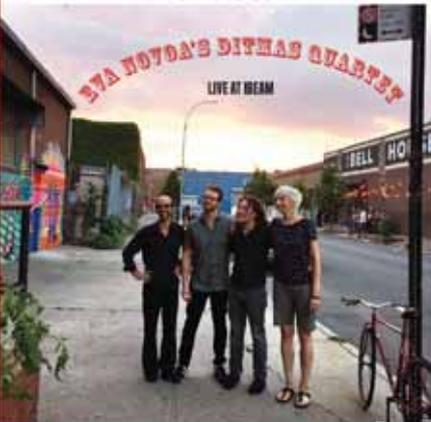
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Guitarist Andreas Varady was born in Slovakia but is now based in Ireland.

MILAN ILIJK

ANDREAS VARADY

Sounds of Life

You're a high school senior. You've applied to the best jazz colleges. They've all accepted you. So, what do you do? You blow them off and head downtown to play for spare change.

Does this mean you're crazy? Not if you're Andreas Varady, who by age 12 had done plenty of busking on the streets, posted scenes of passersby marveling at his guitar virtuosity on YouTube and cut his first album.

On July 24, Varady turns 21, the age when many of his peers are wrapping up their music degrees. Yet, he can look back on becoming the youngest artist ever to headline at Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club in London, being mentored by none other than Quincy Jones, and performing at the Montreux Jazz Festival.

The brisk guitar work and sophisticated compositions on Varady's latest album, *The Quest* (Resonance), confirm that he made the right career choices. They include opting to stay in Limerick, Ireland, where his family settled after emigrating from Slovakia when Varady was 9 years old. He's still there and happily so.

"I'm not sure college is something I'd want to do for music," Varady said. "I'm not being arrogant at all, but sometimes I feel like, what can you show me there that I haven't already expressed? I've tried it before. I was at Skidmore [College, on a scholarship from Ireland's Arts Council in 2010,] for two weeks. I felt like, what am I learning here? We were playing standards. I can do that with my brother [drummer Adrian Varady] in my room. I know the music scene is not good in Limerick. But I like being here. I don't need to move to New York to be a better musician."

Varady always has based his approach to improvisation on infusing his own ideas into classic jazz solos. In his early years, he recalled,

"I would practice, like, 'Donna Lee,' to try to get it to be as clear as possible. I would play it straight-up, and then I'd work on making it more the way I wanted it to be. Practicing runs and scales doesn't help you as much, because that becomes what you know. I'd rather learn five minutes of 'Giant Steps' and practice that."

Miles Davis, John Coltrane and Charlie Parker were among his early favorites. "I always listened to all kinds of music," Varady explained. "I didn't get too far into rock. Radiohead was a huge influence, but I was never into rock guitar players. I did get into electronic music, like Disclosure and Kaytranada. And hip-hop inspires a lot of my playing."

His interest in hip-hop certainly isn't obvious on *The Quest*, where several tracks feature a 6/8 meter and the solos reflect a strong grasp of melodic and harmonic nuance. Still, Varady insisted, "When you grow up with a type of music, it becomes a part of you. It's more about the vibe than the sound or the way someone is rapping. But the way Mos Def and Q-Tip rap, it's so swinging. It inspires the way I phrase in a solo."

The recording sessions for *The Quest*—which contains 10 of Varady's original compositions—were a bit of a family affair, with the leader's brother playing drums, and their father, Bandi, on bass. Rounding out the band were Benito Gonzalez (piano) and Radovan Tariska (saxophone).

"My inspiration is everything," Varady noted. "It's not one person or genre. It's just life in general. For example, *The Quest* is aggressive; it's in-your-face jazz. The music I'm writing now is very different, because different things are happening in my life now. So, my next album will still be my vibe, but with very different sounds. It's always about how my life sounds."
—Bob Doerschuk

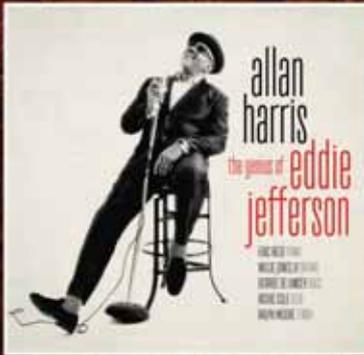


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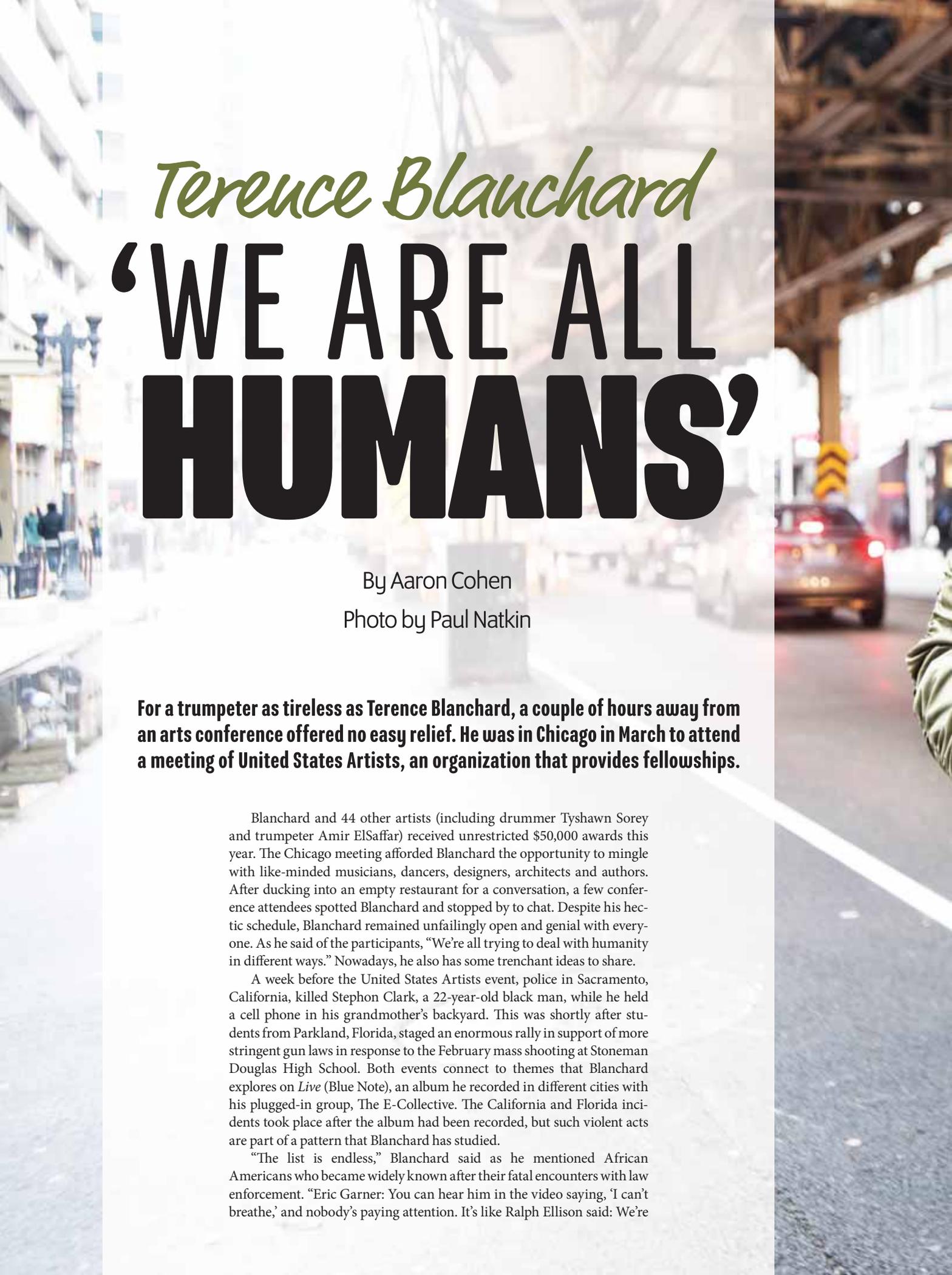
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Terence Blanchard

'WE ARE ALL HUMANS'

By Aaron Cohen

Photo by Paul Natkin

For a trumpeter as tireless as Terence Blanchard, a couple of hours away from an arts conference offered no easy relief. He was in Chicago in March to attend a meeting of United States Artists, an organization that provides fellowships.

Blanchard and 44 other artists (including drummer Tyshawn Sorey and trumpeter Amir ElSaffar) received unrestricted \$50,000 awards this year. The Chicago meeting afforded Blanchard the opportunity to mingle with like-minded musicians, dancers, designers, architects and authors. After ducking into an empty restaurant for a conversation, a few conference attendees spotted Blanchard and stopped by to chat. Despite his hectic schedule, Blanchard remained unfailingly open and genial with everyone. As he said of the participants, "We're all trying to deal with humanity in different ways." Nowadays, he also has some trenchant ideas to share.

A week before the United States Artists event, police in Sacramento, California, killed Stephon Clark, a 22-year-old black man, while he held a cell phone in his grandmother's backyard. This was shortly after students from Parkland, Florida, staged an enormous rally in support of more stringent gun laws in response to the February mass shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School. Both events connect to themes that Blanchard explores on *Live* (Blue Note), an album he recorded in different cities with his plugged-in group, The E-Collective. The California and Florida incidents took place after the album had been recorded, but such violent acts are part of a pattern that Blanchard has studied.

"The list is endless," Blanchard said as he mentioned African Americans who became widely known after their fatal encounters with law enforcement. "Eric Garner: You can hear him in the video saying, 'I can't breathe,' and nobody's paying attention. It's like Ralph Ellison said: We're





Blanchard's *Live* emphasizes sound and place to convey his protest against injustice.

'We wanted to make a statement about gun violence in this country.'

invisible. It's just frustrating. You're just tired of this shit. You would think that any rational person would start to understand that any human being can only take so much. Everybody has their breaking point and—as a country—I feel like we're getting close to ours."

If Blanchard's warning sounds ominous, his perspective and his music balance several different tones. He also expressed hope, saying of the Parkland students, "God bless those kids who marched on Washington the other day. You could feel that something has changed with them; I didn't know how huge it was going to be. To see that response and to see how eloquent those kids were. You got the feeling that

nobody put those words in those kids' mouths."

That blend of directed anger and attentive optimism fuels *Live*, as it did The E-Collective's *Breathless* (Blue Note) in 2015, the title of which refers to Garner's death. Blanchard's potent trumpet attack and knack for melody are paired with electric guitarist Charles Altura, bassist David Ginyard Jr., drummer Oscar Seaton and Fabian Almazan, who adds keyboard lines and effects. A spoken-word performance from cultural and political activist Dr. Cornel West enhances one track. While Seaton's gospel background lays the foundation for the group's dynamics, the new album also reflects the communal energy among performers and audi-

ences that shapes the best concert recordings. These listeners also responded to Blanchard's descriptions of his intentions, as this group is markedly different from his renowned acoustic jazz ensembles. For Blanchard, the nation's epidemic of fatal violence calls for a new kind of urgency.

"When we play, it's important for me to take the time to say this album is inspired by this topic," Blanchard explained. "That goes a long way. I've seen it at shows. We make a joke about it now; you can tell the people who've heard the band for the first time because they look around like, 'What the hell is *this*?' By the third tune, people are tapping their feet. Normally, after the third or fourth tune is when I talk to the audience, and I'll break everything down and introduce the guys in the band. And then we continue to perform. We're still trying to be creative. The funny thing about this band is we don't even know how to tell people what it is. We try to describe it, but we can't because we still feel like we're evolving.

"The other thing, too, is that the technology helps us. I'll be willing to bet that if Max Roach could've had a sampler where he could perform some spoken-word, he would. You use those elements to try to get your idea across."

While Roach's 1960 classic *We Insist!* mostly uses Oscar Brown Jr.'s lyrics to express demands about civil rights, Blanchard's *Live* emphasizes sound and place to convey a continuation of that message. The song title "Can Anyone Hear Me" carries emotional weight in this context. The album's tracks were recorded in cities that have been marred by racial tension and fatalities: Minneapolis (where Philando Castile was shot by a police officer), Cleveland (where 12-year-old Tamir Rice was shot by a police officer) and Dallas (where five police officers were shot while they were on duty at a peaceful Black Lives Matter protest).

"We wanted to make a statement about social injustice and gun violence in this country, but we needed to figure out how to do it," Blanchard said. "My agent, Michael Fox, had the idea of going to these places and having some civic engagement in all of the places to try to stir up conversation about gun violence. Because you see the news every day, and we don't talk about it.

"There's a visual artist over here at the conference [Pepón Osorio] talking about Puerto Rico, and it was heartbreaking. He was talking about how people are going down and buying up property while the island is totally devastated. That's the story that's not being told, because we're so consumed with other things. That's kind of what we wanted to do with the live album."

The E-Collective's performances also radiate joy. An example is "Dear Jimi," Blanchard's tribute to Jimi Hendrix, which features Altura's

soaring lyricism. Throughout the seven tracks on *Live*, the bandleader makes the program's contrasting emotions cohere.

As a young man, Blanchard joined the Jazz Messengers and benefited from the mentorship of drummer/bandleader Art Blakey. Today, the trumpeter is paying it forward by working with a gifted group of musicians from a younger generation. The E-Collective keeps him on his toes.

"When you listen to what Fabian did on the introduction to 'Kaos' with the sound design with the acoustic piano, it's phenomenal," Blanchard said. "Charles has such a unique harmonic approach to playing the guitar, but it's still steeped in the jazz tradition and the blues tradition. David has a great understanding of harmony and rhythm, and how to develop musical ideas, and Oscar has such a unique sound and groove."

Seaton said that The E-Collective's compositions help distinguish the group from many of its contemporaries that also feature electronics and, occasionally, similar inclinations. "We're doing songs that have a groove base," he said. "Terence is just one of the best writers. Me, putting my gospel backbeat to it, it's just unique. No one right now is doing that."

Almazan noted Blanchard's open-minded attitude as a leader. "He means it when he says he wants musicians in his band to be themselves," Almazan said. "He wants you to find your way, no matter what that may be. A lot of bandleaders may say that, but they don't mean it. Every night that we play, if any band member hears the music going in a different direction, then we play it. He's not the type of bandleader to get [upset] because we didn't stick to the plan. He's the first to give a musical gesture that he's on board."

During the past few years, as Blanchard has recorded and toured extensively with The E-Collective, he has continued to work with filmmaker Spike Lee in a collaborative relationship that's spanned 27 years. Blanchard adheres to similar methods and attitudes, whether he's working with Lee or with his quintet.

"Spike and I have been working together so long, there's a trust factor there—where we don't have to talk much," Blanchard said. "The same thing's occurring with this band."

Recently, Blanchard has been composing the score for Lee's upcoming film, *Black KKKlansman*. The film—which has a production team that includes Oscar winner Jordan Peele (*Get Out*)—is based on the memoir of an African American detective who infiltrated the white supremacist organization in Colorado in 1978. The issues the film addresses are relevant today, as Blanchard observed last spring. He was in his hometown, New Orleans, where he witnessed the removal of Confederate monuments in the city's public parks. He hopes it's a sign of change.

"Working on that movie and dealing with that issue is the same thing as dealing with the gun violence issue, where you're dealing with intolerance and bigotry," Blanchard said. "It's 2018—that's the thing that gets me. I'm old enough to remember that when Jimmy Carter was president—maybe that's because I was naive, 18 and in college—I thought all of this shit was behind us. I knew that we had a long way to go, but I didn't think that we'd be going backwards. I just felt like we were in an upward trajectory and you can see that, obviously, that's not the case. It's very frustrating

that you still have to fight to get people to see you as being human, as not being what they perceive from some bullshit idea. It's one of the reasons I wrote 'See Me As I Am' [on the 2015 album *Breathless*]. There are times when I can sit down in a conversation with somebody and I can see how their mind has changed about what they thought I was or who they thought I was. That's frustrating. The only thing you want is to be treated equally."

Blanchard's lengthy experience orchestrating for films also informs his recent opera compositions. He wrote the music for *Champion*,

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"It doesn't matter how hard you play, these cymbals are never too much for the mics onstage or the crowd in the room."
- Gregory Smith (Drummer)

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Blanchard sees social issues in American life that jazz has yet to fully address.

which premiered in St. Louis five years ago and examines the life of boxer Emile Griffith (1938–2013). Currently, he is collaborating with librettist Kasi Lemmons for that city’s Opera Theatre production of *Fire Shut Up In My Bones*, which is based on newspaper columnist Charles M. Blow’s memoir. That performance is slated to debut in June 2019. Blanchard explained that he enjoys the way creating large-scale works for the screen and the stage pose distinctive challenges and opportunities.

“Opera gives me a little more leeway than film, because with film, there’s a definite timing of things, a definite perception of actors with the pace of the dialogue,” Blanchard said. “All of those things set up a finite set of criteria that I have to move around. With opera, it’s not like that. It ebbs and flows, depending on the performance each night and who’s performing it. It’s a fascinating thing to see because it’s live art. But even within that and some of the dramatic scenes, some of the heartfelt scenes, the film scoring of being able to color those emotions helped me a great deal with this.

“Now that I’m working on the next one, I’ve been going back, listening to *Salome* by Strauss, *La Bohème* by Puccini, and I’m hearing it more than listening to the melodic content. Now, I’m listening to see where the dark chords come in, why it’s lighter here, and in a phrase you can run through all of these emotions. Because that’s what the libretto is doing.

“So, I’m excited about that, even though I’m still writing the vocal and piano parts. I’m so eager to get past that, because that’s what I really love: I really love orchestration. People talk

about my melodic sense and writing, and I’m very appreciative of that, but, man, I love coloring it with an orchestra. Where you can sit down and take a melodic idea and make it sound dark and moody just by giving it three clarinets and a bassoon. Or having dense harmony with low brass and low strings and just having a little bit of percussion.”

Champion and *Fire Shut Up In My Bones* examine how Griffith and Blow hid or spurned their sexual identities. During a 1962 bout, Griffith knocked out Benny Paret, who lost consciousness and died 10 days later. Griffith, who was bisexual, was hospitalized in 1992 after being beaten outside a gay bar in New York. This historical context adds to the poignancy of a line in the opera, delivered by an actor portraying Griffith: “I killed a man and the world forgave me; I love a man and the world wants to kill me.”

Blow fought internally about suppressing his desires. Such LGBTQIA+ struggles have not been addressed within jazz as frequently, or for as long, as civil rights advocacy. That’s another area where Blanchard sees considerable room for change.

“When I won my first Grammy, I jumped up, gave my wife a kiss and a hug without thinking about it and got my award,” Blanchard said. “I started equating that with Emile. The man became welterweight champion of the world and couldn’t celebrate it with anybody he loved openly. That’s got to be an awful feeling, to live in the shadows like that. ... It seems silly that anybody with a logical brain would persecute a man for [his sexual orientation]. He’s not trying to hurt you, he’s not even trying to date you, so

what’s the issue? We are all humans.

“With *Fire Shut Up In My Bones*, it’s more about the inhumanity of all of this stuff. From a mental- or spiritual-health issue, I look at Charles Blow and he openly talked about being attracted to men, but never having a relationship with a man because of being molested as a kid. That’s got to be rough. And the wild part about it is I know in the jazz community these issues have never been seriously tackled. From a creative standpoint, we’re missing out on a lot of great ideas.

“There are topics that just mean a lot to me because they deal with our inhumanity against another human being. My dad was a serious pacifist when I was growing up. He never let me play with guns, and that stuck with me. So, when I see these issues and have the opportunity to raise a platform to create a dialogue, why not?”

Along with all his performing and composing obligations, Blanchard is also in his third year of teaching at Berklee College Of Music. (The school’s website features a valuable three-minute video lesson he delivers on technique.) Whether he’s in the classroom or on the bandstand, though, Blanchard encourages youngsters to keep pushing the music forward—just as Blakey did.

“When you’re working with kids who really want to learn and have talent, it’s not teaching, it’s sharing,” Blanchard said. “You’re sharing what you know to take this one little thing and make it into something bigger. They take that but do it with their little thing, their idea. I tell them to think about any wild idea: It’s all possible; it’s all there for the taking.” **DB**

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HENRY THREADGILL DOUBLES DOWN



BY TED PANKEN | PHOTO BY MICHAEL JACKSON

No one applies more creative mojo to naming a band or a song—or to conjuring out-of-the-box instrumentations to compose for—than Henry Threadgill. The 74-year-old maestro maintains that standard on Pi Recordings' pair of May releases by two recently configured ensembles.

Double Up, *Plays Double Up Plus* follows Double Up's 2016 debut album, *Old Locks And Irregular Verbs* (Pi). The earlier date coincided with Threadgill's Pulitzer Prize award, bestowed for *In For A Penny, In For A Pound*, the sixth album by Zooid. The new album *Dirt ... And More Dirt* introduces his band 14 or 15 Kestra: Agg, which combines personnel from Zooid, Double Up and an as-yet unrecorded brass ensemble dubbed Dimples, which Threadgill premiered in 2014.

Threadgill's well-turned epigrams complement the music's singular character. Yet again, he continues to find new ways to address the raw materials that have defined his work since 1975's *Air Song*, the first of a dozen recordings by Air, a trio with fellow AACM members Fred Hopkins and Steve McCall, in which he sought to expand the possibilities of the saxophone-bass-drums format along organizational principles gleaned from Ahmad Jamal, whose trio Threadgill heard while growing up on the South Side of Chicago.





he doesn't play on the *Double Up Plus* disc.

"I use 'free serialism' as an analogy," Threadgill said between sips of a double espresso in a cafe on Ninth Street and Avenue C in Manhattan's East Village, a few blocks from the apartment he moved into in 1980. "There's no other term I can use. These are technical issues only scholarly-type people are concerned with."

After this demurral, Threadgill broached the matter with a pithy "serialism for civilians" explanation. "Serialism is a tone row of 12 notes arranged in order, and you follow that order strictly, over and over," he explained. "If it's free serialism, you're using still only those 12 notes, but not strictly in that order. Something that goes 1-2-3-4-5, is now going 1-3-5-2-4. I really like Alban Berg, who just did things he wanted to do with his system. I like people like Debussy—people who just do what they want."

"I think the musical language Henry uses to construct the pieces is so ingrained that he can extrapolate from it right away at any point," Virelles said. "With the piano, you can hear his harmonies as more defined than some things he did in the past, when he distributed it between the wind instruments, the bass, sometimes even the drums. He tunes the drums specifically, in an orchestral and harmonic way, to add to the overall color he's trying to put forth."

Why did Threadgill remove himself from the mix? "It's not necessary for me to play in every group," he said. "Sometimes it's a distraction to listeners; they focus on me as though the other musicians aren't important. I brought these new young people on the scene with me because I think they're extremely important."

He added: "My music is a type of concept or system. It's not something you can come in and do in any short period of time. Zooid rehearsed a year-and-a-half, without a gig in sight, before we started. That's nothing unusual. I did it in Chicago with a number of people. I did it when I worked with Cecil Taylor during the 1980s. For these new people, I had to consider how I could modify my processes, so they could be comfortable and use it."

According to the band members, Threadgill's modifications do not denote a concomitant decrease in the intensity of his rehearsals. Ellman noted Threadgill's penchant for targeting areas of deficiency. "He started writing really high guitar parts, which were hard for me to read," Ellman remarked. "Henry said, 'You're wasting a whole lot of your instrument.' But an improvising ensemble requires a lot of rehearsal to execute the music properly, with the required joy and freedom. Henry wants the music to be tested and internalized, so it really comes out as something that's been mastered before we perform it."

"Henry is always writing to push you to your limits, trying to expose something we're

After the 1979 one-off recital *X-75* by a bespoke nonet (four basses, four winds, voice), Threadgill launched a six-album run by his seven-piece Sextett, framing his oracular, spirit-raising voice on alto and tenor saxophone and flute with trumpet, trombone, cello, bass and two drummers. The players, who included rugged individualists like Olu Dara on trumpet and Craig Harris on trombone, rendered with panache and flair his *sui generis* pieces, in which Threadgill deftly refracted marches, rags, the blues, sacred music, Balkan strains, Afrodiasporic pop elements and modernist Euro-canon harmony into his own extravagant argot.

There followed three albums by Very Very Circus during the early '90s, on which Threadgill deftly sculpted polyphonic and contrapuntal tonal combinations from the admixture of saxophone, trombone, two electric guitars and two tubas, propelled by Gene Lake's primal, funky grooves. On another three albums by *Make A Move* between 1995 and 2001, Threadgill added accordion, harmonium, vibraphone and hand percussion colors to his palette, and delved into Pan-American and Pan-Asian flavors. Then, with *Zooid*, he pared down, framing his instruments with an austere guitar-cello-tuba-drumset ensemble, which improvised fluently within the rules of a rigorous,

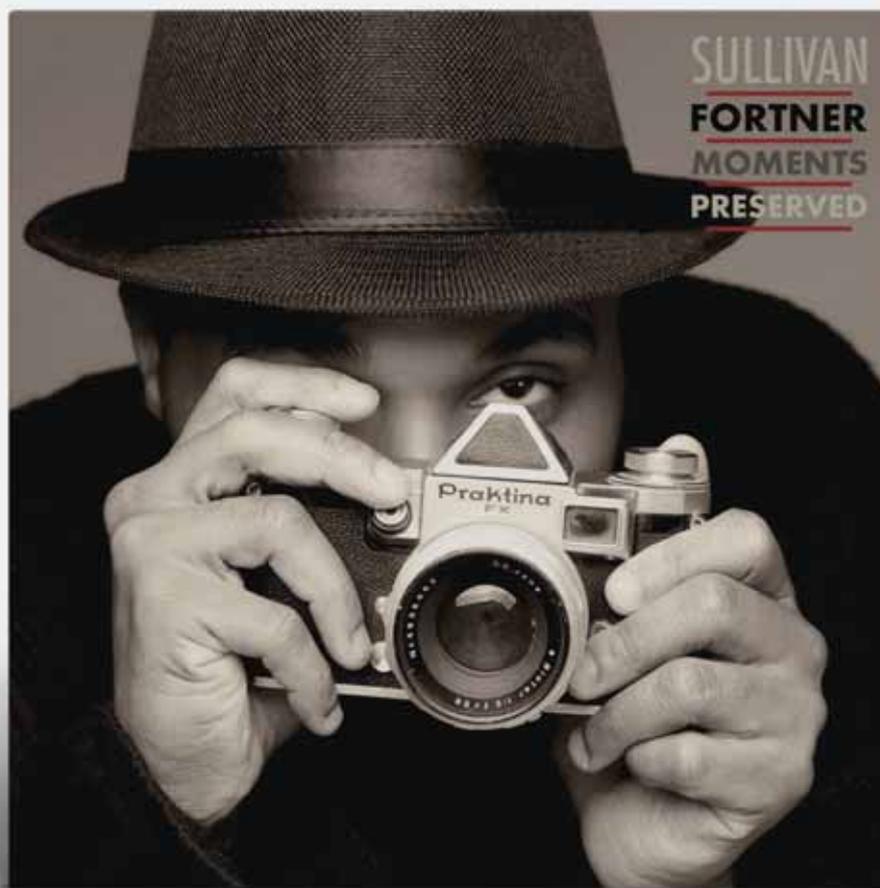
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On *In For A Penny*, Threadgill began to loosen the reins, applying a process he describes as "free serialism." He continues that practice with *Kestra* and *Double Up*, creating environments as timbrally lush as *Zooid*'s are spare, while removing his instrumental voice from the preponderance of the proceedings. To navigate them, he's recruited a cohort of New York-based best-and-brightest Gen Xers and millennials who match his job description of being "without preconceptions that music and art go one way, and one way only."

Double Up consists of pianists David Virelles, David Bryant and Luis Perdomo; alto saxophonists Román Filiú and Curtis Robert Macdonald, and drummer Craig Weinrib, none of whom played in *Zooid*, from which tubist Jose Davila and cellist Christopher Hoffman return. Augmenting that personnel in the *Kestra* (minus Perdomo) are trumpeters Jonathan Finlayson and Stephanie Richards, trombonists Jacob Garchik and Ben Gerstein, bassist Thomas Morgan and—from *Zooid*—guitarist Liberty Ellman and drummer Elliott Humberto Kavee, who pairs off with Weinrib. While Threadgill contributes alto saxophone, flute and bass flute to *Dirt ... And More Dirt*,

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Threadgill onstage in 1990

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'There shouldn't be a limit to what jazz is.'

trying not to expose," said Macdonald, who has doubled as Threadgill's copyist for several years. "He'll completely change stuff on the fly. He's always curious, listening to what other people are up to."

Why did it take Threadgill so long to write a consequential body of work built around the harmonic possibilities of multiple pianos? After noting his previous deployment of Myra Melford on piano and Amina Claudine Myers on organ and harpsichord on the 1993 album *Song Out Of My Trees*, Threadgill offered a characteristically blunt explanation.

"I always wanted to write for piano, but I haven't used it because the pianos are so bad in the New York clubs and venues we've had to play in," he said. "It's taken this amount of time for me to feel comfortable with the physical instrument in this environment."

Another motivation was Threadgill's burgeoning friendship with Virelles, who moved to New York in 2009 at the instigation of Steve Coleman and Dafnis Prieto, who had alerted Threadgill to the Cuban pianist's skills, and, in turn, brought Macdonald, Filiú and Weinrib into Threadgill's orbit. "During our first few sessions, he'd bring me with him to hear the music playing in New York in a given week," Virelles recalled. "We'd hear Muhal Richard Abrams with George Lewis and Roscoe Mitchell, then a premiere by Elliott Carter, whoever was playing at the Village Vanguard or the Jazz Gallery. We'd go to museums and galleries.

"Every couple of weeks, I'd bring things to his house to work on. He'd give me directions

as to how he thought I could expand and generate more material from what I already had, to transform any amount of information into something else, both for preconceived composition and improvisation. We'd have long discussions about composition and orchestration, which we still do. That's how I became familiar with his way of thinking about music. After a couple of years, he started coming up with situations where he could use my voice."

Although Threadgill emphatically does not see teaching as his calling, he acknowledges doing so in his ensembles. "Leaders lead people," he said. "They trust you to lead them. You've experienced a lot more than they have, so you can make them aware of certain things. You have to know what you're doing, or you shouldn't be in that position." His next remarks hearkened to his time in Vietnam, where in 1967-'68 Threadgill served as an Army musician in Pleiku, an active combat zone. "Make the most dangerous, critical thing you can imagine, and everyone could end up dead if you get it wrong. You want the leader to be the person you believe can take you through."

This being said, Threadgill evaluates his relationship with Virelles as a collaboration between equals. "David was using me more or less as a lead assistant," he said. "He was a mature artist when I met him, not only an outstanding pianist but an accomplished composer. He knew my musical processes. We looked together at different ideas and problems he was exploring, and I showed him things I was working on, which he examined and understood."

In describing his interaction with Virelles, Threadgill mirrors his own 55-year friendship with the late Muhal Richard Abrams. They met when Abrams played a concert at Chicago's Wilson Junior College, where Threadgill was an 18-year-old freshman, and then invited the aspirant to participate in the Experimental Band, the rehearsal group from which the AACM emerged. Threadgill mentioned the encounter to classmates Joseph Jarman, Roscoe Mitchell and Malachi Favors, who decided to investigate. In 1965, they became members of the newly formed AACM; in 1968, Threadgill—who had spent three years raising a joyful noise with a traveling evangelist before his time in Vietnam—joined them.

"Muhal was an example of the studious musician-student, the inquirer-scientist," Threadgill said. "His level of intensity and the depth of his research went past jazz and past classical music. Once Muhal told me he was going to start tuning his piano. He took the whole piano apart. He said, 'That leads up to tuning.' When computers came out, he was the first one I knew who had books and materials about the systems. Next thing you know, he had three computers, including one he was opening up to see the mechanics. You saw him unravel the myths or mysteries behind things. His level of research cleared up what you had to do. It told you, 'See, if you do this, you can go somewhere.'"

Like Abrams and his fellow AACM lifers, Threadgill weathered the ups and downs attendant to a career in creative music, before attaining golden-years institutional recognition, as most recently signified by his Pulitzer.

"It was a great honor and privilege to receive the Pulitzer in my lifetime," he said. "It's certainly helped me get a bit more attention and have people take some of my work more seriously. Labels like 'jazz' put you in ghettos. I just say it's improvisational-based music. There shouldn't be a limit to what jazz is in terms of going forward."

What kept him motivated over the years?

"This is what I do!" Threadgill said incredulously. "This is what I'm here for. There's nothing here to discourage me. If I let myself be discouraged, it's my problem. I'm not supposed to let that happen."

Threadgill then mentioned the M.O. of the late conductionist Lawrence "Butch" Morris, a fellow Vietnam veteran, composer, flaneur and Lower East Side neighbor, to whom he dedicated *Old Locks And Irregular Verbs*. "Butch was looking to get people out of the effect of habit," Threadgill said. "I am, too. It takes time to understand what's going on in music. In time, you see how people are doing things by rote almost. My idea—and what Butch was concerned with—is how to keep musicians away from automatic musical behavior. I take away all the symbols they're used to, that tell them how to behave, and give them another set that allows them only to be spontaneous." **DB**

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NEW YORK ATTITUDE

By Bill Milkowski

Photos by Sarah Escarraz

We're racing through the South Bronx in **BOBBY SANABRIA'S** dark-grey Ford Flex as he points out key places in his former stomping grounds. We drive along "Banana Kelly," that strip of Kelly Street shaped like a banana where Orlando Marin, timbalero for the Alegre All Stars, and Manny Oquendo, original timbalero/bongocero for Eddie Palmieri's La Perfecta band, once lived.

"Practically every well-known Latino musician from the Golden Age of Salsa in NYC grew up and/or lived in that area of the Bronx," says Sanabria, beaming with pride. "Ray Barretto, Ray Mantilla, Eddie and Charlie Palmieri, Johnny Pacheco, Nicky Marrero, you name it. They all lived here."

Around the corner is Casa Amadeo, the oldest continuously run Latin music store in New York. Opened in 1941 by music entrepreneur Victoria Hernandez, it was sold in 1969 to current proprietor Mike Amadeo, a renowned and prolific composer in Puerto Rico who has written songs for Tito Puente, Celia Cruz, Hector Lavoe, El Gran Combo, Tito Nieves and many others. Casa Amadeo was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2003 as a symbol of Latin music history in New York. In 2014, the corner of Longwood Avenue and Prospect Avenue, where Casa Amadeo sits in the shadow of the elevated 2 and 5 trains, was renamed Miguel Angel "Mike"



The double album *West Side Story Reimagined* was recorded at New York's Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola in 2017 by Bobby Sanabria's 21-piece Multiverse Big Band.

Amadeo Way. “That intersection of Prospect, Longwood and Westchester Avenues is sacred ground in Da’ Bronx,” says Sanabria, a 2006 inductee into the Bronx Walk of Fame. “It’s a living symbol of the intersection of African-American, Puerto Rican and Cuban cultures and music that happened all over New York.”

Finally, we come upon the place where Sanabria had his salsa epiphany at age 12—the park where Tito Puente’s band played, right next to Sanabria’s elementary school, P.S. 1, and right across the street from the Melrose Housing Projects where he grew up, located at E. 153rd Street and Courtlandt Avenue.

“You’re a little kid, you’re watching this band play, and Tito Puente was not a very tall man, but when he played the timbales, he was a giant among men,” Sanabria recalls. “He was directing his orchestra and the first song they played was ‘Para Los Rumberos,’ a song he wrote in 1955 and that [rock band] Santana covered. But here was the man that created it ... the king of the timbales, a fellow Nuyorican. And when he raises his hand to the saxophones and they stand up to do the mambo background lines to launch the orchestra into orbit, I’m watching this and going, ‘Oh, my god!’ And in that moment, I said to myself, ‘This is what I’m going to do for the rest of my life.’”

All these rich scenes, along with the memories of drums resonating through the canyons of the projects and the omnipresent sound of the clave rhythm from his youth in the Fort Apache section of the South Bronx, are part of Sanabria’s DNA. “I grew up with Afro-Cuban rumba, as well as Puerto Rican bomba, plena and Garifuna drumming,” he recalls. “Cats were playing conga drums in the park all the time, and at that time, salsa was ubiquitous in the South Bronx. That music was so much in full force, the culture was so in-your-face, there was

no way you could escape it.

“What is salsa?” continues the drummer-bandleader, who apprenticed with such legendary salseros as Mario Bauza and Mongo Santamaria. “It’s Cuban music with a freakin’ New York attitude. I can explain it to you intellectually, but it’s like a Boston accent or an accent from New Orleans. You hang out there long enough and eventually, you’re going to start walkin’, talkin’, movin’, shufflin’ just like what you’ve heard and experienced in those places. Same with salsa. It was the soundtrack to South Bronx in the ’70s.”

Sanabria is understandably proud of his Puerto Rican roots and his Bronx upbringing. It’s what launched his career, garnered him a few Grammy nominations along the way and informed his latest project: a triumphant, Latin-flavored reimagining of Leonard Bernstein’s masterwork *West Side Story*.

Recorded live at Dizzy’s Club Coca-Cola on Nov. 19, 2017, with Sanabria’s 21-piece Multiverse Big Band, the commemorative double album *West Side Story Reimagined* is scheduled for a July 20 release on the Jazzheads label in conjunction with the year-long celebration of Leonard Bernstein’s centennial. “*West Side Story* first premiered on Broadway back in 1957, which happens to be the year that I was born,” says Sanabria. “So, I figured it was a great way for me to celebrate my birthday and the birthday of this masterwork, as well as the 100th anniversary of maestro Bernstein.”

Sanabria began formulating his ideas for a Latin jazz take on *West Side Story* about two years ago, commencing with a concert at the Manhattan School of Music with his student ensemble, the MSM Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra. “It was part of a movie soundtrack-themed concert,” he recalls. “And one of the things we did was the mambo ‘Gym Scene’ from

West Side Story. And that was so successful that I decided to tackle the whole score. So, I started assigning arranging tasks to current and ex-students of mine while supervising them.”

His initial presentation of *West Side Story Reimagined*, performed with Sanabria’s student ensemble in February 2017 at the Manhattan School of Music, was a massive, two-and-a-half-hour production. “But I soon realized that it was murder on the brass players, so I started scaling down everything and editing, until I finally got it down to an hour-and-a-half.”

Sanabria later decided to document the new work with his 21-piece Multiverse Big Band. “We played Dizzy’s on Friday and Saturday, so by the time we recorded live on Sunday, the band was firing on all cylinders,” he recalls. And while eight members of the group are his former students from the Manhattan School of Music, the rest are veterans from the salsa and jazz scenes in New York.

Perhaps the secret weapons in the Multiverse Big Band’s *West Side Story Reimagined* are percussionists Orestes Abrantes on congas and Matthew Gonzalez, who plays bongo, cencerro, barril de bomba and bata. “They have a wide range of experience, in terms of folkloric music, plus they’re both great readers,” says Sanabria. “If you listen to ‘Prologue,’ there’s a whole conversational thing that’s written out for conga and bongo that has to be played exactly as written or else it won’t work. And that’s great for me, because in the past I’ve used really talented percussionists who had no reading skills or very limited reading skills, and it was very difficult. My feeling is that the percussionists have to be on the same level technically as any of the horn players, the bass player or the piano player, especially in this day and age. That gives us the liberty to do really complex things at a moment’s notice and learn them quickly in rehearsal time.”

Whereas the original *West Side Story* addressed the Puerto Rican community supposedly encroaching on the white ethnic working class, Sanabria has flipped the script with his *West Side Story Reimagined*. “Today, it is the so-called gentrifiers who are now invading our neighborhoods, displacing our communities,” he says. “These neighborhoods were abandoned by those working-class whites who were fleeing out of fear, ignorance, redlining, planned shrinkage, governmental malfeasance and political corruption. So, this new reimagining is now from the perspective of what is happening in our communities today—communities that are no longer exclusively Puerto Rican but also Dominican, Mexican, South American, African and Asian. And the rhythms and cultures of those communities are now reflected in this new reimagining.”

“America” opens with Sanabria reciting a line from the Stephen Sondheim lyric, uttered in

the play and movie by the Sharks leader Bernardo as a sarcastic retort to Anita: “Life is alright in America/If you’re all white in America.” Jeff Lederer’s arrangement not only utilizes the same rhythmic cadence of the Mexican huapango that Bernstein used in the original, it also interjects bits of the national anthems from the six countries that faced an immigration ban from the Trump Administration, all played simultaneously in a dissonant swirl against Sanabria’s churning joropo undercurrent. The piece closes with a sly wink, as bassist Leo Traversa quotes from the Russian national anthem.

“Tonight” is rendered as a romantic Cuban bolero before shifting into a spirited Dominican merengue. “Maria,” underscored by a 6/8 bembé rhythm, is recast as a santería ritual dance between Maria as Oshun and Tony as Changó. And the program concludes with “Somewhere” interpreted as a brisk Venezuelan joropo.

Sanabria recalls seeing the movie version of *West Side Story* in 1971 when he was 13. “My parents, José and Juanita, took me and my younger sister Joanne for the 10th anniversary of the movie at the luxurious Loews Paradise at the Grand Concourse on Fordham Road, which was the biggest theater in the Bronx. I was hooked from the overture. And the opening chase scene with the juxtaposition of the dance and the accompanying music was so powerful, the synergy was so intense. And

then you hear so many xylophone and marimba runs that are really complex ... the intervals and lines. It was like nothing I had ever heard before. I was completely flabbergasted by the virtuosity of the music.”

The film was Sanabria’s first exposure to Bernstein the composer. Today, the Bronx native has high praise for the son of Ukrainian Jewish parents who revolutionized the classical and musical theater worlds. “He’s one of America’s five greatest composers who have utilized or been influenced by jazz,” Sanabria says. “For me, they are Louis Moreau Gottschalk, George Gershwin, Duke Ellington, Don Ellis and Leonard Bernstein. But I would say that Bernstein is probably the greatest composer that this country has produced. I mean, he made 800 albums. I was blown away by that fact alone. That’s who I’m chasing, man.”

Sanabria explains that Bernstein’s use of the mambo, cha-cha-cha, huapango and joropo rhythms heard throughout *West Side Story* came naturally. “People don’t know that Bernstein used to go to the Palladium Ballroom, the home of the mambo on 53rd Street and Broadway, to see Machito, Tito Puente and Tito Rodriguez. Plus, Bernstein’s interest in Latin music goes back to 1942, when he was in Boca Raton, Florida, and heard Cuban music on the radio emanating from Radio Progreso. And when he heard that

music, he fell in love with it right away. So, he started writing a piece of music called ‘Conch Town,’ which is the nickname that people from Boca Raton give to the town because there’s a lot of conch shells there. He never finished the work but it’s in the Library of Congress. And that’s the beginning of Bernstein falling in love with Latin American culture. So, he had all that inside of him. Plus, he had the symphonic tool kit at his disposal. That’s why *West Side Story* is so monumental.”

While Sanabria maintains that *West Side Story* is “still the greatest show that’s ever been written for the Broadway stage,” he says his *West Side Story Reimagined* achieves another goal. “This album is a testimony not only to Bernstein’s music, but to the power and the influence and the importance that the Puerto Rican community has had on New York City. Because we literally transformed this city—rhythmically, socially, politically, poetically, artistically, dance-wise and, of course, musically, and we’ve never gotten credit for that.

“So this whole reimagining is really a socio-political statement,” he continues. “But the original *West Side Story* was, too. Everything that Bernstein was as a humanitarian and as a musician is in *West Side Story*. Because he always championed tolerance and fighting bigotry and racism. And we should all check that out.”

DB

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GRANT GREEN 'TAKING IT TO A CLIMAX'

BY J.D. CONSIDINE

In the decades since Grant Green's music was rediscovered by DJs like Gilles Peterson and acid jazz groups such as US3, and sampled by hip-hop pioneers like A Tribe Called Quest and Public Enemy, there has been a tendency to view the guitarist's career as two distinct eras.

Act One started in 1959, when he first recorded with tenor saxophonist Jimmy Forrest, and continued through the mid-'60s. At the time, Green (1935-'79) was a stalwart of the soulful straightahead jazz scene, a worthy foil to such big-voiced tenor men as Ike Quebec, Stanley Turrentine and Hank Mobley, and had proven himself especially adept in the organ trio setting, having done epic work with the likes of Jimmy Smith, "Brother" Jack McDuff, Big John Patton and Larry Young.

But a decade later, when the curtain came up for Act Two, consensus on Green's output was deeply divided. Mainstream partisans largely turned up their noses at what *The Penguin Guide to Jazz* described as "the bland funk he chugged out." But a generation along, Green was dubbed the "Father of Acid Jazz," as DJs and funk fans scoured used record bins for copies of his long-out-of-print '70s albums, thanks to the popularity of such rare groove classics as "Maybe Tomorrow," "Down Here On The Ground," "Ain't It Funky Now" and "Sookie Sookie."

For some, this split represents the evolution of a courageous and creative artist who wasn't afraid to plug into the energy of the funk era; to others, Green's change in direction amounted to little more than pandering, as a once-great jazz musician watered down his music in the hopes of attracting a wider audience.

But with the release of two new live albums from Resonance Records—*Funk In France: Paris And Antibes (1969-1970)* and *Slick! Live At Oil Can Harry's*—that bifurcated view of Green's career now feels like an oversimplification. Although there definitely was a change in the kind of music he made, it wasn't as cut-and-dried as dropping swing in favor of funk. Nor, if the audience response on these albums is any indication, did it involve abandoning jazz fans in favor of funk kids.

Grant told Vancouver DJ Gary Barclay, "Our audiences did get younger" after the band had funk'd things up, but the fact was he hadn't stopped playing standards; he'd simply augmented the



Resonance has released two new albums by Grant Green.
(Photo: ©Chuck Stewart Photography, LLC)



© GERRY MARRIN

Ronnie Ware (left), Gerald Izzard, Green, Greg “Vibrations” Williams and Emmanuel Riggins perform at Oil Can Harry’s in 1975.

‘When everybody is building a groove, you gotta take the audience there, too.’

—Grant Green Jr.

old tunes with new ones. As his son Greg, who performs and records as Grant Green Jr., put it, “He lived all types of music. He loved James Brown, he loved the Isley Brothers, but he loved the Beatles, you know? One thing that most people—especially jazz cats—don’t realize is that all of your jazz standards were once pop standards. So, saying that it’s not jazz is not true. It’s your interpretation of the tune that makes it jazz.”

Still, if you wanted to mark a turning point in Green’s career, Feb. 17, 1969, would be as good a date as any.

Green was in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, that day, sitting with his guitar and amp in Rudy Van Gelder’s studio, where he was about to record a date for Prestige with saxophonist Rusty Bryant. What they cut that day—six tracks for the album *Rusty Bryant Returns*, including the groover “Zoo Boogaloo,” which was released as a single—doesn’t matter to our story so much as the fact that the date marked Green’s first recording session in almost two years.

That would have been inconceivable just a few years earlier. After he was introduced to Blue Note chief Alfred Lion by alto saxophonist Lou Donaldson in 1960, Green quickly became one of the label’s most prolific players. Either as leader or sideman, Green did more than 100 sessions for the label, a feat made all the more awesome by the fact that the vast majority of those dates occurred between 1960 and 1966.

But it wasn’t just this astonishing fecundity that set him apart; Green’s guitar playing was decidedly one-of-a-kind. His playing had a

dark, horn-like tone and rich, blued-tinged lyricism that made his single-note solos instantly identifiable. His playing could be edgy and aggressive enough to hold its own against the toughest tenors, but it also had a remarkable delicacy, a finesse that made his style akin to a form of speech.

But at the tail end of the ’60s, Green wasn’t saying much. Before the session with Bryant, his last recording had been a session with organist Big John Patton and drummer Ben Dixon for Cobblestone—his only studio time in all of 1967. It wasn’t that he’d suddenly gone out of fashion or suffered some horrible accident that made him unable to use his hands. No, Green had a drug problem, a heroin addiction that, as it got worse, increasingly left him short on money and musicians willing to work with him. The 1999 book *Grant Green: Rediscovering The Forgotten Genius Of Jazz Guitar*—by Sharony Andrews Green, the guitarist’s daughter-in-law—quotes clarinetist Wendell Harrison describing what it was like. “See, you’d go on the road with Grant, and you might not get but half your money,” he said. “He was sick. All the money he would get would go for drugs.”

In 1968, Green was busted for possession in New York. It was a minor conviction, but the guitarist made it worse by heading to California for a gig, instead of reporting to prison. U.S. Marshals arrested him and flew him back. Green’s sentence was extended, and he spent most of 1968 behind bars. No wonder some saw this as the moment the curtain came down on Act One.

Once he was released from jail, Green made it plain that he hadn’t lost his chops. But things had changed in the interim. Alfred Lion had relinquished his control of Blue Note, selling the label to Liberty Records and retiring to Mexico. Closer to Green’s heart, Wes Montgomery—who, along with Kenny Burrell, Green had considered the only guitarists of consequence since Charlie Christian—died. The landscape had changed, but so had Grant Green.

The first important recording date he had after Rusty Bryant was with organist Reuben Wilson, for an album called *Love Bug*. This session was significant for two reasons. First, it placed Green alongside a young drummer from New Orleans named Leo Morris, although he would reach more listeners under the name Idris Muhammad. Second, it was built around jazz treatments of contemporaneous pop tunes, among them the Supremes hit “I’m Gonna Make You Love Me,” Sam & Dave’s soul anthem “Hold On, I’m Coming” and the Burt Bacharach classic “I Say A Little Prayer.”

“I came up with this idea of playing pop music with jazz,” Wilson said in the book. “They used a lot of jazz musicians in Motown. They were background players. So instead of having them in the background, it was just a matter of bringing [them] to the forefront.”

Green definitely dug the concept, and in October he was back at Van Gelder’s studio for his first Blue Note session as a leader since 1965. Not only was he embracing Wilson’s concept—there were covers of tunes by James Brown (“I Don’t Want Nobody To Give Me Nothing”), the Meters (“Ease Back”) and Little Anthony & The Imperials (“Hurt So Bad”)—but he made sure to bring in Morris on drums again, along with Claude Barteau on tenor saxophone and Clarence Palmer on electric piano. Titled *Carryin’ On*, the album was full of enduringly funky grooves, some of which later were sampled by rap visionaries Eric B. & Rakim on their final album as a duo, 1992’s *Don’t Sweat The Technique*.

Three weeks later, Green was in France. The Office de Radiodiffusion Télévision Française had planned to shoot a “Guitar Workshop” at its Round House studio in Paris. Originally, the lineup was to have been Barney Kessel, Kenny Burrell and Tal Farlow, but Farlow was suffering from asthma and had to cancel, so the organizers brought in Green to replace him.

There was little budget for the taping, which meant Green wound up working with bassist Larry Ridley and drummer Don Lamond instead of the ensemble used to record *Carryin’ On*. As evidenced on *Funk In France*, Green delivered a rousing rendition of Brown’s “I Don’t Want Nobody To Give Me Nothing,” deftly playing off the skeletal funk groove of upright bass and drums. The interplay between Green and Ridley is wonderfully contrapuntal, as they sketch blues variations against

Lamond's lightly simmering pulse. There's even deeper interplay between Green and Ridley on an untitled, eight-minute blues number that gives the bassist tremendous room to stretch. "A lot of that funky stuff really sits well when the bass is just a tad behind the beat," said Green Jr. "When you play right on top of it, it's fine. But when you're a tad behind, it just sits better. Larry had that approach on bass, so [he] had that real grooving, laid-back feel. And it's a great thing, because not everybody can do it."

ORTF never aired the video of Green's performance, and it remained unseen until last year, when it turned up on YouTube. One of the people who saw it there was Resonance producer Zev Feldman, who tracked down and licensed the audio for legitimate release. (The music had been bootlegged before, but from low-quality copies and not the 96kHz master Feldman used.) During a search through the archives, Feldman's contacts at France's Institut national de l'audiovisuel also found a second Grant Green live recording from nine months later at the Festival International de Jazz d'Antibes Juan-les-Pins. Green's touring band with Bartee on tenor, Palmer on organ and Billy Wilson on drums played twice—for about 30 minutes on July 18 and about 45 minutes on July 20.

By that time Green had moved from his Brooklyn apartment to Detroit, where he bought a house. He continued to release studio albums of funk-infused jazz, and slowly built a bigger audience. His 1971 album *Visions* made it onto Billboard's pop albums chart, which is impressive given that its track listing ran the gamut from the Jackson 5 hit "Never Can Say Goodbye" to the first movement from Mozart's Symphony No. 40 in G minor.

But it would be his concert recordings that were the most enduring. *Alive!*, cut on Aug. 15, 1970, at the Cliché Lounge in Newark, New Jersey, used much of the *Carryin' On* crew, and is particularly celebrated for the generous New Orleans funk that Green and Muhammad generated on the 11-minute version of "Sookie Sookie." Then in 1972, there was *Live At The Lighthouse*, recorded at the Hermosa Beach, California, landmark. Again, the emphasis was on extending the groove, not simply so the players could stretch out, but also to give the audience something to react to. And react they did. On the *Lighthouse* track "Jan Jan," fans can be heard yelling "Go, go!" at various points during Green's solo, urging the guitarist on as he further excites the crowd.

"That thing is all about energy," Green Jr. said. "When you play like that, everybody is listening, and they're all working together to build this energy thing. And when everybody is building a groove—you know, taking it to a climax—you gotta take the audience there, too."

Slick! Live At Oil Can Harry's is Green's last known live recording, and a perfect example

of that dynamic. Taken from a Sept. 5, 1975, recording made by radio station CHQM at a Vancouver night club, the one-hour performance consists of just three tracks: Charlie Parker's jump blues "Now's The Time," Antonio Carlos Jobim's melancholy bossa nova "How Insensitive (Insensatez)," and an epic jazz-funk medley that over the course of 32 minutes careens through Stanley Clarke's "Vulcan Princess," the Ohio Players' "Skin Tight," Bobby Womack's "Woman's Gotta Have It," Stevie Wonder's "Boogie On Reggae Woman" and the O'Jays' "For The Love Of Money."

After the show, Green was interviewed by CHQM's Gary Barclay, who asked the guitarist about the challenges of balancing his crossover material with jazz standards. Green acknowledged the distance between "Now's The Time" and "Skin Tight," but he viewed such eclecticism as a matter of inclusivity. "We don't want to set up some type of limitations to what we do," he said. "We want to try to get everybody . . . We don't want to say we're playing 'ghetto music,' or we don't want to say we're playing 'white music' or 'black music.' We're just playing music. Because we're playing all music." **DB**

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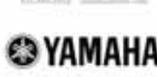
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Pianist Brad Mehldau leads his trio through a spate of varied interpretations on *Seymour Reads The Constitution!*

Brad Mehldau Trio *Seymour Reads The Constitution!*

NONESUCH 563508

★★★★

Stirring unwelcomed comparisons to fellow pianists Bill Evans and Keith Jarrett, Brad Mehldau won legions of fans in the mid-'90s with his reharmonization of compositions by writers as popular as John Lennon and Paul McCartney and as obscure as Nick Drake.

Mehldau has changed course several times in the intervening 20 years, but *Seymour Reads The Constitution!* returns him to those roots with interpretations of songs by composers as varied as Frederick Loewe, Elmo Hope and McCartney.

While any stylistic comparison to Jarrett is specious—or even lazy—where the two do collide is in their mutual love for nuanced repetition, subtly shifting phrases or entire motifs that become an additional layer of percussion and create a mild trance effect. Where Mehldau

diverges is in the intricacy of these phrases. He never has been a player to shy away from complexity; one of his gifts is his ability to make it all appear much simpler than it is.

“Spiral,” the original composition that opens *Seymour*, is a perfect example of how Mehldau generates a feeling of stillness while stirring circles of sound. Beginning with a descending pattern, the song has a rich texture of counter-movement, an invitation to get lost in any of the threads or switch between the woven piano parts, Jeff Ballard’s constantly changing drum accompaniment and Larry Grenadier’s sympathetic bass lines. The ensemble’s performance here is strong enough that it might set a new bar for what counts as *The Art Of The Trio*.

The title composition, inspired by a dream Mehldau had in which actor Philip Seymour Hoffman read to him, is a meditative near-waltz that nicely illustrates the pianist’s ability to make his left hand an additional member of the rhythm section. “Ten Tune,” another Mehldau original, is an outlier, sounding like its parts don’t quite fit together during its ensemble passages. A lengthy, rambling piano solo during the middle section adds to the disjointed feel.

The pure pop pieces—McCartney’s “Great Day” and Brian Wilson’s “Friends”—don’t take on added dimensions, as Drake’s “River Man” did in Mehldau’s hands, but the trio finds much to explore. Where McCartney’s original version was a spare combination of acoustic guitar, hand percussion and voices, Mehldau extrapolates the optimistic joy of the lyrics and manages to capture something of Macca’s phrasing in his playing. It’s a neat trick.

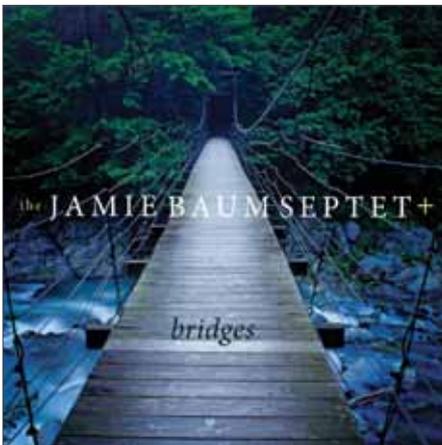
Loewe’s “Almost Like Being In Love,” from the 1947 musical *Brigadoon*, is played as if Bud Powell had just discovered it on the composer’s worktable and taken it to his pals on 52nd Street. Grenadier powers through it, while Ballard provides a lithe ride cymbal. Hope’s Monkish “De-Dah” extends the bop reflection.

—James Hale

Seymour Reads The Constitution! Spiral; Seymour Reads The Constitution!; Almost Like Being In Love; De-Dah; Friends; Ten Tune; Great Day; Beatrice. (64:20)

Personnel: Brad Mehldau, piano; Larry Grenadier, bass; Jeff Ballard, drums.

Ordering info: nonesuch.com



Jamie Baum Septet+ *Bridges*

SUNNYSIDE 1502

★★★★½

Jamie Baum is making her bid to be cast among the lot of great American improvisers who've mingled Indian classical influences, jazz strategies and electric instrumentation. *Bridges* is her second album to cover this ground. The first, *In This Life* (Sunnyside), was engrossing and evasive of cliché, but this one's even stronger.

A band this size can fall into sounding like either a mini-orchestra or a beefed-up combo. But thanks to Baum's arranging, Septet+ is

an earnest collective of eight players: It has no governing instrumental structure or guideline. Often listeners will hear sub-exchanges between members of the group, supported by—or in defiance of—some broader context.

Composer-pianist Carla Bley often has been at her most comfortable arranging for bands of a similar size, and on Baum's "Song Without Words" that influence rears up. On "Mantra," Baum's electronically harmonized alto flute improvises smartly over Navin Chettri's tanpura, playing drones and flag-like single notes. When "UCross Me" gets going, a groove takes hold that merges Bollywood, disco and hip-hop-influenced jazz. But Baum's compositions show their greatest internal range on the three-part *Shiva Suite*. It begins with Aaron Copland-esque harmonies, played by piano and horns while a singing bowl yawns underneath. Then comes an eruption of writhing electric scuttle, cymbals and guitar improvising madly. The chord changes reassert themselves, but things never unify into a simple meld.

—Giovanni Russonello

Bridges: From The Well; Song Without Words; There Are No Words; Honoring Nepal: The Shiva Suite, Part 1: The Earthquake; Part 2: Renewal; Part 3: Contemplation; Joyful Lament; Mantra; UCross Me. (59:34)

Personnel: Jamie Baum, flutes, singing bowl; Amir ElSaffar, trumpet, vocals (2); Sam Sadigursky, alto saxophone, bass clarinet; Chris Komer, French horn; Brad Shepik, guitar; John Escreet, piano; Zack Lober, bass, singing bowl (4); Jeff Hirschfield, drums; Jamey Haddad, percussion (1, 5, 6, 9); Navin Chettri, percussion, tanpura, vocals (7, 8).

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com



Charles Lloyd & The Marvels *Vanished Gardens*

BLUE NOTE 0028435

★★★★½

The Charles Lloyd-Bill Frisell alliance that the first appeared in 2015 as The Marvels takes a dark dive into blue-collar despair with Lucinda Williams, whose mumbled emotional memoirs are filled with folk and country drawls that dominate half the material here. Her boozy voice has the craggy texture of a cheap Muscatel, sloshed in the harsh experience of life learned the hard way. Authenticity, not craft, is her principal asset, and she spins it into a hungover hillbilly elegy of misfortune, laced with compassion. Greg Leisz lays down soft, shimmering pools of steel-guitar schmaltz that locate it all in the hills of Appalachia and beyond.

Frisell's dense, snaking guitar winds around this milieu more contentedly than Lloyd's pastel tenor. But it works for them, and they make it work for us. Each seems to have fun loping through Williams' "Unsuffer Me." And those looking for "Lloyd the jazz musician" will find comfort in the engaging medium-tempo "Blues For Langston" and a pensive "Monk's Mood" done in duet with Frisell.

"Defiant" and "Ballad Of A Sad Young Man" are dirgy, but rather lovely reveries rooted in the isolation of the country. They start on the same chord and feel very much alike in their soft, beseeching yearning. Lloyd often appends arpeggiated flourishes that hang like little tails on the ends of his warm, lyrical sighs. The title track is an uninspired collection of miniature Coltraneisms and sound-check scraps.

—John McDonough

Vanished Gardens: Defiant; Dust; Vanished Gardens; Ventura; Ballad Of A Sad Young Man; We've Come Too Far; Blues For Langston; Unsuffer Me; Monk's Mood; Angel. (74:28)

Personnel: Charles Lloyd, tenor saxophone, flute; Bill Frisell, guitar; Greg Leisz, steel guitar; Reuben Rogers, bass; Eric Harland, drums; Lucinda Williams, vocals (2, 4, 6, 8, 10).

Ordering info: bluenote.com

Tia Fuller *Diamond Cut*

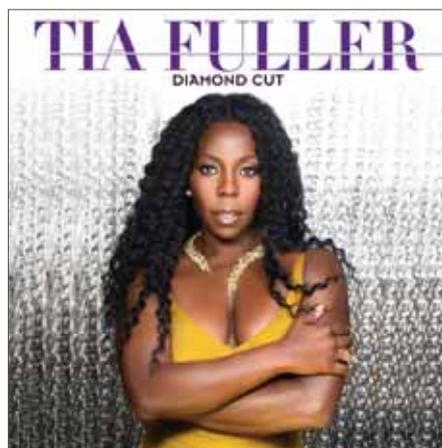
MACK AVENUE 1127

★★★★½

Saxophonist Tia Fuller is nothing if not fierce. On her fourth Mack Avenue album, her strong family jazz background still shapes every bebop and post-bop line. Her experience touring with Queen Bey a decade back is reflected in her powerful self-presentation. Fuller, now 42, is no longer a promising newcomer, but an impressive mid-career professional. At the urging of producer Terri Lyne Carrington, Fuller evolved in that direction here with a stimulating shift from a piano- to a guitar-based setting, and by challenging herself with two master rhythm sections.

"Fury Of Da'Mond" best showcases this more open setting, with guitar and saxophone conversing brightly, while also managing vigorous exchanges with bassist James Genus and drummer Bill Stewart. Five tunes featuring Dave Holland and Jack DeJohnette don't always connect; Fuller keeps driving to the basket when she's got a dream team ready to run some plays. But on "Tears Of Santa Barbara," a duet with Holland, Fuller puts down her armor of burnished facility for meaningful interplay, her timbral range broadening into the colors of a sunset.

Fuller sometimes plays as if she were having



a cutting contest with herself. Given the rigors of the jazz life, emerging careers are forged in pressure and heat, making it seem as if every note must be cut on defiant self-determination. This album is best when Fuller relaxes into her expertise and meets her personnel on the established-artist stage, where she now most certainly belongs.

—Michelle Mercer

Diamond Cut: In The Trenches; Save Your Love For Me; I Love You; Queen Intuition; Joe'n Around; Crowns Of Grey; The Coming; Soul Eyes; Delight; Fury Of Da'Mond; Tears Of Santa Barbara; Joe'n Around (Alternate Take). (63:51)

Personnel: Tia Fuller, saxophones; Adam Rogers, guitar; James Genus, bass; Bill Stewart, drums; Terri Lyne Carrington, percussion (7, 8); Sam Yahel, organ (2, 7); Jack DeJohnette, drums (4, 5, 7, 8, 9); Dave Holland, bass (4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11).

Ordering info: mackavenue.com

The Hot Box

Critics	James Hale	John McDonough	Michelle Mercer	Giovanni Russonello
Brad Mehldau Trio <i>Seymour Reads The Constitution!</i>	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Jamie Baum Septet+ <i>Bridges</i>	★★★	★★★½	★★★★	★★★½
Tia Fuller <i>Diamond Cut</i>	★★★½	★★★★	★★★½	★★★½
Charles Lloyd & The Marvels <i>Vanished Gardens</i>	★★★★	★★★½	★★★	★★★½

Critics' Comments

Brad Mehldau Trio, *Seymour Reads The Constitution!*

Mehldau follows his usual strategy of salting his set with a couple of standards, so we can find surprises on our own, then takes us into some fresh territory. But the musical clarity is airy and constant; Mehldau is the keeper of modern piano essentials. —John McDonough

Contrary to some conventional jazz wisdom, not every album needs to rearrange the furniture in your mind. The quiet virtuosity here is a return to a familiar summer cabin, where subtle rhythm adjustments slant new light into the room and fresh chord voicings open windows to the breeze. —Michelle Mercer

The trio's synergy borders on delirium: It's never restrictive, always loosely stitched and propellant. The ribbons of counterpoint on "Ten Tune" and "Spiral" suggest Mehldau's recent explorations of Bach might be having some spillover effect. —Giovanni Russonello

Jamie Baum Septet+, *Bridges*

Bridges works best when rhythm's kept at the center of its tour through the Balkans and the Indian subcontinent. There's brisk interplay between the ensemble, Baum, reed player Sadigursky and, particularly, trumpeter ElSaffar. Interest wanes when the pace slows. —James Hale

There is a rustic placidity in Baum's Copland-esque blends that is warmly welcoming to her flute, Sadigursky's clarinet and Escreet's piano. Material is somewhat weakened by several empty prologues of dawdling duration and a few splashes of gratuitous chaos. —John McDonough

Always a traveler, never a tourist, Baum constructs significant harmonic relationships between jazz and some far-flung music traditions. Everything connects here: concept and execution, soloists and ensemble, Nepal and New York, spirit and flesh. —Michelle Mercer

Tia Fuller, *Diamond Cut*

Fuller's tone has taken on depth and texture, and she slices through this program with authority. The accompaniment by two all-star rhythm sections adds a layer of interest. —James Hale

Diamond Cut is a straight-jazz quartet setting for Fuller, whose sound, poise and confidence cover a formidable swath of alto acrobatics. —John McDonough

An unimpeachable force on the alto is back, at long last. More than ever, Fuller's brand of post-bop improvising is as true to her inner Maceo Parker as it is to Cannonball Adderley's influence. —Giovanni Russonello

Charles Lloyd & The Marvels, *Vanished Gardens*

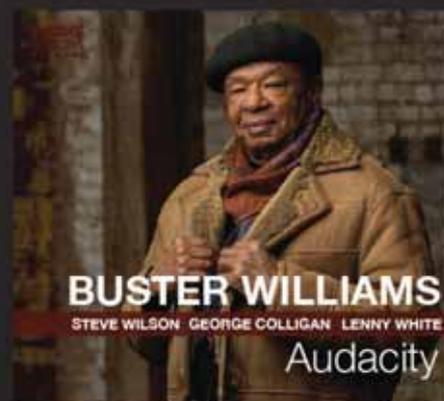
Williams and Lloyd are well matched as world-weary poet-mystics. Add Bill Frisell and things get deep. The meandering 12-minute version of Williams' "Unsuffer Me" is sublime. —James Hale

The adaptable Marvels can preach any music gospel, urban or rural. But for all the celebration of the leaders' shared Southern roots, Lloyd's refined sax fits Williams' beautifully rugged voice like a beret on a dusty cowboy. —Michelle Mercer

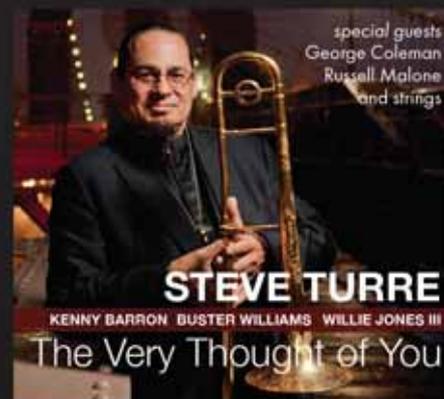
Williams' smoky, bourbon-on-the-rocks alto skips along the warm surface of this band, whose sound is defined by the prattle and hum of Frisell as much as by Lloyd's evocative, hollow-vessel cants. —Giovanni Russonello



EDDIE HENDERSON
DONALD HARRISON alto saxophone
KENNY BARRON piano
ESSIET ESSIET bass
MIKE CLARK drums



BUSTER WILLIAMS
STEVE WILSON saxophones
GEORGE COLLIGAN piano
LENNY WHITE drums



STEVE TURRE
KENNY BARRON piano
BUSTER WILLIAMS bass
WILLIE JONES III drums

with special guests
GEORGE COLEMAN tenor saxophone
RUSSELL MALONE guitar
and STRINGS



Kenny Barron Quintet *Concentric Circles*

BLUE NOTE 6747897

★★★★★

Pianist Kenny Barron debuted fronting a quintet in 1968, and now, age 75, embodies progressive jazz modernism's continuity with post-bop traditions. There's nothing old-fashioned about the 11 tracks on *Concentric Circles*, his 47th album as a leader, featuring eight original compositions and four younger colleagues.

Barron employs tunefulness, fine touch and implacable swing smartly, with ease and variety, based on his decades of experience. Every track

is exemplary, but consider the opener, "DPW," a Blakey-esque air taken at a confident tempo. Its arrangement sets up shapely solos from Dayna Stephens on tenor saxophone, Mike Rodriguez on trumpet and Johnathan Blake on drums. Barron is creative even in the background, as is bassist Kiyoshi Kitagawa, holding things together without flash, just grace.

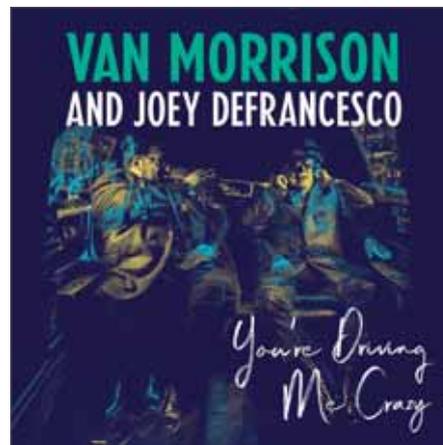
Cohesion and subtlety are basic to *Concentric Circles*, moments of particular beauty emerging from its stream of high-minded, yet gratifyingly grounded, play. The title track, a waltz, evokes sweetly sad memories via the head's flugelhorn-tenor harmony and the horn players' tone-true statements.

Barron's tastes extend to Brazilian sambas, as per his cover of Caetano Veloso's "Aquele Frevo Axe," and Afro-Cuban montunos, but he long ago absorbed those influences into his warm, understated style. Yes, he could be showier, but why? His project is perfect as is, drawing the ear with delicate flourishes and turns. His unaccompanied version of Monk's "Reflections," concluding *Concentric Circles*, is simply divine. —Howard Mandel

Concentric Circles: DPW; Concentric Circles; Blue Waters; A Short Journey; Aquele Frevo Axe; Von Hangman; In The Dark; Baile; L's Bop; I'm Just Sayin'; Reflections. (66:22)

Personnel: Kenny Barron, piano; Kiyoshi Kitagawa, bass; Johnathan Blake, drums; Mike Rodriguez, trumpet, flugelhorn; Dayna Stephens, tenor and soprano saxophones.

Ordering info: bluenote.com



Van Morrison and Joey DeFrancesco *You're Driving Me Crazy*

SONY LEGACY 190758200

★★★★★

At 72, Van Morrison continues to prove he's among the hardest-working vocalists in jazz and its adjacent musical territories, showing no signs of artistic fatigue on *You're Driving Me Crazy*, his 39th record.

The album comprises an eclectic collection of songs, drawing the bulk of its material from the showtune canon, Chicago blues and even Morrison's own illustrious discography. But the distinguishing feature on this latest project is the presence of organist Joey DeFrancesco, whose richly expressed keyboard harmonies and laconic trumpet interludes provide the scenery through which Morrison and the rest of the ensemble explore.

Morrison knows how to animate an album, varying pace and mood to supreme effect. Sometimes the musicians pursue each other at a sprint, as on the harried "Evening Shadows," which finds DeFrancesco creating a vortex of colliding lines. Other times, the pace is more of a stroll, with the musicians allowing greater time for introspection and nuance.

DeFrancesco, a well-articulated improviser, proves a suitable foil for Morrison's heartfelt vocals, noteworthy here for their humanity and warmth. And there's a sense of grit to "Travelin' Light," on which Morrison opines for a lost lover: "She said goodbye/and took my heart away/So from now on/I'm traveling light," he laments with a sand-in-the-shoes sense of road-weariness. —Brian Zimmerman

You're Driving Me Crazy: Miss Otis Regrets; Hold It Right There; All Saints Day; The Way Young Lovers Do; The Things I Used To Do; Travelin' Light; Close Enough For Jazz; Goldfish Bowl; Evening Shadows; Magic Time; You're Driving Me Crazy; Every Day I Have The Blues; Have I Told You Lately; Sticks And Stones; Celtic Swing. (71:00)

Personnel: Van Morrison, vocals, alto saxophone; Joey DeFrancesco, organ, trumpet; Dan Wilson, guitar; Michael Ode, drums; Troy Roberts, tenor and soprano saxophone; Shana Morrison, vocals.

Ordering info: legacyrecordings.com

Monika Herzig *SHEROES*

WHALING CITY SOUND 106

★★★★★

Pianist, composer and educator Monika Herzig opens *SHEROES* with a tribute to her mentor, the late Third Stream composer David Baker. Listeners can hear his influence on "Time Again, D.B." as Herzig and the SHEROES band move in and out of different meters, blaze through intricate solos and sync up effortlessly on the tune's compelling melodic theme. What might not be audible is that all of the compositions on the release are written, arranged and played by women—the female heroes (or "sheroes") who collaborated with Herzig on this timely recording.

Each of the nine players on the recording is a stand-out musician in her own right. If individually they are impressive, collectively they are a force. Take their ensemble effort on Leni Stern's original "Bubbles." Guitarist Stern, percussionist Myra Casales and drummer Rosa Avila hold the complex rhythmic center for the duration of the piece; during solo sections, flutist Jamie Baum and trombonist Reut Regev are free to explore the heights of Stern's harmonic vision. Conversely, on bassist Jennifer Vincent's "Song for C.C.," Baum and Regev's unison line provides the necessary



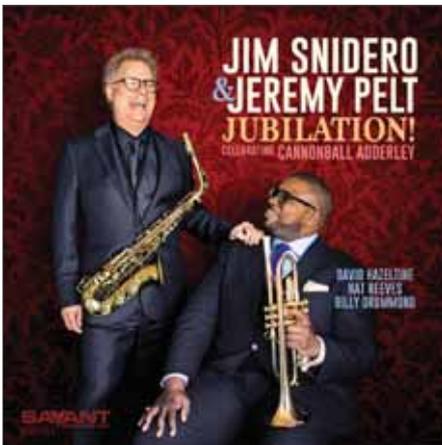
foil for Herzig's impassioned improvisation.

On the album's final track, the eclectic "I Am A Superstar," Regev uses spoken word to affirm what makes these women so exemplary in turn: their kindness, humor and beauty. But the list is incomplete without also noting their superior musicianship. —Suzanne Lorge

SHEROES: Time Again, D.B.; Bubbles; Ain't No Mountain High Enough; Nancy Wilson Portrait; Song for C.C.; Just Another Day At The Office; The House Of The Rising Sun; Wayning; Cantos; I Am A Superstar. (58:28)

Personnel: Monika Herzig, piano; Ingrid Jensen, trumpet; Jennifer Vincent, bass; Ada Rovatti, tenor saxophone; Jamie Baum, flute; Reut Regev, trombone; Leni Stern, guitar; Myra Casales, percussion; Rosa Avila, drums.

Ordering info: whalingcitysound.com



Jim Snidero & Jeremy Pelt
Jubilation! Celebrating Cannonball Adderley

SAVANT 2167

★★★★½

Jeremy Pelt
Noir En Rouge (Live In Paris)

HIGHNOTE 7314

★★★★★

Legend has it that when 26-year-old alto saxophonist Cannonball Adderley sat in with bass-

ist Oscar Pettiford at Café Bohemia in 1955, the leader called a tempo so fast it appeared he was trying to humiliate the young musician off the bandstand. Adderley responded with a solo so amazing that it shocked the New York jazz scene, earning him overnight sainthood and an Emarcy Records contract within a week.

Exceptional hard-bop-and-beyond players Jim Snidero and Jeremy Pelt pay tribute to Adderley, who would've turned 90 this year, titling the effort after a key Adderley trait—jubilation. The pair perform with energy, wit and élan throughout *Jubilation! Celebrating Cannonball Adderley*, supported by a top-tier rhythm section.

Pelt's "Party Time" establishes the mood, a funky soul-groover enlivened by Billy Drummond's tipping ride cymbal beat and Pelt's blasé solo. Sam Jones' "Del Sasser" is the perfect vehicle to convey Adderley's singular *joie de vivre*, and Snidero jumps in head-first, his blustery solo channeling Cannonball, as well as his own blues-inflected identity.

Pelt also proves his versatility and virtuosity on his own turf, the intimate *Noir En Rouge (Live In Paris)* performed by a brash young band equipped to make waves. Drummer Jonathan Barber is relatively new to the New York and Paris scenes, his Tony Williams-

inspired stickwork a consistent source of fire. That Williams attitude fills a portion of this live set, its expansive grooves coupled with exploratory trumpet work recalling Miles Davis' epic *Filles De Kilimanjaro*. After the lovely "Black Love Stories," the Miles vibe continues on "Evolution," followed by the serene standard "I Will Wait For You," Pelt playing with the kind of bittersweet luminosity for which he is renowned. He returns to the future with the Afro-Cuban groove of "Melody For V," Barber and percussionist Jacqueline Acevedo creating layers of chattering rhythms. *Noir En Rouge* closes with the subtle "Chateau D'Eau," a meditative composition enabling Pelt to direct his inner Freddie Hubbard-meets-Lee Morgan panache, while pianist Victor Gould casually elucidates the music with beauty and breath.

Both albums are an homage to jazz's past, with a subtle nod to the music's future.

—Ken Micallef

Jubilation! Celebrating Cannonball Adderley: Party Time; Del Sasser; Wabash; Saudade; Stars Fell On Alabama; Sack O' Woe; Ball's 90th; Work Song. (53:23)

Personnel: Jim Snidero, alto saxophone; Jeremy Pelt, trumpet; David Hazeltine, piano; Nat Reeves, bass; Billy Drummond, drums.

Noir En Rouge (Live In Paris): Make Noise!; Re-Invention; Sir Carter; Black Love Stories; Evolution; I Will Wait For You; Melody For V; Chateau D'Eau. (66:05)

Personnel: Jeremy Pelt, trumpet; Victor Gould, piano; Vicente Archer, bass; Jonathan Barber, drums; Jacqueline Acevedo, percussion.

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com



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Fecundity of European Style

The European jazz scene, in all of its guises, continues to produce significant artists who increasingly are making their voices heard across the Atlantic. Here we have, in a typically diverse trawl, bands from England, France, Norway and Portugal, producing sounds that fuse jazz with electronica, chamber improvisation, free-form hymnals and Guadalupean drumming.

In London, **Dinosaur** swiftly has followed-up its 2016 debut album, *Together, As One* (Edition). **Wonder Trail (Edition 111; 36:47 ★★★★★)** moves further toward electronica, but with Laura Jurd's trumpet nestled in a central position, sometimes trimmed with an effects cloak. Folksy vocals are heard down a tunnel at the start of "Set Free," and then a core theme kicks in. It's just about a minute before the distinctive riff of "Quiet Thunder" emerges, fuzzed bass sounding like a guitar soloing with a jittery electro-halo. Skinny drum claps and percussively thumbed bass hark back to teenagers' bedrooms in the 1980s, then suddenly, there's a close-mic'd trumpet solo, intimate and striking.

Ordering info: editionrecords.com

Demian Cabaud is an Argentinian bassist living in Portugal, and his **Astah (Porta-Jazz; 58:04 ★★★★★)** was recorded live at the Porta-Jazz festival. The contemplative spiritual-jazz aura has shades of Tord Gustavsen's hymnal touch, all its freeness revolving around a warm-tonal base, even if earthy tenorman Ariel Bringuez frequently emits a David Murray cry.

This album has the prime quality of being perpetually on the cusp of tough and tender, even including some high-kickin' showtime swing outbreaks.

Ordering info: portajazz.com

The Norwegian pianist **Håvard Wiik** is familiar as a member of Atomic, and is

joined for **This Is Not A Waltz (Mose-robie 111; 45:00 ★★★)** by bassist Ole Morten Vågan and drummer Håkon Mjåset Johansen. Wiik is consistently playful, running around inside a series of hyperactive (and well-titled) pieces. He's fluid and free, but the soloing has soft edges, rather than a spiny, aggressive nature.

"Pneumatiques" has bowed bass, trilled piano and percussive clatter, acting as a prelude for the tour de force "Mnemonic Functions," which finds the trio at full power and pace, until a sculpture garden drum solo inhabits a very quiet conclusion.

Ordering info: quesonegro.de

Here's a pair of releases with strong Parisian connections. The **Sonny Troupé Quartet** is led by a percussionist from Guadeloupe—a resident of France since 2000—with **Reflets Denses (Socadisc TW2; 66:00 ★★★★★)** dedicated to a bracing amalgam of jazz, flavored with traditional gwo ka drumming. Its arrangements frame a travelogue in sound that invariably hit the right ratios, balancing its array of inputs. This is jazz as ritual celebration.

Ordering info: sonnytroupe.com

The lineage of the original Gong is complex, including a time in 1975 when founding members Daavid Allen and Gilli Smyth actually left their own band. The remaining players continued as Pierre Moerlen's Gong, three of whom now are part of **Gong Espresso** and have issued **Decadence (Self Release; 38:51 ★★)**. There's a complete lack of resonance with the old Gong universe of eccentric cosmic jazz-prog. Moerlen's version was always more concerned with straight jazz-rock, but Espresso has evolved into placid smooth jazz, dominated by mellow guitar noodlings. **DB**

Ordering info: gongexpresso.com



Román Filiú Quarteria

SUNNYSIDE 1504

★★★★½

The Cuban-born alto saxophonist Román Filiú—an outstanding soloist with Henry Threadgill's Ensemble Double Up and Dafnis Prieto's Big Band—fronts an impressive group on his third album as a leader.

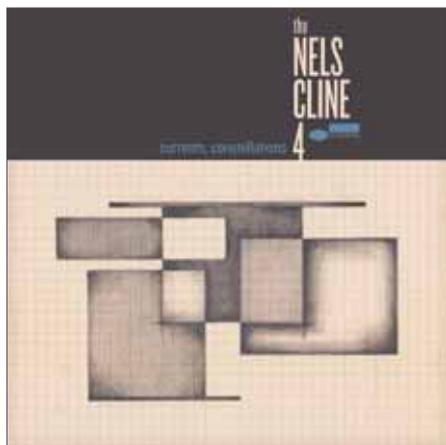
The angular opener, "Fulcanelli," bears the stamp of Steve Coleman and yields particularly potent statements from the leader and from a fellow Cuban native, pianist David Virelles. The Afro-Cuban flavored "Harina Con Arena" is a showcase for trumpeter Ralph Alessi's bright-toned excursions and also serves as a launching pad for one of Filiú's most adventurous solos here.

"Danza #5," Virelles' solo piano interlude, leads into the dynamic "Danza #1," fueled by Yusnier Sanchez's churning percussion in tandem with Craig Weinrib's polyrhythmic drumming, as bassist Matt Brewer bobs and weaves in a tumbao groove underneath. Alessi delivers a dazzling high-note trumpet solo here, while Filiú adds a sinuous solo of his own before the piece builds to a swirling crescendo. The moody and alluring "Choral," underscored by Weinrib's sensitive brushwork, recalls the delicate vibe of Miles Davis' "Flamenco Sketches" and reveals some warmly inviting solos from Filiú, tenorist Dayna Stephens and Virelles. Filiú again organically incorporates his Steve Coleman-esque alto lines into the Afro-Cuban fabric of "Danza #3," and Virelles follows with another singular, cascading piano solo. Swiss-born tenor saxophonist Maria Grand, another Coleman disciple, appears on the chorale "For Horns And Bells" and solos authoritatively on the pensive "Tursten." —Bill Milkowski

Quarteria: Fulcanelli; Grass; Harina Con Arena; Choral; Danza #5; Danza #1; Glass; Danza #3; Emperor; For Horns And Bells; Tursten; Kaijufrem. (59:47)

Personnel: Roman Filiu, alto saxophone; Ralph Alessi, trumpet; Dayna Stephens, tenor saxophone; Maria Grand, tenor saxophone (10, 11); David Virelles, piano; Matt Brewer, bass; Craig Weinrib, drums; Yusnier Sanchez, percussion.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com



Nels Cline 4 *Currents, Constellations*

BLUE NOTE 0028064

★★★★★

It all starts with a guitar bang, followed by an uptempo four-to-the-floor riposte with unwieldy dueling guitars astir, clickety-clack drumming and that furtive bass driving it all, before the minimal theme statement finally emerges.

With no real climax or obvious destination, listeners have entered the Nels Cline 4 experience, a new band. The scampering con-

tinues with “Swing Ghost ’59,” the two-guitar conversation somewhat tempered as it continues to unravel.

As with previous efforts—including last year’s marvelous *Lovers* (Blue Note) and Cline’s 2014 guitar duo with Lage, *Room* (Mack Avenue)—*Currents, Constellations* can be heard as a guitar-lover’s outing. Here, Cline’s inclinations with Lage take advantage of various effects, moods, experiments and styles, bequeathing a kind of guitar glossary on listeners. “Amenette” begins quickly, stops for a quiet chat between the plectrists only to pick up again, before bassist Scott Colley reasserts himself.

To play this kind of music as an ensemble—a chunk of it weighty-sounding—requires a special telepathy, not to mention talent and discipline.

Not that all of *Currents, Constellations*, which features seven Cline compositions, is frolicsome. Hardly. It’s as if there are two clearly demarcated bands here. Indeed, there are lovely contrasts, refrains that offer us another glimpse of Cline’s more lyrical side. “For Each, A Flower,” which closes the album, sends us out humming (as opposed to strumming); the measured, dreamy “Imperfect 10” plays like something Jim Hall would’ve felt right at home with, the mel-

ody, the single lines, the interludes just this side of lush, romantic even; and Carla Bley’s “Temporarily,” perhaps a combination of the two.

“As Close As That” is a prime example of the two-guitar dialogue, the intermingling almost gooey, filled with lots of reverb. The title says it all: As the foursome takes this dreamy, atmospheric number and weaves tapestries, Colley’s gently throbbing lines interact with drummer Tom Rainey’s equally gentle punctuations. Past the intro, Cline and Lage go on to complete each other’s sentences, the rambling cadences in their phrasings leaving the impression of one guitar player with four hands. Likewise with “River Mouth (Parts 1 & 2).” Its initial passage is as quiet a tune as any on *Currents, Constellations*, allowing for more soloing, more meandering. The ways Cline and Lage interweave, one guitarist playing single-note lines while the other solos—and switching between the two—enhances a gorgeous melody that eventually takes flight in “Part 2” as a flurry in 5.

—John Ephland

Currents, Constellations: Furtive; Swing Ghost ’59; Imperfect 10; As Close As That; Amenette; Temporarily; River Mouth (Parts 1 & 2); For Each, A Flower. (44:13)

Personnel: Nels Cline, Julian Lage, guitar; Scott Colley, bass; Tom Rainey, drums.

Ordering info: bluenote.com

Stephanie Richards *Fullmoon*

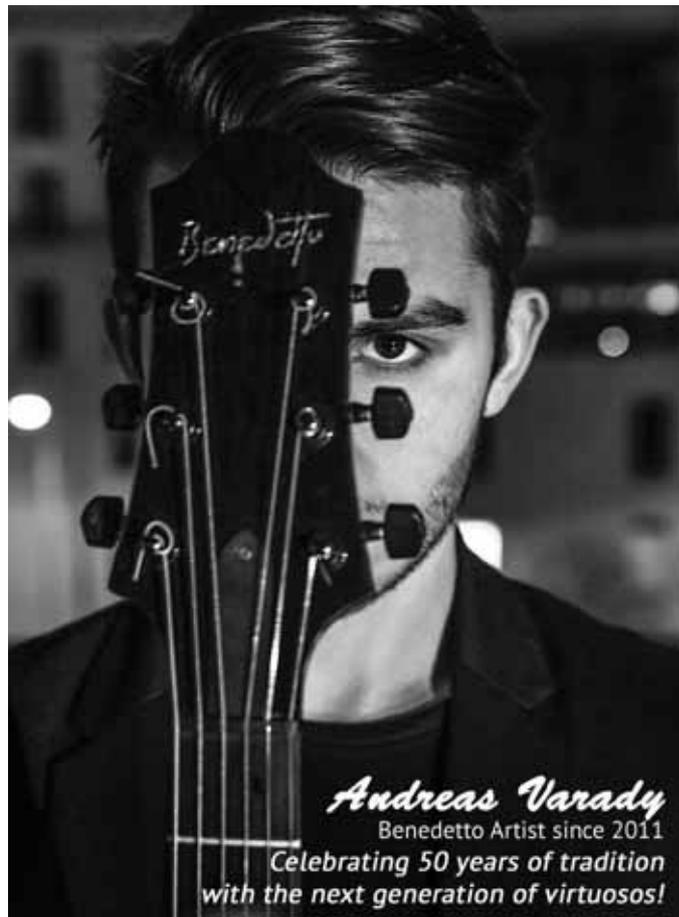
RELATIVE PITCH 1066

★★★

Trumpeter Stephanie Richards has a striking facility on her horn, with expressive dynamism and a multi-hued tonal range. Layering percussion atop atmospheric created by the sampler of Dino J.A. Deane, Richards has created what can feel like a jagged analog to Jon Hassell’s vintage exoticisms. *Fullmoon* tends toward starkness, whereas Hassell’s explorations have been lush and ambient; music here evokes not so much the natural world, but an industrial one, as if the album were a field recording from an abandoned factory.

Fullmoon could be an inspiration to young avant-minded trumpeters, showcasing what can be achieved, even with a limited palette. This rather brief album also should serve as a calling card for soundtrack work. One easily can imagine Richards’ scoring a sci-fi thriller with Deane. In particular, the two parts of “Full Moon” work wonders in establishing alien worlds through all manner of acoustic and synthetic effects. The tongued rhythms and digital grinding on some tracks could be a tough sell for lay listeners. That said, the arching trumpet melodies on the standout “Piano”—the horn echoing through a curtain of silvery electronic tension—are unquestionably beautiful.

—Bradley Bamberger



Fullmoon: New Moon; Snare; Piano; Half Moon; Gong, Part I; Gong, Part II; Timpani; Full Moon, Part I; Full Moon, Part II. (32:46)

Personnel: Stephanie Richards, trumpet, flugelhorn, percussion; Dino J.A. Deane, sampler.

Ordering info: relativepitchrecords.com



Ben Lamar Gay *Downtown Castles Can Never Block The Sun*

INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM 0017

★★★★½

If the story in the press notes is true, Ben Lamar Gay has, during the past seven years, recorded seven full-length albums that he's pocketed rather than shared with the world. It's from those sessions that *Downtown Castles Can Never Block The Sun*, the first full-length from this Chicago cornetist and producer, is compiled.

It's impressive enough that he was able to carve out time to make that much music, consid-

ering his calendar of performances and studio work with the likes of Bitchin Bajas and Nicole Mitchell. But what's especially remarkable is how well considered the material is.

Downtown Castles also provides a snapshot of Gay's various musical personalities. The collection varies from somber balladry and banjo-heavy trad-jazz to much more abstract work, like the ambient drift of "Melhor Que Tem."

Much of the rest of the album is leavened with a spirit akin to the cut-and-paste hip-hop productions of Madlib and J Dilla. On "Jubilee," Gay loops a beat that feels like it could collapse in a heap at any moment, held together only by his minimalist cornet honks. "Music For 18 Hairdressers," on the other hand, strips the beat away, leaving just a looped lo-fi bass line and some staccato wind instruments.

A fine collection on its own, *Downtown Castles* feels like a taster menu, offering delectable samples of what Gay can do, while leaving listeners hungry for a full plate. —Robert Ham

Downtown Castles Can Never Block The Sun: Vitus Labrusca; Muhal; Music For 18 Hairdressers: Braids & Fractals; Jubilee; A Seasoning Called Primavera; Miss Nealie Burns; Me, JayVe & The Big Bee; Uvas; Galveston; Swim Swim; Kunni; Melhor Que Tem; Gator Teeth; 7th Stanza; Oh no ... not again! (44:24)

Personnel: Ben Lamar Gay, cornet, synthesizers, flute, voice; Rob Frye, bass clarinet, flute; Hanna Brock, viola; JayVe Montgomery, tenor saxophone; Gira Dahnee, vocals; Zuzu Fé, vocals; Polyphonic, synthesizer, drum programming; M'rald Calhoun, violin; Some Yoga Teacher, banjo; Tommaso Moretti, drums; Josh Sirotiak, tuba, flute; Will Faber, guitar, ngoni, synthesizer, fretless 12-string guitar, flute; Ed Bornstein, electronics.

Ordering info: intlanthem.com

Fred Hersch Trio *Live In Europe*

PALMETTO 2192

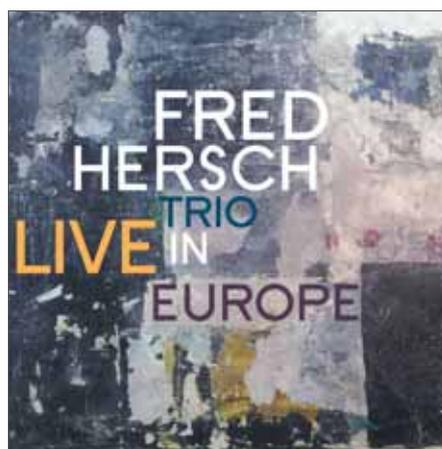
★★★★★

The piano/bass/drum combo demands full awareness of internal and external processes. In large ensembles, one's either playing charts or improvising in ways that render individuals' contributions less vital. Solo settings direct the artist to focus entirely on what's within; they're also forgiving.

Recently, Keith Jarrett, Gary Peacock and Jack DeJohnette have been commended for bringing this trio setting to an apotheosis. But on this live project, Fred Hersch, John Hébert and Eric McPherson merit the same level of praise.

Hersch's compositions sometimes are open frameworks for free extemporization, as in the flow of "Snake Maltings," "Scuttlers" and "Skipping," all evoking queasy imagery. They also can be more fully written, as on "Bristol Fog (For John Taylor)," with a melody that artfully lifts and falls.

Regardless of the setting, Hersch's playing achieves profundity through minimal means. Bassist Hébert crafts a thoughtful solo on "Bristol Fog" but the piano provides near-miraculous accompaniment—sometimes with just one note. On the final track, Hersch takes a solo



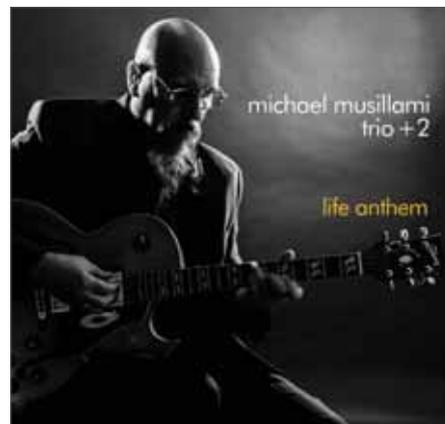
encore. We know what's coming from the title, but for the audience at this concert, the performance must have been a mystery. Hints pop up—parallel sixths, a lurching stride—but the head to "Blue Monk" emerges only 30 seconds before the end. Improvisation doesn't engage the listener any more playfully than this.

—Bob Doerschuk

Live In Europe: We See; Snake Maltings; Scuttlers; Skipping; Bristol Fog (For John Taylor); Newklypso (For Sonny Rollins); The Big Easy (For Tom Piazza); Miyako; Black Nile; Blue Monk (Solo Encore). (63:56)

Personnel: Fred Hersch, piano; John Hébert, bass; Eric McPherson, drums.

Ordering info: palmetto-records.com



Michael Musillami Trio + 2 *Life Anthem*

PLAYSCAPE 091717

★★★★★

Modernist guitarist Michael Musillami has crafted a thoughtful and moving album in *Life Anthem*, a survivor's celebration. Bracketed by solo and ensemble versions of the title track, this recording expresses the wide range of emotions Musillami experienced in the summer of 2016, when a blinding headache led to the discovery of a brain tumor that had to be removed.

The East Coast musician's response to that close call includes a weirdly funky tribute to his neurosurgeon, a fluid thanks to his nurse, the pastoral, grounding "Renewed Focus" and jagged depictions of life in the desperate lane. More melodic forays, like the dense "ICU Blues" and the expansive "Visions," dovetail with the dominant, more abstract tracks.

The sequencing reflects the bandleader's drama, as Musillami puts together this account of his journey to recovery. The ensemble performs longer tracks alongside shorter, calmer ones like "Slow Bleed," an interstitial cut featuring the bandleader at his friendliest, and "I'm Beginning To Feel Life's Pulse Again," bassist Joe Fonda's turn to shine.

Musillami manipulates his tone on tracks like "MRI Countdown," swelling it into warmth, then squeezing it down cold to underline his point. His communication with tart cornetist Kirk Knuffke and the more visceral saxophonist Jason Robinson is a welcomed bonus.

The album's as far as possible from easy listening. At the same time, though, it's bracingly and courageously true to life. —Carlo Wolff

Life Anthem: Life Anthem (Solo Cornet); I Hear Sirens In The Distance; MRI Countdown; Slow Bleed; Dr. Mohamad Khaled, Neurosurgeon; I'm Beginning To Feel Life's Pulse Again; June Recovery; Nurse Roe; ICU Blues; Visions; Night Walker; Renewed Focus; Family; Think Of Something Beautiful; Life Anthem (Full Ensemble). (72:57)

Personnel: Michael Musillami, guitar; Joe Fonda, bass; Kirk Knuffke, cornet; Jason Robinson, tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone, alto flute; George Schuller, drums.

Ordering info: playscape-recordings.com

BLUE NOTE®



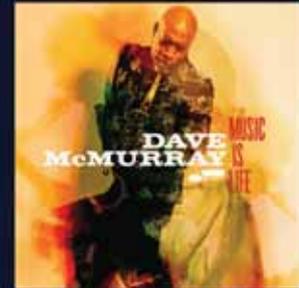
DR. LONNIE SMITH ALL IN MY MIND

The Hammond B-3 organ legend and **NEA Jazz Master** releases a spirited live trio album recorded at the **Jazz Standard** in New York City. *All In My Mind* opens with a powerful rendering of **Wayne Shorter's** "JuJu," while Smith also takes **Paul Simon's** hit "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover" for a 10-minute joyride.



GOGO PENGUIN A HUMDRUM STAR

One of **New York Times' 12 best bands at SXSW 2017**, the Manchester-based trio conjure richly atmospheric music that draws from their grounding in classical conservatoires and jazz ensembles, while merging acoustic and electronic techniques. Their latest album builds on the momentum of its acclaimed predecessors, the **Mercury Prize**-nominated *V2.0* and *Man Made Object*, and transports it to new realms.



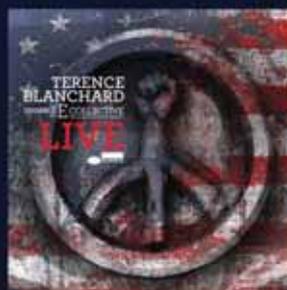
DAVE McMURRAY MUSIC IS LIFE

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



GREGORY PORTER NAT KING COLE & ME

The **GRAMMY-winning** vocalist releases his stunning fifth studio album, a heartfelt tribute to the legendary singer and pianist **Nat King Cole**. With the help of **six-time GRAMMY-winning arranger VINCE MENDOZA**, and the **LONDON STUDIO ORCHESTRA**, Porter revisits some of Cole's most cherished classics such as "Smile," "L-O-V-E," "Nature Boy," and "The Christmas Song."



TERENCE BLANCHARD LIVE (FEAT. THE E-COLLECTIVE)

Following his powerful album *Breathless*, **4-time GRAMMY-winning trumpeter** Terence Blanchard documents his band The E-Collective live in Minneapolis, Cleveland, and Dallas - cities that have been scarred by the tension between law enforcement and unarmed African Americans. Live features keyboardist **FABIAN ALMAZAN**, guitarist **CHARLES ALTURA**, bassist **DAVID GINYARD JR.**, and drummer **OSCAR SEATON**



THE NELS CLINE 4 CURRENTS, CONSTELLATIONS

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

Crying More Salty Tears

Water “Wolfman” Washington, *My Future Is My Past* (Anti- 87595; 48:54 ★★★★★) Walter Washington, a New Orleans blues and r&b veteran, has been open to singing jazz in the studio since the 1980s. On this recent austere session, his rich voice hedges that way in a sage, deliberate manner as it reflects the sensitivity or strength found in the lyrics to ageless classics. “I Just Dropped By To Say Hello,” a bittersweet remembrance, probably hasn’t been rendered so stirringly since Johnny Hartman owned the tune. His pairing with estimable vocalist Irma Thomas for David Egan’s “Even Now” is a godsend. Emotionally decisive on other tracks, just the Johnny “Guitar” Watson tune “Lone Ranger” fails to impress. Not incidentally, there’s a fair amount of Washington’s high-quality blues guitar work, too.

Ordering info: anti.com

Teresa James & The Rhythm Tramps, *Here In Babylon* (Jesi-Lu; 52:57 ★★★★★) Vocalist Teresa James is as talented and emotionally true as any of her peers, making one strong record after another since the 1990s. Her latest finds her in top form, an evenness of temperament in play on most of the songs that were penned by her trusted producer-bassist, Terry Wilson. When James occasionally heats up her delivery, there’s even more evidence of her abundance of spirit. Wilson and the other Tramps craft a winning sound derived from Memphis, Texas and West Coast influences.

Ordering info: teresajames.com

Tim Woods, *Human Race* (Self Release; 53:26 ★★½) Not your garden variety guitarist, Tim Woods uses his thumb to get a mix of electro-magnetic lead lines, chords and bass figures. His sophomore album isn’t so ordinary, either. After beginning with three decent blues-rock numbers, “Take A Minute” arrives as the game changer. The Pittsburgh-area musician steps up as a vocalist and songwriter to grip our attention with an exceptionally melodic and intelligent plea for everyone to slow down and go about healing the world with compassion; no weak sentiment intrudes.

Ordering info: timwoodsmusic.com

Geoff & Maria Muldaur, *Pottery Pie* (Omnivore 241; 41:23 ★★½) The Muldaurs were making Americana albums long before the term was coined. This reissued 1970 Reprise album encompasses folk, gospel, hillbilly-style Tin Pan Alley, Bob Dylan, camp and unadulterated blues. The latter wins out. Maria is coy, sultry and wistful while singing Memphis Minnie’s “Me And My Chauffeur Blues,” and the emotional coloring of Geoff’s vocal on Son House’s



Walter “Wolfman” Washington

GREG MILES

“Death Letter Blues” hasn’t faded over time.

Ordering info: omnivorerecordings.com

Michael Bloomfield, *San Francisco Nights* (RockBeat 3403; 54:21; ★★★) Anyone unaware of or needing a reminder of Mike Bloomfield’s superiority as a guitarist should go straight to his Sony Legacy box set, *From His Head*. This patchwork of solo-acoustic and electric-band tracks from Norman Drayton’s trove of tapes has too few instances displaying his guitar acumen.

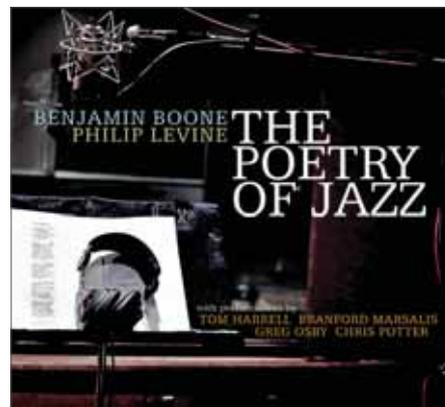
Ordering info: rockbeatrecords.com

Various Artists, *The Best Country Blues You’ve Never Heard* (Rough Guide 1362; 74:24 ★★½) This U.K. collection of 25 songs by forgotten recording artists from the late 1920s and ‘30s hits the traditional bullet points: good singing and good guitar, mandolin and harmonica work, mainly of the vigorous Delta or relaxed East Coast-style. Bob Campbell is all sinister business wielding “Shotgun Blues,” and Water Coleman makes an off-color request, “Mama, Let Me Lay It On You.” State-of-the-art noise reduction of analog tape-hiss increases the attraction of meeting these and other unknowns, such as Willie Reed and Spark Plug Smith.

Ordering info: worldmusic.net

Ghalia & Mama’s Boys, *Let The Demons Out* (Ruf 1250; 47:55 ★½) What the Belgian band lacks in originality is partially offset by vigorous technical competency. Or is it demonic possession? A passable cover of Little Willie John’s “I’m Shakin’” gets lost in a blitz of freaky originals, among them “Hiccup Boogie” and “4 A.M. Fried Chicken.” **DB**

Ordering info: rufrecords.de



Benjamin Boone/ Philip Levine *The Poetry Of Jazz*

ORIGIN 82754

★★★★★

Like a whiskey aged in charred casks, not a gin—which Pulitzer-winning poet laureate Philip Levine at first taste thought was hair tonic—this collection of world-weary words framed by quick-witted saxophonist/composer Benjamin Boone should be taken neat and steep sampled.

Levine grew up in Detroit, and as a teenager during the ‘50s worked in car manufacturing plants. His general cynicism about the workplace is at odds with the historicizing Studs Terkel, and his uncomplicated lines are delivered with bleak soulfulness. Levine, who died in 2015, insisted on recording live in the studio with the musicians, even though, in his 80s at the time, it reportedly took a toll on him. Boone states, nevertheless, he delivered his text, often in first takes, with consummate confidence.

Non-nostalgic jazz pedants might find some of these romanticized riffs on the following somewhat obvious: Sonny Rollins’ Williamsburg Bridge woodshedding; the tragic early departure of Clifford Brown; and Bird’s forlorn “Lover Man” phase. But these vintage meanders bear repeat listening.

Levine and Boone bring it closer to home on the poignant, floaty “Soloing (Homage To John Coltrane),” with lovely, tidal strokes from Branford Marsalis. Despite the star turns, Boone not only distinguishes himself with uncluttered, affecting orchestrations, but by passionately balancing intellect and emotion. —Michael Jackson

The Poetry Of Jazz: Gin; Making Light Of It; The Unknowable (Homage To Sonny Rollins); Yakov; They Feed They Lion; I Remember Clifford (Homage To Clifford Brown); The Music Of Time; Soloing (Homage To John Coltrane); Arrival; A Dozen Dawn Songs, Plus One; Our Valley; Call It Music (Homage To Charlie Parker); By The Waters Of The Llobregat; What Work Is. (73:08)

Personnel: Benjamin Boone, alto and soprano saxophone; Philip Levine, poetry, narration; David Aus (2–6, 10–14), Craig Von Berg (1, 7, 8, 10), piano; Spee Kosloff (1–3, 7, 9, 10, 12), Nye Morton (4, 5, 11, 15), bass; John Lauffenburger (6–8), Brian Hamada (1–3, 6–8, 10, 12), drums; Gary Newmark (4, 5, 11, 14), Stefan Poetzsch, violin (10, 15); Karen Marguth, vocals (1–7); Max Hembd (4, 5, 10), Asher Boone (6), Tom Harrell (6), trumpet; Atticus Boone, French horn (6); Chris Potter, tenor saxophone (6); Branford Marsalis (8); Greg Osby (12), alto saxophone.

Ordering info: originarts.com



Joshua Redman
Still Dreaming
NONESUCH 565047

★★★★★

Tribute albums can seem overly manufactured—designed to trade on nostalgia—but Joshua Redman’s *Still Dreaming* feels not just right, but overdue. Inspired by family and stylistic connections to the quartet Old And New Dreams (saxophonist Dewey Redman, bassist Charlie Haden, trumpeter Don Cherry, drummer Ed Blackwell) and by extension to Ornette Coleman’s late-’60s band, this newer ensemble’s work shows that the elder Redman and his bandmates all still cast long shadows on contemporary jazz.

Old And New Dreams often reveled in Coleman’s joyful side, even when compositions contained blues elements. Cherry’s puckishness was always on display, and Blackwell often punctuated statements with wry aplomb. Ron Miles is a weightier player in some instances, but he sounds as light as Cherry on the opening “New Year,” which has the oblique phrasing and unison themes associated with Coleman’s first quartet.

Scott Colley’s “Haze And Aspirations” is highlighted by a gorgeously textured unison head between Redman and a muted Miles, while “The Rest” carries the group into darker regions, with a theme drenched in Coleman’s influence over droning arco accompaniment from the bassist. A rendition of Haden’s “Playing” builds slowly to a celebratory second half—a hard-charging group improvisation that ends far too soon.

But “Blues For Charlie” collects all the elements together, with Redman leading a solemn, bluesy theme before the band comes in swinging with distinctive, if somewhat crab-like, swagger. —James Hale

Still Dreaming: New Year; Unanimity; Haze And Aspirations; It’s Not The Same; Blues For Charlie; Playing; Comme Il Faut; The Rest. (40:02)

Personnel: Joshua Redman, saxophone; Ron Miles, trumpet; Scott Colley, bass; Brian Blade, drums.

Ordering info: nonesuch.com

Eliane Elias
Music From Man Of La Mancha
CONCORD 00099

★★★★★

Finally, after a long incubation, Grammy-winning pianist Eliane Elias’ *Music From Man Of La Mancha* has been released. The album, recorded and mixed in 1995, was delayed because of contractual circumstances. Notwithstanding the legal entanglements, the music—from Elias’ first chord and sizzling arpeggios on “To Each His Dulcinea” to “A Little Gossip”—is a veritable festival of engaging rhythm.

Mention the Broadway or film version of *Man Of La Mancha*, and “The Impossible Dream” is the song most folks remember. After the shifting samba-like trance of the leadoff track, there’s a much slower treatment of “Dulcinea” that follows, as Elias’ rippling phrases suddenly brighten the song’s pensive mood.

No matter which bassist (Marc Johnson or Eddie Gomez) or drummer (Jack DeJohnette or Satoshi Takeishi) accompanies Elias, there is a tight affinity. Alongside her keyboard kinetics on “The Barber’s Song” is the perky percussive interplay between Johnson and Takeishi, with percussion-



ist Manolo Badrena adding a little Brazilian sauce.

Mitch Leigh, who composed the music and co-produced the album, heard the completed recording before his death in 2014. And according to his family, he was more than pleased that the lady from São Paulo had held her own with the *Man Of La Mancha*.

—Herb Boyd

Music From Man Of La Mancha: To Each His Dulcinea; Dulcinea; What Does He Want Of Me; The Barber’s Song; It’s All The Same; I’m Only Thinking Of Him; Man From La Mancha (I, Don Quixote); The Impossible Dream; A Little Gossip. (53:25)

Personnel: Eliane Elias, piano; Eddie Gomez (2, 3, 5, 6, 7), Marc Johnson (1, 4, 8, 9), bass; Jack DeJohnette (2, 3, 5, 6, 7), Satoshi Takeishi (1, 4, 8, 9), drums; Manolo Badrena, percussion (1–4, 6–9).

Ordering info: concordmusicgroup.com

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CLAIR LEARNED

Sarah Louise's new album, *Deeper Woods*, extends the vision of American folk music.

Folk's Enduring Misnomer

This year marks the 60th anniversary of John Fahey's Takoma Records, which along with Vanguard Records provided the breeding ground for the subgenre known as American Primitive guitar: a mash of deep blues, sound collage, folk and bluegrass run through a prism of Middle Eastern, Indian and North African musics to create something otherworldly.

The Thousand Incarnations Of The Rose: American Primitive Guitar and Banjo (1963–1974) (Craft Recordings; 78:42 ★★★★★) is a finely curated collection spanning the peak years of the genre's first wave. With expert liner notes from American Primitive scholar and former Cul De Sac scion Glenn Jones, and vibrant album art by Drew Christie, *Rose* includes popular faves from such giants of the genre as Fahey, Henry Taussig, Max Ochs and Peter Walker, as well as arguably the most broadly popular player to emerge from the Takoma school, Leo Kottke. Also included on the set are perhaps two of the most distinctive guitarists in genre, **Sandy Bull** and **Robbie Basho**, both of whom have their own separate archival titles available beyond this collection.

Ordering info: concordmusicgroup.com

Following the release of *Demolition Derby* in 1972, **Bull** laid low and got himself off heroin, a habit that, as legend has it, inspired John Lennon to pen the line "he shoot Coca-Cola" on the Beatles' "Come Together." By 1996, however, the 55-year-old guitarist reappeared with a new album called **Steel Tears (Omnivore Recordings; 72:04 ★★★★★)** that saw him eschew the avant-gardisms of his '60s/'70s work in favor of the effervescent country feel of his new home in Nashville.

Bull never was shy about singing on record, but songs like "Arabalabama," "Love Is Forever" and a stunning version of Arthur Crudup's "My Baby Left Me" reveal a whole

new dimension to his timbre in such a way that had *Tears* been released in the mid-'70s, it would've put him in direct competition with the likes of Gene Clark, John Prine and Kinky Friedman. This definitive edition by Omnivore expands the album with the inclusion of four previously unreleased instrumentals from his final years and three tribute pieces, featuring some famous pals.

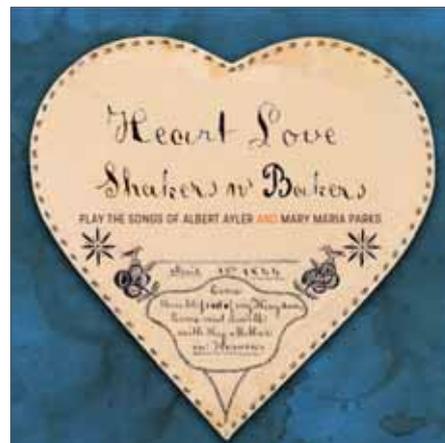
Ordering info: omnivorerecordings.com

Meanwhile, **Basho's** esteemed legacy in the American Primitive tradition continues with an excellent recording captured during his 1982 tour of Italy, four years before his death. This particular performance was recorded at Palazzo Gaddi, an 18th-century building in Forlì, where the guitarist was supporting the music he'd recently released on two Italian indie labels. **Live In Forlì, Italy 1982 (Obsolete Recordings/ESP-Disk; 55:52 ★★★★★½)** finds an affable Basho enrapturing the audience both in bilingual conversation and stunning renditions of classic compositions like "Song Of The Stallion" and "California Raga."

Ordering info: espdisk.com

In terms of the ability to interweave 12-string intricacy and vocal expression, **Sarah Louise**, who also performs as half of the duo House and Land, is among the brightest stars of the latest crop of American Primitive performers. On **Deeper Woods (Thrill Jockey; 35:13 ★★★★★)**, the Asheville, North Carolina, musician displays her vocal chops with prominence, showcasing a lovely timbre that could be mistaken for a young Joan Baez or Sandy Denny, especially when accompanied by the agile backing of a rhythm section comprised of drummer Thomas Nguyen and Jason Meagher, of the woebegone No-Neck Blues Band, on bass. **DB**

Ordering info: thrilljockey.com



Shakers n' Bakers Heart Love

LITTLE (I) MUSIC 107

★★★★★

Albert Ayler's r&b period is hardly one of the more celebrated aspects of the saxophonist's legacy, not least because it lasted only one album (1970's much-maligned *New Grass*). But if any musician could redeem that period of Ayler's musical life, it's Jeff Lederer, whose *Shakers n' Bakers* does its best to revive the sensibility, if not the sound, of Ayler's soul sessions.

Where *Shakers n' Bakers'* two previous albums drew both from Ayler's repertoire and Shaker vision songs, this one focuses almost exclusively on Ayler, the sole exception being "Message From Mother Ann," which winks at *New Grass'* "Message From Albert," but swaps Ayler's new age-y musings for a text by religious matriarch "Mother Ann" Lee. But Lederer's group doesn't just cover these tunes; they improve them, in many cases making them not only funkier but jazzier than Ayler's versions.

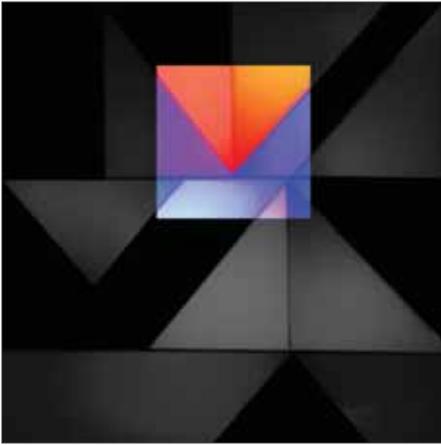
Where the soul-style grooves on *New Grass* often sound unfocused or under-rehearsed, Lederer's ensemble delivers its gospel-inflected exuberance with the snap and precision of a practiced show band. On "Everybody's Movin'," for instance, Allison Miller's drumming puts the pedal to the metal, while still maintaining enough polyrhythmic complexity to fuel paint-peeling solos by Lederer and baritone saxophonist Lisa Parrott, while Lederer's rearrangement of "Heart Love" conjures a sort of free-jazz Motown sound that's far closer to the premise of *New Grass* than what Ayler got on vinyl.

—J.D. Considine

Heart Love: Message From Mother Ann; Everybody's Movin'; Oh Love Of Life; Deep River; Music Is The Healing Force Of The Universe; A Man Is Like a Tree; Nobody Knows The Trouble I've Seen; New Generation; Swing Low Sweet Chariot; Goin' Home; Heart Love. (54:15)

Personnel: Mary LaRose, Miles Griffith, vocals; Jeff Lederer, tenor saxophone, flute; Jamie Saft, piano, organ, Baldwin electric harpsichord; Chris Lightcap, bass, electric bass; Allison Miller, drums; Steven Bernstein, trumpet, slide trumpet; Kirk Knuffke, cornet; Joe Fiedler, trombone; Lisa Parrott, baritone saxophone; Matt Wilson, drums (7, 9); Amy Cervini, Melissa Stylianou, Toni Seawright, Chelsea McClaren, backing vocals.

Ordering info: littlemusic.com



Brian Eno *Music For Installations*

ASTRALWERKS 2567132363

★★★★★

As Brian Eno has continued to support the pop-facing efforts of artists like James Blake and Coldplay, his own music has become more diaphanous and abstract. And often the work he creates is meant to be heard in tandem with visual art installations, either of his own conception or those of like-minded artists, like sculptor Mimmo Paladino or designer Asif Khan.

This ongoing chapter of his multi-tiered career also has been one of the hardest for his fans to participate in, as these displays have been reserved for far-flung parts of the globe, like Helsinki and Kazakhstan, and occasionally released on disc in limited numbers.

Music For Installations is then a blessing for longtime lovers of his work, cobbling together six CDs (or nine LPs) of this material.

Even for completists, it's a lot of music to absorb in one chunk. But like all of Eno's ambient music, the material here has a dual purpose, comfortably providing some atmosphere as it sits in the background of your daily activities and revealing a depth of field upon close listening.

Nowhere is that more apparent than "77 Million Paintings," a 43-minute suite whose title is a reference to the possible combinations of the music here being paired with the pieces of art they initially were based on or connected to. The version captured on this disc is an ocean of sound, with waves of melody and drones rising and dissolving steadily, cut through with small intrusions of processed vocals. Listened to in total or taken in small doses, the beauty of Eno's creation is startling, inviting listeners to get lost, exploring its broad strokes and tiny flecks of color.

Not all of the material found on *Music For Installations* is as widescreen and slippery, though. The fifth disc in the set features tracks like the programmed pulse of "All The Stars Were Out" that are downright danceable, or at least presented in small, more easily digestible portions where Eno's ideas are condensed and clarified.

But, again, none of it is work that is particularly demanding of a listener's attention, if one doesn't want to offer it. The genius of the music Eno has released under his own name since 1978's *Music For Airports* is how well it evolves to meet so many different circumstances or settings.

While there undoubtedly is more to be gained by experiencing this music in the controlled atmosphere of a gallery or, in the case of "The Ritan Bells," a public park in Beijing, there's still much to be gained by letting it wash through your earbuds or stereo speakers as a soundtrack to the otherwise humdrum or routine.

—Robert Ham

Music For Installations: Disc One: Kazakhstan; The Ritan Bells; Five Light Paintings; Flower Bells. Disc Two: 77 Million Paintings. Disc Three: Atmospheric Lightness; Chamber Lightness. Disc Four: I Dormienti; Kites I; Kites II; Kites III. Disc Five: Needle Click; Light Legs; Flora And Fauna/Gleise 581d; New Moons; Vanadium; All The Stars Were Out; Hopeful Timean Intersect; World Without Wind; Delightful Universe (Seen From Above). Disc Six: Unnoticed Planet; Liquidambar; Sour Evening (Complex Heaven 3); Surbahar Sleeping Music. (76:23/43:57/55:40/69:52/39:45/41:08)

Personnel: Brian Eno, keyboards.

Ordering info: astralwerks.com

Edith Lettner's *Freemotion* *Taking Off*

ARTDIALOGUE 007

★★★★★

When it comes to incorporating various ethno-musics—particularly those culled from the African and Middle Eastern diasporas, respectively—then recontextualizing them through the lens of modern jazz and asserting a definitive voice, Edith Lettner has few peers.

The Austrian alto and soprano saxophonist accomplishes the lofty artistic pursuit with graceful ingenuity, as she fronts her longstanding combo, Freemotion. She wields a grainy, vigorous tone on saxophones, and often favors searing melodies that brim with braying and growling dissonance. And while the compositions on *Taking Off* undoubtedly tilt toward the avant-garde, the music still can swing hard.

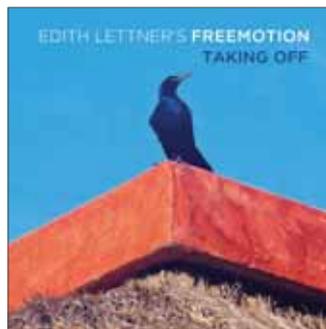
It's on Lettner's "Treibholz/Driftwood," the disc's final cut, however, that it seems as if all of the band's powers coalesce. Recorded live in Vienna during 2016, the episodic composition features Lettner playing the duduk (an Armenian double-reed instrument) and alto, as the rhythmic pulse continuously morphs while the ensemble crafts alluring melodicism, virtuosic showmanship and surging emotional warmth.

—John Murph

Taking Off: Schönberg Blues; Q-Train; LAX; Lost; Doktor Gupta; Passage; Blue 'N' Purple; Alert; Who's That From; Treibholz/Driftwood. (73:01)

Personnel: Edith Lettner, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone, duduk; Gerhard Franz Buchegger, piano, keyboard; Gerhard Graml, bass, electric bass; Stephan Brodsky, drums, percussion.

Ordering info: artdialogue.at



Peggy Lee *Echo Painting*

SONGLINES 1626

★★★★★

With more than 25 years performing on the Vancouver, Canada, creative and new music scenes, cellist and composer Peggy Lee's *Echo Painting* is her latest effort to showcase gifted area musicians.

The introductory "Incantation" spotlights ethereal long-bowed strings, guitar, pedal steel and saxophone textures. Organic rhythms and lyrical folk-like melodies emerge, joined by horns for a powerhouse jazz feature of Lee's husband, drummer Dylan van der Schyff, and tenor saxophonist Jon Bentley. From thoughtful intervallic motifs to complex layering, Lee's intuitive compositions are witty and clever, and the arranging is powerfully inventive.

Lee's "Nice Collection" jazz-waltz is pure joyous melody, and a cover of "The Unfaithful Servant" concludes the disc, with Robin Holcomb's laid-back vocals mingling with horns.

A formidable talent and bandleader, Lee and her creative collective rip it up. Memorable music flourishes on her compositional canvas, resonating across sundry genres.

—Kerlie McDowall

Echo Painting: Incantation; Out On A Limb; A Strange Visit; Nice Collection; Snappy; Painting Echoes; Foreground; The Hidden Piece; Hymn; WB Intro; Weather Building; End Piece; The Unfaithful Servant. (50:38)

Personnel: Peggy Lee, cello; Brad Turner, trumpet, flugelhorn; Jon Bentley, soprano and tenor saxophone; John Paton, tenor saxophone; Roderick Murray, trombone; Meredith Bates, violin; Cole Schmidt, electric and acoustic guitar; Bradshaw Pack, pedal-steel guitar; James Meger, electric and acoustic bass; Dylan van der Schyff, drums, percussion, Yamaha RX-15 drum machine; Robin Holcomb, vocals (13).

Ordering info: songlines.com





Esbjörn Svensson (1964–2008) leads his trio on a live recording on the ACT label.

European Past Appears Recast

Herman Schoonderwalt, *The Winner* (Nederlands Jazz Archief 1702; 61:36/44:22 ★★★★★½) From the annals of unearthed classics most of us never knew were classics comes the warm and wonderful mid-'60s reissue by the then-young Dutch reedsman Herman Schoonderwalt (1931–1977). Although he was to become a celebrated arranger-composer and big-band leader on the Dutch jazz scene, he also was a sleek and tasteful player, as evidenced by this jewel of a release, featuring tracks recorded between 1963 and 1965.

The Winner, which originally was recorded for Phillips Phonogram and rescued from obscurity more than 50 years later by the Nederlands Jazz Archief, is a fine place to start getting acquainted with Schoonderwalt, a reedist too little known in the States.

Kicking off with the briskly swinging original "The Winker" (not to be confused with Latin-esque flute showcase, "The Winner"), the 13-track collection offers up an enticing, if avowedly straightforward, variety of contexts. He's heard mostly in an intimate quartet, often featuring the fine pianist Rob Madna, but also with septet and a quintet with tenor saxophonist Toon van Vliet.

The Winner is one of those special, multi-purpose historical albums that manages to capture precious moments and performances (retooled and cleaned up for the occasion) while expanding on a once dimly lit corner of jazz history.

Ordering info: jazzarchief.nl

Esbjörn Svensson Trio, *e.s.t. live in London* (ACT 9042; 61:36/44:22 ★★★★★) I'll never forget hearing the dynamic and important late Swedish piano virtuoso Esbjörn Svensson and trio performing in the 2,000-year-old Roman Amphitheater

during the 2003 Jazz à Vienne festival in France.

Tragically, Svensson—who along with his ensemble appeared on the cover of *DownBeat* in May 2006—would die in a scuba-diving accident at the age of 44. The live and overall magic of his trio, though, is neatly embodied on this satisfying album, captured at the Barbican Center in London, circa 2005. The trio has issued other live recordings, including *e.s.t. Live '95* and *Live in Hamburg*, circa 2007, but this posthumous release, a decade after Svensson's passing, carries both a particular poignancy and a reminder of his lively and lyrical presence.

Seeds of a post-Keith Jarrett sensibility were integral to Svensson's concept, and he brings aptly sensitive poetics to tunes such as "In The Tail Of Her Eye" and "Viaticum." But the trio could shift into energy levels appealing to listeners with a taste for rock, as well—roughly in sync with the Bad Plus' own rock-teasing tactics—as on the epic "The Unstable Table & The Infamous Fable."

Two of the album's most memorable tunes, and treatments, follow a middle path, energy-wise and idiomatically: The opening "Tide Of Trepidation" and the bass ostinato-fueled "When God Created The Coffeebreak" exist in some gray zone between easily categorized niches in piano-jazz repertoire.

In moments like those, especially, the album supplies a persuasive reminder of the creative elasticity and technical prowess of a musician deprived of a full evolutionary tenure. We savor the document, while nursing the speculation of what might have materialized had Svensson enjoyed a longer life.

Ordering info: actmusic.com

DB



Enemy
Enemy
EDITION 1112
★★★★½

Kit Downes and the mad scientists of Enemy have a lot to celebrate. The trio's new eponymous album, featuring the pianist alongside like-minded whiz kids—bassist Franz Petter Eldh and drummer James Maddren—is a success story in experimentation. Enemy dares to test the limits of expectant jazz listeners as much as its personnel during this provocative album-length journey. It's not for the wary.

With confidence and open-mindedness, Enemy navigates exciting new genre byways at every turn. Eldh and Maddren, who stand on equal footing with Downes, provide stimulating conversation throughout the recording. Riveting energy begins at the outset: Downes throttles into back-to-back firestarters in fanfare tracks "Prospect Of K" and "Faster Than Light" alongside Maddren's whip-quick old-school breakbeats.

Amid the thoughtful intensity of the trio, a few pleasantly ambient moments of Zen emerge. Tracks such as "Fogo" also shed light on a slightly more playful Downes, whose lighthearted romps intertwine beautifully with Maddren's delicate triplets. Eldh guides his cohort with pulsating, electro-inspired avenues on bass, but certainly has time to open up on the album, too. And he doesn't disappoint with stop-and-go abandon on the whimsical "Children With Torches" and a delightfully enigmatic frolic on "Politix."

Enemy is a delight in its intersection of artistry and technicality, but it's more brilliant in its authenticity. Even at breakneck tempos, there's still time to soak in the honesty and vision of a truly cohesive outfit.

—Hilary Brown

Enemy: Prospect Of K; Race The Sun; Fogo; Brandy; Low Hanging Fruit; Jinn; Children With Torches; Ruster; Politix; Faster Than Light. (47:38)

Personnel: Kit Downes, piano; Franz Petter Eldh, bass; James Maddren, drums.

Ordering info: editionrecords.com

Elina Duni *Partir*

ECM 2587

★★★★

Born in Tirana, Albania, in 1981, Elina Duni sang through the troubled political and social upheaval of the post-Communist Balkans and emigrated to Switzerland. She's made her mark with a supple contralto, expressive grace, refreshing originals and earthy folk themes. *Partir* makes a stark departure—solo and self-accompanied, themed on exile and loss—with roots in performances alongside her mother, Bessa Myftiu, reading poems focused on exodus and travail.

Duni's recent personal pain and indecision over a band breakup and lost love expands into the international tragedy of migrants' exile and homelessness. As she sings in nine languages, her approach effortlessly embellishes folk themes with subtly improvised touches in minor keys. Duni brightens her reflective mood late in the set, with brisk tunes in her native Albanian: "Ani Kaj Lulije" features loose hand-drumming, but her reading of Jacques Brel's work on distancing himself from a jilted love stings like sleet. ECM's hallmark cushions of "live air," which more often divide tracks and isolate emotions rather than offer moments of meditation and reflection, sparkle as energized quanta, salubrious as breath.

—Fred Bouchard

Partir: Amara Terra Mia; Let Us Dive In; Meu Amor; Lamma Bada Yatathanna; Vishnja; Lusnak Gisher; Ofyn Veg; Kanga E Kurbetti; Vaj Si Kenka; Ani Kaj Lulije; Je Ne Sais Pas; Schönster Abestärn. (47:45)

Personnel: Elina Duni, voice, piano, guitar, percussion.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com



Sean Khan featuring Hermeto Pascoal *Palmares Fantasy*

FAR OUT 203

★★★★½

Sean Khan's compositions and arrangements might straddle the worlds of DJ culture and pop, but his saxophone, flute and attitude are unmistakably jazz in eloquence, scope and intent on *Palmares Fantasy*.

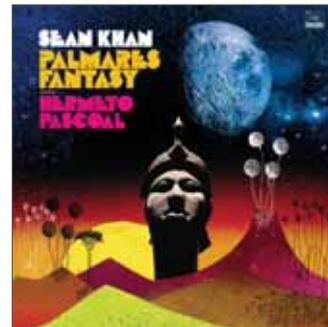
Khan is a self-taught iconoclast and pioneer of London's broken beat scene, and he calls this collaboration—recorded in Rio de Janeiro, with Brazilian music icon Hermeto Pascoal—a dream project. The pairing dovetails with the album's story of anti-colonialism, its title track a reference to a 17th century settlement of escaped slaves in Brazil. "Moment Of Collapse" echoes the sound of empire in free fall, and "Montreux" finds its original composer, Pascoal, soloing on a teapot and a glass of water. The hyperkinetic "The Blonde" reaches for a new rock-soul-avant-garde hybrid that calls on past jazz masters while speaking loudly to the future. Finally, "Your Way Not My Way" makes peace with all these disparate elements, as Heidi Vogel sings matter-of-factly about past horrors and lights the way toward a Utopian ideal of Khan's imagining.

—Denise Sullivan

Palmares Fantasy: Moment Of Collapse; Waltz For Hermeto; Palmares Fantasy; Said; Montreux; The Conversation; Tudo Que Você Podia Ser; The Blonde; Your Way Not My Way. (46:29)

Personnel: Sean Khan, alto saxophone, flute; Hermeto Pascoal, glass of water, melodica, Fender Rhodes, piano, flute; Ivan "Mamo" Conti, drums; Paul Russo, bass; Jim Mullen, guitar; Sabrina Malheiros, Heidi Vogel, vocals.

Ordering info: faroutrecordings.com



Diane Moser *Birdsongs*

PLANET ARTS 30174

★★★★½

Birdsongs traverses classical and jazz with the fluid movement heard in the songs of creatures from which Diane Moser's initial inspiration flowed.

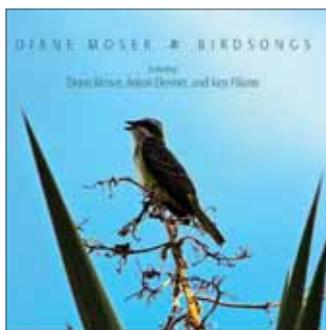
During "Birdsongs For Eric," bassist Ken Filiano's solo legato, overlapped by flutist Anton Denner's trill-like alternation on a minor-third and a delicate upper-octave flourish of Moser's piano, recall compositional character across the 19th and 20th centuries. Still, elements like the metallic, nervous bow strokes at the onset of "Hello" inject contemporary creativity that keeps *Birdsongs* feeling present-minded. Where the lens of jazz then colors *Birdsongs* is in how its arrangements are executed. Though graceful tracks like "Folk Song" and "When Birds Dream" feel delivered with a more traditionally classical hand, at other moments, the group includes more jazz-minded directives: syncopated call-and-response ("If You'll Call Me, Then I'll Call You"); relaxed piano, partnered with loose bass pizzicato ("(Un)Common Loon"); and sprightly flute, placed within a tonal context close to the blues ("Won't You Come Out To Play"). Intertwining musical structures with nature's capricious beauty, *Birdsongs* provides a vivid oasis for those willing to let imagination lead.

—Kira Grunenberg

Birdsongs: Birdsongs For Eric (For Eric Dolphy); Hello; Dancin' With The Sparrows; If You'll Call Me, Then I'll Call You (For Mark Dresser); Won't You Come Out To Play; The (Un)Common Loon; Variations On A Hermit Thrush At Eve; Folk Song; When Birds Dream. (78:21)

Personnel: Diane Moser, piano; Anton Denner, flute, piccolo; Ken Filiano, bass.

Ordering info: planetarts.org



Sameer Gupta *A Circle Has No Beginning*

SELF RELEASE

★★★★

On *A Circle Has No Beginning*, kit drummer and tabla player Sameer Gupta implements a creative carte blanche of melodic jazz improvisation on Indian classical music forms.

His endgame is accessibility and potentially spiritual exaltation, drawing listeners into wondrous music of sophisticated technique and emotional heft. Sixties Cree folk singer Buffy Sainte-Marie's "Little Wheel Spin And Spin"—the only composition not composed by Gupta and the only one featuring a singer—encourages a state of vertigo. Morley Kamen's vocal glides dizzily over a groove that evokes British jazz-rock avatars Nucleus and Soft Machine. The suspenseful mood of "Crows At Sunset" recalls the Mahavishnu Orchestra, but with Neel Murgai's expertly played sitar rather than a guitar. Remodels of Bollywood soundtrack numbers "Come Take Everything" and "With Blessings" carry measured shares of joy, yearning or awe, while "Taiwa" is Gupta's deeply touching homage to the late South African jazz pianist Moses Taiwa Molelekwa.

—Frank-John Hadley

A Circle Has No Beginning: Little Wheel Spin And Spin; Taiwa; Innocence In Harlem; Come Take Everything Intro; Come Take Everything; Two Faces Of The Moon; Tyagaraja Dreams In Brooklyn; With Blessings; Crows At Sunset Intro; Crows At Sunset; Run For The Red Fort; Prog-Raag Bhimpalasi. (73:59)

Personnel: Sameer Gupta, drums, tabla; Marc Cary, Wurlitzer, synthesizer; Jay Gandhi, Bansuri flute; Arun Ramamurthy, violin; Marika Hughes, cello; Trina Basu, violin; Rashaan Carter, bass; Neel Murgai, sitar (5, 7, 11, 12); Brandee Younger, harp (1, 2); Pawan Benjamin, tenor saxophone (3–7, 9, 10, 12); Morley Kamen, vocals (1).

Ordering info: sameergupta.com



Questlove Questions

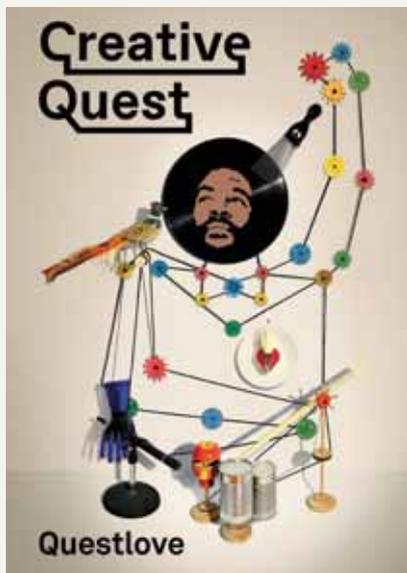
At some point early in the process of writing his fourth book, *Creative Quest* (HarperCollins), Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson assigned himself this task: “Figure out one unique strategy to recommend to people to protect and preserve their creativity.” He writes that his own habit of indulging in “micro-meditations” came to mind. “There’s lots of noise all around, and as a creative person, you’re being asked to find the signal,” he explains. “But to truly find it, you need some sort of internal check or monitor. You need moments of silence where you can hear yourself. You need stretches where you can stretch.”

Actually, the act of reading *Creative Quest* feels like one big creative stretch. Insightful, funny and often deeply personal, Thompson’s writing here hinges on the same kind of boundless creative curiosity that drove his previous books, particularly *Something To Food About: Exploring Creativity With Innovative Chefs* and *Mo’ Meta Blues: The World According To Questlove*. Despite his multi-hyphenate status as drummer, producer, DJ and writer, this is a guy who deals with moments of self-doubt, negative reception and blocked creativity. As he shares narratives drawn from his own interactions with other creatives, tips and lessons trickle through the engaging and often relatable stories.

The creative energy “stretches” begin with the book’s structure. Organized into chapters that align with the development of an idea from creative spark to execution and audience reception, each section ends with one bite-sized suggestion for a way to get your brain moving. These help refocus the reader as a participant. Have an “Unblock Party,” Thompson suggests. “When you’re having trouble thinking of new ideas, go to one of your old ideas and rework it.”

From the outset, Thompson admits he’s struggled to believe he’s truly “a creative person.” He points to the fact that whether he’s playing drums, DJing or writing, he feels like he’s collecting outside ideas, then organizing them to create something new. He comes back to that idea repeatedly. He also divulges the insecurities of artists he’s worked with, then turns those insecurities on their head by showing how he and others developed new perspectives on potentially career-obstructing failures and blockages.

We learn how Thompson’s work with D’Angelo on *Voodoo*, his long-awaited *Brown Sugar* follow-up, became a lesson in learning the value of “copying or covering.” According to Thompson, D’Angelo “emptied out the tank in a very comprehensive and exhaustive way promoting [his previous] album around the clock for two years.” After that, he strug-



gled to “get things to float to the surface,” Thompson writes, so he “did the next best thing.” He recorded covers that were meaningful to him. That process allowed D’Angelo to keep his “machinery humming along,” which eventually contributed to his “well” being filled once more. The story serves as a point of departure for more thoughts about ways in which a creative person can “reduce, reuse [and] recycle” ideas.

Other narratives guide readers through Thompson’s own creative exercises. He reorganizes songs he has stored digitally, asking himself some (admittedly uber-Questlove) questions along the way: “Why exactly do I have eight copies of *Crazy In Love*?” he writes, then adds a parenthetical word of caution: “On the other hand, all the various permutations of Michael Jackson’s ‘Wanna Be Startin’ Something’—the seven-inch edit, the twelve-inch, demos 1, 2 and 3, and the regular album release—are essential for collecting.” (Noted.)

Creative Quest is rife with suggestions for how to maintain a vibrant, creative mind. It also leaves room for bigger discussions about the value of creativity. Quoting an explanation he once heard Laurie Anderson give when asked why she creates, Thompson returns to another idea he flirts with throughout the book.

“[Anderson] makes things because it makes her feel like she can change things. It’s a world where we grapple all the time with our insignificance,” he writes. “Being creative, in whatever form, is the proof that we can leave an imprint on our surroundings, that we can make a mark on time.” **DB**

Ordering info: harpercollins.com



Fatoumata Diawara

Fenfo

SHANACHIE 66046

★★★★★

Fatoumata Diawara’s last album credit was a live recording she made in 2015 with Cuban pianist Roberto Fonseca, *At Home* (Jazz Village). Live, they both gave free rein to improvisational instincts, producing an album of extraordinary musicality.

Diawara’s singing is just as impressive and uncontained on *Fenfo*. She performs in Bambara, her native tongue, but her passion and sincerity bring the songs to life for listeners of all backgrounds. Her remarkable vocal flights and improvisational guitar playing are as stirring in a studio setting as at performances. French producer Matthieu Chedid, who adds his sympathetic guitar playing to the mix, brings elements of funk, rock and reggae to the arrangements he put together with Diawara. “Nterini” offers an impressive display of multi-layered vocals that swirl in and out of cascading guitar work. Diawara laments the loss of her only love with tear-drenched vocals that rise up to a wail of anguish. Rippling Congolese guitar fills and reggae-like chord clusters provide an understated backdrop for her softly swinging vocal on “Fenfo.” The title track expresses grief for the violence that pervades the world and pleads for harmony between nations, with a vocal that conveys a combination of hope and desperation.

With a powerful groove that combines elements of rock, funk and Latin music, “Negue Negue” salutes the Afrobeat of Fela Kuti. A zooming bass line and the interlocking percussion of hand drummer Bakari Dembele and Mokhtar Samba’s drum kit support Diawara’s percussive vocal improvisations. —j. poet

Fenfo: Nterini; Kokoro; Ou Y’an Ye; Kanou Dan Yen; Fenfo; Negue Negue; Mama; Takamba; Bonya, Dibi Bo; Don Do. (41:58)

Personnel: Fatoumata Diawara, vocals, electric guitar, shakers, pumpkin; Matthieu Chedid, electric and acoustic guitar; Etienne Mbappe, bass; Bakari Dembele, percussion; Eric Yelkouri, electric guitar; Pierre Juarez, programming and keyboards; Sekou Bah, electric guitar, bass; Salif Diarra, kamalen ngoni; Yaron Herman, keyboards; Zé Luis Nascimento, percussion; Mokhtar Samba, drums; Pascal Danae, electric guitar; Vincent Ségall, cello; Sidibe and Toumani Diabate, kora; Feal le Rouzic, vocals.

Ordering info: shanachie.com

Fran Vielma and His Venezuelan Jazz Collective

Tendencias

PAPELON 667

★★★★

Percussionist and composer Fran Vielma has assembled a star-studded band of Venezuelan and Latin-American jazz musicians to perform nine of his own pieces and an arrangement of “Pasaje Del Olvido” on *Tendencias*.

The horn section of trumpeter Michael Rodriguez, alto saxophonist Miguel Zenon and trombonist Angel Subero is tight and unified on the heads, while stepping back gracefully for extended solos that showcase individual voices.

The ensemble is not quite hard-bop and not quite salsa—they’re something more complex and unprecedented, and take sharp left turns at times. Luis Perdomo is on keys for most of the album, his fluid lines and powerful chords driving the band. But on “A Modo Patanemeño” and “Ehlba,” Cesar Orozco takes over, and his florid style changes the whole picture.

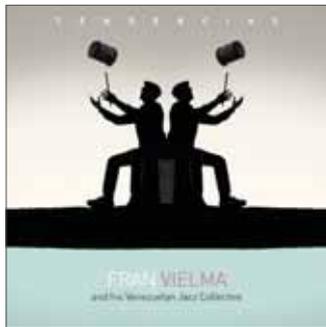
The final piece, a percussion-piano duo with Perdomo, takes the album out on a soft, romantic note.

—Philip Freeman

Tendencias: Monk En Aragua; Cereal De Bobures; Tendencias; Pasaje Del Olvido; Minanguero; Mis Dos Luces; Hubbardengue; A Modo Patanemeño; Ehlba; Miel De Cayena. (59:26)

Personnel: Fran Vielma, vocals, percussion; Michael Rodriguez, trumpet; Miguel Zenon, alto saxophone; Angel Subero, trombone; Luis Perdomo, Cesar Orozco, piano, Fender Rhodes; Roberto Koch, bass; Pablo Bencid, drums; Jeremy Bosch, Manolo Mairena, vocals.

Ordering info: franvielma.com



Akira Tana

JAZZaNOVA

VEGA 14050

★★★

JAZZaNOVA is awash in the vibrant sounds of Rio de Janeiro, and drummer Akira Tana’s immersion in the city is the reason.

The drummer’s latest venture is a reimagining of the Brazilian songbook with an air of modern sensibility and heavy texture. Chalk those layers of sound up to the album’s arsenal of artists: The Bay Area trio of pianist Peter Horvath, bassist Gary Brown and percussionist Michael Spiro fuel intimate conversations between vocalist and soloist. And when those soloists include saxophonist Branford Marsalis and trumpeter Arturo Sandoval, confident navigation is inevitable. As expected, *JAZZaNOVA* offers some Jobim classics—five to be exact. And the album’s uniqueness resides in Tana’s mindfully selected vocalists to do Jobim justice. Each exploration features a distinctive storyteller, including Sandy Cressman, Jackie Ryan and Carla Helmbrecht.

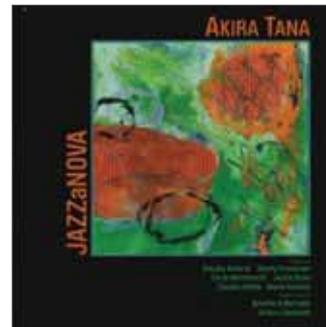
On both tributes and back-pocket Brazilian classics, *JAZZaNOVA* showcases fresh perspectives and synchronicity among Tana and his personnel.

—Hilary Brown

JAZZaNOVA: Águas De Marco; Love Dance; Chega De Suadade; Billhete; Corcovado; Condênname A Callar; Waiting For Angels; Jangada; Caminhos Cruzados; Aquele Frevo Axe; Por Causa De Você; Diride; La Gloria Eres Tu. (56:34)

Personnel: Akira Tana, drums; Ricardo Peixoto, acoustic and electric guitar; Branford Marsalis, saxophone (2, 7, 10); Arturo Sandoval, trumpet, flugelhorn (1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, 13); Peter Horvath, piano; Gary Brown, bass; Michael Spiro, percussion; Claudio Amaral, Sandy Cressman, Carla Helmbrecht, Jackie Ryan, Claudia Villela, Maria Volonté, vocals.

Ordering info: akiratana.com



Erik Friedlander

Artemisia

SKIPSTONE

★★★★

Artemisia is a story of inspiration. Sparked by a Pablo Picasso glass sculpture, cellist Erik Friedlander went to work writing music and forming the Throw A Glass ensemble to record it.

“Inspired by the murky history of absinthe,” one might think the music would be somewhat otherworldly or highly experimental. Instead, across 10 tracks listeners find an assortment of styles that, for the most part, offer an intelligent blend of familiar strategies. The lilting, lighthearted swing of “Seven Heartbreaks” could be heard as music for a children’s story about a “green fairy,” while dramatic tension drives the mysterious “The Devil Made Liquid.”

As a narrative music, thematic connections clearly can be heard. As composed music, though, *Artemisia* still manages to breathe in possibility, as if the musicians were creating spontaneously. The highly notated, lively “Sparkotropic” has Friedlander tying his cello in furious ribbons of notes with drummer Ches Smith’s fancy, dancing rhythmic patterns close on his heels. The rubato of “La Fee Verte” is a good example of Throw A Glass’ ethereal nature: quiet, ready to pounce, only to remain dreamy, hypnotic, an open place where (with Smith’s occasional probes) cello and Mark Helias’ bass sing together.

—John Ephland

Artemisia: The Great Revelation; Artemisia; Seven Heartbreaks; The Devil Made Liquid; Sparkotropic; La Fee Verte; As They Are; Tulips Bruch Against My Legs; Blush; Drop By Drop. (62:41)

Personnel: Erik Friedlander, cello; Uri Caine, piano; Ches Smith, drums; Mark Helias, bass.

Ordering info: erikfriedlander.com



Ken Fowser

Don't Look Down

POSI-TONE 8178

★★★

What goes around comes around, and around. Bebop is today’s gift that keeps on giving; it’s the “new” dixieland.

Ken Fowser is a youngish, Philadelphia-reared, Gotham-based tenor player who’s been mining the fertile grooves of the bop tradition for a decade. He’s an amiable and adept throwback.

Bantamweight originals on Fowser’s third leader date, though, deliver jabs and feints, not haymakers. “Maker’s Marc” opens with a Latin riff, featuring facile keyboardist Rick Germanson, whose alert comping and inventive fills really help firm up Fowser’s command of the hard-bop vernacular. The bandleader flips the repeat lick of the tune on “Queens” and fades it with a refreshingly manic out-chorus. Forget ballads: These guys run full-steam ahead. But an abbreviated solo format effectively skims the tunes, with little chance to dig in.

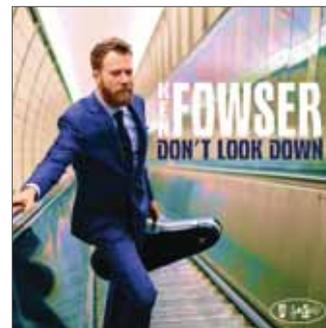
The takeaway is of cheerful, easy swagger, but also a sense of glibness, kinda mailing it in. Inclusion of any indestructible Blue Note anthem (something from Mobley, Silver, Walton) would’ve earned bonus points.

—Fred Bouchard

Don't Look Down: Maker’s Marc; Coming Up Shorter; You’re Better Than That; Fall Back; Don’t Look Down; Divided State; I’ll Take It From Here; Queens; Top To Bottom; Inversions; From Six To Midnight. (53:18)

Personnel: Ken Fowser, tenor saxophone; Josh Bruneau, trumpet (1–8, 10); Rick Germanson, piano; Paul Gill, bass; Joe Strasser, drums.

Ordering info: posi-tone.com





...to let you
...yours more
...to a friend
...and one night
...could be to
...where I'm
...ling me and
...his father
...and he's not
...to go home
...my words to
...Tish (Allyson)
...about it and

...to be
...business is an
...and they pay me

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BOBBY BROOM

LEARNING TO PLAY OVER CHANGES

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By Keith Baumann

COOKING UP A BETTER GUITAR

The Benefits of Torrefaction & Thermally Aged Woods

There is an old joke that goes, “How many guitarists does it take to screw in a lightbulb?” The punchline is, “One thousand: one to screw in the lightbulb and 999 to talk about how much better the old bulb was.”

The sentiment expressed in this bit of humor is very real, and we all can agree that there is something special about a well-seasoned instrument. Natural aging of the wood and playing time are important factors in the maturing of musical instruments, and luthiers have spent decades researching this phenomenon in the hopes of discovering a method

to accelerate the process. Although improvements in materials, design and manufacturing have resulted in instruments that edge closer to that highly coveted sound, a technique known as *torrefaction* rapidly has been gaining acceptance as one of the more significant advancements in this quest, and it has seriously grabbed the attention of the entire guitar world.

Torrefaction was created with an entirely different purpose in mind. With roots that stem from the time of the Vikings, the modern technique is credited to a Finnish fire chief named Osmo Savolainen, who was searching

for a non-toxic alternative to pressure treating, a chemical process used to make wood resistant to rotting and warping in outdoor environments. He hoped to use it in the construction of children’s playgrounds. This research led to the development of the “thermal treatment” process in the late 1980s, which uses high heat in an oxygen-deprived container to dry out wood, resulting in a more stable and weather-resistant material. Years later, Savolainen happened to show some of his treated material to a friend, Rauno Nieminen, headmaster of a guitar-making school in Finland, who immediately noticed



a similarity between this wood and images he had seen of a 17th century violin top.

Nieminen's discovery led to an intensive university study intended to evaluate the effects of thermal treated wood used on musical instruments. The study, released in 1999, produced data that clearly indicated that this process replicated some of the same chemical reactions that occur in the natural aging of tonewoods. It also indicated that the wood underwent a measurable improvement in its ability to transfer vibrations across its surface. Available only in the Finnish language, the report did not gain much attention at first. Some eight years later, an article on the process by David Wilson appeared in the "ToneQuest Report," and torrefaction began to gain serious traction.

Today, torrefaction increasingly is used by guitar makers worldwide in building both acoustics and electrics. Many of these builders point out that torrefaction has the ability to noticeably improve the tonal characteristics of a new instrument, and it also adds dimensional stability to the wood. With such a major innovation impacting the industry, we decided to take a closer look at the process and speak with several companies that currently use torrefied wood in building their guitars.

As a participant in the initial Finnish study in 1998, Juha Ruokangas, master guitar builder and CEO at Ruokangas Guitars, is one of the very first luthiers to use torrefied wood on guitars. He is widely recognized as a pioneer in the field. Ruokangas was given the opportunity to measure and inspect pre- and post-treated wood and came to the conclusion that certain types of thermal treatment can result in a chemical reaction that is nearly identical to what occurs during natural aging. To be more specific, cell walls harden, resins crystalize and partially vaporize, stiffness is increased, weight is slightly reduced, the wood darkens in color and pores are cleansed.

Ruokangas' first instruments to use torrefied woods were solidbody electrics that had treated necks, bodies and fretboards. He noticed a difference in the stability of the material, as well as an increase in strength, and these two benefits alone were enough to sell him on the process. Actually, the added stability was the first aspect that widely was acknowledged by the music industry, resulting in several companies offering "roasted" necks for electric instruments.

The tonal benefits of torrefaction took a bit longer to surface, and Ruokangas points out that they are more subjective. He noticed that many

players of his customers were sensing a difference in the sound of these treated necks, commenting that they were "just better." Ruokangas also said that during the study, experimentation with a variety of temperatures and durations indicated that extreme treatments can result in negative consequences, such as overly brittle wood, and that milder treatments produce the best results for instruments. Ruokangas has gone on to build carved archtops using treated wood and is a firm believer in torrefaction. "It is just good for the whole industry," he says.

Ruokangas' research had opened a door, and Dana Bourgeois, founder and CEO of Bourgeois Guitars, was one of the first ones to step through it. Bourgeois widely is recognized as a trailblazer who has had a major impact on the use of torrefaction in acoustic guitars. His interest in torrefaction began when he first saw a thermo-treated bass guitar neck from Music Man. In addition to enhanced stability, Bourgeois noticed that this wood differed in appearance and began to hear that it also sounded better. He soon acquired some samples of Adirondack spruce and immediately sensed a similarity to aged wood. During a conversation with a violin-making friend, Bourgeois was asked to shine a light through

Recording King RP1-16C



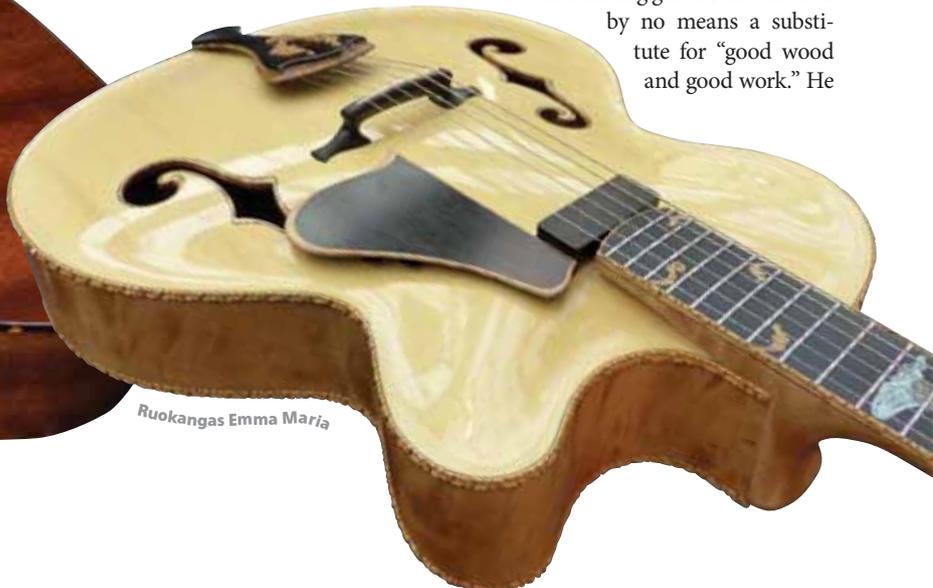
Martin D-28 Authentic 1937



Ibanez AVD9MH



Ruokangas Emma Maria



the wood to see if it would pass through. It did not, and he learned that this was one of the foolproof methods used to detect counterfeit Stradivarius violins, since new wood allows light to pass through but old wood does not. With his interest piqued, Bourgeois built his first guitar using a torrefied top in 2012. "It was amazing," he says. "I immediately acquired all the treated wood I could."

Bourgeois now uses treated wood in more than half the guitars he builds, and torrefied tops are available as an option on any model. He has developed a process called "Aged Tone," which uses treated tops and braces plus a specially developed finish that mimics the thinness and hardness of aged nitro-cellulose lacquer. Bourgeois points out that it took years of experimentation trying various species of wood and altering time and temperature to come up with the best "recipe" for his particular needs. "Torrefaction has affected the way we build," he says. "We had to learn how to optimize." In describing the tone of these guitars, Bourgeois points out that they tend to be very lively, with a quicker response, and sound more like a broken-in guitar. "This is probably one of the most important technological advances I've seen in decades of guitar making," he says.

As the largest purchaser of wood in the music industry, it only makes sense that Yamaha would take an interest in torrefaction. According to Dennis Webster, marketing manager at Yamaha Guitars, initial research on the technology began in the violin department but soon spread to acoustic guitars, which were the first products released in 2007 using the technique. Yamaha offers torrefied tops on their L series and A series models cooked to the company's own custom recipe, known as Acoustic Resonance Enhancement. Webster says that Yamaha actually built its own proprietary ovens and doesn't depend on any outsourcing. This has allowed Yamaha to maintain total control over the process and fine-tune it to perfection. In evaluating the effects of torrefaction, Yamaha ran A/B tests comparing treated guitars to non-treated. The difference was not only audible; scientific measurements indicated a substantial increase in the resonance of the wood. The result is a more balanced guitar with sweetened highs and better lows. Webster adds, "We are giving the guitar a 10- to 15-year head start." Yamaha also notes that the A.R.E. process adds time and expense to the build, but it's well worth it, considering the final result.

Eastman Music Company began looking into torrefaction about two years ago, running tests on Adirondack spruce tops. The company released select models with "ThermoCured" tops last year, with only about 40 instruments produced. According to Otto D'Ambrosio, guitar designer at Eastman, the company fully is convinced of the benefits of the process, but remains in the evaluation phase as it tweaks its manufacturing techniques. D'Ambrosio says that torrefaction simply is an additional step in building guitars and that it is by no means a substitute for "good wood and good work." He

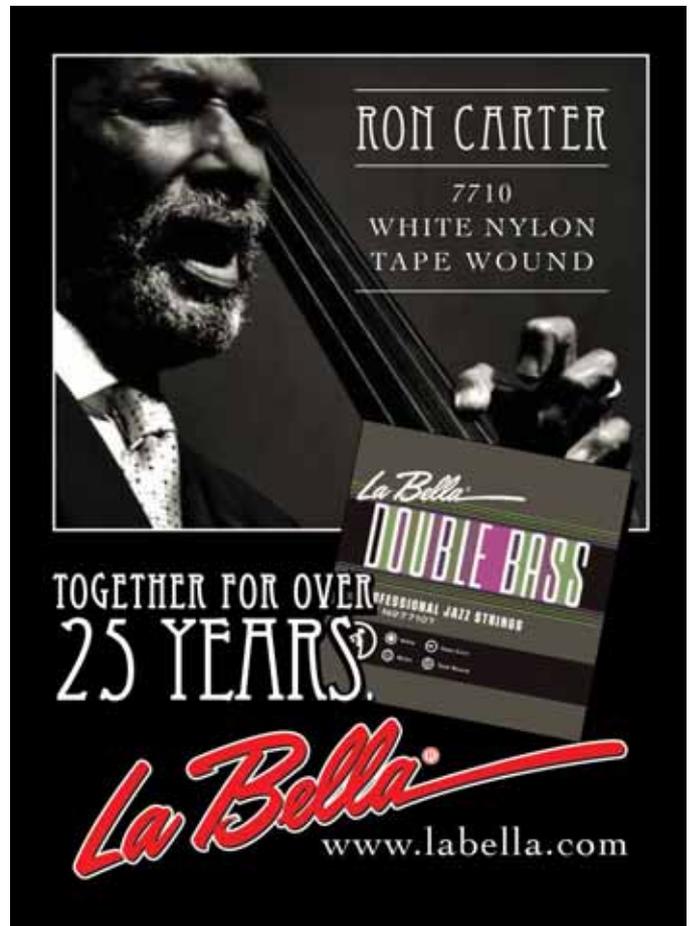
adds, "There are very few individual steps that you can change in the process that will have such a large impact." D'Ambrosio describes playing Eastman's ThermoCured guitars as "a night-and-day experience," adding that "it rounds all the corners."

Like many others, Don MacRostie, luthier at Red Diamond Mandolins, first heard about torrefaction from Bourgeois. However, he took a different approach, applying the technique to his carved-top mandolins, instead of flattop acoustic guitars. Carved instruments are very different animals, and the archtop community has been extremely slow in adopting torrefaction. MacRostie felt that the technique would work well for his instruments, and after sending some samples out for testing, he decided that commercially treated wood was too brittle for his use and went on to build his own oven, so he could experiment and develop the perfect recipe for his purposes. He found that a "light cook" worked best for him and has since jumped in with both feet, using treated wood on nearly every instrument he builds. In addition to the tops, MacRostie also cooks the backs and sides, necks, tonebars, neck blocks and even bridges.

MacRostie noticed that when given the choice between a treated and un-treated instrument, players preferred the torrefied mandolin nearly every time. Torrefied wood also is stiffer and less sensitive to climate change, making it easier to carve, sand and finish. MacRostie feels that his main goal is to see how close a modern maker can come to producing an instrument that plays and sound like a Lloyd Loar; he's confident that torrefaction will help him achieve this. "There is no one thing that will make or break an instrument," he concludes. "All the little things together can make a big difference. And torrefaction is definitely one of those things that makes a difference. The acoustic quality becomes mellow and sweeter, and all the frequencies sound more compressed. It's like all the corners are rounded."

Jonathan Lee, director of design and development at Washburn Guitars, has been aware of torrefaction since the Finnish report was published in the late 1990s. The company had been conducting experiments with other roasting methods prior to releasing its first torrefied guitars a few years ago. According to Lee, Washburn was very interested in trying the technique on mass-market instruments. They have had success with spruce and mahogany, but found that cedar was problematic. Today, Washburn uses torrefied tops on nearly all of its solid wood guitars built overseas. Tops and braces are treated, and varying degrees of treatment are used on different models. With instruments shipping worldwide, the dimensional stability of torrefied guitars is a huge benefit to Washburn. Lee also mentions, "There is an immediacy that occurs with the tone on these instruments, and they appear a bit louder." He says that there is an increased cost and extra risk involved in torrefaction, since the wood is a bit more finicky and it requires an added amount of awareness in manufacturing. Lee adds that torrefaction is not magic: It still requires quality tonewood to produce a good guitar.

As a company focused on providing quality, affordable instruments, Recording King was extremely interested in exploring the benefits of torrefaction. According to Travis Atz, director of product development for parent company The Music Link, it was Bourgeois' work that convinced him that the process was not just voodoo. Recording King built a few prototypes and offered its first torrefied-top guitars in 2014. Atz says that there was a serious learning curve involved in working with treated wood, as it reacts differently to tools and adhesives. Recording King has developed its own custom recipe and feels that these instruments exhibit an even response with more volume and increased bass. Atz feels that torrefaction works extremely well for Recording King's market. "We are proud to have been one of the first to offer it in a low-priced instrument," he says. Atz notes that these guitars will age just like vintage



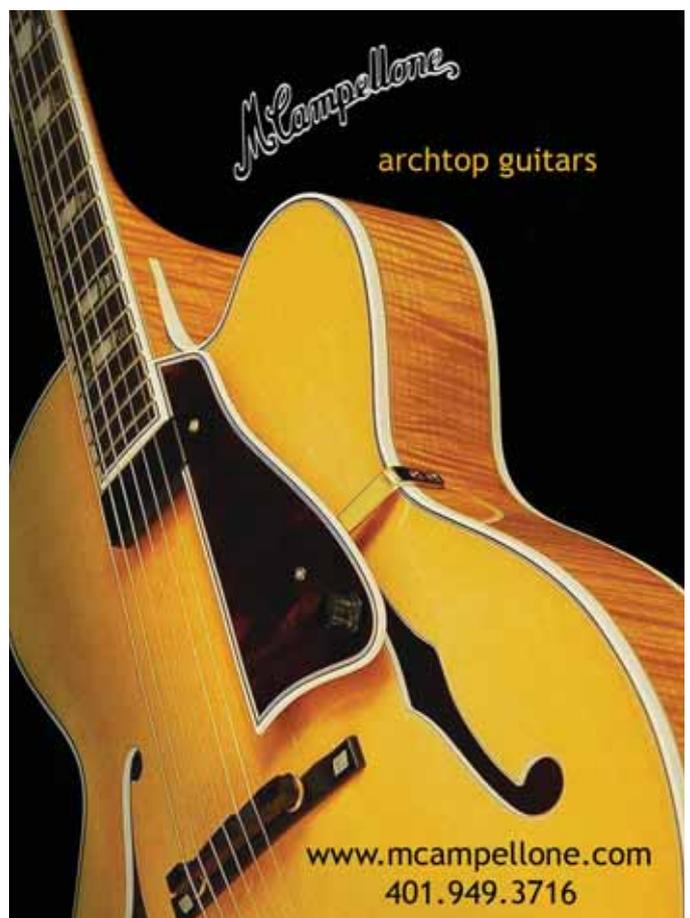
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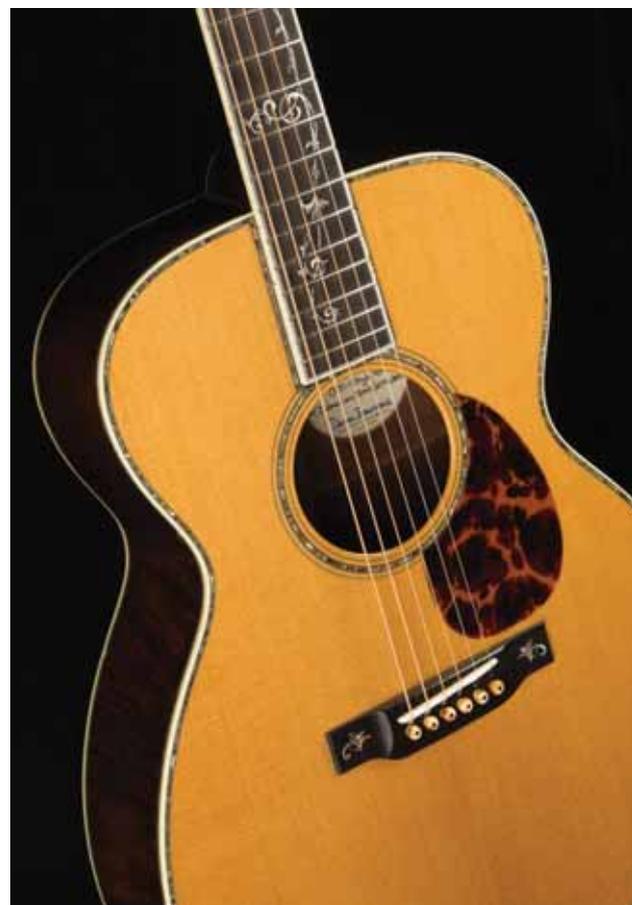
instruments and that torrefaction simply is speeding up the natural changes that occur in the wood over time.

Taylor Guitars had been experimenting with torrefaction for years and has taken a gradual approach, introducing the process on a few select models in 2016. According to Andy Powers, master guitar designer at Taylor, the company closely is evaluating the effects of the treatment on various guitars and wood species to ensure that it benefits the overall sound of the instrument. Powers points out that the added resonance and decreased damping sometimes can have a negative impact on a guitar by introducing unwanted overtones and other inharmonic content. “You have to be very careful,” he says. “It can create something that is non-musical.”

Taylor has worked with spruce, koa, maple, mahogany and rosewood, using a slightly different recipe for each wood. According to Powers, the results of torrefaction are lighter and stiffer wood with a lower damping factor and higher sound velocity, noting an increase of 5 to 10 percent. Taylor feels that it’s essential to maintain total control over the process and has its own thermal oven on site. The company uses a mild treatment and actually introduces some oxygen into its recipe. Powers states that the results vary quite a bit with different times and temperatures, and he claims that Taylor’s unique recipe produces results closer to natural aging.

Powers recognizes the potential of torrefaction and says it gives an instrument a head start. “You can get some of the characteristics of an old guitar, but it is not a substitute for natural aging,” he says.

Ibanez claims that torrefaction first came onto its radar when major players like Martin and Taylor began to use the process. Ibanez felt it would be perfect for its Artwood Vintage line, which features moderately priced guitars built to vintage specs. Ibanez released the Artwood Vintage Thermo Aged series instruments



Bourgeois Aged Tone OM-45

in 2013. Frank Facciolo, acoustic guitar merchandiser for Hoshino, says that Ibanez was “looking to capture that vintage look and sound at an affordable price, and Thermo Aged has really brought it all together.” Ibanez offers torrefied spruce and mahogany tops, as well as mahogany backs and braces on select models. Facciolo says that the process is a win-win for Ibanez and is definitely worth the extra production time and cost since it helps the company achieve its mission of offering the best guitars possible and creating a good playing experience right from the start.

Facciolo describes the tone of these guitars as live, more dynamic, with a sweeter high end and an expanded reach. “It just makes a better guitar, and this is only the beginning for us.”

Having produced some of history’s “holy grail” acoustic guitars, Martin is in the rather unique position of striving to recreate its own vintage tones. Although the company has worked with torrefaction in the past, Martin has developed its own proprietary Vintage Tone System (VTS), specifically engineered to recreate the sound and playability of great Martin guitars from the 1930s and ’40s. According to Jeff Allen, vice president of global manufacturing and operations of Martin Guitar, “It allowed us to get the tone closer to an old Martin that had naturally aged.”

Martin uses the VTS process on its high-end Authentic series guitars. The company describes it as a combination of specifications, procedures, materials and parts designed to mimic a naturally aged Martin as closely as possible. Using vintage guitars as a model, Martin worked on replicating the tone, color and even the cell structure of these instruments.

“We desired something that sounded older and closer to a Martin that had been played for 75 years versus a brand-new Authentic series model,” Allen says. “We found that the top, bridge plate and the braces provided the best results when they have undergone VTS.”

Torrefaction is certainly not the first “sonic aging” technology to come along, but many industry experts agree that is one of the most significant. The process is currently being used by numerous companies, large and small, with more coming on board every day. It has proven to be an asset on guitars at nearly every price point, and players are beginning to take notice. Although debates continue over whether torrefaction actually makes a new guitar sound just like a vintage one, there appears to be no debate over the fact that they definitely do sound better.

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'How Did You Learn To Play Over Changes?'

The other day, I got a message on Facebook asking, "How did you learn to play over changes?" It's a good question, but not one that I'm asked all that often. I remember back when I was trying to figure it out for myself, it was the biggest concern and dilemma in my musical life.

Back then I was doing tons of daily listening to all kinds of records by the jazz masters, trying to figure out how it was done by hearing it being done. As I expanded on my new personal adventure of listening to jazz, I moved beyond my exclusively guitarist protagonists to an all-inclusive, multi-instrumental community of musicians who I quickly discovered were all speaking the same language. I began making sense of the stylistic links between certain players and their predecessors, based on chronology. George Benson and Pat Martino suggested strong ties to Wes Montgomery. Grover Washington and Stanley Turrentine to John Coltrane, Dexter Gordon, Rollins and Charlie Parker. Freddie Hubbard to Miles Davis and Dizzy Gillespie. Herbie Hancock and Bob James to Red Garland and Wynton Kelly. And to my even greater

delight, I heard a connection between all players, regardless of what instrument they played, or period they were in, and I became determined to understand the common elements of the language that they were speaking.

I began to notice that the most frequent points of occurrence of commonly used "jazz language"—phrases that I had started to recognize as shared among and played by just about everyone who I chose to listen to and those who could play over changes—were over a perennially common progression of chords known as the 2-5-1. Once I realized that, I started listening for the "lines" that occurred at those points in every tune's harmony or chord changes: Where were the 2-5-1s? Next, I detected the similarities, as well as the differences in each player's linear approaches at these points: What melodic lines were they playing in these instances? At that point, the task became twofold:

1) To understand and become familiar with common chord progressions—those that usually contained 2-5-1s, but were a bit more lengthy and complex, usually occurring over two to four bars, rather than one or two bars—

and to be able to play them as accompaniment (comping), moving among them whimsically, freely and within context.

2) To be able to improvise melodic lines over these progressions when and where they occurred.

Task #1 required learning and memorizing songs that were common to jazz players—the ones that kept showing up in my nascent jazz life, on recordings, at jam sessions among friends, in classes, etc. These included such standards as "Satin Doll," "My Romance," "The Days Of Wine And Roses," "Stella By Starlight" and "Four," as well as blues progressions and "Rhythm" changes. Within these tunes I began to recognize the differences between 2-5-1s in major and minor keys. I also became familiar with recurring chord progressions and their variations, several of which are shown in Examples 1-2.

As the music of the Jazz Age stylistically informed the melodic and harmonic tendencies of the Tin Pan Alley composers of popular show tunes and the Great American Songbook, a canon of jazz standards was being created. In the hands of jazz musicians, these common

Example 1: Recurring Major-Key Chord Progressions

- V7 - I maj7
- II min7 - V7 - I maj7
- I maj7 - VI7 (alt) - II min7 - V7
- III min7(b5) - VI7 (alt) - II min7 - V7
- IV maj7 - IV min7 - III min7 - VI7 (alt) - II min7 - V7 - I maj7
- #IV min7b5 - VII7 (alt) - III min7 - VI7 (alt) - II min7 - V7 - I maj7

Example 2: Recurring Minor-Key Chord Progressions

- V7 (alt) - I min7
- II min7b5 - V7 (alt) - I min7
- I min7 - VI7 (alt) - II min7 - V7 (alt)
- VI min7 - VI min/7 - II min7b5 - V7 (alt) - I min7

chord changes ultimately were infused into the accompaniment of a significant amount of repertoire. I intuitively realized that I needed to be familiar with these chords to the point of being able to hear, understand and even anticipate them in an instant. With that ability, I could play the chords to standard tunes that I'd never played before and/or didn't really know.

I used to sit in with Al Haig, the pianist on several classic Charlie Parker records, and before beginning a tune like "A Nightingale Sang In Berkeley Square," he would often ask me if I had ever heard it. Very rarely could I answer "yes"—often I had never heard whatever song he was about to play. But within two years I had heard enough jazz that I was now familiar with many chord progressions and song forms.

The hardest part about comping on an unknown tune on the fly was identifying and keeping track of key centers and modulations. I tell my students all the time that you only can improvise as well as you can comp. Technically, the main musical objective of interpretive jazz improvisation is to convey variations of songs by depicting their chord progressions using instantaneously "composed" melodies. Which brings us to task #2.

The jazz language is just that: a language or a collection of melodies, otherwise known as lines, phrases or licks. Many of these have remained and/or have been developed and evolved over 100-plus years of jazz history. The melodic content used in the construction of jazz didn't occur in a vacuum or bubble, but within the everyday life of American existence. Every melody is viable fodder for jazz interpretation: folk songs, hymns, marches, nursery rhymes—all of it. Of course, that includes that great line that you heard your idol play on that record that you love. In fact, anything you've ever heard, can remember and get to in an instant on your instrument is useful. The interpretive, "jazz" part of improvising encompasses your ability to access melodies that you're hearing in a moment via your instrument, your awareness of a melody's congruence with that moment's harmonic environment and your ability to

compose rhythmically. The rhythmic component involves placement, timing and phrasing, which you also are free to compose in that same instant as your melodic/harmonic creation.

Having been presented with all that freedom of rhythm, melody and harmony, it stands to reason that we would need some standardized organization in order to communicate to each other in meaningful and memorable ways. That's where the "language" part of jazz becomes relevant. Certain melodic phrases, along with their inherent rhythms and accents, have become what we call "jazz" because the art form has survived, thrived, flourished and been transferred over generations. Knowing, understanding and playing this language (verbatim or, in essence, by allusion) is the declaration or intimation of a player's allegiance, not only to the musical style, but often to the jazz life and culture—its history, practices, accomplishments and underlying original social meaning, feeling and purposes.

When I was trying to figure out how to "play through changes," the main thing that I wanted to do was to play lines in the ways that I heard them played on records, in the right places (the correct harmonic situations) and with the right feeling and intention. In order to become fluid and to sound natural meant that I had to accumulate and be able to execute melodic phrases that could properly and creatively illustrate all of the harmonic situations that I was likely to encounter. This amassing of data and technique takes tons of time, effort, dedication, patience, failed attempts and incrementally small victories in practice and execution. As with the process of learning and mastering any verbal language, mimicry and repetition are paramount. In this sense, "jazz" is much less random and improvised than most laypeople tend to think. The freedom within jazz improvisation lies in one's ability to hear/create and execute by making informed choices with the greatest variety, drawing from the well of their listening and practice history, and their imagination.

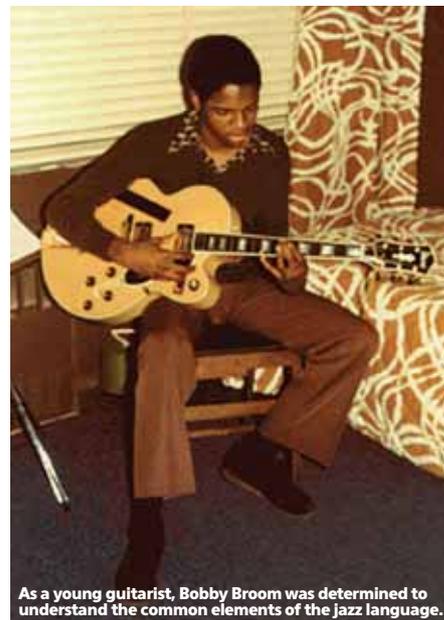
Putting components #1 and #2 together is

what learning to play, and playing, are all about. The development, maintenance and quest for variety and freedom within one's vocabulary can last a lifetime. However, first we should understand that one note often will make the color of the chord just perfectly, and if we can learn how to "move around" the harmony appropriately using just individual notes, we can play changes in that most simple yet beautifully melodic way. In fact, just as harmonious arranging calls for proper voice-leading, the cornerstone of playing melodious lines, phrases and patterns through changes requires being able to hear which notes to start and end phrases with, as well as notes that are common to chords in motion.

Playing, no matter how complex, is only as tasteful as the choice of notes that start and finish each phrase. If that philosophy lies at the foundation of your solos, then even at a fairly novice level, you can make correct and pleasing choices of notes over chords. After that, no matter how much further you advance, the driving force of your playing always will be governed by that simple core aesthetic value. Let's call it "beauty."

DB

Born and raised in New York City, guitarist Bobby Broom made his first appearance with Sonny Rollins at Carnegie Hall at age 16. He went on to tour and record with Rollins for 10 years. During his early career, Broom also performed with Tom Browne, Hugh Masekela, Weldon Irvine, Dave Grusin, Al Haig and Walter Bishop Jr. By age 20, he had recorded his debut as a leader, *Clean Sweep*. He relocated to Chicago later in that decade, while continuing to work with Kenny Burrell, Stanley Turrentine, Charles Earland, Miles Davis, Kenny Garrett and Dr. John, among others. An active educator, Broom holds a master's degree in jazz pedagogy from Northwestern University and has taught at the University of Hartford and DePaul University, prior to his current position at North Park University. He conducts clinics, master classes and lectures internationally and is also an artist/instructor with the Thelonious Monk Institute and the Ravinia Jazz Mentor Program. Broom has spent the new millennium focusing on his musical output as a leader. His latest recording, *Soul Fingers*, revisits the music of his youth, employing palpable group interplay, a wide range of instrumental palettes and his own singularly personal sound and style.



As a young guitarist, Bobby Broom was determined to understand the common elements of the jazz language.



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Using Octaves, Chords To Build Your Guitar Solo

When we play a solo, we try to tell a story. It's good to have a beginning, middle and end, and it can be effective to gradually build the excitement in your story (or solo). As guitarists (or any instrumentalists, for that matter), we can look to Wes Montgomery (1923-'68), one of the greatest storytellers in the history of jazz, and learn from how he built his solos. He often would begin his solos with single-note lines, followed by octaves in the middle, and finish with chords or chords-and-octave combinations. His improvisations often sounded like a big band building up to a final shout chorus.

When playing octaves on the guitar, Montgomery, George Benson and others often use fingers 1 and 3 on octaves built above the notes on the low E and A strings, and fingers 1 and 4 on the octaves built above the notes on the D and G strings. The string between the octave is muted. I use fingers 1 and 4 for all octaves, as I like how it lays on the guitar, and I find it works better for me. Try experimenting and use what works best for you. A lot of Montgomery's sound comes from his plucking the strings with his right thumb, and playing octaves with your thumb gives a very rich tone.

The following song, my "Blues For Wes

#2," is an example of an idea you might try incorporating into your own playing for the last chorus of a blues, where you are doing a call-and-response between a simple octave phrase, followed by a chordal stab, similar to the above-mentioned shout chorus.

Try playing the octave starting in 8th position with the low F on the A string and the F an octave above on the G string. Then go to 6th position and play the A \flat on the D and B strings. Go back up to 8th position for the next note, B \flat (again on the D and B strings). Then the B \flat 13 chord stab is played in 6th position on the "and" of 2 on the top four strings. Next, play the same three-note phrase, only move over a string set, starting the B \flat octave on the D and B strings on the "and" of 3 in the first measure. Continue this motif leading into each chord until you get to measure 9, where you play an E \flat major arpeggio phrase over the Cm-F7+ progression in measures 9 and 10, followed by the descending dominant turnaround starting on D \flat 13 on beat 3 of measure 11.

You also can try adding your own improvisation while keeping the chord stabs consistent. This is a nice call-and-response way to build your solo and finish with an exclamation mark!

Of course, this one idea barely scratches the surface of Montgomery's artistry. Try using this idea inspired by Montgomery to build your solo, and perhaps it will help to inspire you to tell your own story. **DB**

Dave Stryker recently launched his online Jazz Guitar School at Artistworks. This lesson and others are available on video at artistworks.com/jazz-guitar-lessons-dave-stryker. As a leader, Stryker has released 28 CDs to date. He was voted as one of the top jazz guitarists in the 2017 DownBeat Critics and Readers Polls. Stryker's most recent CD, *Strykin' Ahead* (with Steve Nelson, Jared Gold and McClenty Hunter), was named one of the top CDs of 2017 by DownBeat. He has performed with Jack McDuff, Stanley Turrentine, Freddie Hubbard, James Moody, Dizzy Gillespie, Jimmy Smith, Dr. Lonnie Smith, Steve Slagle, Kevin Mahogany, Javon Jackson, Eliane Elias and numerous others. He is an adjunct professor of jazz guitar at Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University and at the John J. Cali School of Music at Montclair State University. Stryker teaches at the Jamey Aebersold Summer Jazz Workshop and the Litchfield Jazz Camp. His book, *Dave Stryker's Jazz Guitar Improvisation Method* (Mel Bay Publishing), is available at davestryker.com.

MEDIUM SWING

Chord stabs: B \flat 13, E \flat 9, B \flat 13, E9, E \flat 9, A \flat 13, B \flat 13, G7 \flat 9, C-, F7+, D \flat 13, C15, B13, C15, B13, B \flat 13, FINE

1. FOR OCTAVES USE FINGERS 1 AND 4 ON ALTERNATE STRINGS (UNLESS FINGERS 1 AND 5 ARE MORE COMFORTABLE ON OCTAVES WITH THE LOW NOTE ON THE LOW E AND A STRINGS).

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Julian Lage's Guitar Solo on 'Splendor Riot'

Though many listeners might categorize him as a jazz guitarist, Julian Lage's most recent album, *Modern Lore* (Mack Avenue), defies categorization. Elements of rock, blues, Americana and other genres coexist alongside jazz sensibilities. Lage's composition "Splendor Riot" is a great example, displaying modern art-music elements within a more rock-leaning groove and structure. (As is conventional for guitar, the transcription is presented one octave higher than it sounds.)

For instance, the entire improvisation is based on the C mixolydian scale. In fact, there are only two non-scale tones (the G \flat , passing tone in measure 18 and the B natural in bar 20) in the entire solo. This is very unusual in jazz, but fairly common in rock music. But what's not common to rock are the

note clusters Lage plays.

Worth noting is that Lage starts and ends with three-note voicings, and even puts some in the middle (bar 16). This creates a nice contour to the development, starting with clusters, moving into single-note lines, hinting at chords again and switching back to single notes before culminating in chords again. His choice of voicings is important, starting out with stacked diatonic fourths. This device can be heard in a lot of modern jazz and contemporary art musics (it's not common in rock or folk music at all), but where Lage goes next is farther afield.

Measures 6–7 also exhibit diatonic voicings, but Lage is no longer stacking fourths. Here he is putting a third on top of a seventh. This simultaneously sounds dense but sparse,

"out" yet "in." This is due to the lowest note being the scale degree that would be between the upper notes, if it were raised an octave. If it were played that way, it would sound very dense, indeed, but by dropping the middle note, it puts a sense of space in the voicing, while retaining the vague sense of not being a conventional triad or seventh chord. In bar 8, Lage returns to quartal voicings, though the #4 (between B \flat and E) that occurs in the first and last chord make these sound a little spicy as well.

Lage's final bar of improv contains a very creative voicing. Intervallically, it's a seventh, a fifth and a third (low to high). That's a lot of space covered. Put together, it doesn't create a triadic chord. Seen through the F/G harmony of the song, it implies an Fmaj7 on top of the G. With the third of the F missing, we again have one of those vague voicings that creates such a sense of atmosphere.

Rhythmically, Lage follows a curious, yet effective, path. He kicks off with long tones, but mostly played before the beat. The anticipation creates energy, while holding the chords produces a sense of relaxation.

In measure 6, Lage starts playing denser rhythms, but still with a purpose. He plays a hemiola (occurring in many genres), a triple-based rhythm against the duple foundation. In this case, he plays a quarter note followed by an eighth note, and repeats this for each chord. These chords being the dense voicings commented on earlier, provides quite a contrast to his opening statement.

Syncopation, so far, has been restricted to eighth notes. Measure 10 is where 16th-note syncopation is introduced, at the same time as chords are giving way to single-note lines. Once again, Lage is playing opposing elements against one another. He also uses a technique often referred to as "isorhythm": playing the same rhythm, but varying the notes. It's a very effective means of creating variation while simultaneously producing consistency, especially since the repeated rhythm adds to the groove. With a small variation, we hear the same rhythm played almost four times in bars 10–11. By playing a line that ascends throughout these measures, Lage also creates tension, which he dissipates by descending just as he abandons the isorhythm.

There's another hip lick a few bars later, in measure 14 (including the anticipation). Lage plays some ascending octaves. Octaves were made essential to jazz guitar by Wes Montgomery in the 1950s. Lage puts a spin on this concept by staggering the octaves, rath-

er than playing them together. This trick has a history in rock 'n' roll: Some of you may remember it from Tony Iommi's introduction to Black Sabbath's "Fairies Wear Boots."

It's often illuminating to examine a soloist's use of their instrument's range. Lage uses almost the entire thing, from the low F in bar 18 to the high C in measure 23. In standard tuning, guitar only goes one note lower, and, depending on the specific instrument, only one to four notes higher. Not only does Lage utilize most of the guitar's range, but he's comfortable enough to cover it throughout the solo. Witness how often Lage traverses from one end to the other, often within a couple of measures. Bar 19 is an example of where he runs across almost three octaves in one measure, and does so with the kind of arpeggios more often associated with "shredder" guitarists. (Playing this lick with such a clean tone is certainly outside of that style, though.) Also, in a 24-bar solo, he has the restraint to wait until measure 18 to go to the basement and measure 23 to hit the ceiling. Lage has been slowly pushing the boundaries, bringing our

ears to these extremes just before wrapping up his statement.

The arpeggio referenced above happens after the song moves from the modal section into some changes. The harmonies are diatonic to C mixolydian, consisting of just a I and IV chord, but the tonic here is inverted. This is a modern rock progression. Since Lage is soloing over bass and drums (with no chordal instrument), he makes some choices that help make the harmonies clear. One of those involves arpeggios, with which he begins measure 18. Playing a C major arpeggio while the bass plays a G makes it clear to the listener that this isn't a G chord. In bar 20 he makes a different choice: He just leans on a Cmaj7 chord. This is especially effective as it brings our ears out of C mixolydian, producing a C major (ionian) quality. Lage continues with C mixolydian after this, but notice how he only plays the B \flat 's on the F chords, preventing the C's from sounding like C7's. **DB**

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

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Heritage H-535 Semi-Hollow

A Classic Axe Lives On

When Jim Deurloo, Marv Lamb and JP Moats made the decision to set up shop in the former Gibson Guitar factory in Kalamazoo, Michigan, they made a commitment to uphold the legacy of high standards and hand craftsmanship for which the historic building was known. Releasing its first guitar in 1985, the Heritage Guitar company has gone on to produce a line of instruments that have earned praise among players for their playability and fine attention to detail.

With deep roots in Kalamazoo, several former Gibson employees made the choice to stay behind when production was relocated to Nashville in 1984. With a strong respect for history and tradition, these craftsmen hatched a plan to reopen a small guitar factory in the vacated space. Considering that this was the very same spot where Lloyd Loar designed the L-5 archtop and F-5 mandolin, as well as the birthplace of some of the most iconic guitars in the world, it made sense that Heritage would build on the reputation that Gibson had established early on. Heritage initially released the H-140 solidbody, based on the Les Paul design, and later moved into hollowbody archtops, eventually offering the H-535 semi-hollow, based on the classic Gibson ES-335.

The H-535 is extremely close in design to the original ES-335, with only minor differences in pickups and hardware. Originally introduced in 1958, the 335 received an overwhelming response due its ability to maintain some of the resonance and warmth of an archtop, but with the added capability of being able to play at much higher volume levels. This revolutionary design uses a hybrid approach featuring a thinner body depth with a solid maple block running down the center, surrounded by two hollow wings with f-holes in the top. Sitting firmly between a hollow archtop and a solidbody, it's the perfect guitar for a wide variety of styles.

The Heritage H-535 might look a lot like the Gibson, but on closer inspection, you begin to notice the fine detail and high quality of this guitar, which is much closer to a 1960s 335 than a newly manufactured Gibson. Heritage builds these guitars using some of the very same Gibson machinery that either was left behind or purchased by Heritage after Gibson relocated. The H-535 is available in four finish options, and the one I play-tested was in translucent cherry, recreating the look of classic 335s from the 1950s. The body is made from laminated figured maple that

is sourced mainly from Michigan, and the neck is hand-rolled mahogany. The cream-colored binding helps add an aged look to the guitar, which is finished in nitrocellulose lacquer. This is a classy, well-built instrument.

You always can tell a really good guitar by how well it plays right from the factory, an indicator of the maker's quality control. The H-535 plays wonderfully with a great setup and required no adjusting to dial it in. The dual Seymour Duncan Seth Lover humbucking pickups sound good with plenty of clarity, but with a nice warmth and fullness to them. The guitar has great sustain and seemed to excel when paired with a quality tube amp. The range of tones available on this guitar is very impressive, providing the ability to navigate through nearly any gigging situation.

The semi-hollow design, well known for its versatility, always has been a popular choice for guitarists who require a single axe that can function in a variety of musical situations. At \$2,799 (including a sturdy TKL case), the Heritage H-535 offers quality and playability that hark back to the glory years of American guitar manufacturing.

—Keith Baumann

heritageguitars.com



Fishman Loudbox Mini Charge

Battery Power, Maximum Output

Fishman, known for its acoustic instrument amplification products, has released the next generation in the company's Loudbox series amplifiers. The Loudbox Mini Charge runs on a rechargeable battery and power management circuitry specifically designed to maximize output levels and playing time. With 60 watts of power, dedicated instrument and microphone channels, and Bluetooth 4.0 connectivity for playback of backing tracks or external music sources, the Loudbox Mini Charge covers all the bases for modern utility and portability in a high-quality acoustic instrument amplifier.

Dimensions of the 21.2-pound amp are 12 inches high by 13.7 inches wide by 9.7 inches deep. It's covered with textured tolex, a dark-tan tweed

grille and a brown control panel—a smart aesthetic that pairs well with wood-based acoustic instruments. The amp cabinet has a 10-degree tilt to the base and a comfortable carrying handle.

Two separate channels for instrument and microphone on top of the amp are angled toward the musician for easy visibility and adjustment. The instrument channel has a 1/4-inch input, a phase button to tame situational feedback, and knobs for gain control, low/mid/high EQ and digital reverb and chorus effects. The mic channel with XLR input also has its own gain, low/mid/high EQ and digital reverb effect. Above the master volume are three small lights to indicate battery use, battery life warning and power charging status. The closed back of the amp has the power

switch, XLR D.I. output, 1/8-inch aux input and DC plug for the 12-volt DC power charging cord.

Full battery charge can take up to 10 hours, but I was so excited to hear this amp, I charged up for about an hour before turning it on. I set the instrument channel controls to about 10 o'clock on the channel gain, and straight-up 12 o'clock for the low, mid and high EQs. I kept the reverb and chorus effects off to hear the true "flat" amplified sound of my dreadnought acoustic with wired active pickup. With the master volume set at about 10 o'clock, my first impression was that it sure lives up to the "Loudbox" name. Indeed, it might be small in stature, but it's huge on sound.

The 6.5-inch woofer and 1-by-1-inch soft dome tweeter deliver a very loud and accurate tone. The closed back of the amp keeps the sound punchy, and I was impressed by the volume and bottom end it delivered. When I turned up the gain and master volume controls, there was no additional compression or transients added to the native tone of my guitar. Next, I dialed in reverb and chorus. The reverb offers a full range from normal room ambience to lush hall sounds, and the chorus is tasteful without venturing too far to nullify the natural sound of the acoustic.

I then added a vocal mic to the mic channel and detected no degradation, nor any perceived power struggle between the acoustic and the mic. The Loudbox Mini Charge managed to handle a substantial push of volume for both guitar and vocal without distorting or sacrificing tonal range.

I was most curious about the battery life and how working the amp in a live setting affected the duration of charge. After charging overnight, I used the Loudbox Mini Charge at a private gig in a medium-sized room, using my concert-size acoustic and running my vocal through the second channel with master volume just shy of straight-up and gain set at about 12 o'clock. Having separate digital reverb effects for both the acoustic and vocal gave me a lot of control over my sound.

Fishman says the battery will last 12 hours using it on "average" volume and 4 hours at full volume. I left the amp on, unplugged, from setup to teardown (about 4 hours total), and never even got a low battery warning. Even after bringing the Loudbox Mini Charge home from the gig and using it again in my studio for a few more hours, I never needed to recharge.

—John LaMantia

fishman.com



NS Design NXTa Radius *Innovations in Bass Guitar Playability & Tone*

NS Design is always pushing the envelope of innovation, and the new four-string NXT4a and five-string NXT5a Radius bass guitars are no exception. The instruments' innovations are multifold, targeting not only ergonomics, playability and comfort, but also electronics and tonal capabilities.

Boy, do I love the "out of the box" moment. The extremely lightweight NXT4a came out of its custom gig bag perfectly setup and ready to roll. "Hey, what is this quarter-inch cable-to-AC adapter?" I asked myself. A mystery to be unraveled! (More on that later.) The rounded NS Diradial body shape is noticeable immediately. The concave back provides comfort whether sitting or standing. The top is less exaggerated, but the rounded nature of it gives the player a very comfortable playing angle.

Let's talk about playability. The headless bolt-on maple neck features 24 frets, a 34-inch scale (35-inch for the NXT5a), a durable Richlite fingerboard and a pleasingly chunky 15-inch radius. The neck is fast and familiar, with good spacing—not too narrow, not too wide. Each note rings out true and clear, up and down the fingerboard. Somehow the tension is simultaneously tight yet supple. Fingerstyle is quick and easy, but this modern instrument also lends itself to chording, tapping, slapping, palm-muting, picking, etc. This bass speaks, clear and present.

The Radius NXT4a is headless, but not to worry: There is a volute by the nut for thumb reference (very comfortable), and I certainly did not miss the headstock, heavy tuners and neck-dive. The ball end of the bass strings slots into an aluminum headplate above the nut. The bridge and self-clamping tuning system are integrated directly into the body of the bass, and are an absolute breeze to use (gone are the days of the double-ball-end strings). Insert the string end through bridge and body, then turn the tuner to clamp it into place and rotate the tuning knob. Once complete, trim off the string ends.

All of the ergonomics in the world won't matter if an instrument doesn't sound good, and the NXT4a did not disappoint. It features two humbucking pickups in your traditional neck and bridge configuration. The familiar volume/volume/tone control knobs make you feel right at home. The bridge pickup is tight and punchy as can be, and the neck pickup offers up some real beef. Blend away to your heart's content, J-Bass style.

Brilliantly innovative, the custom NS/EMG pickups feature battery-free Dual Mode Output electronics made for NS by Mi-Si. That's right, battery-free active or passive pickups. Remember that quarter-inch instrument cable-to-AC adapter I mentioned earlier? The AC charger plugs into the guitar's output jack, and a 60-second charge gives you 16 hours of active output. This is possible due to its special supercapacitor-based circuitry. One thing that takes a little while to get used to is that in order to enter the active mode, you pull "up" on the tone control, instead of the other way around. Many active electronic preamps require you pull "up" to put the bass into passive mode. This is not an issue, just something to be aware of before plugging in.

The Czech Republic-made NS Radius NXTa bass guitars truly are impressive, combining innovation, quality materials and high attention to detail while retaining familiarity and feel. My test instrument performed admirably in a variety of performance situations, showing off its versatility and playability time after time.

—Jon Paul

thinkns.com



GUITAR SCHOOL Toolshed > GEAR BOX

1. Custom Wiring Solution

D'Addario's DIY Pedalboard Power Cable Kit provides a solution for custom wiring the DC cables of a guitarist's pedalboard. Simply cut the included cable to length, place the cable into the plug end and secure the set screw to produce custom-length power cables. The proprietary cable has three times the amount of copper as standard cables for improved voltage transfer. The kit includes a cable tester.

More info: daddario.com

2. Guitar Multi-tool

The Octopus 17 'n 1 Tech Tool from Music Nomad is suitable for adjusting screws and hex nuts on guitar components, such as bridges, saddles, locking nuts, output jacks, control pots and tuning machine bushings. The multi-tool's ergonomic handle is made from ballistic nylon that won't scratch or ding hardware. The Octopus 17 'n 1 Tech Tool contains a 10-piece screwdriver bit set, eight Allen SAE/metric keys and seven hex wrench sizes.

More info: musicnomadcare.com

3. Wireless Guitar Amp

The Katana-Air by Boss is a compact, battery-powered wireless guitar amplifier. It features low-latency wireless technology and a custom wireless transmitter that plugs into any electric guitar. The Katana-Air is a true stereo amplifier with two custom-tuned speakers and up to 30 watts of power. A convenient docking port in the amp charges the battery in the included wireless transmitter, providing up to 12 hours of continuous playing time.

More info: boss.info

4. Dual-function Pedals

Expanding its dual-function pedal line, VHT's all-analog Dyna-Boost features an enhanced classic transconductance compressor circuit with attack, presence, compression and level controls. VHT's Dyna-Chorus pairs the same compressor circuit as the Dyna-Boost with an analog stereo chorus featuring speed, tone and depth controls, plus a wet-dry selector switch for the second output.

More info: vhtamp.com

5. Vintage Strings Resurrected

La Bella has reintroduced "The Bender" strings for electric guitar, which were widely used in the 1960s and 1970s. The company resurrected the exact formulation of nickel plating used in the original strings. "The Bender" strings are available in nine different gauges, including B828 Ultra Bender, B942 Super Bender, B946 Lite Bender, B1046 Bender, B1150 Blues Bender, B1252 Jazz Bender, B1152 Medium Bender, B1252 Heavy Bender and B1052 Lite Top/Heavy Bottom Bender.

More info: labella.com

6. Pitch Meets Rhythm

Korg's TM-60 is a tuner-metronome combo that allows for simultaneous use of pitch training and rhythm training. It includes a large screen with a backlit LCD to accommodate the dual tuner and metronome features.

More info: korgusa.com



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D'Addario

Organist Gerard Gibbs (standing, far left) provides instruction at Hope College's Jazz Organ Summit in Holland, Michigan.



Hope College Hosts Organists

LOCATED IN WESTERN MICHIGAN, THE small town of Holland is not the type of place you'd imagine for a gathering of musicians, students and jazz organ aficionados. Nonetheless, this quaint spot recently hosted a three-day event that was the brainchild of organist Tony Monaco. As a faculty member at Hope College—a liberal arts school of about 3,400 students—Monaco has been an instructor and mentor to several budding organists. He and Brian Coyle, Hope's director of jazz studies, collaborated on the inaugural Jazz Organ Summit in 2016.

"I looked around at all the jazz education conferences and other similar events and realized that they really weren't giving much attention to the jazz organ," Monaco said. "It was time for the legacy of this music to finally get the respect that it deserves, and this summit idea was a good way to start to make that happen."

After a year-and-a-half gap, the second summit took place March 9–11 with a lineup of clinicians and performers that included Monaco, Dr. Lonnie Smith, Gerard Gibbs, Perry Hughes and Gene Dunlap. The college's Jack H. Miller Center for the Musical Arts served once again as the hub of activity for most of the events. Built in 2015, the 64,000-square-foot complex includes two performance spaces, classrooms, practice rooms and a recordings studio.

"The Organ Summit is a one-of-a-kind event in the United States," Coyle said. "It has benefited the organ students in the very obvious ways, but has also benefited *all* of the students by bringing these amazing artists to the campus."

Gibbs, a Detroit-based organist, was a wealth of knowledge for students. In addition to leading a master class, Gibbs helped Monaco coach participants during a large jam session. Students rotated seats at four organ consoles while taking

on various support roles, all while accompanied by a drummer and horn players.

During the weekend's master classes, drum great Gene Dunlap waxed eloquently about his early experiences working with guitarist Brian Green and vibraphonist Roy Ayers. Indiana-based organ technician Lonnie Smith (no relation to B-3 master Dr. Lonnie Smith) offered tips on B-3 maintenance and repair.

In addition to a Friday night concert by Dr. Lonnie Smith and Saturday evening's performance by Gibbs, there were Monaco's nightly jam sessions held in the bar of a nearby hotel.

"This summit has exposed Hope students to the many [types of] attendees of the event," Coyle explained. "Many of these people are professional organists, but several others have other professions. With Hope being a liberal arts college, it's really great for the non-majors and minors to see that music can be part of their lives, even if they are working in a different profession."

Hope College offers several music degree programs, including a bachelor's of music in jazz performance and a bachelor's composite in recording arts. Students studying jazz can perform in small groups and large ensembles.

Back in 2014, while still in high school, Hope College sophomore and jazz organ major Clif Metcalf made Monaco's acquaintance while the organist was on campus delivering a clinic. "I studied for three semesters with Tony, and after graduating from high school, it made perfect sense for me to attend Hope," Metcalf said.

Metcalf appreciates the expertise of Hope's jazz and recording studies faculty: "They all have performing and recording careers, in addition to teaching. They are *serious* musicians, and they've developed a program that is highly individualized to each student." —C. Andrew Hovan



Summer Jazz Academy in Chicago

Happy Campers: Trumpeter Orbert Davis' Chicago Jazz Philharmonic will present the Summer Jazz Academy July 16–27 at Chicago State University. The two-week camp, designed for music students age 10–17, runs 8:30 a.m.–5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Students will explore multiple artistic disciplines and civic engagement. College and career counseling will be available. Each day is capped off with a performance by professional guest artists.

chicagojazzphilharmonic.org

Research Honor: The National Association for Music Education has named Dr. Harry Price as the 16th recipient of the Senior Researcher Award, which recognizes significant long-term scholarship in music education. The award was given to Price at NAFME's Music Research and Teacher Education National Conference, which took place in March in Atlanta. Price holds the title of Professor of Music History and Music Appreciation at Kennesaw State University. The NAFME National Conference will take place Nov. 11–14 in Dallas. nafme.org

Envisioning New Programs: The Carolina/College Music Society Summit 2.0 will be held Jan. 17–20, 2019, at the University of South Carolina. This experiential workshop will focus on designing relevant, thriving 21st-century music programs. It will address the question: "How can music programs better emphasize 21st-century priorities within existing courses and curricular structures?" Multiple teams will collaborate to reimagine traditional offerings, and then pitch proposals during this friendly competition. music.org

Final Bar: Nathan Davis, founding director of the University of Pittsburgh's jazz studies program, died of natural causes on April 9. He was 81. Davis founded the Pitt program in 1969. He is credited with infusing the Pitt community and the greater Pittsburgh region with jazz education, performance and appreciation during his 43-year career. Davis earned a bachelor's degree in music education from the University of Kansas and a Ph.D. in ethnomusicology from Wesleyan University. He retired from Pitt in 2013.

music.pitt.edu

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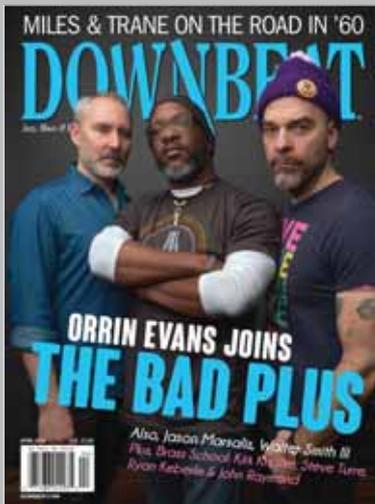
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Melissa Aldana

Five years after becoming the first female musician and first South American to win the Thelonious Monk International Saxophone Competition, Chilean-born Melissa Aldana, 29, steadily is raising her profile on the jazz scene. In addition to leading a quartet, she is a member of the all-star ensemble Artemis, and she recently recorded *Doubtless* with spouse Jure Pukl (tenor saxophone), Joe Sanders (bass) and Gregory Hutchinson (drums). This is Aldana's first Blindfold Test.

Walter Smith III

"On The Trail" (*Twio*, Whirlwind, 2018) Smith, Joshua Redman, tenor saxophones; Christian McBride, bass; Eric Harland, drums.

Walter Smith with Joshua Redman. I've been checking out this album. It's Christian McBride and Eric Harland. I've been a big fan of Walter Smith's since I was at Berklee. He has one of the most distinctive sounds of the saxophone players from my generation. I love this album, because he's just playing standards, but it's so fresh and organic at the same time. It doesn't feel old. It feels very creative. I grew up listening to Joshua Redman because my father [Marcos Aldana] was part of the Thelonious Monk Competition the year that he won [1991].

Both players are so different, but they play like they're one. I love the interaction, and how one can sing the other's story. 7 stars.

Houston Person & Ron Carter

"Spring Can Really Hang You Up The Most" (*Now's The Time*, Muse, 1993) Person, tenor saxophone; Carter, bass.

I recorded a duo version of this song, which wasn't released. It was very similar to this. I'm not sure, but I think it's Houston Person. I'm not that familiar with him, but I played a gig with Ethan Iverson celebrating Monk's 100-year anniversary, and he played on one of the nights. I remember his phrasing from that.

I don't know who the bass player is, but I love the way they play together. I love the harmony, and he plays the melody so simply and beautifully. He doesn't have to play anything complex. That's all it needs. 7 stars, of course.

Troy Roberts

"Bernie's Tune" (*Tales & Tones*, Inner Circle Music, 2017) Roberts, tenor saxophone; Silvano Monasterios, piano; Robert Hurst, bass; Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums.

The player is rhythmically very rich, very virtuoso. Definitely modern—playing a lot of altissimo. It reminded me of Chris Potter, Bob Berg—not them, but that lineage of saxophone player—or maybe Ben Wendel, but it's not him, either. I liked the band. I liked the arrangement. I know the tune, but I can't remember the name. I liked the piano player, who reminds me of Kevin Hays. The tenor is very on top of the beat; I like the rhythmic aggression. He probably was into Michael Brecker. The sound is bright, but dark at the same time. Amazing player. 5 stars.

Johnathan Blake

"Cryin' Blues" (*Gone, But Not Forgotten*, Criss Cross Jazz, 2014) Blake, drums; Chris Potter, Mark Turner, tenor saxophones; Ben Street, bass.

I grew up listening to Chris Potter a lot, but I didn't hear about Mark Turner until I turned 15, when I heard him with Kurt Rosenwinkel at the Panama Jazz Festival. I was in a period of listening to a lot of Michael Brecker, but Mark completely changed my mind about what I wanted in terms of sound and phrasing.

He's been a huge influence through all these years, as has Chris. These guys play one note and you can tell right away it's them. I love the way Mark uses harmony, his lyrical voice-leading and how he develops



Melissa Aldana

MICHAEL JACKSON

ideas. I feel more familiar with that kind of playing than Chris'. At the same time, Chris is a virtuoso. I've transcribed both of them a lot, and every time I transcribe Chris, I just think: "He's playing some things out of this world; I don't know how he can come up with that." 7 stars.

David Murray

"Positive Messages" (*Blues For Memo*, Motéma, 2018) Murray, tenor saxophone; Orrin Evans, keyboards; Jaribu Shahid, bass; Nasheet Waits, drums.

It sounds like an older guy, but a recent recording. The sound and some of the phrasing remind me of the elders. The vibrato and how he plays on the bottom of the saxophone reminds me a bit of George Coleman and Jimmy Heath, but some of the lines remind me of something different.

I liked the tune, and he's a strong player. 5 stars. [after] I know his previous album with Terri Lyne Carrington and Geri Allen.

Ben Wendel

"Solar" (*What We Bring*, Motéma, 2016) Wendel, tenor saxophone; Gerald Clayton, piano; Joe Sanders, bass; Henry Cole, drums.

Ben Wendel. He has a very personal sound and way of phrasing, while also being very modern. Ben and Walter both have very distinctive sounds among their generation—where I can tell right away it's them. What's special about Ben is more than sound: His tempo and the way he plays one note behind another is different than what I'm used to hearing. I've heard this album, and I've been following his "Seasons" video project.

The drummer is playing the odd meter very naturally, with a flow; it's a specific arrangement but everything feels organic. Is it Eric Harland? Justin Brown? Kendrick Scott? It's somewhere around there. 5 stars. **DB**

The "Blindfold Test" is a listening test that challenges the featured artist to discuss and identify the music and musicians who performed on selected recordings. The artist is then asked to rate each tune using a 5-star system. No information is given to the artist prior to the test.

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