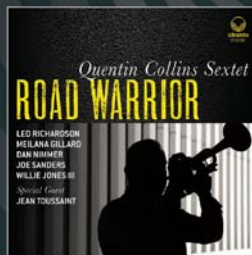




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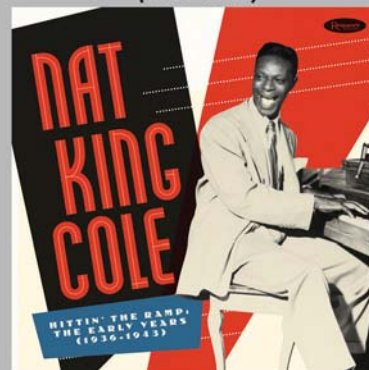
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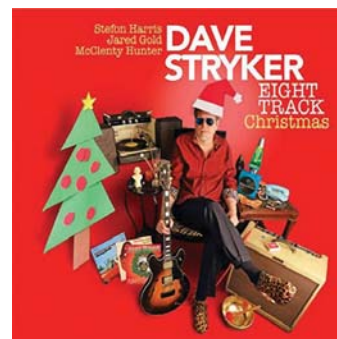
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Miles Davis (Photo: ©Herman Leonard Photography, LLC)



# BOUNTY OF YULETIDE TUNES

Each autumn, a windfall of new albums arrives to help celebrate the Christmas and Hanukkah season. And every year, thankfully, there are a dozen or so releases that stand apart from the pack.

Dave Stryker has lent his considerable musical intelligence, imagination and prowess the past few years to a series of three *Eight Track*-titled albums recorded with organist Jared Gold, drummer McClenty Hunter and either Stefon Harris or Steve Nelson on vibes. Crafting soul-jazz grooves, the quartet reanimates tunes Stryker enjoyed listening to as a teenager in the 1960s and '70s. *Eight Track Christmas* (Strikezone 8819; 51:02 ★★★★★) continues the series with the guitarist's fresh-as-newly-fallen-snow ballad and uptempo arrangements of his favorite Yuletide tunes, mostly familiar carols. The shiny star atop Stryker's Christmas tree is "Soulful Frosty," a mash-up that pairs "Frosty The Snowman" with a version of Young-Holt Unlimited's hit from 1968, "Soulful Strut."

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

Talented singer Brynn Stanley projects unstudied rapport with the melodies and messages of the 10 songs comprising her *Classic Christmas* (SonoPath 2019001; 35:55 ★★★★★). The pure tones and shadings of her appealing voice invite return listens to Brook Benton's "This Time Of The Year" and the Tony Bennett-identified "I Love The Winter Weather." Supported by a big band led by arranger/

co-producer Tony Guerrero or a combo, sometimes strings and a vocal group, Stanley makes sure her singing elevates the human spirit.

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

Denmark-based Kristin Korb's *That Time Of Year* (Storyville 1014323; 65:06 ★★★★★) pulls off the trick of sounding simultaneously new and traditional. A skilled bassist and a more than capable singer, she imparts warmth to her interpretations of 13 holiday songs. Highlights include her renditions of the Lou Rawls-identified "Christmas Will Really Be Christmas" and Dave Frishberg's "Snowbound."

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

The Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis follows up its 2015 seasonal concert album with *Big Band Holidays II* (Blue Engine 0020; 50:32 ★★★★★), which compiles highlights from the past four Jazz at Lincoln Center holiday shows. Key to the band's appeal is how assuredly it embraces famous carols ("Silver Bells," "We Three Kings") and less-common chestnuts ("Cool Yule," popularized by Louis Armstrong, and Percy Faith's "Brazilian Sleigh Bells," incorporating cross-currents of serious jazz business and seasonal gaiety). The Claude Thornton classic "Snowfall," arranged by Sherman Irby, defines elegance. Featured vocalists include venerated jazz veteran Catherine Russell, rising star Veronica Swift, Canadian treasure Denzal Sinclair and

the late, great Aretha Franklin, alone, singing and playing piano on "O Tannenbaum."

Ordering info: [store.jazz.org](http://store.jazz.org)

The 12-piece, Wisconsin-based Isthmus Brass delivers its second holiday album with *We Need A Little Christmas* (Summit 737; 65:07 ★★★★★). Tuba player Mike Forbes and all the other horn players, along with drummer Keith Lienert, are Christmas music connoisseurs with jazz and classical backgrounds. Serious beauty informs "Ave Maria," "Wexford Carol" and "Russian Christmas Music," while sheer fun propels the sled occupied by "Frosty The Snowman," with its thundering Gene Krupa-like drums.

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

The German, Belgian and Dutch members of the New Orleans Jazz Band of Cologne find their passion in New Orleans traditional jazz. *Santa Claus Is Coming To Town* (K&K Verlagsanstalt 134; 66:52 ★★★½) maintains the level of energy necessary to keep nostalgia away on this live album. A round-robin of decent solos is the order of the day.

Ordering info: [kuk-art.com](http://kuk-art.com)

The vocal group Accent reacts to the specialness of the holiday season with *Christmas All The Way* (self-released; 39:10 ★★★½). These six singers exult something outstanding in their a cappella rendering of the Swedish classic "Jul, Jul Stralande Jul." They hit it off in tandem with Gordon Goodwin's Big Phat Band

on “It’s The Most Wonderful Time Of The Year” and “Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!”

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

Often heard at posh hotels in Manhattan, the **Acute Inflections** duo of singer Elasea Douglas and upright bassist Sadiki Pierre share a heartbeat for the popular carols they play on *In December* (self-released; 46:23 ★★★½). Douglas’ lovely voice meshes with Pierre’s rich, thumping tones throughout the program, whether they’re reworking “Sleigh Ride,” “White Christmas” and “Winter Wonderland” or offering their compelling original composition “In December.”

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

It’s only fitting that gospel group **The McCrary Sisters** would record an album in celebration of the season. On the satisfying *A Very McCrary Christmas* (Rounder 1166100649; 55:29 ★★★★★), these four daughters of a preacher stick to carols, singing with a religious exhilaration that elevates the tunes far beyond staleness. Gospel legend Shirley Caesar helps the siblings lift up “Joyful Joyful,” and blues star Keb’ Mo’ graces “Away In A Manger.”

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

Utilizing warm, accessible vocal tones, **Keb’ Mo’** gracefully navigates the lyrics of old standbys like “Please Come Home For Christmas” in his comforting pop style on *Moonlight, Mistletoe & You* (Concord 01077; 35:25 ★★★½). Shifting the mood, he and guitarist Akil Thompson light real blues fires on “Santa Claus, Santa Claus” and Koko Taylor’s “Merry, Merry Christmas.” Keb’ Mo’ deserves an extra slice of gingerbread cake for daring to poke Mr. Claus in the belly with the witty, anti-consumerism anthem “Christmas Is Annoying.”

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

East L.A. rockers **Los Lobos** also had never released a holiday album until this year. On *Llego Navidad* (Rhino 604538; 40:48 ★★★★★), the band delivers messages of peace, hope and compassion as they marvelously update gems like “La Rama” and Mexican singer Javier Solís’ classic “Regalo De Reyes.” The studio tamale-making party heats up with “It’s Christmas Time In Texas,” a merry Tex-Mex tune.

Ordering info: [store.rhino.com](http://store.rhino.com)

Assessing Hanukkah as a celebration of the freedom of faith and thought, **Yale Strom’s Broken Consort** creatively mixes elements of folk, classical, jazz, blues, rock and traditional Jewish music styles on *Shimmering Lights* (ARC Music 2809; 77:18 ★★★★★). First-rate violinist-composer-arranger Strom and his colleagues tap into the humanity of Sephardic and Yiddish folk songs. Gifted collaborators include vocalist Elizabeth Schwartz, who skillfully sings in Yiddish, Hebrew, Ladino and English while eschewing egotism.

Ordering info: [arcmusic.co.uk](http://arcmusic.co.uk)

—Frank-John Hadley

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## MILES' 'COOL' SESSIONS

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the short-lived, but now legendary, Miles Davis Nonet. Its recordings, first issued in 1949, attracted only modest attention and praise from jazz fans and critics until 1957, when they were compiled for the newly popular LP format as *Birth Of The Cool*. This was a marketing masterstroke that capitalized on the rising popularity of "cool" jazz and elevated the nonet recordings from a faintly remembered curio into the realm of overlooked masterpiece.

To mark the anniversary, Blue Note/UME has issued a set titled *The Complete Birth Of The Cool*, including the 12 studio sides, plus all known recordings of the nonet's live shows. Those took place in September 1948 at New York's Royal Roost, a long-defunct Broadway chicken restaurant that served bebop on the side, and whose shows were broadcast on WMCA by famed radio DJ "Symphony Sid" Torin.

Although the set is available in vinyl, CD and digital formats, the two-LP version is especially notable: It marks the first time since 1957 that the recordings have been remastered for vinyl, and the first time that all the *Birth Of The Cool* performances—studio and live—are available together on LP. The accompanying book includes informative essays by Ashley Kahn, Gerry Mulligan and Phil Schaap, along with gorgeous photos.

The nonet grew out of impassioned intellectual discussions held in arranger Gil Evans' basement room behind a laundry on 55th Street, a "salon" frequented by many of the music's rising stars. Two factors especially distinguished the nonet's sound from previous iterations of bebop: the orchestration—a six-member horn choir, featuring French horn and tuba, backed by a rhythm section—and the arranging concepts of Evans, which he had developed while working for the

Claude Thornhill Orchestra.

As Davis recalled in his 1989 autobiography (written with Quincy Troupe), *The Birth Of The Cool* album came from some of the sessions we did trying to sound like Claude Thornhill's band. We wanted that sound, but the difference was that we wanted it as small as possible."

For fans just discovering this music, it might not sound as "cool" as the title suggests: Some of the playing is actually pretty hot, especially the live material, propelled by Max Roach's drums. Balancing the heat, however, is a heady mix of 20th-century classicism mixed with bebop, the approach Evans honed with Thornhill. Not all the arrangements are by Evans, but his overwhelming influence is made clear in the dense, choir-like, parallel voicings of the six horns—as opposed to the usual colloquy among brass, woodwinds and rhythm sections of traditional big bands.

"It's something I listened to a lot back in 10th grade, when I was first getting into Miles," trumpeter Jeremy Pelt said recently. "These recordings are iconic. They should be studied from a lot of different angles. It's like watching *The Godfather*: You watch it one way the first time, then ... you watch it again and start to think about some things; it grows on you. I listen back to solos I've been able to sing for 25 years, and they have new meaning to me ... [Those musicians] were dissecting chords in a very hip way. It was bebop in sheep's clothing."

*The Complete Birth Of The Cool* provides invaluable snapshots of several young, future jazz masters who were just beginning to crystallize their sound, especially the 22-year-old Davis. On his first recordings as a leader, he delivers sumptuous trumpet lines with hints of the lyricism and mystery to come.

—Allen Morrison

# CAMP & CLASS CONVERGE ON COLE'S 'RAMP'

Big CD box sets are like fancy cars or eye-catching jewelry—fun to own but expensive to buy. Then comes the holidays, a time when wish-lists come out of the shadows and permit us to ask others for all the things we dare not ask of ourselves. That's why record companies reserve their most tempting treasures for December, when even adults are entitled to dream like children on Christmas Eve.

In that spirit, the front runner for the most wish-lists in 2019 could be *Nat King Cole, Hittin' The Ramp: The Early Years (1936–1943)* (Resonance Records), which scoops into one seven-CD (or 10-LP) package a nearly complete library of Cole's early pre-Capitol period, which formally ended Nov. 30, 1943. I say "nearly" because it misses the nine 1940 sides he did for Victor with Lionel Hampton and a 1943-ish Norman Granz session with Illinois Jacquet and Shad Collins whose precise date remains mysteriously vague and might fall within the Capitol period. But their absence won't stop *Hittin' The Ramp* from becoming the essential companion to Mosaic's famous *Complete Capitol Recordings Of The Nat King Cole Trio*, issued nearly 30 years ago.

The principal platform of Cole's early career was not the commercial record, but the radio transcription. The '30s and '40s were a pre-payola period when big record companies fought to keep their music off the radio, not give it away free on the radio. To fill that gap, annotator Will Friedwald explains, local stations subscribed to various transcription services that supplied them with whole libraries of recorded music.

Starting in September 1938, Cole and his new trio began picking up quick cash by dashing off a dozen or more tracks in an hour or two for these libraries. The performances were relaxed and not particular about details or repertoire. Of the nearly 200 selections on *Hittin' The Ramp*, almost 150 are transcription pieces. (Cole did another 100 or so transcriptions after joining Capitol, but they are for another day.) Only about 40 tracks here are commercial record dates, and only 16 of those were for a major label, Decca. The remaining dozen or so are taken from Armed Forces radio broadcasts in which the hipster lingo seems quaintly, if not severely, dated.

It reminds us that Cole was still very much a "race" or "sepia" artist whose scat and "jive" appeal was assumed to be limited strictly to African American audiences. Hipness distanced the young Cole from the embarrassments of miscarried emotions, otherwise known as corn. It kept things light, even when



Nat "King" Cole

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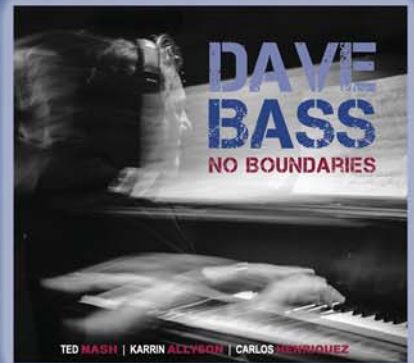
racism was systemic. The featherweight innocence of a tune like "I'm An Errand Boy For Rhythm" would be too politically incorrect for public display today.

Yet, the music—and particularly Cole's magnificently streamlined piano flights—sounds totally at ease in the 21st century, much more so than, say, the pre-Decca Bing Crosby sides made only a few years before. In the interim, between 1933 and 1938, the modern swing bands had, shall we say, hip-notized American music, i.e., awakened young audiences to the often-subtle distinctions between the quick emotional hit of campy excess and the enduring elegance of authentic style. Hipness became its own kind of camp, of course. ("Tickle my belly, and I'll send you the jelly," says Cole. Translation: "Send your requests and I'll sing them on the air.") But Cole on piano was like Fred Astaire in shoes.

Camp and class converge like two clashing sensibilities in this wonderfully conflicted collection. The faddish slang of a revolt against schmaltz blinks like a neon sign, but Cole's pianism illustrates the sublime intellect of a master virtuoso at the height of his powers. It was the place where Earl Hines met Teddy Wilson and Art Tatum. But don't take Cole's singing too seriously here. He was still learning.

In addition to Friedwald's fine notes, the 80-page book that accompanies *Hittin' The Ramp* offers reflections on Cole from Dick Hyman, Tony Bennett, Quincy Jones, John Pizzarelli, Michael Feinstein, Johnny Mathis, Harry Belafonte, Oscar Moore and his brother, Freddy Cole; many photographs; and a complete discography with dates, locations and personnel.

—John McDonough



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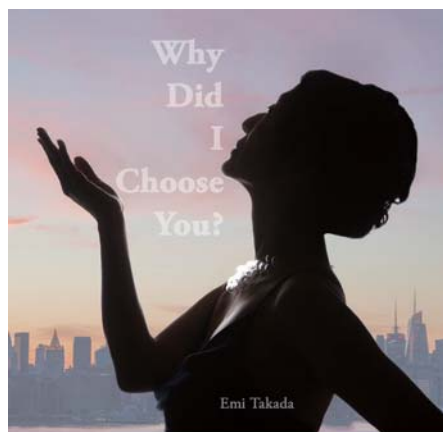
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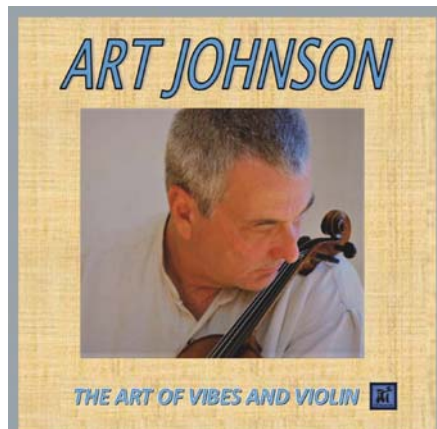
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## 12 GARNER ALBUMS REISSUED IN OCTAVE REMASTERED SERIES

Fans of pianist Erroll Garner (1923–'77) have rejoiced in recent years, as reissues and new titles have shone a spotlight on the work of the legendary Pittsburgh native. The resurgence continues with the 12-album Octave Remastered Series, a joint effort between Mack Avenue and the Garner estate. The dozen albums—each of which has a previously unreleased bonus track—are newly restored from analog masters of releases from the 1960s and 1970s. The series represents a treasure trove for Garner fans and completists.

The first four titles in the series—*Dreamstreet*, *Closeup In Swing*, *One World Concert* and *A New Kind Of Love*—were released Sept. 27. The series will continue, with one album released per month—*A Night At The Movies*, *Campus Concert*, *That's My Kick*, *Up In Erroll's Room*, *Feeling Is Believing*, *Gemini*, *Magician* and *Gershwin & Kern*—leading up to the kick-off of Garner's centennial celebration in June 2020, concluding on his 100th birthday in June 2021.

The master tapes for all 12 albums were transferred and restored using Jamie Howarth's Plangent Process playback system, which removes machine noise and unwanted fluctuations from the original analog recordings. "The experience of it is more like you're listening to Garner through the monitors in a professional studio, rather than listening to him off the tape copy," said Peter Lockhart, senior producer of the project and vice president of Octave Music.

Lockhart originally began working on the Garner archives in 2015 with pianist Geri Allen, then director of jazz studies at the University of Pittsburgh. "Geri was our creative center and our 'North Star' in terms of the Garner project," he said. "After she passed [on June 27, 2017], we were trying to figure out where to go from there. Geri had introduced us to Christian Sands after a three-piano Garner tribute they did with Jason Moran at the Monterey Jazz Festival in 2015, so we started talking to Christian. Then early last year, he became our creative ambassa-

dor. Christian is very passionate about performing Garner's music in concert with his High Wire Trio, and he's been a great ambassador for the Garner project."

In 1959, Garner successfully sued Columbia Records to remove an album the company had released without his permission. Garner and his manager, Martha Glaser, subsequently founded and launched Octave Records, whose 12 releases make up the Octave Remastered Series.

The reissue of *Dreamstreet* contains the bonus track "By Chance," an engaging, medium-tempo Garner original, while *Closeup In Swing* includes "Octave 103," another original that showcases the pianist's impeccable sense of time. *One World Concert*, recorded in Seattle at the 1962 World's Fair, includes the hauntingly beautiful Garner ballad "Other Voices," and *A New Kind Of Love*, featuring the pianist with a 35-piece orchestra, includes a new trio version of "Paris Mist."

Lockhart explained that many of Garner's spontaneous intros to tunes on the live recordings were cut to fit the time limitation of the LP format. Those same off-the-cuff intros have been restored for the new releases. "For instance, there's an extra minute of an introduction for 'The Way You Look Tonight,' an extended introduction for 'Sweet And Lovely' and a really amazing one for 'Mack The Knife,' where he goes through these progressions and modulations that are really hip and that no one's ever heard before."

"It's such a unique catalog," Lockhart continued. "There are so few artist-owned catalogs that are this important and this large and have so much unexplored material to work with. And it's not just the music but a million pieces of paper—all of his telegrams and correspondence, contracts, pictures, and then there's his clothing, jewelry, artwork. There's so many things to explore, and we're trying to encourage more people to go to the [Erroll Garner Archive at the University of Pittsburgh] and engage in scholarship about his life and his work."

—Bill Milkowski

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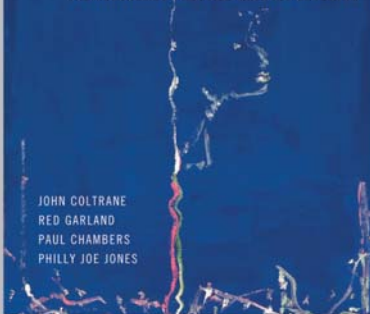
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Robert Glasper (foreground) and Herbie Hancock in a scene from the documentary *Blue Note Records: Beyond the Notes*.

# JAZZ FILM WITH HIP-HOP HEART

Swiss-born director Sophie Huber's *Blue Note Records: Beyond the Notes* (Eagle Vision), which coincides with the label's 80th anniversary, supports the canard that good things come in threes. However, the film stands in contrast to both *It Must Swing: The Blue Note Story*, by Eric Friedler, a German—which portrays label co-founders Alfred Lion and Francis Wolff from the perspectives of the musicians they documented—and *I Called Him Morgan*, in which Kasper Collin, a Swede, traces the relationship between iconic Blue Note trumpeter Lee Morgan and the woman who shot him in 1972. Huber examines the ways in which the members of Blue Note's hip-hop-informed 21st-century roster connect, aesthetically and emotionally, to the classic albums that established Blue Note's indelible brand.

She frames the narrative around a beautifully shot 2017 recording session at which the "Blue Note All Stars" (Ambrose Akinmusire, Robert Glasper, Derrick Hodge, Lionel Loueke, Kendrick Scott and Marcus Strickland) join old masters Wayne Shorter and Herbie Hancock for two intuitive explorations of Shorter's "Masqualero." Huber interviews all of them, as well as Blue Note President Don Was, producer-alto saxophonist Terrace Martin, vocalist/pianist Norah Jones, recording engineer Rudy Van Gelder (1924–2016) and alto saxophonist Lou Donaldson, whose 23 years with Blue Note included the 1967 LP *Alligator Bogaloo*, which featured contributions from "hip-hop architects" (in the words of Ali Shaheed Muhammad from A Tribe Called Quest), such as guitarist George Benson, organist Dr. Lonnie Smith and drummer/groove-master Idris Muhammad.

"I knew from the beginning that I wanted to talk to the younger artists not only about what's happening now, but to directly understand how alive the influence of the artists of the past still is," Huber said. As examples, she mentions

Scott's account of his "conversion experience" after hearing Art Blakey on *A Night At Birdland* (1954), and Strickland's paean to John Coltrane's *Blue Train* (1958).

The project began in 2015, after an inquiry from Was, who'd played bass on the soundtrack to Huber's first documentary, *Harry Dean Stanton: Partly Fiction*. "My dad had a lot of jazz records, and the music always intrigued and invigorated me," she said. "But what made Blue Note different was the aesthetics." Huber was referring to the "timeless, perfect combination" of Wolff's distinctive photographs and Reid Miles' album cover design, which she deploys prominently in propelling the film's narrative flow.

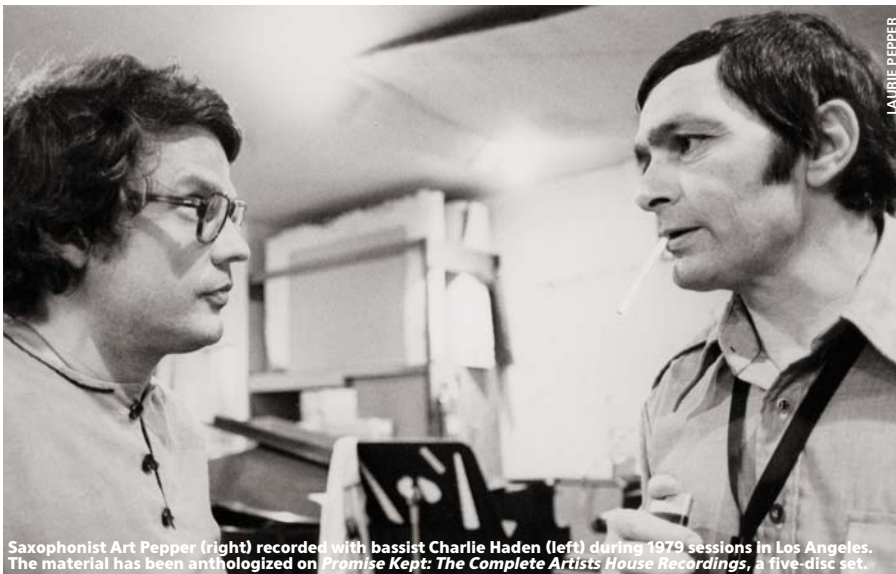
"Then I discovered that Blue Note was founded by two German-Jewish refugees," she added. "In a time when xenophobia and racism are moving to the forefront, it was important to tell a story about immigrants and African Americans who created a legacy as powerful and vital today as it was then."

The process of winnowing down hours of footage to an 85-minute film "that would hopefully appeal to younger people, and people who don't necessarily know much about jazz, or like it, or even know that they like it" necessitated difficult editorial decisions.

Some aficionados will question Huber's choice to generally ignore the 1984–2010 tenure of label head Bruce Lundvall, who oversaw consequential albums by Cassandra Wilson, Dianne Reeves, Kurt Elling, Joe Lovano, Greg Osby, John Scofield, Benny Green and Jason Moran, as well as Jones, Glasper and Loueke.

"I tried to at least show an album cover, so that [many artists'] names come up," she explained. "But I chose to be present and look into the future, rather than go into detail about the past. I hope people will be interested enough to dig deeper and find out more, as the wealth is vast."

—Ted Panken



Saxophonist Art Pepper (right) recorded with bassist Charlie Haden (left) during 1979 sessions in Los Angeles. The material has been anthologized on *Promise Kept: The Complete Artists House Recordings*, a five-disc set.

## PEPPER'S COMEBACK

In 1977 alto saxophonist Art Pepper told New York Times critic John S. Wilson, "In a very short time I'll be like Trane. There was Pres, then Bird and then Trane. And then there's going to be Pepper. I've felt that way all my life."

Lawyer, record producer and ardent Pepper fan John Snyder—then the head of the A&M jazz imprint Horizon Records—did his best to help the saxophonist achieve that goal, booking the weekend stint at the Village Vanguard that preceded the Times article. The gigs were part of an impressive comeback, following years of inactivity caused by drug abuse and incarceration.

"Our gratitude to John was enormous, because it was John who put Art on the road and hired PR people," said the saxophonist's widow, Laurie Pepper.

The Vanguard engagement was the saxophonist's first-ever performance in New York, nearly three decades after he first appeared on the Los Angeles scene. Snyder suggested recording the Vanguard shows, releasing them to great acclaim on Contemporary Records, the saxophonist's longtime label run by Les Koenig.

Pepper and Snyder agreed that they would make a studio recording, eventually. A few months after the Vanguard dates that summer, Koenig died and Pepper signed a new deal with Fantasy, with the caveat that he was to make a record for Artists House, a new imprint Snyder launched after leaving Horizon.

Pepper never attained the influence he prophesied, but he did make good on his word to Snyder. In 1979, the producer put together all-star bands in New York and Los Angeles for sessions that would yield four albums worth of material. The first, *So In Love*, was issued on Artists House in 1980, while the Fantasy-owned Galaxy and the Japanese imprint Victor released the other three after Pepper's death in 1982. Apart from appear-

ing in the out-of-print 1989 box set *The Complete Galaxy Recordings*, the Snyder sessions long have been unavailable, but thanks to the efforts of Laurie Pepper—who made most of them available digitally through the Bandcamp page of her Widow's Taste label in 2016—they were recently collected in a five-CD set, *Promise Kept: The Complete Artists House Recordings* (Omnivore), which features 15 previously unissued takes.

While the music throughout the set generally is superb, both Laurie and Snyder have reservations. In her liner notes, she accuses some musicians of disrespecting the saxophonist and phoning in some of the performances. She relates an anecdote about bassist Ron Carter reading a newspaper during a session after Pepper had requested him to lie out during an a cappella introduction for one tune. Still, the rest of the group—pianist Hank Jones and drummer Al Foster—play with exquisite grace and depth.

"The record we made for Artists House isn't that good in my opinion," said Snyder, now a professor at Loyola University-New Orleans. "I picked the wrong repertoire. The world did not need another 'Straight No Chaser.'" Indeed, with the exception of a few Pepper originals, including his timeless ballad "Diane," everything cut was a standard. On the other hand, Snyder had the nifty idea of recording six remarkable solo performances by Pepper, which prove revelatory.

"I thought Art's sense of melody and storytelling through sound matched up perfectly with the idea of the solo voice. It was my way of framing an exquisite human ability at which Art Pepper had a particular genius," Snyder said. "He was like a Delta blues dobro player—he could create melody, harmony and motion at the same time, which, coincidentally, just so happens to be the DNA of Ornette [Coleman]'s 'Harmolodics.'"

—Peter Margasak



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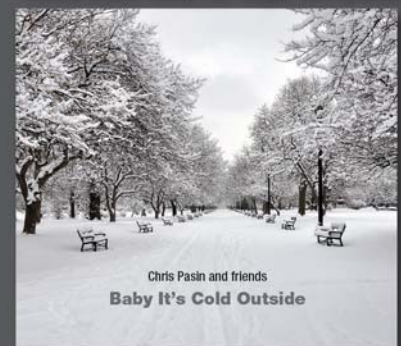


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The deluxe edition of *Ann Arbor Blues Festival 1969* has LPs pressed on red and blue vinyl.



Narvel "Cadillac Baby" Eatmon was the founder of the label *Bea & Baby Records*.

# ENCHANTING DISCOVERIES

Michael Robert Frank, founder and CEO of the label Earwig Music, has completed his greatest rescue mission. "I've believed that the *Bea & Baby* record label had too much great country and urban blues, doo-wop and gospel to let it go into the dustbin of history," he said. "So, I've produced a deluxe, complete testament to all the musicians and to Cadillac Baby. I took the project on as a fan, to create something to be dug into deeply, a source of enchanting discovery to be cherished."

The box set *Cadillac Baby's Bea & Baby Records: The Definitive Collection* (Earwig Music) brings to light the long-neglected recording legacy of Narvel "Cadillac Baby" Eatmon (1914–'91). Based on Chicago's South Side, Eatmon was a club and label owner who scouted out artists, especially blues musicians, for gigs and sessions. In addition to 101 tracks spread across four CDs, the set has a 128-page book with rare photos and essays by blues authorities Jim O'Neal and Bill Dahl, as well as gospel historian Robert M. Marovich.

The set (spanning 1959–'89) showcases more than 30 recording artists. Blues fans, in particular, have lots to explore. Wild slide guitarist Hound Dog Taylor's first recordings are here, and a young James Cotton gruffly sings "One More Mile," using resolve to mute a penetrating sadness. Among the others plunging into the blues with personality are Eddie Boyd, Earl Hooker, Homesick James, Sunnysland Slim, Detroit Junior and Lee Jackson. R&B acts no longer lost in the mists of time include Kirk Taylor & The Velvets and Faith Taylor, who cut two tracks at age 11. African American gospel singers turn

up on Disc 4, notably the transcendently impassioned Eddie Dean. On six tracks, Cadillac Baby himself is heard discussing his fascinating life and career.

Stories about the man are legion. Perhaps none more outlandish than the account of him driving one of the convertible Cadillacs he owned through his club's entrance door, up a ramp and onto the stage. He then cruised over to the bar.

In 2006, Earwig Music bought *Bea & Baby* and its associated labels from Cadillac's widow, Bertha (aka *Bea*). The transaction got Frank thinking about a compilation. With stacks of 45s and a bushel of paperwork in his possession, he began doing research. He spent years organizing a discography and tracking down missing records owned by collectors. He then created new digital masters.

In addition to issuing 76 albums on Earwig, Frank has ranged freely throughout the blues world as an artist manager, booking agent, and producer of albums and the occasional event. He's also a harmonica player, long serving as an accompanist to bluesman David "Honeyboy" Edwards (1915–2011), whom he managed.

All the while, Frank has been motivated by altruistic instincts. "As I learned more about the histories and obstacles faced and overcome by musicians, especially blues musicians, I began to appreciate their lifetime commitment to creating and performing. [These artists are] revolutionary and inspiring. I wanted to help them to have better economic opportunities by playing to larger, more diverse audiences and to make more recordings.

"On an experiential level," he continued, "I felt the transformational power, emotion and cultural magnificence of the music. I wanted to share all that—so the public could experience the music and the artists as deeply as I did."

Another labor of love by a committed blues fan was Jim Fishel's restoration and compiling of tapes he made a half century ago as a teenager at a three-day event near the campus of the University of Michigan. Now issued as *Ann Arbor Blues Festival 1969—Vols. 1 & 2* (Third Man Records), the set offers one or two performances each by a parade of blues VIPs, including B.B. King, Howlin' Wolf, T-Bone Walker, Muddy Waters, Junior Wells, Son House, Mississippi Fred McDowell, Lightnin' Hopkins, Roosevelt Sykes, Big Mama Thornton, Big Joe Williams and Clifton Chenier.

Up-and-comers of the time were out in force, too. Guitar firebrands Magic Sam, Otis Rush and Jimmy "Fast Fingers" Dawkins agitated a barbed-wire tension that surely affected thousands of concertgoers. Harmonica players James Cotton ("Off The Wall"), Junior Wells ("Help Me—A Tribute to Sonny Boy Williamson") and Charlie Musselwhite ("Movin' And Groovin'") dazzled the college crowd as well. A 26-page booklet provides details on the event, one of the first U.S. festivals devoted solely to the blues. A deluxe edition includes reproductions of tickets, news articles, production notes and more.

Like the *Bea & Baby* box set, overall the sound quality here is acceptable, with historical importance trumping sonic purity.

—Frank-John Hadley

# WRITERS ILLUMINATE VAUGHAN'S ARTISTRY

What made Stevie Ray Vaughan great? Nearly 30 years after the Texas guitar slinger's tragic death, music journalists Alan Paul and Andy Aledort provide hundreds of testimonials to his exalted status with *Texas Flood: The Inside Story of Stevie Ray Vaughan* (St. Martin's Press). Paul recently described the 366-page book as "a biography in the form of an oral history." The biographers, who are both musicians, brought rare insight to the project.

Scores of Vaughan's bandmates and fellow Lone Star artists shared their stories for *Texas Flood*, most notably older brother Jimmie Vaughan, who served as Stevie's guide into the music world. Jimmie—founder of the blues-rock band The Fabulous Thunderbirds and now a solo artist—previously had been reluctant to discuss his brother. But here, he details Stevie's early guitar prowess and later triumphs.

Bassist Tommy Shannon and drummer Chris Layton, both longtime members of Vaughan's trio, Double Trouble, offer valuable perspectives. But amid the many revealing quotes, one source seems a little scarce: Stevie himself. Aledort said he interviewed Vaughan on four occasions and knew him well, while Paul lamented that he never got a chance to interview him.

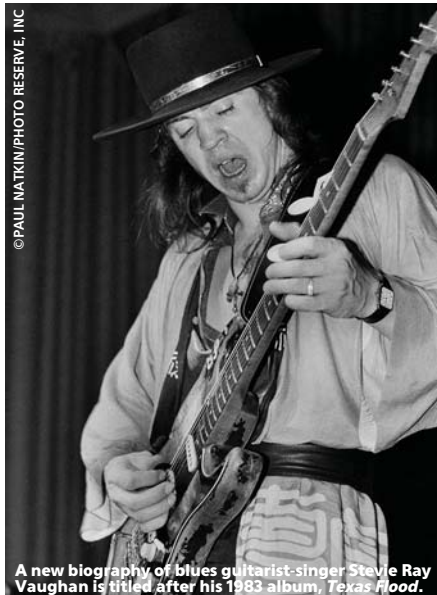
"Every quote in the book came from interviews that one of us conducted," Paul explained. "It was tempting at times [to incorporate Vaughan quotes from secondary sources], but we thought it was important to stick with quotes from us."

One nonparticipant was Johnny Winter (1944–2014), the prototypical white Texas blues-rock guitar hero, whose legacy slowly has faded as Vaughan's reputation has continued to grow. "Johnny didn't have a lot to say about Stevie," Aledort said. Shannon, who played bass for Winter early in his career, provides needed context here.

The book is illustrated with two glossy sections of rare photos, as well as grainy black-and-white shots that break up the text. The authors present a balanced, warts-and-all account of Vaughan's life without devolving into hagiography. Readers won't like the substance-abusing SRV whose life spirals out of control prior to entering rehab in late 1986.

"Stevie's life was so much about overcoming adversity, so the last several years of his life were dedicated to helping other people overcome their own adversity," Paul said.

Aledort stressed that Vaughan's intensity made him an enduring artist. "All things that



A new biography of blues guitarist-singer Stevie Ray Vaughan is titled after his 1983 album, *Texas Flood*.

are great just get better over time," he said. "With Stevie, he combined two things that the greatest of the great usually do: He had tremendous facility and technique, but also played with a depth of emotion. Tommy Shannon said he poured his life into every note, and that sounds like a cliché, but it's true."

Bonnie Raitt, one of many rock stars who sing Vaughan's praises in *Texas Flood*, said, "[T]he fire and passion with which he invested everything he touched was just astounding, as was the way he synthesized his influences and turned them into something so fiercely personal."

As perhaps Vaughan's foremost influence, blues legend Albert King said succinctly, "No doubt about it, Stevie had what it takes."

In show business, a sudden death can enhance a legend. When Vaughan's helicopter went down in the fog after a memorable show with Eric Clapton, Buddy Guy and Robert Cray at Alpine Valley in East Troy, Wisconsin, on Aug. 26, 1990, he was only 35 years old. He was at his creative peak, committed to sobriety, in a loving relationship and had recorded *Family Style*, a collaborative album with Jimmie.

Those who knew him best still marvel at his upbeat attitude and soaring musicianship. "Stevie's tragic death only punctuates his greatness and puts a mark on his legacy, akin to Buddy Holly, Otis Redding, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin and Duane Allman," Layton said. "It's like something has been stolen and you can only wonder what might have come next."

*Texas Flood* will leave readers longing for that next chapter.

—Jeff Johnson

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Gregg Allman (1947–2017)



# BRILLIANT ABUNDANCE

With the gift-giving season upon us, music lovers have a multitude of options when it comes to reissues, deluxe editions and box sets. As record labels eagerly raid their vaults, a couple of industry trends continue to blossom. First, a “more is more” aesthetic often is at work, with voluminous amounts of music being presented. Secondly, in 2019, elegant design remains essential. If you’re going to go to the trouble of buying music in a physical format, the packaging should be stunning, right?

In keeping with the DownBeat motto of covering “Jazz, Blues & Beyond,” below are descriptions of some intriguing titles from the worlds of country, rock, r&b and hip-hop.

A generation ago, every jazz fan had a strong opinion about director Ken Burns’ 10-episode film *Jazz*, which aired on PBS television in 2001. Many viewers scratched their heads because the first nine episodes covered the period from the late 19th century up until 1960. Then the concluding episode had the audacious title “A Masterpiece by Midnight: 1960 to the Present.” (Forty years of multiple sonic revolutions surveyed in 109 minutes?) This approach was a way for Burns to remind viewers, quite clearly, that his film was about history, not the current scene.

Burns’ recent eight-episode film *Country Music* has thrust roots-music critics into similar debates about the time period that the documentary covers. No matter whether one was

genuinely moved by the film or deeply disappointed by it, one topic where viewers might find common ground is the soundtrack. The five-CD set *Country Music—A Film By Ken Burns (The Soundtrack)* (Legacy), which includes 105 tracks, would not be a bad place to start for novices seeking a broad overview of the art form.

Disc 1 includes tracks that helped give birth to the genre, such as The Carter Family’s “Wildwood Flower” (1929) and Jimmie Rodgers’ “In The Jailhouse Now” (1928). Disc 5 features high-quality tearjerkers, such as Kathy Mattea’s “Where’ve You Been” (1989) and Vince Gill’s “Go Rest High On That Mountain” (1994), the most recent studio cut in the collection.

Burns used more than 3,200 photographs in his film, so there was plenty of visual material from which to choose for the colorful, 69-page book housed with the soundtrack. Essays by country music historians Bill C. Malone, Colin Escott and Tamara Saviano provide context for the music.

Among the artists who are represented with multiple tracks are Bill Monroe, Hank Williams, Patsy Cline, George Jones, Loretta Lynn, Dolly Parton, Kris Kristofferson, Ray Price, Willie Nelson, Merle Haggard, Ricky Skaggs and Dwight Yoakam.

Johnny Cash and Bob Dylan’s duet version of “Girl From The North Country” (from the latter’s 1969 album, *Nashville Skyline*) pops up on Disc 3 of *Country Music*. Fans who revere

that track certainly will want to check out the next installment of Columbia/Legacy’s ongoing Bob Dylan Bootleg series.

The 50-track set *Travelin’ Thru, 1967–1969: The Bootleg Series Vol. 15* focuses on Dylan’s recording sessions in Nashville for the albums *John Wesley Harding*, *Nashville Skyline* and *Self Portrait*. Among the 47 previously unreleased tracks are numerous collaborations with Cash. Rockabilly pioneer Carl Perkins stops by to add his twangy guitar to a handful of tracks, too.

*Travelin’ Thru* is a three-CD set, which is but a tasty snack for the obsessive Dylan fan, whose appetite seems insatiable. (These are the Dylan die-hards who bought the epic 36-CD set that Legacy released in 2016: *The 1966 Live Recordings*.)

Last year, Legacy delivered a six-CD deluxe edition of Vol. 14 of the Bootleg series: *More Blood, More Tracks*, which documents all the sessions that yielded Dylan’s 1975 classic *Blood On The Tracks*. The first two tracks on that LP—“Tangled Up In Blue” and “Simple Twist Of Fate”—made it onto the set list for Dylan’s Rolling Thunder Revue Tour of 1975.

During the first leg of that tour, which stretched from October to December, The Bard performed several songs that he had not yet released, such as “Hurricane,” “Isis,” “One More Cup Of Coffee,” “Romance In Durango” and “Sara.” Those songs are on his album *Desire*, which would be released in early 1976.

The hefty 14-CD set *The Rolling Thunder*

*Revue: The 1975 Live Recordings* documents five complete concerts, as Dylan surrounded himself with an amazing cast of players that included folk icon Joan Baez, Byrds frontman Roger McGuinn, violinist Scarlet Rivera and bassist Rob Stoner. How did the sprawling ensemble work out the set list? Well, hardcore fans seeking a fly-on-the-wall viewpoint can check out the rehearsal sessions documented on Discs 1–3.

Far more modest in scope, but free of extraneous material, is the three-CD deluxe edition of Van Morrison's 1997 gem, *The Healing Game* (Exile/Legacy). This is an exemplary reissue. Disc 1 has the original album's 10 tracks, plus five bonus cuts. Disc 2 has alternate takes and collaborations with some of the singer's heroes, such as Carl Perkins, skiffle master Lonnie Donegan and blues titan John Lee Hooker.

Disc 3, chronicling a transcendent concert, is the most potent catnip here. Morrison was infused with explosive charisma during his show in Montreux, Switzerland, on July 17, 1997, as he explored tracks from *The Healing Game* ("Rough God Goes Riding," "Fire In The Belly," "Sometimes We Cry"), as well as covers and classics from his catalog. All 14 concert tracks are previously unreleased.

After commercial and critical successes with the Allman Brothers Band, in 1973, lead singer Gregg Allman released his solo

debut, *Laid Back*, which yielded the hit single "Midnight Rider." He also teamed with a 24-piece orchestra (featuring members of the New York Philharmonic) for a road jaunt, which was documented on the 1974 live album *The Gregg Allman Tour*. Fans now can revisit both chapters of Allman's career, thanks to reissues from Mercury/UMe.

The two-CD deluxe edition of *Laid Back* includes demos, rehearsal tracks, alternate mixes and a solo acoustic live version of "Melissa." *The Gregg Allman Tour*—which is being reissued on vinyl for the first time since 1987—was recorded at Carnegie Hall and the Capitol Theatre in Passaic, New Jersey. The set list for the double album has some interesting twists, as Allman tackles Elvis Presley's 1961 hit "I Feel So Bad" and the traditional tune "Will The Circle Be Unbroken."

The mid-'70s was a time of tremendous popularity for the Steve Miller Band, which shot up the charts with the hits "The Joker," "Rock'n Me," "Fly Like An Eagle" and "Jet Airliner." All those tracks are included on the three-CD/single-DVD set *Welcome To The Vault* (Sailor/Capitol/UMe). Of the 52 audio tracks, 38 are previously unreleased, including demos, rehearsal sessions, live takes and some blues tunes. The DVD compiles 21 live performances, ranging from 1967 to 2011. The accompany-

ing 100-page hardbound book features a 9,000-word essay by rock journalist David Fricke.

Fans of Motown have had plenty to celebrate in 2019, the 60th-anniversary year for the label. An expanded version of *Motown: The Complete No. 1's* (Motown/UMe) has a whopping 208 tracks on 11 CDs, packaged in a replica of Motown's original Hitsville U.S.A. headquarters in Detroit (now home to the Motown Museum). The box set also includes a 100-page book with rare and classic photos.

Tracks include Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On," The Jackson 5's "ABC," The Supremes' "Where Did Our Love Go," Smokey Robinson & The Miracles' "Tears Of A Clown," Stevie Wonder's "Superstition," Diana Ross' "I'm Coming Out," Rick James' "Super Freak," Boyz II Men's "End Of The Road" and Erykah Badu's "Bag Lady."

Early hits by the "Queen of Hip-Hop Soul" are the focus of Mary J. Blige's *HERstory, Vol. 1* (UMe), a compilation available Dec. 6. In addition to the CD, two-LP and digital versions, it is packaged as a set of eight 7-inch vinyl singles housed in a sleek carrying case with a handle.

Fans can spin the 1992 track "Real Love" and then flip the vinyl over to hear the remix featuring The Notorious B.I.G. Other artists appearing on the remixes include Keith Murray, K-Ci and Method Man. —Bobby Reed

## Jonathan Butler CHRISTMAS TOGETHER



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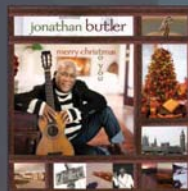
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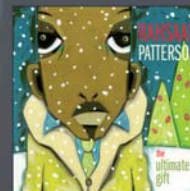
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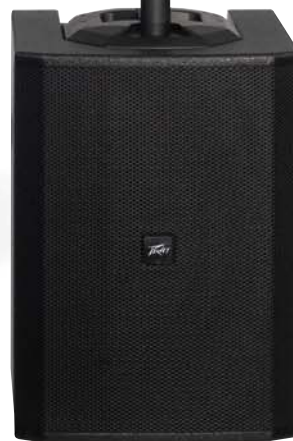
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### Real Reharmonizations

Hal Leonard has introduced *The Reharmonized Real Book*. By retooling songs featured in the original *Real Book*, *The Reharmonized Real Book* shows new options for harmonizing melodies. Editor Jack Grassel reharmonized 393 songs, resulting in some songs with fewer chord changes, some with more changes, some with different types of alterations and some with a more modern sound. [halleonard.com](http://halleonard.com)

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### Elegant Reed Case

The Selecta Wooden Reed case from Chedeville is made from an elegant cherry-stained birchwood. The case features a super-flat acrylic plate that will keep reeds from warping while in storage. It can hold four reeds, from B-flat clarinet to soprano, alto and tenor saxophone, in any combination. The case provides ample protection and will store reeds in true style while keeping them flat and ready to perform. [chedeville.com](http://chedeville.com)



### On-the-Go Gear Stand

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### Higher-Output Lunchbox

ZT Amplifiers' Lunchbox Reverb combo amp replaces the company's classic Lunchbox model. The original Lunchbox, introduced in 2009, provided guitarists with high output from a very compact amp. The Lunchbox Reverb is a complete redesign, with increased output, expanded tone controls, the addition of reverb and a fresh look featuring the trademark "swoop" grill of the ZT Custom Shop line and a durable metallic-silver gloss finish. [ztamplifiers.com](http://ztamplifiers.com)



### Synthetic Reed

The Elite is a responsive and resonating synthetic new reed from Bari Woodwinds that provides players with great projection and focus and even tone through all registers. Currently available for tenor and alto saxophone, the line soon will be available for clarinet, bass clarinet and the rest of the saxophone family. Elite reeds come in multiple strengths: Soft (2–2.5), Medium Soft (2.5–3), Medium (3–3.5), Medium Hard (3.5–4.0) and Hard (4–4.5). They feature a distinctive, genuine Swarovski crystal inlay. [bariwoodwind.com](http://bariwoodwind.com)



### 4-Track Clarity

Zoom's H4n Pro delivers high-quality four-track audio recording for music, film and podcasting. It features advanced microphones, high-performance mic preamps and an extremely low noise floor. The H4n Pro's built-in condenser mics capture sound with remarkable clarity and definition. Capable of handling up to 140dB SPL, creators can count on distortion-free X/Y recording even in loud environments. [zoom-na.com](http://zoom-na.com)



### Wireless Agility

Samson's Airline 99m wireless microphone series is designed for active performers. Available in headset and fitness headset configurations, the frequency-agile UHF wireless system combines the AH9 micro transmitter and AR99 micro receiver for a highly portable, rechargeable setup that offers high-definition sound free of cables and backpacks. [samsontech.com](http://samsontech.com)