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CARRINGTON**

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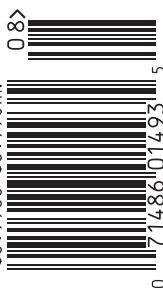
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MAHANTHAPPA**

Photo: Denise Applewhite

Alto saxophonist, composer, educator and Yamaha Artist Rudresh Mahanthappa is widely known as one of the premier voices in jazz of the 21st century. In addition to winning several "Saxophonist of the Year" distinctions over the last decade, he has also received the Guggenheim Fellowship and the Doris Duke Performing Artist Award, among other honors, and is currently the Anthony H. P. Lee '79 Director of Jazz at Princeton University.



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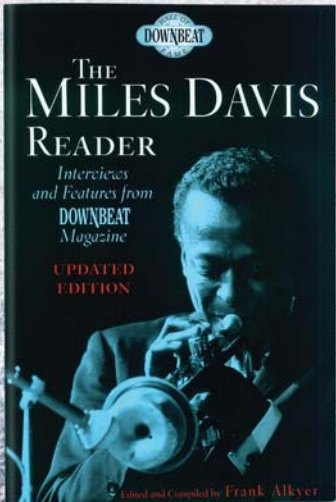
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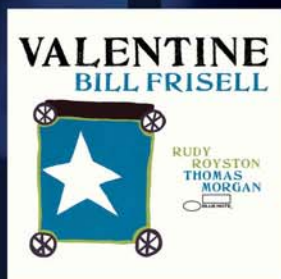
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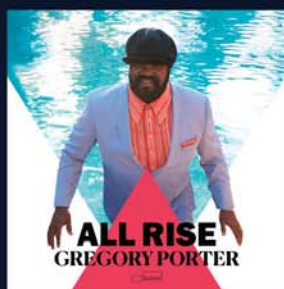
**GERALD CLAYTON**  
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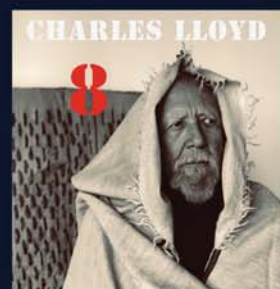
**GREGORY PORTER**  
**ALL RISE**

2-time GRAMMY Award winner **GREGORY PORTER** follows his loving tribute to Nat "King" Cole with a return to his deeply soulful original songwriting on *ALL RISE*. The album is a potent mix of jazz, soul, blues, gospel, and pop featuring longtime bandmates pianist **CHIP CRAWFORD**, bassist **JAHMAL NICHOLS**, drummer **EMANUEL HARROLD**, augmented by a horn section, string orchestra, and a dynamic production aesthetic courtesy of **TROY MILLER**.



**IMMANUEL WILKINS**  
**OMEGA**

After making a striking appearance on Joel Ross' *KingMaker*, alto saxophonist **IMMANUEL WILKINS** delivers an expansive opus about the Black experience in America on his own debut album *OMEGA*, which was produced by **JASON MORAN** and features a next-generation quartet with pianist **MICAH THOMAS**, bassist **DARYL JOHNS**, and drummer **KWEKU SUMBRY**.



**CHARLES LLOYD**  
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Jazz legend **CHARLES LLOYD** celebrated his 80th birthday in 2018 with a grouping of musical friends including guitarist **JULIAN LAGE**, pianist **GERALD CLAYTON**, bassist **REUBEN ROGERS**, and drummer **ERIC HARLAND**, with special guests organist **BOOKERT JONES** and bassist **DON WAS**. *8* commemorates the first 8 decades of Lloyd's remarkable journey and arrives in a limited-edition deluxe boxset that includes 3-LPs, 2-CDs, and a DVD, along with a 96-page hardcover book and 2 photo prints, as well as standard LP/DVD, CD/DVD, and digital versions.

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AUGUST 2020

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*Jazz Artist, Jazz Album,  
Jazz Group*

BY PHILLIP LUTZ

The drummer and bandleader, who topped three categories in the Critics Poll, discusses *Waiting Game*, the acclaimed album she recorded with her band Social Science, and reflects on the motivation that drives her work as an educator and activist for social justice.

Terri Lyne Carrington conducts a clinic at the 2016 Next Generation Jazz Festival in Monterey, California.



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Cover photo of Terri Lyne Carrington shot by Steven Sussman.

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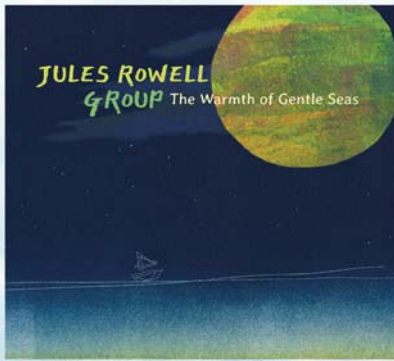


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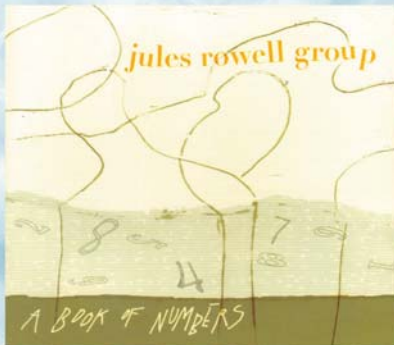
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## First Take > BY HERB BOYD

CHRISTOPHER DRUKKER



Regina Carter

JOHN ABBOTT



James Carter

# An Expression of Urgency

**FIRST CAME THE CORONAVIRUS AND** then the killing of George Floyd, his neck fatally compressed under the knee of a Minneapolis police officer. For Black Americans, a convergence of plagues compounds disappointment and outrage—a double whammy.

“Being on ‘lockdown’ and glued to the news during the pandemic, the world witnessed a speck of the systemic racism that Black Americans face, daily,” said violinist Regina Carter from her home in New Jersey. “Examining and discussing America’s ugly history over the last 400 years is extremely difficult for some, but there is no other choice; George Floyd was the last straw.”

Multireedist James Carter echoed the urgency expressed by his cousin and a multitude of others demonstrating in the streets around the world. “It’s good to see so many young people, especially white Americans with Black Lives Matter signs, in the demonstrations,” he said. “The pandemic, poverty and the police have brutally assailed the Black community.”

No place or profession is immune to the coronavirus pandemic or disparities based on race. But setbacks are not defeats for these two musicians, whom I’ve known since they were coming of age in Detroit—Regina when she was a member of the all-female ensemble Straight Ahead and James when he was with the youth ensemble Bird-Trane-Sco-Now! Both are as talented as they are resilient, and though at the moment they can’t perform together—as they have on numerous studio dates—the pandemic has put them back in touch.

“When James called me about sharing my thoughts during this bleak period, it was an opportunity I welcomed,” Regina said. “This is a good way of reconnecting, something that is

absolutely indispensable for us musicians.”

But being apart hasn’t kept musicians from collaborating. James’ son—16-year-old James Carter Jr.—recently participated with classmates and faculty in a virtual spring concert for his Detroit-area high school.

“You sit in front of your computer,” James said, explaining the process, “with a PDF of the music and a click track for you to play along with. Your clip is delivered to the webmaster, who then assembles the finished product. I felt sorry for him and his fellow bandmates ... To miss contributing to the blend of his sax section is a feeling that can’t be duplicated.”

Irreplaceable, too, is the financial compensation for lost gigs. There are instances, Regina said, in which you have to return the advance, if the date is canceled or postponed. “These are some very tricky endeavors,” she said.

Always evident in the music of these cousins is a deep regard for jazz history and tradition. Both have devoted albums to outstanding musicians of the past, be they Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald or Django Reinhardt. And they both were saddened to learn of the recent deaths of Wallace Roney, Lee Konitz and Ellis Marsalis, all of whom succumbed to COVID-19. It’s a list of lost lives and talent that was taken from the world too soon.

For this writer, after weathering the turbulent 1960s, today’s spasm in reaction to police brutality is a case of déjà vu. These recent—and very public—transgressions by law enforcement are uniquely exacerbated by a relentless pandemic and an unrivaled economic crisis. But like the Carters and the rest of our jazz community, we need to continue to cultivate and support a common human resiliency. **DB**

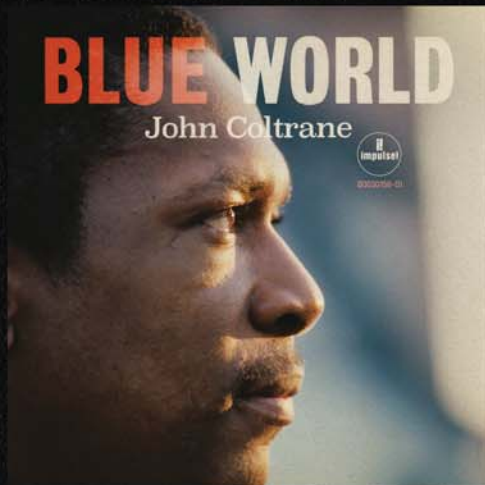


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## Chords & Discords >

### Message of Social Justice

In the light of the protests in support of Black Lives Matter, one track on Orrin Evans' *The Intangible Between* stands out. Evans' masterful blend of Andrew Hill's "Tough Love" and two poems paints a vivid image of the injustices suffered by Black Americans at the hands of the police.



Orrin Evans

In John McDonough's Hot Box review in the July issue, he refers to the poetry within the piece as "various spoken digressions by Evans" that "get in the way, leaving the whole piece torn in two directions." The narrator of "Love Poem," written by John Holiday, declares he will do anything possible to make life better. In the recitation of "Yo! Bum Rushing the Door" (by Todd Evans, aka Son of Black), the narrator is the voice of love overcoming hate to "sober up justice." He exclaims, "I already know Black Lives Matter, and it matters to me that the young brothers in the street know this, too."

My concern is not with the reviewer's 3-star rating, or his slant on the tunes and the playing within. But considering this song's message, to brush off the narrative—without even briefly mentioning the context—is disappointing, to say the least.

PAUL RAUCH  
SEATTLE

### Black Lives Matter

As a fan of your online presence, I couldn't help but notice the lack of posts supporting the Black Lives Matter movement and addressing the historic protests that have swept this country over the past few weeks. I have also noticed a similar type of silence from many of the jazz and blues clubs that I have been a patron at.

I find it baffling that any business or publication that owes its existence to Black culture and music would have nothing to say. While the Black musicians who created this music were giving our nation something we could all take pride in, they were also fighting for equality. To say nothing now does all of them a huge disservice.

AARON ROSAPEPE  
[AARONROSAPEPE@GMAIL.COM](mailto:AARONROSAPEPE@GMAIL.COM)

### Systemic Imbalance in Jazz

I am a working jazz musician and lifelong DownBeat reader. During my youth in Trinidad and Tobago, reading your magazine led me to believe that all jazz musicians were family and that playing this music—born of and carrying the pain and joy of the Black experience—would instill a defining respect and cherishing of Black worth.

I find myself deeply disappointed by our community's response to the recent tragedies. Despite expressing solidarity with BLM, there is no recognition of how the New York jazz scene—Brooklyn's in particular—reflects the systemic imbalance.

DAVID BERTRAND  
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

### Corrections

- In the print edition of the July issue, the review of Dana Sandler's album *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* (Fractamodi) contained misspellings and multiple errors related to the personnel. These errors have been corrected in the digital edition of the July issue.

DOWNBEAT REGRETS THE ERRORS.

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Protesters march June 6 in Washington, D.C., following the police killing of George Floyd.

# Societal Reckoning Over Racism Encompasses the Jazz Community

Jazz singer and activist Aaron Myers was among the demonstrators who gathered to protest at Lafayette Square on June 1 in Washington, D.C., following the police slaying of George Floyd.

Myers said he was in one of the guard facilities across the street from the White House in Lafayette Square when he realized that law enforcement had begun firing rubber bullets and tear gas at peaceful protesters. The District's mayor, Muriel E. Bowser (who since has renamed the park Black Lives Matter Plaza), had issued a 7 p.m. curfew after some of the previous protests resulted in vandalism and confrontations with police.

It was still the afternoon.

"I was in that burned-out building, trying to get some footage of the protest," Myers recalled. "As I walked out of that bunker, out of the corner of my right eye, I saw people running. That's when I could smell the gas; I started coughing and crying. It was pure shock at first. Usually, when that measure is used, it's accompanied by some action that precipitated that. There was no just cause of why the gassing should have started."

Soon after, armed security forces from various branches of local and federal agencies cleared a path through the park for President Donald Trump to walk from the White House through

the park to St. John's Episcopal Church for a photo-op, where he proceeded to pose with a Bible.

"In that action, the president served as the largest threat to public health, regarding the protesters in that moment. I was dumbfounded," said Myers, who's the co-founder of Capitol Hill Jazz Foundation, a nonprofit aiming to use jazz as a tool for economic development. "After my initial shock, my next immediate reaction was concern. I knew in that moment that we all had been exposed. The protesters had already made the calculated risk of being out there with COVID-19. I became angry, because it was clear that the president does not care about Black people."

For a time, it seemed as though the coronavirus pandemic was going to completely dominate the news in 2020. And it did, until the Black Lives Matter movement ignited protests around the world following Floyd's May 25 killing in Minneapolis by city police.

After being called to a convenience store on suspicion of Floyd passing a counterfeit 20-dollar bill, video shows him struggling beneath the weight of Officer Derek Chauvin's knee for about eight minutes, calling out for his mother and telling police that he couldn't breathe. The Minneapolis Police Department fired all four officers involved in the killing; Chauvin was

charged with second-degree murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter. The other officers all are charged with aiding and abetting two of those alleged crimes.

Ever since Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi started the Black Lives Matter movement in July 2013 as a response to George Zimmerman's acquittal in the slaying of Trayvon Martin, jazz musicians like Robert Glasper, Ben Williams, Ambrose Akinmusire, Terri Lyne Carrington, Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah and Matana Roberts have contributed to its soundtrack.

Despite safety concerns amid the pandemic, many performers still have decided to engage in a range of social activism, including bassist Luke Stewart, a cofounder of the D.C. nonprofit presenting organization CapitalBop, which often marries jazz performance and activism.

"I was pretty much at a protest in some fashion every day for an entire week," Stewart said about the days following Floyd's killing. "But I was on the periphery, because I'm still very much concerned with staying healthy with the COVID-19 situation. Still, I'm also drawn to the fact that these protests are happening in Washington, D.C.—in my own backyard. I feel like it's my responsibility to at least be a witness."

Myers grasps the need for safety precautions,



too, but warned against complacency: “Far too often, jazz musicians just wait to put their music out or hit the bandstand when making political statements. In this moment, it’s not time for that. In this moment, you must make your statements very clearly to your fans.”

For sure, the outcry over Floyd’s killing—as well as the recent slayings of Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery—has reached beyond expectations. Recent protests noticeably have been multicultural and multiracial, and spread across the globe. With those protests came various statements from non-Black individuals, corporations, small businesses and nonprofit organizations, voicing solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement.

Some, though, perceive these newfound declarations of solidarity—particularly on social media—as nothing more than “thoughts and prayers” with insubstantial follow-through.

On June 2, Brianna Agyemang and Jamila Thomas, two music executives, launched Blackout Tuesday, a social-media call to action for the industry to halt the release of new music and to cease business operations for a day as a show of protest against the killings of countless Black Americans. Blackout Tuesday also brought attention to economic injustices the industry at large has inflicted on Black performers throughout the history of recorded music. But amid the swirl and sensationalism of today’s 24-hour news cycles, some musicians perceived its mission to be unclear.

“I had no idea what it was about,” Stewart recalled. “I heard about it [the day before it happened]. It hearkened back to my distinction between the art industry and the entertainment industry. That seemed like an entertainment-industry issue. I’m not knocking that industry; it’s just not immediate in my sphere.”

Stewart went on to detail decades of economic disparities that fall along racial lines and affect the number of Black people who gain access to the jazz industry through higher education. He also mentioned that fewer young Black jazz musicians in comparison to their white counterparts can weather the high costs of living in metropolitan cities like New York. He also said that he’s had to compete with white jazz musicians who have had greater access to formal education and elders of the genre.

“There are a lot of young white musicians with a certain attitude of almost showing off their prowess in ‘Blackness’ at the expense of other Black jazz musicians,” said Stewart, as he recalled a specific instance at the New York club Smalls in 2010. Across from the club, he saw graffiti that said “White Negro,” a reference to Norman Mailer’s essay *The White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipster*, which discussed the “psychic havoc” of mid-20th century living. When Stewart entered the club, he noticed an audience of aspiring young musicians, sprin-

kled with established performers, like vocalist Andy Bey. Based on the demographics of that crowd, it was clear to the bassist that there was an oddly balanced racial dynamic at work, not just in the club, but more broadly in the industry.

“It’s ... an attitude that [says], ‘I have conquered your Blackness; I’ve conquered your culture,’” he said.

Following Blackout Tuesday, the music industry witnessed some movement aimed at fighting racial injustice. The online music marketplace Bandcamp announced that it would donate its portion of sales from Juneteenth, which commemorates the end of slavery each year on June 19, to the NAACP. The Warner Music Group and a charitable foundation affiliated with its parent company announced a \$100-million fund to help “groups promoting social justice, specifically against violence and racism,” according to the Los Angeles Times.

Closer to home for the jazz community, the newly formed Jazz Coalition partnered with The Blacksmiths (a coalition of artists, curators, producers and organizers), the Intersectional Voices Collective and The Wide Awakes to present “Juneteenth Jubilee,” a June 19 celebration in Harlem to heighten awareness of the Black queer and transgender communities, which also contend with racialized disparities and violence.

While Blackout Tuesday helped to spotlight significant systemic imbalances within the jazz community, it’s difficult to find published studies examining current issues in the music. Works like Zola Philipp’s scholarly paper “The Social Effects of Jazz” and Gerald Horne’s book *Jazz and Justice: Racism and the Political Economy of the Music* have explored the history of financial exploitation of Black jazz artists. But questions

about disparities in wealth and hiring practices, the ownership of jazz labels, jazz media outlets, venues, and nonprofit institutions and access to education have yet to be studied in such depth.

“Historically, who owns a lot of music publishing and whose songs were they? Let’s just start there,” said Katea Stitt, program director at WPFW—Washington, D.C.’s Pacifica Foundation radio station. The daughter of late saxophonist Sonny Stitt, she also said she participated in recent protests in the capital. “Who owned the clubs? And who played inside the clubs?” she asked.

Vocalist and activist Myers recently published a book, *White People Talking to White People*, as a guide for how individuals can address systemic racism within their own homes and businesses. He, too, cited glaring racial discrimination in jazz performance spaces and the education system.

“If we do not force white people in jazz to start examining their own fragility and privilege that we as Black people have tolerated and tiptoed around for as long as we’ve been in this genre, the systemic racism within jazz will continue,” he said.

“A lot of jazz musicians are afraid to speak up about it, because they’re afraid they are going to lose some of their audience,” Myers continued. “They know their audience is a lot of white people—older white [people] at that. We as jazz musicians can no longer be in a position of playing it safe. In this moment, where do you stand? I push everyone within the jazz community to make a stand and put our own individual equity in jeopardy in the fight against racial injustices, including those within the jazz industry.” —John Murphy

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## Riffs >

JAZZ FOUNDATION OF AMERICA

Bettye LaVette

**LaVette's Latest:** Vocalist Bettye LaVette returns with *Blackbirds* (Verve), an album of songs made famous by singers like Nina Simone and Nancy Wilson. The new release includes a powerful rendition of the protest song "Strange Fruit" (also released as a single), which depicts the lynchings of Black Americans. "It really is horrifying that ... the meaning of this song still applies," LaVette said of the tune, which was recorded and made famous by Billie Holiday in 1939. "It might not be men and women hanging from trees, but these public executions are now on video and it feels like they're doing it for sport."

[vervelabelgroup.com](http://vervelabelgroup.com)

**Forging Ahead:** As the coronavirus pandemic continues across the globe, live jazz performances in front of audiences are expected to remain a rarity for a while. But a few festivals in Europe are forging ahead, including Lisbon's **Jazz Em Agosto** (July 31–Aug. 9), which has renamed itself Jazz 2020 and has planned outdoor sets by trumpeter Susana Santos Silva, among others. **Keystone Corner** might be the outlier on this side of the Atlantic. At press time, the Baltimore club was set to host gigs again on June 25–28. The Sean Jones Quartet and Eternal Triangle (led by Warren Wolf) are scheduled to perform at the venue, which is planning to function at 50-percent capacity with plexiglass dividers to separate concertgoers. [keystonecornerbaltimore.com](http://keystonecornerbaltimore.com)

**In Memoriam: Brother Ah (aka Robert Northern),** a French horn player who recorded exploratory leader dates during the 1970s and served as a member of Sun Ra's Arkestra, died May 31 at the age of 86. ... Another former Arkestra member, trumpeter **Art Hoyle**, died June 4 at age 90 of Alzheimer's disease. ... **Vera Lynn**, a British vocalist known for bolstering the spirits of World War II troops with songs like "We'll Meet Again," died June 18 at age 103. ... **David P. Helland**, who served as DownBeat's associate editor from 1988 to 1993, died May 27 at age 71 after a battle with Parkinson's disease.



Raw Poetic (left), Archie Shepp and Damu The Fudgemunk collaborated on the album *Ocean Bridges*.

COURTESY: REDEFINITION RECORDS

# Shepp Bridges Hip-Hop, Jazz on New Recording

**EVEN WHEN FAMILY MEMBERS SHARE A** musical calling, it might take decades for them to collaborate. That was the case for saxophonist Archie Shepp and his nephew Jason Moore, who performs as Raw Poetic. Their jazz-meets-hip-hop release *Ocean Bridges* (Redefinition) was 20 years in the making, created with input from Moore's partner, drummer and producer Earl "Damu The Fudgemunk" Davis.

When Moore, a Washington, D.C.-based rapper, launched his career in 2000, he convinced Shepp to play on a track, "Back Into The World Again," though it never was released. It took two decades to get Shepp back in the studio.

"He made me work for it," Moore said. "I would send him musical ideas, and he would just say, 'Oh, you're not ready yet.' It really didn't bother me. I looked at it as if I was just taking notes from one of the greats."

Shepp, though, hinted that he sees himself as something of a hip-hop forebearer. "I was working with words and poetry all the way back in the 1960s," he said, citing the landmark LPs *Three For A Quarter*, *One For A Dime* (1966) and *Attica Blues* (1972), as well as his collaborations with Amiri Baraka, James Baldwin and Public Enemy.

"Words have a direct way of communication; music is more nuanced," Shepp said. "You can interpret [an instrumental] any way that you want. With words added, it makes the songs' meanings more concrete and specific."

In 2016, when the NEA paid tribute to Shepp and other recipients of the Jazz Masters fellowship at the Kennedy Center in Washington, Moore and his mother attended the event. Several months later, Moore again approached Shepp about the prospect of collaborating. After hearing some of his then-recent work, Shepp finally agreed. And in 2019, Moore and Davis corralled a crew of five additional musicians for the sessions.

By then, the MC had gained new insight into

collaborating with jazz-inclined musicians. "It's one thing to rap over beats and it's another thing to blend it with a certain type of melody that a jazz artist would play," he said. "It's about learning to breathe and using my voice like a saxophone. It felt like I was trading solos with Archie."

Among *Ocean Bridges'* highlights is "Learning To Breathe," a percolating joint where Moore combines battle-rhymes with themes about living while black in America.

For the sessions, Davis said that the band would warm up and start grooving while the tape rolled. Shepp would be in another room, and once the music had locked into a vamp, he'd enter the studio and find his way into the music.

Lyrics came after Moore listened to the recorded sessions: "I took it home and started breaking things apart. I had to think about where I fit inside the music. The instruments sort of told the story before my voice did."

In between fleshed-out tracks, such as the searing "Searching Souls," are seven interstitial pieces, each titled "Professor Shepp's Agenda," on which the saxophonist waxes about topics like the loss of oral histories in the black diaspora and the value of education.

"The musicians sounded like they were trying to break some new ground, especially with the rapping," Shepp said. "I was impressed by their enthusiasm and the novelty of their invention, particularly the spoken word. Poetry today is frequently bound up with the music. So, the message is not always so clear."

Moore saw the project as an endeavor that ultimately boosted his skills. "The things I've learned the most from working with Archie is that you never stop learning, and that you should never stop experimenting. I discovered new sounds just exploring my vocal range because the music called for it. I've learned how to dig deeper."

—John Murph



# Collaboration Fuels Hirahara

**VISITING HIS NATIVE SAN FRANCISCO IN** mid-March to play some dates and see his mother, Art Hirahara suddenly found himself under a shelter-in-place order while the coronavirus raged through California. By the time the pianist was able to ensure his 84-year-old mother's safety and return to New York, he was out of work.

"Everything is basically at a standstill," Hirahara said from his Brooklyn home in March. The pandemic caused Hirahara to miss shows as an accompanist for singer Stacey Kent, but he still found a way to work with her: On May 25, Kent posted a video of a gorgeous duo rendition of Stevie Nicks' "Landslide," featuring her vocals and Hirahara's electric piano—each recorded separately in their respective homes.

"Playing with people is the most important thing to me, and *not* playing with people is torture," Hirahara said.

Look no further than *Balance Point*—Hirahara's fifth leader date on Posi-Tone—for evidence of how collaboration fuels his music. The lustrous post-bop program matches him with two longtime colleagues, bassist Joe Martin and drummer Rudy Royston, as well as a new acquaintance: tenor saxophonist Melissa Aldana.

"I was just hanging out at Smalls one night when I heard her," he said. "I thought, 'Wow. This musician is fully formed, and worldly, and has a deep perspective on music and on life.' I knew I wanted to work with Melissa."

He suspected, correctly, that they would quickly establish a rapport. "For someone I had never had the chance to play with before, it felt very natural," Aldana said. "His compositions are very beautiful, and they make sense. I really love his comping: To be able to make the whole band and the soloists feel and sound better, it's not something you can practice, but it's a big part of maturity as a musician."

Along with its original compositions and Duke Ellington's "Prelude To A Kiss," the album includes two free improvis, "A Fine Line Between" and "Fulcrum," by the trio (minus Aldana).

"Those [improvised tracks] are included to show our conversational interaction and sensitivity," Hirahara said. "How can we respond and react to one another in an eloquent, spontaneous way?"

Hirahara began playing piano at 4 and later studied electronic music at Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Ohio. There, he took an interest in jazz, convincing Cleveland pianist Neal Creque, who taught at Oberlin, to take him on as a student.

In 2003, Hirahara moved to New York, where he became an active member of the jazz scene.

"The immediacy and vibration of live performance is at the heart of the improvised music that I love," Hirahara wrote in a June 23 email. "Until it's possible to play live, my peers and I have to find different ways to sustain our incomes.

For me, this includes remote recording, remote teaching, or writing music for film and video. I know of many musicians who have taken side jobs [because] performance is their main source of income. I've been trying to develop other music-related work, so I haven't yet had to take that path . . . The lockdown has been a time for introspection and new kinds of creativity, but I live for the day when I can again make live music with my peers."

—Michael J. West

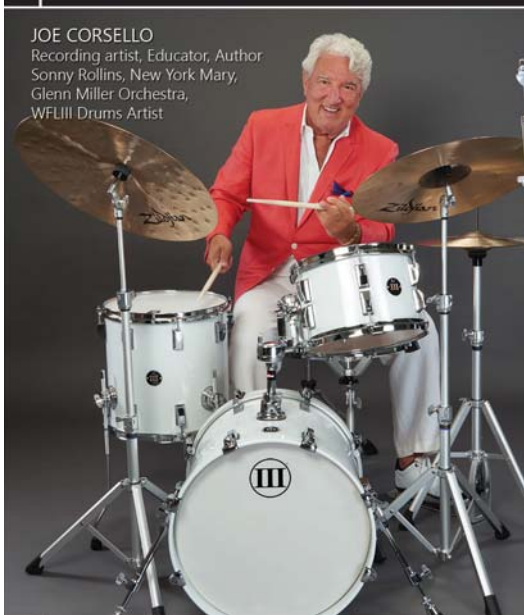


Art Hirahara's new album, *Balance Point*, includes original compositions and one Duke Ellington tune.

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## European Scene / BY PETER MARGASAK

# Gentle Sonic Interactions

Last winter, at the Brand Festival in the quaint Belgian city of Mechelen, guitarist and improviser Ruben Machtelinckx and three close collaborators performed in near darkness, conjuring a gauzy lattice of sound imbued by fragile, haunting melodies. Some of the all-acoustic pieces—played by Machtelinckx, fellow guitarist Bert Cools, reedist Joachim Badenhorst and percussionist Toma Gouband—were composed by the leader; others were improvised on the spot. In both cases, the quartet summoned an elusive world of sound that drew upon the ineluctable unpredictability of nature.

The music was a long way from what Machtelinckx, now 34, was making just six or seven years ago, when he was forging a beautifully pastoral strain of modern jazz, often with the same collaborators.

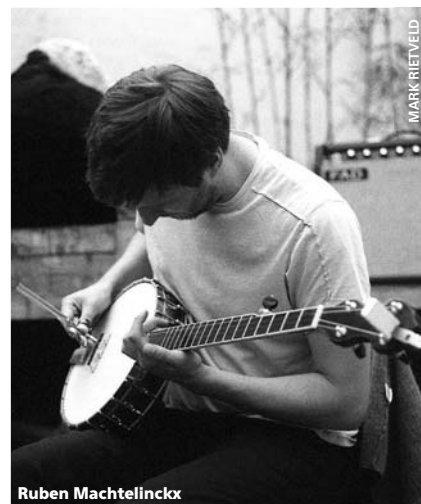
"It wouldn't feel fresh to play the same things I did eight years ago," he said. "In the general music landscape, it maybe feels a bit dated for me, what I was doing."

Indeed, what he's doing now has a certain out-of-time quality. As heard on the same quartet's 2012 debut, *Porous Structures* (Aspen Editions), the music is both *sui generis* and warmly familiar to listeners with the patience to notice the small rustling sounds and gentle sonic interactions that fill everyday life.

"We're trying to achieve a state of being. It doesn't have to go anywhere or have a direction," Machtelinckx said. "Someone told me that the music felt accidental in a way, and I took it as a compliment, because that's kind of what we want to achieve."

Machtelinckx, who grew up in the tiny village of Rozebeke, picked up the guitar when he was 15, inspired by rock music. But by the time he enrolled at Royal Conservatory Antwerp, he'd immersed himself in jazz and found several important collaborators who continue working with him more than a decade later: reedist Thomas Jillings and bassist Nathan Wouters. After finishing his studies in 2010, Machtelinckx often traveled to Copenhagen, where he took lessons with guitarist Jakob Bro, and met and began to play with Badenhorst and the Icelandic guitarist Hilmar Jensson. He formed a quartet with the latter two and Wouters, releasing two albums of ruminative post-bop balladry with a distinctly Scandinavian tint.

Over time, however, Machtelinckx began exploring music less reliant on harmonic rules and conventional structures, a shift that aligned with his forming Aspen Editions in 2017 alongside euphonium player Niels Van Heertum and writer Sanne Huysmans. The imprint's first release, *Mono No Aware*,



Ruben Machtelinckx

featured Linus, the guitarist's project with reedist Jillings, which regularly had worked with a variety of collaborators, including Hardanger fiddle master Nils Økland. In the years since, the label has documented his growth, whether through Poor Isa, Machtelinckx's experimental banjo duo with Frederik Leroux, or Veder, a moody quartet with Van Heertum, Badenhorst and trumpeter Eivind Lønning that still retains vestiges of a post-ECM jazz aesthetic.

Yet, the music on *Porous Structures* seems like the most relevant exposition on his current interests. After experiencing Gouband's playing—where he rubs and strikes stones together, using his kit mostly as a resonator and opting for tree branches rather than sticks or brushes—Machtelinckx said, "The idea of the pitch of the stones and the harmonics of the guitar formed a really nice blend, and I imagined a second acoustic guitar—the sound came together in my head really quickly. Joachim has the freest role."

A few years ago, the guitarist moved back to the countryside, settling in Roborst, a village located about an hour from Brussels. "There are less things happening, less distractions," he said.

The quietude and purity of that environment has worked its way into the music—as well as the label, which has released work by like-minded artists, including multi-instrumentalist Shahzad Ismaily and the Finnish early-music singer Aino Peltomaa.

"Running the label is more difficult than I thought it would be, even releasing small editions of 200 copies," Machtelinckx said. "But I still love it and I love graphic arts, and it's a great way to work with artists and give them the opportunity of the format of the album to make something."

DB



# Drummer Jimmy Cobb Dies at 91

**DRUMMER JIMMY COBB—FAMOUS FOR A** discography that includes appearances on numerous Miles Davis albums—died in his Manhattan home May 25 at age 91 from lung cancer. He was the last surviving musician from the ensemble that recorded Davis' iconic 1959 album *Kind Of Blue*, which included contributions from alto saxophonist Cannonball Adderley, tenor saxophonist John Coltrane, pianist Wynton Kelly, pianist Bill Evans and bassist Paul Chambers.

Cobb was a member of Davis' band between 1957 and 1963, and appeared on several of the trumpeter's albums, including, among others, *Porgy And Bess* (1959), *Sketches Of Spain* (1960), *Miles Davis In Person: Friday Night At The Blackhawk* (1961) and *Miles Davis At Carnegie Hall* (1962). After his stint with Davis, Cobb worked in Kelly's namesake trio, which also included Chambers.

A tasteful drummer known for his pulse and groove, and who eschewed showy grandstanding, Cobb was comfortable in the role of accompanist. It was a quality that made him a sought-after collaborator for decades.

During a career that began in the late 1940s, Cobb performed with the biggest names of the genre. A partial list of collaborators illustrates a wide span of music history: Billie Holiday, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Clark Terry, Sarah Vaughan, Wes Montgomery, Stan Getz, Dinah Washington, Ron Carter, Nancy Wilson, Wayne Shorter, Brad Mehldau, Roy Hargrove and Christian McBride.

A native of Washington, D.C., James Wilbur Cobb was born Jan. 20, 1929. When he began playing drums as a youngster, his key influences encompassed Max Roach and Kenny Clarke.

Cobb's leader projects included *Only For The Pure Of Heart* (1998), *Cobb's Corner* (2007) and *The Original Mob* (2014). In 2019, Smoke Sessions released *This I Dig Of You*, recorded two weeks after Cobb's 90th birthday with guitarist Peter Bernstein, pianist Harold Mabern and bassist John Webber.

In an article in the September 2019 issue of DownBeat, Cobb described how he devised the insistent ride-cymbal sound for which he became famous.

"I developed it from not having something else," he said. "Once, on a gig with Dizzy Gillespie, I was playing a coordination thing out of Jim Chapin's book with figures he'd heard guys play without the bass drum being in 4, as guys had done in the big bands, so that everyone could hear the beat. Dizzy probably was used to hearing his guys play that way, and he came over and put his ear down by the bass drum. I told him, 'Well, Birks, I don't have a big 4/4 like that.' I had to have the beat somewhere, so I concentrated on making it heard on the cymbal. I always liked the way Kenny Clarke played the cymbal—nice and

quiet, but definite and killing—and I got some stuff from him."

As a clinician, Cobb taught at numerous institutions, including the Stanford Jazz Workshop, The New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music, the University of Greensboro in North Carolina and the International Center for the Arts at San Francisco State University.

Cobb also was a 2009 NEA Jazz Masters fellowship recipient.



Jimmy Cobb (1929–2020)

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## TERRI LYNE CARRINGTON

'THE DETERMINATION  
TO BE FEARLESS' BY PHILLIP LUTZ  
PHOTO BY JIMMY  
& DENA KATZ

THE GLOBAL PROTESTS FOLLOWING THE MEMORIAL DAY KILLING OF GEORGE FLOYD IN MINNEAPOLIS MIGHT YET HERALD IMPORTANT SOCIAL CHANGE. BUT THE DEMONSTRATIONS ARE, IN A SENSE, ONLY THE LATEST REACTION TO AN UNCHANGING PROBLEM: POLICE SLAYINGS OF BLACK PEOPLE, AMONG THEM ANOTHER MINNEAPOLIS-AREA RESIDENT, PHILANDO CASTILE.

Castile's killing, on July 6, 2016, sparked numerous protests—one of which arguably came in the form of lyrics by Terri Lyne Carrington, who was motivated to write "Bells (Ring Loudly)," a resounding indictment of police brutality that echoes throughout her latest album, *Waiting Game* (Motéma).

"This is 'Bells' all over again," Carrington lamented in an early-June conversation via Zoom from her home in Woburn, Massachusetts, where she was holed up because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Like many tunes on *Waiting Game*, "Bells" is a multilayered affair that, in its complexity, mirrors this moment of multiple crises. On one level, it involves synchronizing Carrington's sung lyrics ("You took my love away, from me/ I want to know, how did it feel to watch him tremble and bleed?") with actor Malcolm-Jamal Warner's spoken words ("Bells, sirens swell, morphing into church bells/ Signaling another unjustifiable death").

On another level, the track involves integrating the input of instrumentalists, each of whom has a rich musical palette. Crucially, their contributions are spare and offered with humility, filling the available spaces with small sonic touches—a texture here, a color there—rather than thick brushstrokes that might obscure the message.

Ultimately, the message is conveyed with great clarity. And that, Carrington said, owes in no small measure to the matching of messenger and moment: Her band, Social Science, is a dis-

parate sextet united by an inclusive ethos, reflecting the collective mindset of the diverse crowds protesting in the streets around the world.

"Now that we see the movement and the makeup of it," she said, "I think the band is representative of the times and where we're at."

Formed as a means of marrying art and activism after the 2016 presidential election, Social Science—Aaron Parks, 36 (piano and keyboards), Matthew Stevens, 38 (guitar), Morgan Guerin, 21 (saxophone and bass), Debo Ray, 29 (vocals) and Kassa Overall, 38 (turntables and vocals)—has generated widespread acclaim.

In the 2020 DownBeat Critics Poll, Social Science topped the Jazz Group category, and *Waiting Game*, its debut recording, was voted Jazz Album of the Year. Carrington won the Jazz Artist of the Year category in the poll, becoming the first female instrumentalist to do so.

The project marks a high point in her career, which includes time spent as a wunderkind with the late trumpeter Clark Terry, as a 20-something member of bands led by Wayne Shorter and Herbie Hancock, and as a stalwart of TV and recording studios, wielding her sticks as a first-call drummer—one of the few women in that coveted position.

A lingering sense of urgency regarding the disparity became a call to action, inspiring Carrington, 54, to broaden her roles as an educator, advocate and producer. "I'm concerned with making up for lost time," she said. "How many years I went along with playing drums. I just lived it without doing all that I could. I allowed

people to look at me as an exception, and that's not good."

These days, she's certainly doing a lot of good—not least in her work as founder and director of the Berklee College of Music's Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice. Given the demands of that role, her recent accolades are particularly salient.

"Without that kind of encouragement and acknowledgment, it's difficult and sometimes just not fun to keep going down a harder path than your counterparts," she said. "I think that's been a problem for a lot of artists, of musicians—especially women."

Carrington has become a singular figure among jazz musicians in the movement for gender parity, a status boosted by her Concord albums *The Mosaic Project* (2011) and *The Mosaic Project: Love And Soul* (2015). Both feature a multitude of female singers, and the 2011 release earned Carrington the first of her three Grammy awards. But the drummer does not see the gender fight as an isolated one.

"It's like any other ongoing justice struggle," she said.

Her 2013 release, *Money Jungle: Provocative In Blue* (Concord), which won the Grammy for Best Jazz Instrumental Album (she was the first woman to win in that category), emerged as a critique of capitalism within a tribute to Duke Ellington. It was salted with samples of skeptical voices, from Martin Luther King Jr. to Barack Obama.

That technique finds full expression on





Terri Lyne Carrington, seen here in New York at Power Station at BerkleeNYC, is the first female instrumentalist to top the Jazz Artist category in the DownBeat Critics Poll.





Carrington's band Social Science (clockwise from upper left): Aaron Parks, Debo Ray, Morgan Guerin, Carrington, Kassa Overall and Matthew Stevens (center)

*Waiting Game*, a two-disc masterwork produced by Carrington and released in November. On the first disc, the band presents 11 finely wrought songs, featuring the extended use of voices infused with political content. The second disc offers a 42-minute free-form improvisation. Taken as a whole, the work defines musical democracy.

"Trapped In The American Dream," which opens Disc 1, plays as a mildly hallucinatory trip inside the prison-industrial complex. Like the original version—Parks, who wrote the music, introduced the piece as an instrumental with trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire's band—the new one conjures a hypnotic spell driven by a repetitive piano figure laid over an obliquely rendered rhythm in 5/4.

It was one of the first tunes Parks brought to the attention of Carrington. "I thought it might fit the vibe of what we were trying to make," he recalled. "Terri said, 'Let's try that.' From there we started the collaborative process of finding something new inside of it."

Carrington avoided listening to the original version: "I didn't want to know what it sounded like, and I found my own production style with

it." After several takes and considerable editing, the piece took shape. "Once it got to a place that felt right sonically, I asked Aaron if it was OK to add Kassa."

Overall—who invited activist Angela Davis to contribute to his recent leader album, *I Think I'm Good* (Brownswood)—now shares co-writing credit with Parks for "Trapped In The American Dream."

Throughout *Waiting Game*, Overall's judiciously deployed distortions, as well as his rap lyrics, are critical to the album's cohesion. Getting "inside the music," he said, meant finding the right cadence for his words over the odd meter of "Trapped In The American Dream." Drawing on his percussion experience—he spent six years as drummer for the late pianist Geri Allen—he negotiates even the knottiest passage, superimposing rapid-fire triplets over the groups of 5.

Buoyed by Guerin's contributions—a stunning effusion on tenor saxophone—Overall's lyrics create a moment of fury that reflects the music's escalating outrage: "Pay attention how they in the kitchen/ Superstition for my inner vision/ Intuition, I don't wanna listen/ But they got me fishin' for a pot to piss in."

Providing contrast to Disc 1's opener is its closer, the title track. "Waiting Game" was adapted from a piano work by Antoni Vaquer—but it eschews drums or any percussion, its tension conveyed by Ray's anguished interpretation of Carrington's words.

"It's so easy for that song to just be pretty, but it's not about being pretty," Ray said.

The words, joined to a set of portentous harmonies, do not paint a pretty picture. Written in the days after the 2016 election, they close the tune with a rhetorical flourish mirroring the frustration of many voters at the time: "How long can freedom wait before we hear it ring?/ The waiting game is/ No more."

The qualities of ringing resonate in Carrington's universe. Case in point: "Bells," on which Ray also interprets Carrington's lyrics. With a YouTube video of the Castile horror on her mind, Carrington heard in Parks' ringing harmonies a mournful song.

"It immediately felt like church bells at a funeral," she said, adding that she was haunted by the thought of the people left behind after the shooting. "That was the imagery that came to mind when I wrote that piece."

"Bells," like most of the tunes on the album, took a long time to evolve from inspiration to realization. Only after Carrington became intimate with the demo of Parks' instrumental did she take it to the studio and start adding percussive and electronic elements, finally affixing lyrics and bringing Ray into the picture.

At the same time, she was considering candidates to deliver a spoken-word text she had written. But she had a change of heart, instead recruiting Warner, who had appeared on her 2002 album, *Jazz Is A Spirit*, to contribute commentary, and in the process she ditched her text in favor of his.

The use of spoken word and voice samples reaches its apex on "No Justice (For Political Prisoners)." The sextet seethes under layers of spoken-word passages from Meshell Ndegeocello and Mumia Abu-Jamal, as well as voice samples from Davis, Assata Shakur, Laura Whitehorn, Leonard Peltier and Marilyn Buck.

Carrington said that some voices proved difficult to obtain, like that of Abu-Jamal, who is being held in a state prison in Pennsylvania. As an act of resistance, he asked her not to pay the \$200 that prison radio was charging to use his voice. So she transcribed the contents, available on YouTube, and sent them to Abu-Jamal, who read his own words back in a phone call she recorded. At his request, her recording retains a background announcement heard over the prison loudspeaker.

Complications of a more musical nature affected "Pray The Gay Away." Hip-hop artist and Berklee educator Brian "Raydar" Ellis composed lyrics to be rapped and sung for the piece. Some of his words remain. But a reordering of



the musical parts caused Carrington to take the song in a different direction: “Once I rewrote the music, I thought, ‘What about a strong trumpet here?’” That is where Nicholas Payton, an iron-willed artist in his own right, came in.

Originally, Payton laid down the melody and an improvisation; his improvisation is all that remains. “In the end, the texture of the trumpet playing the melody wasn’t working for me,” Carrington explained. “As a producer, you have to figure out where that point is, where your vision meets the artistic nature and offering of the person in the studio with you. I push as far as I can for my vision, and I listen and accept their offering. I try to figure out a way that it all meets together so that it’s satisfactory to everybody.”

## **‘I’M TRYING TO COME OUT OF THAT TRAUMATIC HEADSPACE AND GET BACK TO SELF-CARE AND MUSIC.’**

Amid all the heavy issues surrounding the project, Carrington found some relief by interpreting Joni Mitchell’s “Love” (from the singer-songwriter’s 1982 album, *Wild Things Run Fast*): “I felt like the way this record was shaping up, [Mitchell’s song] was related thematically, because if we try more of that [love], some of these other issues will work themselves out. The point of that song being there is to offer an antidote.”

She asked Stevens, who, like Mitchell, is a native Canadian, to write an arrangement. “Being a collaborative process, I had some ideas,” the guitarist said. “Rather than have a specific mood imbue the music, the music imbues a specific mood that can change depending on the day or time.”

In deference to Mitchell’s precedent, the mood is subdued, with Parks’ Rhodes piano a floating presence atop a colloquy between Ray’s sung vocals and Overall’s spoken-word performance.

As he wrote, Overall said he attempted to tailor his words to those of Mitchell, who granted permission for the band to alter the piece. Carrington steered him from a theme of romantic love toward one of divine love, which comports with the biblical allusions in Mitchell’s lyrics. Ultimately, Overall drew heavily on *The Greatest Salesman in the World*, Og Mandino’s 1968 book based on Christian philosophy. Overall’s final line, “I will greet this day with

love in my heart,” is lifted almost verbatim from the book.

Though lyrics fill Disc 1—only “Over And Sons,” by Stevens, is an instrumental (save for wordless embellishments courtesy of Ray)—they are absent from the long improvised piece on Disc 2, which, after the session, was divided into four tracks, each titled “Dreams And Desperate Measures.” The improvisation was conceived as a kind of “B-side,” Carrington said, recalling that, to facilitate the creative flow, the studio lights were turned off before the musicians played.

“I was determined to do this in one take,” she said. “We were committed to whatever happens.”

The result was a long and winding journey with enough elasticity to complement the click-

would play out, even as they sought to embrace its possibilities. “We’re not trying to play in time with each other,” Carrington said. “We’re responding to what’s being heard.”

And what did Carrington actually experience in the webcast improv? In a short debriefing immediately after the performance, she told Eugene Uman, the Vermont Jazz Center director, that she “felt like we were walking on unstable ground.”

A few hours later, however, she was focusing on a positive side to the improvisation, which followed videos of tunes from *Waiting Game* pre-recorded at the musicians’ homes and compiled in a flurry of back-and-forth communication in the run-up to the webcast.

Asked in a post-performance email correspondence whether she felt any special emotion knowing that the band had been compelled by circumstance to execute the material in this way, Carrington answered in the affirmative.

The reason? “We would never have played with latency in the past, in separate locations,” she wrote. “It spoke to the desire to come together musically and offer something, no matter how humble. It’s the determination to be fearless. Speaks to how we are all feeling now as well.”

Carrington said that, no matter how unsettling the pandemic and the protests, she was duty-bound to forge ahead creatively. In addition to developing new music for Social Science, she is programming shows at Detroit’s Carr Center, where she is artistic director. Come September, she ventured, the shows will go on—albeit with smaller crowds and social-distancing measures for both the spectators and the musicians.

“I’m trying to come out of that traumatic headspace and get back to self-care and music,” she said.

At Berklee, administrators are planning to have both online and on-site classes in the fall. Carrington expressed excitement about the faculty addition of pianist Kris Davis, an acclaimed composer and improviser, who will serve as associate program director of creative development for the Berklee Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice.

Meanwhile, Carrington is keeping Allen’s legacy alive—developing a Geri Allen reading room at Berklee and playing the pianist’s music, which will be part of a residency she has scheduled at San Francisco’s SFJAZZ Center in 2021. Carrington has written about Allen’s music in the journal *Jazz and Culture*, and is including the pianist’s work in a forthcoming book devoted to female composers. All these projects reinforce her efforts to establish equity for women in jazz—and, by extension, for people of color in the world at large.

“We will continue,” she wrote in a June statement issued through the Berklee institute, “to educate with gender justice and racial justice as guiding principles.”

DB

Jimmy Heath, who was a 2003 NEA Jazz Masters fellowship recipient, is now a member of the DownBeat Hall of Fame.

## KEEPER OF THE CONTINUUM

JIMMY HEATH OUTLIVED MOST OF HIS TOWERING CONTEMPORARIES DURING A CAREER THAT SAW THE SPIRITED SAXOPHONIST SERVE AS A BIG-BAND SPECIALIST, A PROLIFIC COMPOSER, AN ASTUTE ARRANGER AND AN AVID TEACHER WHO CHAMPIONED YOUNG MUSICIANS.

Heath, who died Jan. 19 at the age of 93, now enters the DownBeat Hall of Fame, preceded by many titans with whom he shared the bandstand, including John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Benny Golson and Freddie Hubbard.

In a 2014 interview with DownBeat, Heath embraced the word “continuum” as the operative word of his artistic life. In the liner notes of his latest album at the time, *Togetherness*, a big-band affair recorded at the Blue Note in New York, he used the descriptor twice—once in tribute to his mentor Dizzy Gillespie and former colleagues Betty Carter and Art Blakey, and again in reference to the young talent he assembled as his touring team. “The continuum is still here,” Heath said while hanging out at his Corona, Queens,

office. “I’m one of the survivors, along with four or five of the others. Everyone is leaving. But we’re lucky to keep the continuum going.”

Heath kept more than 3,000 digital photos that traced his career on a nearby computer. He was visibly elated as he enlarged a late-’40s shot depicting him with Gillespie, followed by another from 1949 with Diz, Coltrane and vibraphonist Milt Jackson in the trumpeter’s big band. And then one from a 1979 concert in Havana, where he shared the stage with saxophonists Stan Getz and Dexter Gordon. He also viewed a photo from the ’40s when he and his band members, including Coltrane, were playing at the O.V. Cotter Auditorium in Philadelphia (admission fee: 75 cents). Plus, there were recent shots of two saxophonist/educators he had mentored: Antonio

Hart (one of his former students) and Sharel Cassity (a member of his big band).

At the time of that interview, Heath was prepping for an album with vocalist Roberta Gambarini, 2015’s *Connecting Spirits*, on which she sings the Jimmy Heath songbook. “Bring in the voices—that’s what I’m concerned about now,” he said. “Roberta has written words to some of my songs ... and, man, can she sing them. And she scats great, too. These days I think it’s better to connect with the masses by words.”

For his finale, Heath decided, with the support of producers Carol Friedman and Brian Bacchus, to do something he had never done before: record an album of ballads.

Out July 17 on Verve, the gorgeous *Love Letter* features Heath on heartfelt tenor and soprano with accompaniment by bassist David Wong and drummer Lewis Nash. Also in the mix are pianist Kenny Barron on four tracks, vibraphonist Monte Croft on five numbers and guitarist Russell Malone on four tunes. Wynton Marsalis guests on the Kenny Dorham song “La Mesha,” and Heath spotlights vocalists Cécile McLorin Salvant and Gregory Porter, on one tune apiece—another testament to the leader’s commitment to mentoring younger musicians.

The program for *Love Letter* features four jazz classics (including a tenor-led ride through Gillespie’s “Con Alma”), three little-known originals with the leader’s arrangements (including “Ballad From Upper Neighbor’s Suite,” which he recorded on the 1995 album *You Or Me*) and a version of “Don’t Misunderstand” (first sung by O.C. Smith on the soundtrack to the 1972 film *Shaft’s Big Score!*) with Porter emotionally interpreting the lyrics alongside Heath’s dazzling tenor work.

The leader’s advancing age presented an obstacle for the recording sessions, which were done at Sear Sound in New York and 800 East Studios in Atlanta. Heath, who had relocated to Georgia with his wife due to his failing health, supervised some of the sessions remotely via Skype.

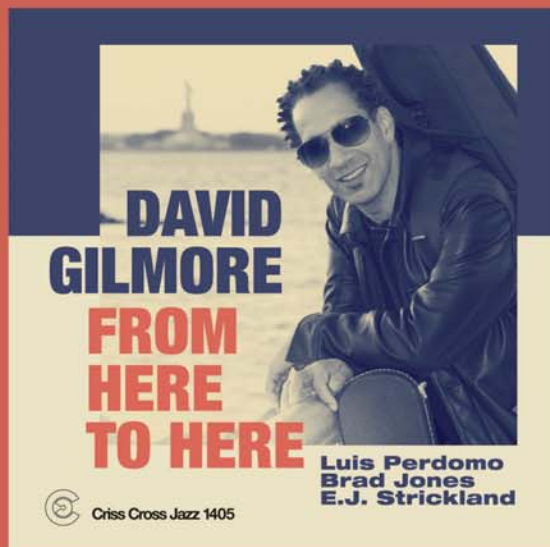
At Heath’s request, Malone flew in from a tour in India just in time to make the date. Even though Heath wasn’t physically alongside the players, Malone said, “His presence was so strongly there with us. We’d talk and he was always so positive. He was a master of this music, had a deep knowledge and advice, but never in a condescending way. He was also flexible. I wanted to change the voicings of a chord on one tune, and he was so happy with what I came up with.”

Malone said the entire ensemble was on the same performance wavelength: “We wanted to make sure we were representing Jimmy’s vision.

“What really knocked me out was Cécile’s soulful voice on the Billie Holiday/Mal Waldron tune ‘Left Alone,’” Malone added. “Jimmy’s decision to ask her to be on the album was perfect. He was also knocked out by her.” —Dan Ouellette



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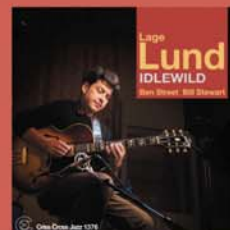
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# 'YOU HAVE TO IMPROVISE'

CARMEN McRAE'S CHEMISTRY WITH A LYRIC WAS NOT DISSIMILAR TO SODIUM PENTOTHAL'S EFFECTS ON SUBJECTS OF INTERROGATION: THE TRUTH, FOR BETTER OR WORSE, WOULD EMERGE.

Like her idol, Sarah Vaughan, McRae was an accomplished pianist; her consummate musicianship allowed her the control to take liberties—wild or subtle—in articulating the emotions implied in a lyric. Her phrasing was so spot-on that the arc of her interpretations was logical, poetic and inevitable.

"You have to improvise," McRae said in the June 1991 issue of *DownBeat*. "You have to have something of your own that has to do with that song." She could uncork vocal pyrotechnics when called for, but she deployed her technique to project an emotional directness and vulnerability more reminiscent of Billie Holiday—her first influence—than the on-the-sleeve virtuosity of Vaughan and Ella Fitzgerald.

That McRae valued textual fidelity and restraint over florid expression is evident in a remark she made in the Jan. 2, 1964, *DownBeat* Blindfold Test. "If it gets to the point where you have to add an extra consonant or vowel at the end of a word ... you don't even know what is

being said," she opined. "Embellishing lyrics is fine, if it's just an extra word here or there; but when you make a whole new sentence out of two words that the lyricist put there because that was what he wanted ... well, I can't see that, either."

Carmen Mercedes McRae was born April 8, 1920, in Harlem, to parents who were from Costa Rica and Jamaica. She studied classical piano assiduously from the age of 8. She listened avidly to Holiday's and Louis Armstrong's 1930s vocal sides, won an amateur contest at the Apollo Theater as a pianist-singer and worked as a chorus girl for a summer in Atlantic City. By 1944, she had wed drummer Kenny Clarke.

After brief stints with the Benny Carter, Count Basie and Mercer Ellington big bands in the early to mid-'40s, McRae moved to Chicago, where she refined her craft in clubs. After returning to Brooklyn, she was hired at Minton's in 1953 as an intermission singer-pianist. Later, she moved off the piano to become a "standup" singer. Her debut for the Bethlehem label earned



Carmen McRae (1920–'94) often paid tribute to Billie Holiday, one of her key influences.

McRae the *DownBeat* award for New Vocal Star of 1954. A year later, she signed with Decca, for which she made 12 albums that established her, in the eyes of fans, as co-equal to her aforementioned heroes in the singers' pantheon.

McRae—who died on Nov. 10, 1994—would go on to record dozens more albums. Some were classics, like *At The Great American Music Hall* (1977), *Fine And Mellow: Live At Birdland West* (1988), *Carmen Sings Monk* (1990) and *Sarah: Dedicated To You* (1991). Others were, frankly, forgettable. But all embodied trumpeter Kenny Dorham's paean in a *DownBeat* review of one of McRae's mid-'60s recordings: "I find in no voice what I find when I listen to her sound—personal. Listen, listen!"

—Ted Panken



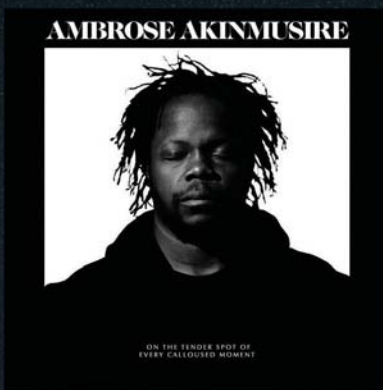
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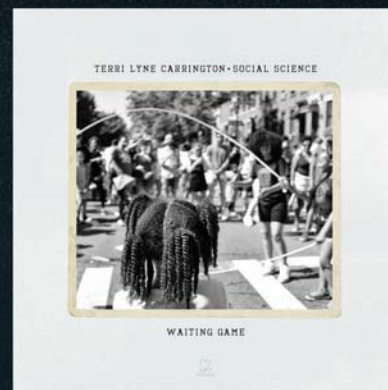
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# BELATED ACCOLADE

PIANIST TEDDY WILSON, WHOSE PARTNERSHIP WITH BILLIE HOLIDAY IN THE 1930S BEQUEATHED US ONE OF THE GREAT COLLECTIVE CANONS OF JAZZ HISTORY, ONCE TOLD ME A SURPRISING THING.

“Mildred Bailey,” he said, “was a much better singer than Billie.” Coming from a man who collaborated with both artists, it carried authority.

So, why is it that today the name Mildred Bailey is unknown to so many? Holiday was voted into the DownBeat Hall of Fame via the Readers Poll in 1961; Bailey gains admission this year via the Veterans Committee. The two singers share many links. Both were influenced by Bessie Smith. Each recorded more than 200 sides for Vocalion and Brunswick in the '30s and '40s. They shared the same accompanist and producer—Wilson and John Hammond—and worked with many of the greatest jazz musicians of their time. Each was venerated by other vocalists. Also, each died poor, in their mid-40s.

The two singers, however, faced drastically different demons and obstacles. For Holiday, it was drugs and racism; for Bailey, it was food and diabetes. She struggled with obesity, but she was gifted with a musician's ear for rhythmic

amendment and could produce a sunny, optimistic timbre that shivered with gentle, shimmering vibrato on high notes.

In July 1938, she explained to DownBeat how she developed her vocal style. “Sheet music was hard to get,” she said, “and a tune had to be [memorized] from a recording. I could never get the exact notes of a song, so I used to scheme out the best way to sing it smoothly. Sometimes I would think how a tune might have been improvised if the composer had changed certain parts ... and I would try singing it in my own way. It sort of stuck this way through the years, and before I could straighten myself out ... I found out they were calling this *swing* and liking it.”

Mildred Rinker was born in Tekoa, Washington, and grew up on the Coeur d'Alene Reservation in northwest Idaho. She married and divorced Ted Bailey, but kept his surname.

When she joined Paul Whiteman in 1929, she became one of the first women to sing with a big band. Bailey and her second husband, vibra-



Mildred Bailey (1907–'51)

DownBeat Archives,  
Bruno of Hollywood

phonist Red Norvo, became a popular celebrity couple, known affectionately as “Mr. and Mrs. Swing.” Between 1937 and '47, she had three DownBeat cover stories. Holiday had none.

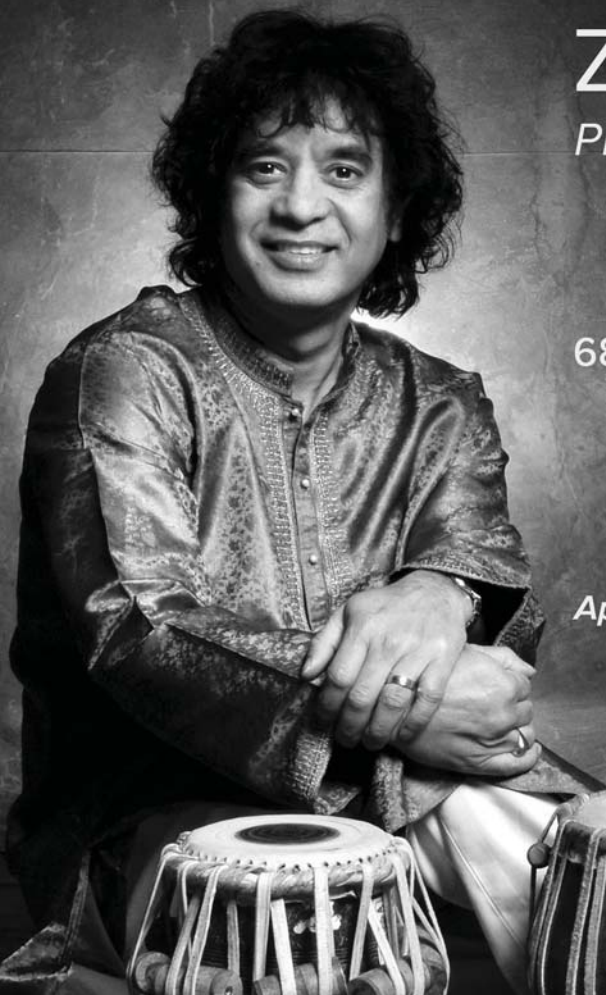
Bailey's hits included “Please Be Kind” and “Says My Heart” (both collaborations with Norvo), “Darn That Dream” (with Benny Goodman & His Orchestra), “Small Fry,” “Trust In Me,” “Never In A Million Years” and her signature song, “Rockin' Chair.”

Alas, the music industry has canonized Holiday yet largely forgotten Bailey. Holiday has eight recordings in the Grammy Hall of Fame; Bailey has one. Bailey belongs to the realm of history now, where recognition can be tardy but never too late.

—John McDonough

CONGRATULATIONS

Photo by Jim McGuire



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On his new album, Ambrose Akinmusire includes original compositions that pay tribute to Roscoe Mitchell and Roy Hargrove.

# AKINMUSIRE'S PURE PURSUIT OF SOUND

HEARING AMBROSE AKINMUSIRE PERFORM BRINGS TO MIND LOUIS ARMSTRONG'S DESCRIPTION OF FIRST HEARING CORNETIST BIX BEIDERBECKE: "THOSE PRETTY NOTES WENT RIGHT THROUGH ME."

A kinmusire's trumpet style sounds nothing like Beiderbecke's, but his music does share a penetrating quality with that of the early jazz icon. Confident, technically brilliant and often bravura, his playing exudes an exquisite tenderness.

"It's pure," said Justin Brown, the trumpeter's lifelong friend and longtime drummer. "I don't think he ever wants to settle. There's some knowledge that he still wants to gain, and he's so pure in that pursuit. That's what I get when I hear Ambrose."

It's an opportune time to hear that purity. Akinmusire's sixth album, *On The Tender Spot Of Every Calloused Moment* (Blue Note), finds him stepping back from the ambitious sonic tapestries of previous recordings. While the pro-

gram features two (low-key) guest vocalists, there are no string quartets, no auxiliary instruments: just the trumpeter's quartet—with Brown, pianist Sam Harris and bassist Harish Raghavan—in an unadorned setting, at once intimate and direct.

"This is my shortest album so far," Akinmusire said from his home in Oakland, California. He explained that downscaling the instrumentation and length of the program might have broadened his expressive palette: "On my other albums, I was dealing with extremes a lot, at either end of the spectrum; on this one, you can feel the middles of things a little bit more."

Asked about the arc of those developments, however, Akinmusire demurred. "I can sort of talk about it, but I feel like I'm grasping at something I'm not supposed to be grasping at," he

said. "About a year before he passed away, I took the opportunity to ask [vibraphonist] Bobby Hutcherson for advice. He said, 'Never, ever analyze what you've done. Then when you get to be my age, you'll have nothing but time, and then you'll look back and you'll say, Oh! That's what I was doing, that's what I was thinking.' That's something that really stuck with me."

Akinmusire, 38, recently has spent a lot of time thinking about the elders who have influenced him. The new album contains direct tributes to two of his heroes. "Mr. Roscoe (Consider The Simultaneous)," with its evocative, tumbling dissonance, is an homage to multi-instrumentalist Roscoe Mitchell, and "Roy" is a beautiful elegy for the late trumpeter Roy Hargrove (1969–2018).

After the album was completed, the jazz world was stunned by the loss of one of Akinmusire's greatest influences: trumpeter Wallace Roney, who died March 31 at age of 59 due to complications from COVID-19. Akinmusire indicated that, had the timing of his recording sessions been different, he might have included a tribute to Roney as well.

"I'm just thinking a lot about how we have to give thanks to people, man," he said. "I, as an African American, playing and participating in an American art form, have to make it so our masters can't be easily written off. That they get the credit they deserve. You pick up my album a hundred years from now and you'll go, 'Who the fuck is Roscoe Mitchell?' and you'll research. You're keeping people alive in doing that, too. I mean that in all the senses of it."

Akinmusire, who has been based in his hometown of Oakland since 2016, carefully cultivates the chops that led to his win in the Trumpet category of the DownBeat Critics Poll. The liner notes for his new album include an essay by saxophonist Archie Shepp, who relates an anecdote about Akinmusire continuing to play his instrument during breaks of a rehearsal session. "I wake up every morning at 4:45 and I practice," Akinmusire acknowledged. To help explain his studiousness, he told another story of a departed hero.

"Every day I think about this moment when I was with Donald Byrd," Akinmusire said. "I was playing at Cleopatra's Needle [in Manhattan]. I finished the gig, I was walking out, and I see Eddie Henderson and Donald Byrd sitting at a table. Mr. Byrd was like, 'Hey! Come over here! You sound good! You sound good! How old are you?' I said, 'Twenty.' He said, 'Oh, yeah, cool. Well, you sound good, but always remember, you're not shit compared to Booker Little.'"

"It sounds so harsh," Akinmusire continued with a laugh. "But the way he said it—it was like there was this pinpoint of light in it. And I think about that every day. That's why I wake my ass up at 4:45 every morning to practice."

—Michael J. West





Joey DeFrancesco, widely celebrated as an organist, also sings and plays trumpet and tenor saxophone.

# DEFRANCESCO EXPANDS SKILL SET

WITH TOURING ON HOLD DUE TO THE PANDEMIC, MULTI-INSTRUMENTALIST AND JAZZ ORGAN ICON JOEY DEFRANCESCO HAS BEEN STAYING PUT IN HIS ARIZONA HOME.

For him, this break from the road has been a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence: During his 33 years as a professional musician, DeFrancesco rarely has spent an extended period of time at home, instead living his life on the stage and in the recording studio. He's been anything but idle during the hiatus, however. "I'm well known for my organ playing, but I play other instruments, too," he said in a phone interview. "It's nice to dig into them a little more."

Saying that DeFrancesco is known for his organ playing is like saying that Porsche is known for its cars. DeFrancesco—who has topped the Organ category five times during the past six editions of the DownBeat Critics Poll—started his career as a musically precocious teenager. By age 20, he had toured with Miles Davis, recorded three albums for Columbia Records and placed fourth in the 1987 Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz International Piano Competition.

From these propitious beginnings he would go on to collaborate as a peer with celebrated artists across the musical spectrum—including organist Jimmy Smith, his mentor—and earn five Grammy nominations as a leader or co-leader.

But DeFrancesco doesn't just play the organ. He has earned his bona fides as a vocalist, and when he's seated on the organ bench, his trumpet often is within arm's reach. Furthermore, he doesn't just play the Hammond B-3 organ. He

plays several other keyboards, including signature JdF models from the Legend line of electric organs manufactured by Viscount.

Of late, too, DeFrancesco has taken up the tenor saxophone, an interest that arose while working on his 2019 release, *In The Key Of The Universe* (Mack Avenue). Spending time absorbing the incandescent reed lines of the album's guest artist, Pharoah Sanders, proved to be an inspiration. "I thought [the saxophone] was going to be something to have fun with, that I wouldn't take too seriously," he recalled. "But then I got really serious about it. And now I feel as strongly about it as any of the other instruments."

For DeFrancesco, wind instruments aren't that far removed from the organ. As a keyboardist, he tends to focus on lissome, single-line runs, the way many horn players do. And as an improviser, he ventures across a capacious harmonic expanse, something he learned from listening to John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins. What changes from one instrument to the next are the tonal elements with which he can experiment. "The ideas come from a certain place, but you can do different things with each instrument," he said.

Percussionist Sammy Figueroa, who first recorded with DeFrancesco almost 30 years ago, joined him in the studio for *In The Key Of The Universe*. Figueroa noted that during those sessions, the leader's ability to synthesize musical elements from different eras and contexts exem-

plified "the sheer, natural beauty of a true artist."

On the title track, DeFrancesco's playing evokes the thrill of Smith's dark, bluesy left-handed bass lines, grounding them in drummer Billy Hart's pressing shuffle and offsetting the sprawling contours of Sanders' improvisations. But on tunes like "A Path Through The Noise" and "Inner Being," DeFrancesco uses Figueroa's euphonic accentuation and saxophonist Troy Roberts' languid musings to stretch into more contemporary feels and fresh harmonic structures.

"Joey takes all styles and creates his own—the Joey DeFrancesco style," Figueroa observed. "When you have that artistry within your physiology, within your spirit, you're unstoppable. He is probably the greatest organ player alive."

Until touring resumes, DeFrancesco will be at home, practicing his instruments and teaching his self-designed jazz courses to students online.

He's looking forward to two releases coming out this fall: *For Jimmy, Wes And Oliver* (Mack Avenue), a Christian McBride Big Band tribute with DeFrancesco on organ; and a new trio album, featuring a second keyboard player, who will play organ, freeing up the bandleader to switch to tenor saxophone at will.

"I'm just being true to myself, always trying to go to the next level," DeFrancesco said. "It's something that you never stop working on."

—Suzanne Lorge



Steve Swallow's early heroes included acoustic bassist Percy Heath.

# SWALLOW'S BRILLIANT DYNAMICS

TO PARAPHRASE SHAKESPEARE, SOME ARE BORN GREAT, AND SOME ACHIEVE GREATNESS. BUT WHEN IT COMES TO PLAYING THE ELECTRIC BASS, STEVE SWALLOW, 79, HAD GREATNESS THRUST UPON HIM.

**"I** was close to 30 years old when the electric bass happened to me," Swallow said, as if describing an accident. "I was the distraught victim of the electric bass."

Swallow—who has topped the Electric Bass category in the DownBeat Critics Poll for three years running—never intended to take up the instrument. "The electric bass was 'Blue Suede Shoes,' as far as I was concerned," he explained over the phone from the home near Woodstock, New York, he shares with pianist Carla Bley.

By 1970, Swallow had established himself on upright bass through recordings with reedist Jimmy Giuffrè's trio, trumpeter Art Farmer's quartet and various groups lead by vibraphonist Gary Burton.

By then, he had performed regularly with Bley, whom he met at Bard College in 1959, and subsequently became an early advocate for her compositions. "He and I played a regular Sunday afternoon duo gig at the Phase 2, a coffeehouse on Bleecker Street," Bley wrote in a recent email. "In the ensuing years, he brought my music with him wherever he went; he induced Gary Burton to record *A Genuine Tong Funeral*," she continued, referring to the vibraphonist's 1968 LP, which consisted of Bley's compositions.

It was Burton who inadvertently led Swallow to the electric bass. "I was doing a music [trade show] with Gary Burton," Swallow recalled. "The two of us were playing at the Musser vibes

booth, and halfway through the first day, I was getting restless." At some point, he "furtively slipped" into the Gibson booth, and tried out a cherry-red EB-2 bass. "I asked the Gibson people if I could take it back to my hotel room that night, and I played it all night long." He was smitten. "The die had been cast. It was just a matter of time before I switched decisively."

That change came with challenges, though. Consider, for instance, his plucking technique. Swallow initially played with his fingers on the electric instrument, but then gradually switched to using a pick. "Unlike almost every other guitarist or bassist who plays with a pick, my predominant stroke is the upstroke," he explained. "This is a cause for a lot of laughter among the guitarists I've worked with over the years. But I think that's a direct result of my mimicking the action of playing the acoustic bass. There is no downstroke on the acoustic bass."

Swallow also wanted to avoid excessive volume. "There is a tendency to make the electric bass too loud, in my opinion," he said. "One of the assets of the electric instrument is the dynamic range. It's considerably broader than the acoustic instrument. The extreme soft is much softer, and the extreme loud is much louder, and it makes perfect sense to me to exploit that."

This attention to dynamics is a key factor in his sound on Bley's recent trio effort, *Life Goes On* (ECM), as well as guitarist John Scofield's


new album, *Swallow Tales* (ECM), on which the bass is, as Swallow put it, "kind of nestled into the sound of that music." He added, "We're looking to speak with a single voice," referring to the trio with Scofield and drummer Bill Stewart. "I'm grateful that the mix reflects that."

In addition to his lower volume, Swallow also tries to retain something of the thump of the acoustic bass in his sound. "I didn't want to leave everything behind when I switched from acoustic bass to electric bass," he said. "My heroes were Percy Heath and Wilbur Ware. I wanted that kind of envelope to my sound, and I wanted it whether I was playing the electric bass or the acoustic bass."

"I should add, though, that I love the legato possibilities in the electric bass. To be able to sustain a note in the high register so easily was a gift from heaven." That aspect of his playing is enhanced by his instrument, a Citron AE5 hollowbody bass with piezo pickups. Although it is a five-string bass, Swallow adds a high C string instead of the usual low B, a choice that extends the instrument's upper register.

This aspect of Swallow's playing style has been essential to his musical relationship with Bley. "He's able to play melodies in the upper register that sing out nicely, something that's difficult on the acoustic bass," she said. "When I'm writing bass, I'm writing for him. Not so much the instrument, but the player." —J.D. Considine





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68<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CRITICS POLL  
RISING STARS

COURTESY OF ARTIST



Sasha Berliner is this year's winner of the category Rising Star–Vibraphone.



CALEB BRYANT MILLER

Sarah Bernstein topped the category Rising Star–Violin.



ECKHART DERSCHMIDT

Lage Lund has won the category Rising Star–Guitar.

# SPARKS OF WONDER, DISCOVERY

IN 2019, FIVE ARTISTS RECEIVED PAGES OF MUSIC WITH AN EXPRESS DIRECTION: “LEARN THESE PARTS.” COMPRISING BASS LINES AND HORN PARTS, THE CHARTS WOULD BE TRANSFORMED INTO POTENT MUSIC IN THE STUDIO, FOLLOWING HEADY CONVERSATIONS AMONG LONDON-BASED SAXOPHONIST SHABAKA HUTCHINGS AND HIS BANDMATES IN SHABAKA AND THE ANCESTORS.

The band, one of three that Hutchings leads, topped the category Rising Star–Jazz Group in the DownBeat Critics Poll. “The struggle for me in the studio context is how to keep that excitement, that freshness,” Hutchings said. “What it comes down to is, we don’t labor recording.”

The leader—who plays tenor saxophone and clarinet on the band’s latest album, *We Are Sent Here By History* (Impulse)—also topped the poll category Rising Star–Jazz Artist. Among the contributors to the album are Mthunzi Mvubu (alto saxophone), Ariel Zamonsky (bass), Tumi Mogorosi (drums), Gontse Makhene (percussion) and Siyabonga Mthembu (vocals).

Hutchings and his Johannesburg counterparts sought to show up to the studio sessions prepared for mutual input and new discoveries. *We Are Sent Here By History* reflects two sessions, recorded a year apart then transformed by Hutchings into 11 distinct tracks during

post-production.

Ideas surrounding the music—topics ranging from intrinsically racist Eurocentric curricula to perceptions of masculinity and the silencing of violent oppression narratives—emerged during studio discussions, generating layered, conversational momentum during the recording process.

The session’s first take became the album’s opener, “They Who Must Die,” a meditative gesture that features resonances from Mthembu, a brilliant vocalist and storyteller. “After a few takes, it becomes that self-reflection of ‘What can I do better?’ Hutchings explained. “That takes away that conversational element.”

Since he was a child, Hutchings has been fascinated with freshness. He spends his days considering possibilities, as well as intention. When he first heard Americans using the word “dope,” both in casual and poignant conversation, he liked it.

“I started thinking, ‘What does it mean to be dope?’ he said. “And I kept the longing to work out what the word ‘dope’ means. To me, it’s having the attitude towards life—or towards whatever you’re putting into your art—that’s constantly fresh and as creative as you can make it.”

For the Ancestors, every gesture, every impulse to create something new, emerges within the context of a continuum. “The music is part of an overall vision of how I see the world,” Hutchings said.

Mogorosi considers *We Are Sent Here By History*, in part, to be an exploration “into the larger story that can’t be contained in one space.”

“Taking your metaphor of the sea—that is inherited—we inherit as some sort of narrative that we get to navigate, or surf,” Mogorosi said. “When the wave crashes, it’s speaking to the moment of the event. But the event is [predicated] on this notion of being sent by something that came before. The music itself is a fin-





Shabaka and The Ancestors, winner of the category Rising Star—Jazz Group, includes Ariel Zamonsky (left), Siyabonga Mthembu, Shabaka Hutchings, Tumi Mogorosi, Gontse Makhene and Mthunzi Mvubu.

ger pointing to the moon, but not the moon.”

Hutchings and his bandmates share a commitment to collaborative discovery with another poll winner, Sarah Bernstein, who topped the category Rising Star—Violin. In recent years, the New York-based violinist, vocalist and interdisciplinary artist has been reframing sound in her mind, exploring the limits of sonic perceptions, on her own and with her longtime duo partner, drummer Kid Millions (aka John Colpitts, who rose to prominence as a member of the experimental rock band Oneida).

The two met six years ago when Bernstein began work on “a very loud set” that featured electronics, “noise” and solo expression. Shortly after their initial encounter, Bernstein began melding her set’s sound with Kid Millions’ approach, one she describes as “a very ecstatic drumming.”

“[My solo] expression grew alongside the duo’s growing,” said Bernstein, who won acclaim for 2019’s *Broken Fall* (577 Records), a duo album with Kid Millions. “I grew as an electronic artist [during the time] I was working with him.”

Despite aesthetic differences, Bernstein and Hutchings wield spontaneity that, moment to moment, has the power to move from rumination to confrontation in search of something honest. “Playing in this context of so much energy—spontaneous energy—is about getting to the root of something,” Bernstein noted. That intense focus during live performanc-

es changed something inside her, affecting how she now approaches every expressive setting. “To be always extremely immediate with energy is something I think about a lot,” she said.

Like Bernstein and Hutchings, two other poll winners—Lage Lund (Rising Star—Guitar) and Sasha Berliner (Rising Star—Vibraphone)—also embrace immediacy as part of their artistry. The opening track of Berliner’s 2019 release, *Azalea*, was nearly entirely improvised. Beginning as the spark of an idea for a harmonically open rumination, “Foreword” provides the listener with what Berliner considers “a homey-ness before [the album] takes off.” As an improviser, she leans as heavily on her own clear vision for where she wants to take the music as she does on her collaborators’ instincts about where it wants to go.

Berliner’s approach for *Azalea* incorporates sung and spoken lyrics with the addition of stark, wildly passionate recorded speeches and broadcast footage reflecting a range of topics, from the 2016 presidential election to the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements.

She crafted a hybrid of “electronic enhancements” and acoustic sound expansion for the album, citing Wayne Shorter, Esperanza Spalding and Ambrose Akinmusire as composers who have inspired her exploration of acoustic-electric instrumentation. “I was really intrigued by that sound and that aspect,” she said.

Unlike Berliner, whose new album is her leader debut, Lund has released more than half a dozen leader projects, yet he remains profoundly inspired by spontaneity and wonder.

“When I put a band together, that [discovery] is kind of what I’m looking for,” said Lund, whose working quartet includes pianist Sullivan Fortner, bassist Matt Brewer and drummer Tyshawn Sorey.

As Lund was preparing to record 2019’s *Terrible Animals* (Criss Cross Jazz), he learned that Brewer’s tour schedule prevented him from making the studio date. Lund adapted: “I thought, ‘Hmmm. Who else plays bass? Well, Larry’s pretty good,’” he said playfully, referring to iconic bassist Larry Grenadier.

The quartet entered the studio with no rehearsal session ahead of the hit. “I love that feeling of, ‘I’m not really sure if this is going to work out,’” Lund said. The former New York resident, who recently moved back to his native Norway, considers discomfort to be essential to freshness. “With Tyshawn and Sullivan, even though they’ve played that music for quite a while, I have no idea what they’re going to do,” he explained. “I can’t go on autopilot. But I know I’m going to like their choices.”

For all these poll winners, the impulse to create—and to seek discovery in creation—seems to be both a revered gift and a solemn responsibility.

—Stephanie Jones

# 68<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CRITICS POLL

# COMPLETE RESULTS

SHERVIN LAINEZ



Anat Cohen, winner of the Clarinet category



DAVID CROW



Rudresh Mahanthappa, winner of the Alto Saxophone category

COURTESY OF ARTIST



Wycliffe Gordon, winner of the Trombone category

## Hall Of Fame

<b>Jimmy Heath</b> .....	<b>121</b>
Anthony Braxton .....	115
Charles Lloyd .....	98
Kenny Barron .....	90
Pharoah Sanders .....	70
John McLaughlin .....	63
Paul Bley .....	59
Oliver Nelson.....	59
Jaki Byard .....	55
Shirley Horn .....	55
Roy Hargrove .....	54
Jack DeJohnette .....	49
Melba Liston .....	47
Bob Brookmeyer .....	44
Yusef Lateef .....	42

## VETERANS COMMITTEE VOTING

## Hall Of Fame

<b>Carmen McRae</b> .....	<b>78%</b>
<b>Mildred Bailey</b> .....	<b>66%</b>
(Note: Artists must receive at least 66% of the Veterans Committee votes to gain entry. Other artists who received more than 50% of the votes:)	
Mario Bauza.....	63%
Machito .....	53%
Les Paul .....	53%

## Jazz Artist

<b>Terri Lyne Carrington</b> .....	<b>102</b>
Kris Davis .....	91
Chick Corea .....	73
Fred Hersch.....	62
Christian McBride .....	60
Cécile McLorin Salvant.....	56
Charles Lloyd .....	52
Roscoe Mitchell .....	43
Nicole Mitchell.....	40
Kenny Barron .....	37
Mary Halvorson.....	34
Esperanza Spalding.....	34
Pat Metheny .....	33
Allison Miller .....	33
Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah	33

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Tomeka Reid Quartet, <i>Old New</i> (Cuneiform).....	37
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Bill Frisell & Thomas Morgan, <i>Epistrophy</i> (ECM) .....	34
Aaron Diehl, <i>The Vagabond</i> (Mack Avenue) .....	31
Lakecia Benjamin, <i>Pursuance: The Coltranes</i> (Ropeadope).....	30
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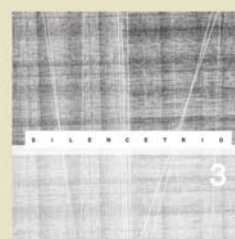
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Gregory Porter, winner of the Male Vocalist category



Cellist Tomeka Reid, winner of the Miscellaneous Instrument category



Zakir Hussain, winner of the Percussion category

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Diana Krall.....	36
Norma Winstone.....	36

## Male Vocalist

<b>Gregory Porter.....</b>	<b>265</b>
Kurt Elling.....	249
Theo Bleckmann.....	97
Tony Bennett.....	79
Bobby McFerrin.....	78
Giacomo Gates.....	60
José James.....	53
Andy Bey.....	48
Dwight Trible.....	43
Jamison Ross.....	37
Johnny O'Neal.....	33
Kenny Washington.....	33
Jacob Collier.....	31
Phil Minton.....	31

## Composer

<b>Maria Schneider.....</b>	<b>134</b>
Carla Bley.....	131
Kris Davis.....	68
Tyshawns Sorey.....	60
Kamasi Washington.....	55
Chick Corea.....	52
Jimmy Heath.....	52
Wadada Leo Smith.....	52
Pat Metheny.....	51
Darcy James Argue.....	48
Terence Blanchard.....	45
Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah.....	35
Anthony Braxton.....	32
Tim Berne.....	30
Bill Frisell.....	30
Guillermo Klein.....	30

## Arranger

<b>Maria Schneider.....</b>	<b>153</b>
Terri Lyne Carrington.....	98
Carla Bley.....	86
Darcy James Argue.....	74
John Clayton.....	47
Miguel Zenón.....	40
Guillermo Klein.....	39
Django Bates.....	38
John Beasley.....	38
Steven Bernstein.....	37
Robert Glasper.....	35
Billy Childs.....	32
Wynton Marsalis.....	32
Christian McBride.....	32
Gordon Goodwin.....	27

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Manfred Eicher, winner of the Producer category

Robert Cray, winner of the Blues Album category, for *That's What I Heard*

Anna Webber, winner of the Rising Star—Flute category

## Record Label

<b>ECM</b> .....	<b>211</b>
Blue Note .....	136
Pi Recordings .....	92
Mack Avenue .....	77
International Anthem .....	68
HighNote .....	51
Intakt .....	48
Sunnyside .....	47
Resonance .....	45
Clean Feed .....	41
ACT .....	36
Concord .....	36
Smoke Sessions Records .....	34
Impulse! .....	31
Mosaic .....	31
Posi-Tone .....	30
Motéma .....	28
Columbia Legacy .....	27
Ropeadope .....	26
Nonesuch .....	24

## Producer

<b>Manfred Eicher</b> .....	<b>210</b>
Terri Lyne Carrington .....	145
Zev Feldman .....	120
Don Was .....	118
Michael Cuscuna .....	99
Dave Douglas .....	79
Robert Glasper .....	65
Christian McBride .....	58
John Zorn .....	48
Flying Lotus .....	44
Larry Klein .....	37
Brian Bacchus .....	31
Al Pryor .....	31
Marc Free .....	28
John Beasley .....	26

## Blues Artist or Group

<b>Gary Clark Jr.</b> .....	<b>121</b>
Buddy Guy .....	80
Taj Mahal .....	61
James Blood Ulmer .....	58
Robert Cray .....	52
Shemekia Copeland .....	51
Fantastic Negrito .....	38
Joe Bonamassa .....	33
Billy Branch .....	32
Keb' Mo' .....	32
Otis Taylor .....	30
North Mississippi Allstars .....	29
Marcia Ball .....	28
Bobby Rush .....	28
Larkin Poe .....	25

## Blues Album

<b>Robert Cray, <i>That's What I Heard</i> (Nozzle/Thirty Tigers) ...</b>	<b>86</b>
Keb' Mo', <i>Oklahoma</i> (Concord) .....	68
Ronnie Earl & The Broadcasters, <i>Beyond The Blue Door</i> (Stony Plain) .....	65
Bobby Rush, <i>Sitting On Top Of The Blues</i> (Deep Rush) .....	56
Billy Branch & The Sons of Blues, <i>Roots &amp; Branches (The Songs Of Little Walter)</i> (Alligator) .....	53
North Mississippi Allstars, <i>Up And Rolling</i> (New West) .....	41
Lucky Peterson, <i>Just Warming Up!</i> (Jazz Village) .....	39
Allman Betts Band, <i>Down To The River</i> (BMG) .....	38
Samantha Fish, <i>Kill Or Be Kind</i> (Rounder) .....	36

Jimmy Johnson, <i>Every Day Of Your Life</i> (Delmark) .....	36
Black Pumas, <i>Black Pumas</i> (ATO) ..	31
Peter Frampton Band, <i>All Blues</i> (UME) .....	26
Coco Montoya, <i>Coming In Hot</i> (Alligator) .....	24
Dave Spector, <i>Blues From The Inside Out</i> (Delmark) .....	23
Robert Randolph & The Family Band, <i>Brighter Days</i> (Mascot Label Group/Provogue) .....	20

## Beyond Artist or Group

<b>Dr. John</b> .....	<b>79</b>
Rhiannon Giddens .....	67
Tedeschi Trucks Band .....	50
Angélique Kidjo .....	47
David Byrne .....	43
Erykah Badu .....	42
Lizzo .....	36
Richard Thompson .....	36
Billie Eilish .....	34
Bob Dylan .....	30
Jeff Beck .....	27
Robert Glasper Experiment .....	26
Brittany Howard .....	26
D'Angelo .....	25
Nick Cave .....	24
Kendrick Lamar .....	24

## Beyond Album

<b>Bill Frisell, <i>Harmony</i> (Blue Note) .....</b>	<b>104</b>
Rhiannon Giddens, <i>There Is No Other</i> (Nonesuch) .....	77
Santana, <i>Africa Speaks</i> (Concord) .....	63

George Benson, <i>Walking To New Orleans</i> (Provogue) .....	46
Angélique Kidjo, <i>Celia</i> (Verve) ..	45
Van Morrison, <i>Three Chords And The Truth</i> (Exile) .....	44
Damon Locks, <i>Where Future Unfolds</i> (International Anthem) ..	41
Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, <i>Ghosteen</i> (Ghosteen) .....	36
Go: Organic Orchestra & Brooklyn Raga Massive, <i>Ragmala: A Garland Of Ragas</i> (Meta) .....	36
Lana Del Rey, <i>Norman Fucking Rockwell!</i> (Polydor/Interscope) ..	33
Lizzo, <i>Cuz I Love You</i> (Atlantic) ..	33
Mavis Staples, <i>We Get By</i> (ANTI-) .....	31
Michael Kiwanuka, <i>Kiwanuka</i> (Polydor/Interscope) .....	30
Joshua Abrams & Natural Information Society, <i>Mandatory Reality</i> (Eremite) .....	27
Tinariwen, <i>Amadjar</i> (ANTI-) .....	27

## ★★ Rising Star ★★

### Rising Star Jazz Artist

<b>Shabaka Hutchings</b> .....	<b>106</b>
Tomeka Reid .....	105
Melissa Aldana .....	82
Gerald Clayton .....	59
Aaron Diehl .....	57
Joey Alexander .....	55
Lakecia Benjamin .....	53
Joel Ross .....	51
Jon Irabagon .....	47
Jason Palmer .....	43





DAVID LASKOWSKI

Jaimie Branch, winner of the Rising Star–Trumpet category



ELIZABETH LEITZEL

Lakecia Benjamin, winner of the Rising Star–Alto Saxophone category

### Rising Star Jazz Group

<b>Shabaka and The Ancestors.....</b>	<b>125</b>
Aaron Diehl Trio.....	83
Irreversible Entanglements.....	67
Gerald Clayton Trio.....	64
Steve Lehman Trio.....	64
The Comet Is Coming.....	56
Orrin Evans Trio.....	52
Ryan Keberle's Catharsis.....	48
Helen Sung Trio.....	46
Artemis.....	45

### Rising Star Big Band

<b>Ralph Peterson's Gen-Next Big Band.....</b>	<b>158</b>
Joel Harrison Large Ensemble.....	89
Ghost Train Orchestra.....	82
Chicago Jazz Philharmonic.....	70
Vince Giordano's Nighthawks.....	58
Webber/Morris Big Band.....	58
Remy Le Boeuf Jazz Orchestra.....	54
People's Liberation Big Band.....	38
Diane Moser's Composers Big Band.....	37
Tommy Igoe's Birdland Big Band.....	34
Brian Krock Big Heart Machine.....	34

### Rising Star Trumpet

<b>Jaimie Branch.....</b>	<b>157</b>
Bria Skonberg.....	131
Jason Palmer.....	97
Peter Evans.....	95
Nate Wooley.....	84
Keyon Harrold.....	81
Josh Evans.....	60
Etienne Charles.....	57
Corey Wilkes.....	52
Yazz Ahmed.....	47

### Rising Star Trombone

<b>Nick Finzer.....</b>	<b>172</b>
Samuel Blaser.....	128
Alan Ferber.....	97
Chris Crenshaw.....	85
Sarah Morrow.....	82
Nils Wogram.....	59
Corey King.....	55
Michael Dessen.....	54
JC Sanford.....	50
Ryan Porter.....	49

### Rising Star Soprano Sax

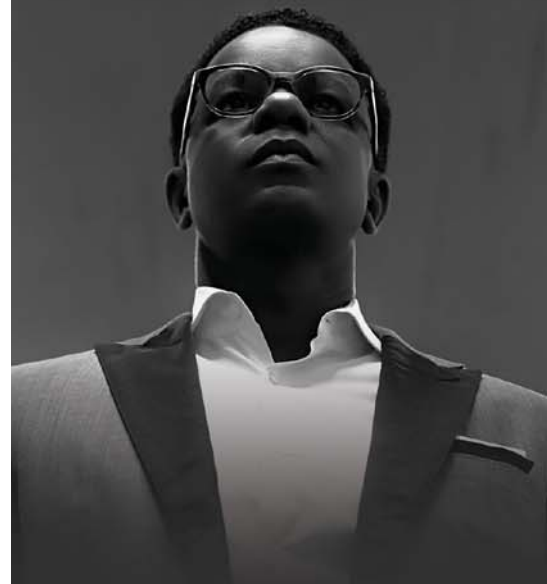
<b>Yuval Cohen.....</b>	<b>183</b>
Roxy Coss.....	178
Hailey Niswanger.....	25
Aurora Nealand.....	99
Jason Robinson.....	65
John Wojciechowski.....	54
Russ Nolan.....	48
Nathaniel Facey.....	43
Jasmine Lovell-Smith.....	43
Steven Lugerner.....	39

### Rising Star Alto Sax

<b>Lakecia Benjamin.....</b>	<b>195</b>
Greg Ward.....	86
Logan Richardson.....	61
Remy Le Boeuf.....	60
Tineke Postma.....	59
Sharel Cassity.....	56
Alexa Tarantino.....	46
Jessica Lurie.....	45
Andrew D'Angelo.....	38
Mike DiRubbo.....	38
Dave Rempis.....	38

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- Downbeat

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Mingus, he insisted, was Mingus music."  
- Jazz Times



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Makaya McCraven, winner of the Rising Star—Drums and Rising Star—Producer categories



Veronica Swift, winner of the Rising Star—Female Vocalist category



James Brandon Lewis, winner of the Rising Star—Tenor Saxophone category



Akiko Tsuruga, winner of the Rising Star—Organ category



Sullivan Fortner, winner of the Rising Star—Arranger category

## Rising Star Tenor Sax

### James Brandon Lewis ..... 135

Nubya Garcia .....	119
John Ellis .....	71
Mats Gustafsson .....	66
Troy Roberts .....	66
Ben Wendel .....	65
Camille Thurman .....	63
Abraham Burton .....	50
Bill McHenry .....	50
Josephine Davies .....	43

## Rising Star Baritone Sax

### Josh Sinton.....98

Charles Evans .....	87
Céline Bonacina .....	86
Jon Raskin .....	75
Mikko Innanen .....	73
Linda Fredriksson .....	70
Jason Marshall .....	65
Frank Basile .....	61
Karen Sharp .....	61
Timo Lassy .....	53

## Rising Star Clarinet

### Aurora Nealand.....114

Angel Bat Dawid .....	104
Chris Byars .....	68
Avram Fefer .....	59
Sam Sadigursky .....	54
Ted Hogarth .....	49
Lucas Pino .....	43
Jeremiah Cymerman .....	42
James Falzone .....	41
Jason Scott .....	40

## Rising Star Flute

### Anna Webber .....279

Magic Malik .....	90
Itai Kriss .....	82
Mayu Saeki .....	80
Ben Kono .....	61
Evan Francis .....	37
Gareth Lockrane .....	36
Tom Reese .....	31
Geni Skendo .....	30
Finn Peters .....	21

## Rising Star Piano

### Aaron Diehl.....116

Fabian Almazan .....	96
Emmet Cohen .....	68
Matt Mitchell .....	65
Christian Sands .....	60
Aaron Parks .....	55
Nik Bärtsch .....	50
Aaron Goldberg .....	44
Helen Sung .....	40
Carmen Staaf .....	36
Dan Tepfer .....	36

## Rising Star Keyboard

### Zaccai Curtis .....125

Lawrence Fields .....	97
Russ Lossing .....	89
Marco Benevento .....	88
Mamiko Watanabe .....	82
Henry Hey .....	66
Jacob Anderskov .....	55

Oscar Perez .....	50
Scott Kinsey .....	49
Joe Armon-Jones .....	48

## Rising Star Organ

### Akiko Tsuruga.....126

Greg Lewis .....	106
Alexander Hawkins .....	81
Gerard Gibbs .....	74
Ben Paterson .....	57
Erik Deutsch .....	52
Bobby Sparks .....	52
Atsuko Hashimoto .....	46
Joe Bagg .....	40
Brian Coogan .....	40

## Rising Star Guitar

### Lage Lund.....110

Camila Meza .....	87
Jonathan Kreisberg .....	77
Matthew Stevens .....	71
Ava Mendoza .....	69
Adam Rogers .....	69
Wendy Eisenberg .....	65
Hristo Vitchev .....	65
Yotam Silberstein .....	44
Pasquale Grasso .....	43

## Rising Star Bass

### Ben Street .....71

Matt Brewer .....	69
Hans Glawischnig .....	69
Mimi Jones .....	68
Junius Paul .....	61
Reuben Rogers .....	57
Joshua Abrams .....	54
Matt Penman .....	53
Kyle Eastwood .....	50
Lisa Mezzacappa .....	50

## Rising Star Electric Bass

### Tal Wilkenfeld .....127

Jeff Denson .....	109
Nate McBride .....	100
Lisa Dowling .....	69
Kaveh Rastegar .....	68
Casey Abrams .....	61
Michael Janisch .....	61
Chris Morrissey .....	38
Carlitos Del Puerto .....	31

## Rising Star Violin

### Sarah Bernstein.....130

Tomoko Omura .....	81
Macie Stewart .....	69
Jason Anick .....	66
Marcus Moore .....	65
Jesse Zubot .....	42
Nora Germain .....	39
Ola Kvernberg .....	37
Ben Powell .....	37
Majid Khaliq .....	34

## Rising Star Drums

### Makaya McCraven .....115

Tomas Fujiwara .....	82
Justin Faulkner .....	73
Obed Calvaire .....	60
Dafnis Prieto .....	60



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- Jazz 'N More (CH)



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Ben Street, winner of the Rising Star-Bass category

E.J. Strickland.....	52	Kat Edmonson.....	46
Ari Hoenig.....	49	Alicia Hall Moran.....	38
Justin Brown.....	46	Daymé Arocena.....	37
Otis Brown III.....	46		
Dan Weiss.....	46		

## Rising Star Percussion

<b>Chad Taylor.....</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>Leslie Odom Jr.....</b>	<b>94</b>
Harris Eisenstadt.....	98	Ben Williams.....	71
Daniel Sadownick.....	86	Casey Abrams.....	66
Richie Flores.....	82	Peter Cincotti.....	57
Rajna Swaminathan.....	74	Jeff Denson.....	54
Tupac Mantilla.....	51	JD Walter.....	54
Jon Wikan.....	50	Vincent Gardner.....	52
Mauricio Herrera.....	41	Dean Bowman.....	47
Kevin Diehl.....	37	Milton Suggs.....	47
Gumbi Ortiz.....	37	Jeremy Davenport.....	46

## Rising Star Vibraphone

<b>Sasha Berliner.....</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>JD Allen.....</b>	<b>75</b>
Lolly Allen.....	79	Allison Miller.....	73
Mike Dillon.....	76	Melissa Aldana.....	64
Corey Mwamba.....	55	Nik Bartsch.....	59
Jim Hart.....	50	Fabian Almazan.....	53
Tyler Blanton.....	43	Aaron Parks.....	53
Lewis Wright.....	39	Miho Hazama.....	52
Smith Dobson.....	36	Marquis Hill.....	52
Rolando Morales-Matos.....	32	Angel Bat Dawid.....	50
Mike Pinto.....	31	Makaya McCraven.....	47

## Rising Star Misc. Instrument

<b>Brandee Younger (harp).....</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>Sullivan Fortner.....</b>	<b>104</b>
Hank Roberts (cello).....	98	Makaya McCraven.....	103
Todd Marcus (bass clarinet).....	92	Allison Miller.....	103
Casey Benjamin (vocoder).....	69	Stefon Harris.....	83
Brian Landrus (bass clarinet).....	61	Miguel Zenón.....	77
Vincent Peirani (accordion).....	50	Miho Hazama.....	76
Fred Lonberg-Holm (cello).....	49	Lakecia Benjamin.....	75
Katherine Young (bassoon).....	48	Anna Webber.....	75
Okkyung Lee (cello).....	44	Helen Sung.....	65
David Virelles (celeste).....	42	Jacob Collier.....	58
Min Xiao-Fen (pipa).....	41		

## Rising Star Female Vocalist

<b>Veronica Swift.....</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>Makaya McCraven.....</b>	<b>98</b>
Sara Gazarek.....	83	Kris Davis.....	78
Camila Meza.....	77	Fabian Almazan.....	73
Angel Bat Dawid.....	69	Tyshawn Sorey.....	70
Kandace Springs.....	67	Liberty Ellman.....	64
Thana Alexa.....	57	Willie Jones III.....	57
Sinne Eeg.....	55	Taylor Ho Bynum.....	50
		Myra Melford.....	49
		JD Allen.....	48
		Aaron Parks.....	46

# 68<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CRITICS POLL

# THE CRITICS

*Below are the 154 critics who voted in DownBeat's 68th Annual International Critics Poll and some of the publications to which they have contributed. In the poll, critics distributed up to 10 points among up to three choices (but no more than 5 points per choice) in each of two groups of categories: Established Talent and Rising Stars. (Note: The asterisk [\*] denotes a Veterans Committee voter.)*

**\*Frank Alkyer:** DB

**Larry Appelbaum:** In The Muse, Let's Cool One, WPFW

**Mirian Arbalejo:** It Don't Mean A Thing, Cuepoint

**Bridget Arnwine:** Beets and Bebop Media LLC

**Glenn R. Astarita:** All About Jazz

**Mark R. Bacon:** Main Event

**Chris J. Bahnsen:** DB

**Michael Barris:** DB

**Chris Barton:** DB, Los Angeles Times

**Peter Bastian:** Jazzthetik

**Bill Beuttler:** DB, Boston Globe

**Edward Blanco:** All About Jazz, WDNA

**Ross Boissoneau:** Something Else Reviews, Local Spins

**Philip Booth:** JazzTimes, Jazziz, Relix, jazzlands.com

**\*Fred Bouchard:** DB, The Boston Musical Intelligencer

**\*Michael Bourne:** DB, WBGO-FM

**\*Herb Boyd:** DB, Amsterdam News, Newworld Review, Code M

**Shaun Brady:** JazzTimes, Jazziz, Philadelphia Inquirer

**Rainer Bratfisch:** Jazz Podium

**Jon Bream:** Minneapolis Star Tribune

**Marcela Breton:** Freelance

**Nelson Brill:** bostonconcertreviews.com

**Paweł Brodowski:** Jazz Forum

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

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

**Andrea Canter:** jazzpolice.com

**\*Dave Cantor:** DB

**Henry Carrigan:** DB, Living Blues, No Depression, Folk Alley

**James Catchpole:** Tokyo Jazz Site

**Brad Cohan:** DB, JazzTimes, Bandcamp Daily

**\*Aaron Cohen:** DB

**Thomas Conrad:** Stereophile, JazzTimes, New York City Jazz Record

**\*J.D. Considine:** DB, JazzTimes

**Ayana Contreras:** DB, WBEZ

**Anthony Dean-Harris:** DB, KRTU San Antonio

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

**Coen de Jonge:** Jazzism, Jazz Bulletin

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

**Bob Doerschuk:** DB

**Laurence Donohue-Greene:** New York City Jazz Record

**Alain Drouot:** DB, citizenjazz.com

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

**José Duarte:** jazzportugal.ua.pt, RTP Radio Television Portugal

**Tina Edwards:** DB, Red Bull Music, Clash

**Shannon J. Effinger:** NPR, Pitchfork, Bandcamp, Jazziz

**Jordannah Elizabeth:** DB, NPR Music, New York Amsterdam News

**\*Ed Enright:** DB

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

**Steve Feeney:** artsfuse.org, Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram

**David Franklin:** JazzTimes, Cadence

**Philip Freeman:** DB, The Wire, Stereogum

**Takao Fujioka:** Way Out West

**Gary Fukushima:** DB

**Jon Garelick:** DB, Jazziz, Boston Globe

**Dustin Garlitz:** jazztalent.com

**Richard Gehr:** DB, Relix, Los Angeles Times, Bandcamp

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

**Steve Greenlee:** JazzTimes

**George Grella:** The Wire, The Brooklyn Rail, Red Hook Star-Revue

**Tyran Grillo:** DB

**Kira Grunenberg:** DB, No Depression, American Songwriter

**\*Frank-John Hadley:** DB

**Carl L. Hager:** Jazz (Jazzers Jazzing) blog

**\*James Hale:** DB, soundstage xperience.com

**Eric Harabadian:** DB, Music Connection, Progression

**Kazunori Harada:** Jazz Japan Magazine

**George W. Harris:** jazzweekly.com

**Kazune Hayata:** Jazz Life

**Chris Heim:** KMWU

**Andrey Henkin:** New York City Jazz Record

**Andy Hermann:** DB, Wondery, djmag.com

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

**Rob Hoff:** WQLN, JazzErie

**Eugene Holley Jr.:** DB, Hot House, Publishers Weekly

**C. Andrew Hovan:** DB, All About Jazz

**Tom Hull:** tomhull.com

**Tom Ineck:** Lincoln Journal Star, NET Radio, KZUM Radio

**Eric Jackson:** WGBH

**Michael Jackson:** DB, Jazzwise

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

**Jeff Johnson:** DB, Chicago Sun-Times, Chicago Blues Guide

**Martin Johnson:** Wall Street Journal, Huffington Post

**Ammar Kalia:** DB, The Guardian

**Richard Kamins:** steptem pest.blogspot.com

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

**Fred Kaplan:** Stereophile, Slate

**Yoshi Kato:** DB, San Francisco Chronicle, Palo Alto Weekly

**Larry Kelp:** KPFA-FM, kpfa.org

**Reinhard Köchl:** Zeit Online, Jazz Thing

**Elzy Kolb:** Hot House

**Jason Koransky:** DB

**Dustin Krcatovich:** DB, The Quietus, Under The Radar

**Jeff Krow:** Audiophile Audition

**David Kunian:** DB, Offbeat, Oxford American

**Will Layman:** popmatters.com

**Angelo Leonardi:** All About Jazz Italia

**Bruce Lindsay:** Jazz Journal

**\*Suzanne Lorge:** DB, New York City Jazz Record

**Phillip Lutz:** DB

**\*Jim Macnie:** DB, VEVO

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

**Peter Margasak:** DB, Chamber Music, Bandcamp Daily

**Cree McCree:** DB, Offbeat, frenchquarter.com

**\*John McDonough:** DB

**Kerlie McDowell:** DB, Inspired Magazine

**Peter McElhinney:** Style Weekly

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

**\*Ken Micallef:** DB, Stereophile, Modern Drummer, JazzTimes

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

**\*Bill Milkowski:** DB, The Absolute Sound, Jazziz

**Ralph A. Miriello:** Notes on Jazz blog

**\*Dan Morgenstern:** Jersey Jazz

**Allen Morrison:** DB, JazzTimes

**Brian Morton:** DB, The Wire, The Tablet, The Herald

**\*John Murph:** DB, TIDAL, JazzWise, JazzTimes

**Russ Musto:** DB, New York City Jazz Record

**Michael G. Nastos:** Hot House, WCBN-FM

**Ron Netsky:** City Newspaper (Rochester, New York)

**Jon Newey:** Jazzwise

**Sean O'Connell:** DB, Los Angeles Times

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

**Adam Olschewski:** Jazz Podium

**\*Dan Ouellette:** DB, Qwest TV, Stereophile, medium.com

**\*Ted Panken:** DB

**Terry Perkins:** DB

**J. poet:** DB, Rock & Roll Globe, New Noise, East Bay Express

**Jeff Potter:** DB, Modern Drummer

**Norman Provizer:** DB, KUVO

**\*Bobby Reed:** DB

**\*Howard Reich:** Chicago Tribune

**Guy Reynard:** Freelance

**Derk Richardson:** The Absolute Sound, Acoustic Guitar, KPFA radio, Peghead Nation

**Alex W. Rodriguez:** DB

**Lloyd Sachs:** DB

**\*Gene Santoro:** DB

**Sebastian Scotney:** London Jazz News, Jazzthetik, The Arts Desk

**Michele L. Simms-Burton:** DB

**Monica Staton:** DB, Chicago Jazz Magazine

**\*Thomas Staudter:** DB, The Gazette, The Hudson Independent

**W. Royal Stokes:** JJA News, wroyalstokes.com

**Denise Sullivan:** DB, San Francisco Chronicle, San Francisco Examiner

**Laurence Svirchew:** misterioso.org

**Otakar Svoboda:** Czech Radio Vitava

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

**Hobart Taylor:** KUCI

**Larry Reni Thomas:** jazzcorner.com, ejazznews.com

**Chris Walker:** DB, JazzTimes, L.A. Jazz Scene

**Ken Weiss:** Candence, Jazz Inside

**Michael J. West:** DB, Washington Post, JazzTimes

**\*Kevin Whitehead:** NPR's Fresh Air

**Carlo Wolff:** DB

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

**Takashi Yamamoto:** Disk Union

**\*Scott Yanow:** DB, Jazziz, L.A. Jazz Scene, New York City Jazz Record, Syncopated Times

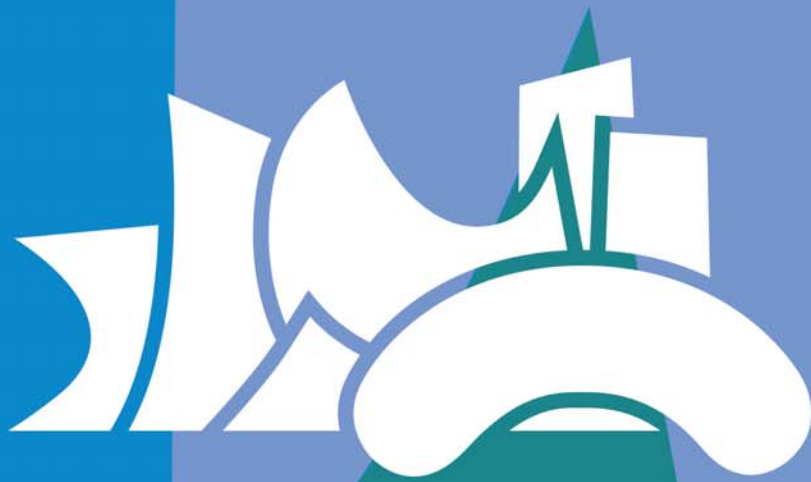


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## REVIEWS &gt;



LAUREN DESBERG

Gerald Clayton makes his Blue Note label debut with a live set recorded at New York's Village Vanguard in 2019.

## Gerald Clayton *Happening: Live At The Village Vanguard*

BLUE NOTE B0032099-02

★★★★

The timing of this release imbues it with melancholy and hope. This year's coronavirus pandemic put most live performances to a halt for much of 2020 because of worldwide shelter-in-place executive orders. So, the transportive splendor of a concert, captured at The Village Vanguard, seduces jazz lovers in a state of nostalgia for intimate spaces, carefree socialization

and visceral performances.

When Gerald Clayton's quintet convened at the Vanguard in April 2019, it's unlikely that the pianist had any idea that a year later, New York would look like a ghost town. Ten years after his debut leader date, *Happening: Live At The Village Vanguard* marks Clayton's first release on Blue Note Records and makes the recording auspicious on its own terms.

Clayton's transfixing reading of "Body And Soul" resonates with emotional weight and new meaning in these uncertain times. The band-leader approaches the song with pensive grace as he slowly unravels thick, striking chords, before

exploring the timeless melody. Marcus Gilmore's caressing brushwork and Joe Sanders' big-boned bass lines gently propel Clayton's improvisations forward. The leisurely pace and sublime manner in which they explore the tune's melodic and harmonic contours make it seem as if the ensemble has all the time in the world to linger in musical dialogue before its appreciative audience.

Similar sensations come on "Patience Patients" and "A Light"—two of three originals here that are featured on Clayton's 2017 adventurous *Tributary Tales* (Motéma). "Patience Patients" evokes a dirge, as alto saxophonist Logan Richardson and tenor saxophonist Walter Smith III blow a somber melody in unison atop the slow rubato momentum. Clayton maps out a probing improvisation, marked by percussive stabs, jolting harmonies and clipped phrases, while the frontline horns drape it in elegy and eventually give way to a suspenseful solo from Smith, and an equally gripping one from Clayton. The song's restive vibe, paired with foreboding horn harmonies, aptly depicts anxieties associated with the pandemic.

"A Light," with its jagged piano melody, conveys the stop-start disposition of a tentatively reopening economy. The jerky manner in which Smith and Richardson's topsy-turvy passages intersect with Clayton's quaking lines suggests the mania of navigating crowds with minimal human contact.

Given that this thoroughly enthralling album—which also includes delightful explorations of Bud Powell's "Ceilia" and Duke Ellington's "Take The Coltrane"—finds Clayton at a new creative height as a stunning pianist, gifted composer and burgeoning bandleader, one hopes that *Happening* isn't a document that in the future serves to remind listeners of vanishing jazz venues.

In the unfortunate event that it does, it'll stand as an invigorating time capsule of an era when early 21st-century jazz thrived in such sacred spaces as the Vanguard. —John Murphy

**Happening: Live At The Village Vanguard:** Patience Patients; A Light; Celia; Rejuvenation Agenda; Envisionings; Body And Soul; Take The Coltrane. (60:15)

**Personnel:** Gerald Clayton, piano; Logan Richardson, alto saxophone; Walter Smith III, tenor saxophone; Joe Sanders, bass; Marcus Gilmore, drums.

**Ordering info:** [bluenote.com](https://bluenote.com)



## Rudresh Mahanthappa *Hero Trio*

WHIRLWIND 4760

★★★★

Alto saxophonist Rudresh Mahanthappa continues to dig into the Charlie Parker songbook on *Hero Trio* (Whirlwind), a smart sequel to his 2015 album *Bird Calls* (ACT). This time, instead of using Parker's material as a jumping-off point for his own compositions, Mahanthappa strips the album's three Bird tunes down to their essence, the better to see how they work.

In this regard, his arrangements for chordless trio—bassist François Moutin and drum-

mer Rudy Royston accompany the bandleader—allow for plenty of enjoyable scrutiny. He opens with “Red Cross,” retaining Parker's brilliant chromaticism, but softening the rhythmic accents and inserting unexpected ornaments during his breakneck improvisations. Midway through the album, Mahanthappa turns out “Barbados/26-2,” a calypso-tinged hybrid of the Parker blues tune and John Coltrane's contrafact of Parker's “Confirmation.” And he closes with “Dewey Square,” a keen reshaping of the original, taking it from spirited bop to sleek avant-garde.

But Parker and Coltrane aren't the only musical minds that pique Mahanthappa's interest. In and around the Parker tunes, the trio salutes Stevie Wonder with “Overjoyed”; Johnny Cash with “Ring Of Fire”; and Keith Jarrett, whose exercise in exuberance, “The Windup,” gives the players a chance to engage in a looser improvised dialogue.

Two standards on the album recall historic chordless trios: those of saxophonists Sonny Rollins (“I Can't Get Started”) and Lee Konitz (“I'll Remember April”). Mahanthappa's notions here, breezier than those of these masters, retain all the muscle of the originals. —*Suzanne Lorge*

**Hero Trio:** Red Cross; Overjoyed; Barbados/26-2; I Can't Get Started; The Windup; Ring Of Fire; I'll Remember April; Sadness; Dewey Square. (45:23)

**Personnel:** Rudresh Mahanthappa, alto saxophone; François Moutin, bass; Rudy Royston, drums.

**Ordering info:** [whirlwindrecordings.com](http://whirlwindrecordings.com)

## Nicole Mitchell & Lisa E. Harris *EarthSeed*

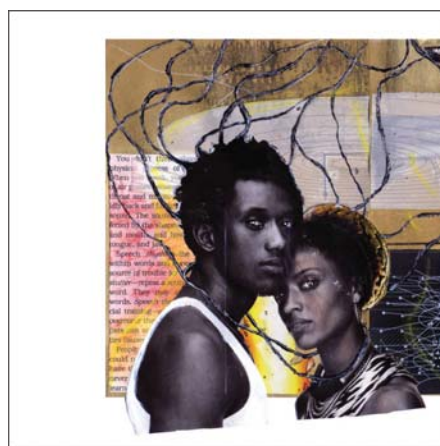
FPE 027

★★★★

Nicole Mitchell's polyglot perspective has made her discography one of creative improv's richest and most daring. The flutist has used both swing and abstraction, recorded solo and with large groups, and experimented with poetry and theater. This homage to Octavia Butler, a collab with vocalist Lisa E. Harris, is especially evocative, arriving with an astute Afrofuturist sensibility that reveals parallels between fiction and reality.

Butler was the first sci-fi author to earn a MacArthur Fellowship, a philosopher who said her work fundamentally is about “social power.” Mitchell fell under her spell, previously recording a pair of albums inspired by Butler's work. The series depicts a fraught future, with violence erupting between classes and a scarcity of natural resources. Adaptation to this new world becomes paramount, but is it possible? Mitchell and Harris stitch their fabric with a timely thread.

The music, from a 2017 live performance, trades conventional storytelling for swooping aural poetry, giving Harris plenty of room to share the skills she's developed in progressive opera and sound-art. The leader's Black Earth



Ensemble amplifies each emotion that passes: “Ownness” addresses the duty of loving each other as flute, strings and electronics hover below, while “Biotic Seeds” declares, “Your enemies and saviors are within.” Mitchell has said she wants to create “visionary worlds,” and *EarthSeed* does just that, boasting an eloquence that matches its imagination.

—*Jim Macnie*

**EarthSeed:** Evnascence/Evanescence; Whispering Flame; Biotic Seeds; Yes And Know; Ownness; Moving Mirror; Whole Black Collision; Phallus And Chalice; Fluids Of Time; Elemental Crux; Purify Me With The Power To Self Transform. (62:27)

**Personnel:** Nicole Mitchell, flute, electronics; Lisa E. Harris, vocals, theremin, electronics; Julian Otis, vocals; Zara Zaharieva, violin; Ben LaMar Gay, trumpet, electronics; Tomeka Reid, cello; Avreeayl Ra, percussion.

**Ordering info:** [fperecs.com](http://fperecs.com)



## Leni Stern

4

LSR 1045

★★★★

Leni Stern's fourth album with bassist Mamadou Ba and percussionist Alioune Faye continues an unlikely winning streak for this fusion guitarist who's created her own brand of music. If you love the wail of Youssou N'Dour and the jangle of Franco Luambo, but also have a soft spot for *música popular brasileira*, this multilingual, crisply produced, infectiously melodic and rhythmically percolating album is for you.

Particularly fetching is the ballad featuring thumb piano, “Chartwell”—named for Thomas Mapfumo's longtime mbira player, Chartwell Dutiro—on which Stern sings wordlessly and plays guitar with lyrical joy. “Habib” is also a standout, with composer Ba contributing a Jaco-like electric bass solo and Stern's husband Mike soaring lyrically on reverbed guitar. On this track and others, the band creates tension with polymetric lines that are as tricky as the overall production is spare, a unique combination that gives Stern's albums their unique flavor. You can taste it right from the start, as the hefty “Lambar” roars in like Weather Report in a pop-pish mood.

“Serrer” hits hard, too, with burbling keys and slapping percussion, while Nigerian jùjú music inspires the dark feel of “Miu.” Stern turns tender on the elegiac “Amadeus” and the gorgeously falling melody of “Zamba 264,” one of two tunes by keyboardist Leo Genovese; his other contribution being the deliciously sinuous “Japalema.” Genovese, a frequent Stern collaborator, is a highlight throughout, on both acoustic and electric.

At just under 39 minutes, 4 is a short trip, but it covers a crazy quilt of musical and linguistic territory.

—*Paul de Barros*

**4:** Lambar; Amadeus; Serrer; Miu; Japalema; Chartwell; Habib; Zamba 264. (38:45)

**Personnel:** Leni Stern, vocals, guitar, n'goni; Mike Stern (7), guitar; Leo Genovese, keyboards; Mamadou Ba, bass; Alioune Faye, percussion.

**Ordering info:** [lenistern.bandcamp.com](http://lenistern.bandcamp.com)



# The Hot Box

	Critics	Paul de Barros	Suzanne Lorge	Jim Macnie	John Murph
<b>Gerald Clayton</b> <i>Happening</i>		★★★½	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
<b>Rudresh Mahanthappa</b> <i>Hero Trio</i>		★★★½	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
<b>Mitchell &amp; Harris</b> <i>EarthSeed</i>		★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★
<b>Leni Stern</b> <i>4</i>		★★★★	★★★½	★★★	★★★½

## Critics' Comments

### Gerald Clayton, *Happening: Live At The Village Vanguard*

Clayton's syncretic and refreshingly cliché-free style has earned him a spot in the "Live At The Village Vanguard" pantheon, and drummer Gilmore definitely keeps things edgy. But this well-rounded quintet set is less explosive than one might have expected, despite some marvelous tenor saxophone solos by Smith. —Paul de Barros

Clayton's concertizing demands rapt attention and the suspension of expectation. What emerges from a close listen is an appreciation for the nuanced harmonizations, lucid phrasings and rich silences that he conjures. Equal parts magic and mastery. —Suzanne Lorge

Clayton knows the value of contours, and this one pretty much has it all. Piano trio intimacy reveals itself on some tracks, while others find the horns uniting for a romp. Vistas at every turn. —Jim Macnie

### Rudresh Mahanthappa, *Hero Trio*

Inveterate experimentalist tackles the standards. Nice idea, though from the get-go, you know this ain't gonna be your grandpa's bebop when Mahanthappa drills down to a pedal tone on "Red Cross." The trio's take on Keith Jarrett's "The Windup" is a dazzler. —Paul de Barros

They come on like a storm, and each turn exudes both articulation and coordination. The boss's flow becomes more sage with each year, chattering one sec, soaring the next. —Jim Macnie

These tributes burst with so much interpretive ingenuity, sparkling friction and caffeinated improvisational interplay that they demand considerable replay. —John Murph

### Mitchell & Harris, *EarthSeed*

As always, Mitchell's flute and Reid's cello are captivating and creative, but the vocal styles, from high art-song to stuttering improv, are more puzzling than persuasive. —Paul de Barros

At times raw, at times refined, *EarthSeed* revels in pure expression. Mitchell and Harris form an uncompromising duo in confronting the bitter realities behind the project's source material; they offer no palliative except for that of art itself. —Suzanne Lorge

This esoteric trip—filled with scraping sonic textures and shattering screams—might require familiarity with Butler's extraordinary sci-fi novels for greater appreciation. —John Murph

### Leni Stern, *4*

Stern, a musical polyglot, excels at fusing far-flung melodies and lyrical percussion, leaving her harmonic intentions clear but discreet. In this way, she prioritizes propulsion over languor, intensity over contemplation. Beneath her surefire fretwork, though, gently voiced chords ring with elation. —Suzanne Lorge

Their confluence of rhythms from around the world is fetching, and the tunes they support are pithy and focused. —Jim Macnie

Color and idiomatic palettes widen with the addition of keyboardist Genovese. But the group's bracing rapport, entrancing Senegalese grooves and snaky improvisations remain intact. —John Murph

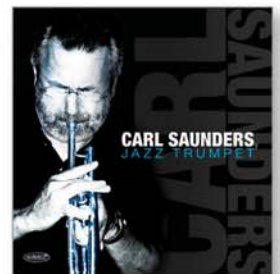


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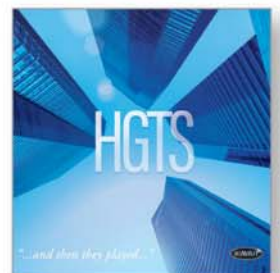


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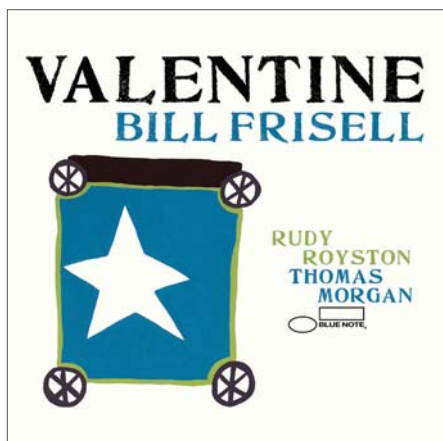
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## Bill Frisell *Valentine*

BLUE NOTE B0032169-02

★★★★★

"Playing together" is a phrase so commonplace it's easy to forget what it signifies. Of course, there's the obvious: making music with others, performing as an ensemble, being creative in a group. But the music guitarist Bill Frisell, bassist Thomas Morgan and drummer Rudy Royston offer here suggests a specific spin on the idea, one that emphasizes the togetherness of the playing.

On *Valentine*, they consistently and strikingly play as one, voices intertwined, completing

phrases as if sharing a single thought. Sometimes, as in the opening to "What The World Needs Now Is Love," that's presented in an interwoven statement of melody; elsewhere, as within the swirling pulse of "Baba Drame," it's exemplified by the closeness of their improvisation. Even overdubs, as on the haunting, atmospheric "Hour Glass," are so perfect that everything feels utterly organic.

In the liner notes, Frisell credits this closeness to two years spent working on the road, and no doubt that's part of the magic. But it also seems to stem from a shared sensibility of feeling the music the same way. How else to explain the lop-sided cadences in the Monkish blues "Valentine," a groove that forever sounds as if it's about to lose its balance yet never does? Or the soulful sweetness they bring to "We Shall Overcome," so that it seems pop-song bright without losing its hymn-like fortitude? Even though the selections on *Valentine* hail from a range of styles—Afropop, country-western, Brill Building pop, atmospheric electronica—the performances represent jazz playing at its most sublime. And music seldom gets more "together" than that. —J.D. Considine

**Valentine:** Baba Drame; Hour Glass; Valentine; Levees; Winter Always Turns To Spring; Keep Your Eyes Open; A Flower Is A Lovesome Thing; Electricity; Wagon Wheels; Aunt Mary; What The World Needs Now Is Love; Where Do We Go?; We Shall Overcome. (65:50)

**Personnel:** Bill Frisell, guitar, acoustic guitar; Thomas Morgan, bass; Rudy Royston, drums.

**Ordering info:** [bluenote.com](http://bluenote.com)

## Bobby Watson *Keepin' It Real*

SMOKE SESSIONS 2004

★★★★★

Alto saxophonist Bobby Watson's quintet keeps it real on this entertaining album by hewing to the general hard-bop format the bandleader absorbed and refined during his stint as music director of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers from 1977 to '81. Catchy melodies steeped in blues and gospel tropes and grounded in steadily swinging, flavorful rhythm-section accompaniment aren't likely to go wrong when capable soloists enjoy what they're playing.

Now 66, and retired after 20 years as director of jazz studies at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, Watson represents slickness in its very best sense. His playing is sophisticated yet soulful. He's elegantly slippery as only a player at one with his instrument can be, stretching phrases seamlessly over nearly the entire length of a chorus and interjecting brief figures with just the right squeal to make his point. Bassist Curtis Lundy, Blakeyesque drummer Victor Jones and sparkling pianist Victor Gould sustain finger-snapping momentum and control the dynamics of their backdrops to vary tunes' tensions.

Two trumpeters alternate matching Watson well on "Condition Blue" (written by Jackie



McLean), "Mohawk" (a revised Charlie Parker tune), "One For John" (written by Lundy) and "Mystery Of Ebop" (a Watson original). The vamp-based tunes here are offset by Donny Hathaway's "Someday We'll All Be Free" and a sensual rendition of Bill Evans' "Flamenco Sketches." Watson's "My Song" turns, as it should, on all the elements that distinguish the altoist as an invaluable straightahead star.

—Howard Mandel

**Keepin' It Real:** Condition Blue; Keepin' It Real; Elementary, My Dear Watson 2020; Someday We'll All Be Free; Mohawk; My Song; One For John; Flamenco Sketches; The Mystery Of Ebop. (58:30)

**Personnel:** Bobby Watson, alto saxophone; Josh Evans, Giveton Gelin, trumpets; Victor Gould, piano; Curtis Lundy, bass; Victor Jones, drums.

**Ordering info:** [smokesessionsrecords.com](http://smokesessionsrecords.com)



## Arturo O'Farrill/The Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra *Four Questions*

ZOHO 202002

★★★★★

With *Four Questions*, Arturo O'Farrill proves prescient. On his first album of all self-composed pieces, the Grammy-winning pianist shoulders what he calls his "sacred obligation" to counter injustice. The exhilarating Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra, O'Farrill's big-band vehicle, delivers both the pith and the punch of his message.

"Baby Jack" introduces O'Farrill's talent for corraling unleashed syncopation and quixotic harmonies into sweeping orchestral statements; he uses a groundswell of horns to connote the power of exultancy ("Jazz Twins") and an aggressive, piano-led pulse to signal unrelenting determination ("Clump, Unclump"). And his grand chorale work, "A Still, Small Voice," pairs simple vocal lines with intricate, rhythmical ensemble sections. That's the pith. The punch comes in the form of spoken-word performances by Dr. Cornel West, whose 2014 speech about facing down racial oppression provided the album's theme. On the title track, against O'Farrill's percussive score, West invokes ideas that W.E.B. DuBois put forth in his 1903 book, *The Souls of Black Folks*. "How does virtue meet brute force?" he asks. "What does courage do in the face of violence?"

Powerful as these musical and rhetorical statements are, it would be a lesser album if O'Farrill and West left it there. They didn't. As the trumpets render a cathartic, dirge-paced outro on the title track, West issues a final, heart-rending blow: "Despair never has the last word. The caravan of love goes on." —Suzanne Lorge

**Four Questions:** Baby Jack; Jazz Twins; Four Questions; Clump, Undump; Elijah—1 Kings 19:13; Amidst The Fire And Whirlwind; Cacophonous; A Still, Small Voice. (62:15)

**Personnel:** Arturo O'Farrill, Alison Deane, piano; Bobby Porcelli, Ivan Renta, Jeremy Powell, Larry Bustamante, David DeJesus, Peter Brainin, Jason Marshall, saxophone; Bryan Davis, Seneca Black, Adam O'Farrill, John Bailey, David Smith, Jim Seeley, Jonathan Powell, trumpet; Rafi Malkiel, Tokunori Kajiwara, Earl McIntyre, Frank Cohen, trombone, tuba; Gregg August, Ricardo Rodriguez, bass; Tony Rosa, Carly Maldonado, Roland Guerrero, Joe Gonzalez, percussion; Vince Cherico, drums; Dr. Cornel West, Aubrey Johnson, Edda Fransdottir, vocals; Sharon Moe, French horn; DJ Logic, turntables.

**Ordering info:** [zohomusic.com](http://zohomusic.com)



## John Scofield *Swallow Tales*

ECM 2679

★★★★

Guitarist John Scofield's new album reflects on a partnership and musical source that stretches back decades, while his trio performs with the spirit of a new beginning. The title refers to bassist Steve Swallow's compositions, which serve as the source material here. Some of these tunes originated in the late 1970s, when an upstart Scofield was the bassist's protege. Time has served these pieces exceptionally well, and so does the group's energy throughout *Swallow Tales*. That spirit comes across from the first notes of "She Was Young." Scofield's relaxed vibe includes an array of low-key effects that quietly embellish his approach to the melody, while Swallow's lines become intertwined with all of the guitarist's turns. Drummer Bill Stewart's seemingly light touch becomes the ideal complement. Swallow and Scofield also swap leads on "Falling Grace," both solos sounding more pointed atop Stewart's roll. Throughout, Scofield's vibrato remains consistently inventive, especially through his deeply lyrical delivery of the ballad "Hullo Bolinas."

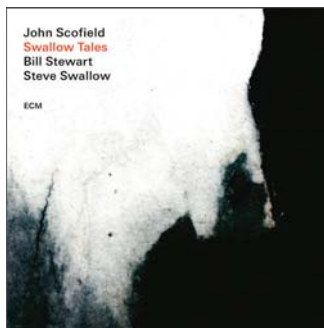
*Swallow Tales* is Scofield's debut leader date on ECM, and he makes the most of the label's undefinable airy sound on the lyrical "Away." As he lays back, he knows that this kind of tribute is as much about highlighting great tunes as it is about their interpreters.

—Aaron Cohen

**Swallow Tales:** She Was Young; Falling Grace; Portsmouth Figurations; Awful Coffee; Eiderdown; Hullo Bolinas; Away; In F; Radio. (53:24)

**Personnel:** John Scofield, guitar; Steve Swallow, bass; Bill Stewart, drums.

**Ordering info:** [ecmrecords.com](http://ecmrecords.com)



## Alexa Tarantino *Clarity*

POSI-TONE 8211

★★★★½

Half the tunes on Alexa Tarantino's *Clarity*, her second leader date, are compositions she penned, but all of them are delivered in a calm, swinging groove. And her riffs sometimes settle to the bottom of the horn, where they merge gleefully with Rudy Royston's tom-toms—check out "A Unified Front."

Tarantino brackets the album with her fabulous flute, opening with a flourish on "Through," where she more than heeds pianist Steven Feifke's gentle guidance, and closes with the rich resonance of her alto flute on "My Ship." The alto saxophone is Tarantino's principal instrument, but she's more than adequate on soprano, and her treatment of Horace Silver's "Gregory Is Here" proves it. Even so, on "A Race Against Yourself," her bebop fluency on alto holds sway, and again comes into play on "La Puerta." The cadenza on this ballad is an opportunity to hear Tarantino unadorned and full of, let's say, clarity. The wait for Royston to break out with one of his rousing solos ends on "Karma," and that rumble of complexity is modified and modulated throughout to meet the variety of Tarantino's musical tendencies.

There's no sophomore jinx with this second disc from Tarantino, and it's a good bet that the third will be even more charmed.

—Herb Boyd

**Clarity:** Through; A Race Against Yourself; La Puerta; A Unified Front; Gregory Is Here; Karma; Breaking Cycles; Thank You For Your Silence; My Ship. (46:27)

**Personnel:** Alexa Tarantino, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone, flute, alto flute; Steven Feifke, piano; Joe Martin, bass; Rudy Royston, drums.

**Ordering info:** [posi-tone.com](http://posi-tone.com)



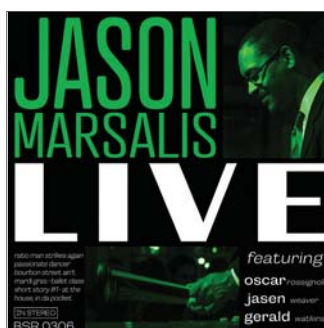
## Jason Marsalis *Jason Marsalis Live*

BASIN STREET 0306

★★★★

By their very choice of instrument, vibraphonists are adventurers, going where few musicians go. Even by that standard, Jason Marsalis has developed into an irrepressible force since taking up vibes, shifting his focus from drums about 20 years ago. *Jason Marsalis Live* might include previously recorded songs, all of them originals, but the album bristles with clever surprises, riding the rim of our expectations. From the Monkish jabs on "Ratio Man" to the strutting, high-stepping Crescent City classicism of "At The House, In Da Pocket," *Live*—recorded at New Orleans' storied Little Gems Saloon as part of celebration of Basin Street Records' 20th anniversary in 2017—never lets up. Virtuoso pianist Oscar Rossignoli runs cascading figures with his right hand while providing lagging counterpoint with his left on "Bourbon Street Ain't Mardi Gras." Alternating between ringing and muted tones, Marsalis creates joyous 3D effects with his four-mallet mastery. Perhaps inspired by Lionel Hampton, he's after a bigger and harder-edged, but still fluid, sound. While the bandleader's playing and composing reflects a deep knowledge of jazz history, they hop and skip past familiar solutions. There's something genuinely new going on here.

—Lloyd Sachs



**Jason Marsalis Live:** Ratio Man Strikes Again; Passionate Dancer; Bourbon Street Ain't Mardi Gras; Ballet Class; Short Story #1; At The House, In Da Pocket. (37:15)

**Personnel:** Jason Marsalis, vibraphone; Oscar Rossignoli, piano; Jasen Weaver, bass; Gerald Watkins, drums.

**Ordering info:** [basinstreetrecords.com](http://basinstreetrecords.com)

## Marcin Wasilewski Trio/Joe Lovano

*Arctic Riff*

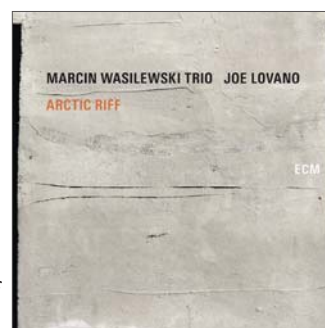
ECM 2678

★★★★

The Marcin Wasilewski Trio, a Polish ensemble that initially came together during the '90s, specializes in controlled blasts—little bursts of freeform creation like the nine-minute "Cadenza" that builds off a tumbling piano line and agitated bass work from Slawomir Kurkiewicz.

Adding fuel to this collective fire is saxophonist Joe Lovano. He appears on all 11 tracks on *Arctic Riff* and handles the gig with a remarkable amount of restraint. Lovano carefully picks his moments to draw focus away from the collective, as through his dancing, halting solo on Wasilewski's "L'amour Fou." Or his eventual appearance on his own composition, "On The Other Side." Lovano waits until the song is in its final minutes before sneaking in to add some punctuation to what was shaping up to be a complete statement by the trio. Label boss Manfred Eicher's devotion to atmosphere also is responsible for allowing the finer details of *Arctic Riff* to emerge. The creak of Kurkiewicz's bass sneaks into the mix, as does Wasilewski's voice as he hums along with a solo. Drummer Michal Miskiewicz is recorded so precisely it's as if every bristle of his brushes is discernible. The music becomes as enveloping and inescapable, yet imperceptible, as oxygen.

—Robert Ham



**Arctic Riff:** Glimmer Of Hope; Vashkar; Cadenza; Fading Sorrow; Arco; Stray Cat Walk; L'amour Fou; A Glimpse; Vashkar (Var.); On The Other Side; Old Hat. (62:30)

**Personnel:** Marcin Wasilewski, piano; Joe Lovano, tenor saxophone; Slawomir Kurkiewicz, bass; Michal Miskiewicz, drums.

**Ordering info:** [ecmrecords.com](http://ecmrecords.com)

## Antibalas' Deepening Power

Although well into its second decade, **Antibalas** recently released its first album that digs deep into Nigerian-American lead singer Duke Amayo's unique compositional approach. ***Fu Chronicles* (Daptone 060; 48:37 ★★★★★)** highlights his entrancing narrative song style with the assertive, punchy energy for which the Afrobeat ensemble has become well-known. Amayo isn't your typical frontman, though he sings at center stage during concerts, his voice and style always has blended seamlessly into the group's collective sound. And this latest recording marks a compelling synthesis of approaches that began when he met the group's founders at his Brooklyn kung-fu dojo.

"He was just a dude in the neighborhood, not making music at the time," Antibalas founder and baritone saxophonist Martín Perna said. "I asked him to fill in one day on percussion, so he started coming through, adding some vocals to songs I had written."

Before long, Amayo grew into the role of lead singer, while his dojo became the base of operations for the nascent Daptone Records.

Amayo has been composing material for the group throughout its 20-year run—he and Perna are the band's two permanent members—but this is the first Antibalas album that primarily features his songs.

"Over the years, some of these songs that are on this record were recorded in some form or another, but there wasn't really an aesthetic container for them. They also felt really personal and idiosyncratic," Perna said. "A lot of the songs have multiple movements and themes—most of them, when we'd play them live, were 28 minutes long. And if you asked him how they went, he would kind of tell you a different way each time."

Whereas many jazz classics stretch compact pop tunes through expressively Afro-diasporic sensibilities—think John Coltrane on "My Favorite Things"—Perna's innovative solution was to take the opposite approach.

"These were songs that we needed to deal with—it's almost like a musical elephant in the room. These have been kicking around, but why haven't we been recording them? ... So, I had to basically sit with the tunes, edit them down and figure [it] out."

Drawing directly from Amayo's relationship to Nigerian ritual music and sung poetry, Perna and Antibalas managed to crystallize a sympathetic approach within the constraints of the LP format. The album's six songs feature the group's trademark grooves, paired with muscular horn lines and background vocals that offer well-timed responses to Amayo's confident singing. The result is, indeed, idiosyncratic: Timbral references to



Amayo's kung-fu philosophy abound, mixing with West African rhythmic frameworks alongside his Lagos-inflected patois. The hypnotic song-forms allow for Amayo's narrative compositional style to play out slowly over the course of each track, weaving themes and melodies together in playful and unexpected ways.

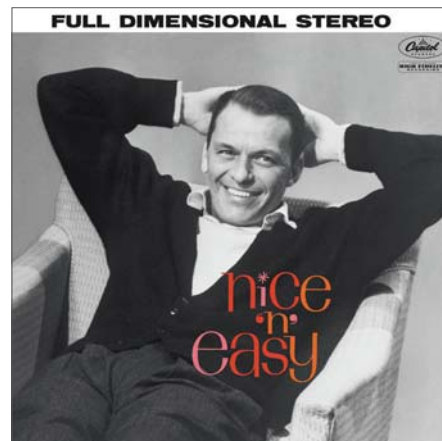
This approach is deeply seductive—sinking into Amayo's compositional approach allows the group to double down on the music's trance-like elements. The call-and-response between Amayo and backup vocalists on "Koto," for example—later mimicked by an interlocking horn arrangement—takes the listener into Amayo's subtle account of the personal tragedies of Williamsburg's gentrification. Others, like "Fight Am Finish," are more anthemic, the groove generating a forceful energy that invites the power and discipline of Amayo's kung-fu sensibilities. The closing track, "Fist Of Flowers," operates similarly—building toward an unironic call-and-response "flower power" chant that only this vocalist could invoke.

"The way that he writes melodies, the intervals he uses, they sound particularly like him. Every record has different elements of different members' creative DNA and fingerprints on it," Perna explained. "This is probably the first [album] that has mostly his."

Although the engagement with Amayo's compositions is unique, *Fu Chronicles* is still an Antibalas record, drawing its power from the size and cohesion of the band's tight, horn-heavy core. The group's collective spirit—evident in their enthusiastic backing vocals and raucous collective improvisation—brings an effective balance to Amayo's charismatic singing. Taken as a whole, the album feels like both a deepening of the band's core ethos and an expansion of what previously had been possible.

DB

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



## Frank Sinatra *Nice 'N' Easy* (60th Anniversary Edition)

CAPITOL/UME B0031729-02

★★★★★

In these troubled times, a classic album of Frank Sinatra love songs might be the ultimate sonic comfort food. Especially this album.

*Nice 'N' Easy* was recorded in 1960 when Sinatra, then 44, was at the height of his vocal powers. No longer the carefree young crooner, his voice had deepened and matured, reflecting the agonies of his tempestuous six-year marriage to Ava Gardner. After releasing two ballad collections—*No One Cares* and *Only The Lonely*—featuring torch songs near-suicidal in tone, Sinatra wanted to record love songs with a lighter touch.

The newly minted title track, by Lew Spence and the young Alan and Marilyn Bergman, was the only medium-tempo number. Sinatra previously had recorded the other 11 songs, all classic ballads, for Columbia in the 1940s. Now, he intended to produce the definitive versions, with peak Nelson Riddle arrangements, this time in hi-fi and stereo. The 1960 versions are richer; the arrangements more modern, yet still timeless.

The new stereo mixes are breathtaking, and the bonus material is invaluable: Two session snippets illuminate Sinatra's process in the studio, recording take after take with the full orchestra. There's also an exquisite "The Nearness Of You," the album's original title track.

Riddle's orchestrations, particularly his writing for woodwinds and strings, are a heavenly combination of romance, classical know-how and judicious use of jazz harmonies. If you don't get goosebumps when Riddle's strings start to soar beneath Sinatra's vocal on "That Old Feeling," check your pulse. —Allen Morrison

**Nice 'N' Easy:** Nice 'N' Easy; That Old Feeling; How Deep Is The Ocean; I've Got A Crush On You; You Go To My Head; Fools Rush In; Nevertheless (I'm In Love With You); She's Funny That Way; Try A Little Tenderness; Embraceable You; Mam'selle; Dream; The Nearness Of You; I've Got A Crush On You; Nice 'N' Easy. (57:15)

**Personnel:** Frank Sinatra, vocals; Nelson Riddle, arranger, conductor; Plas Johnson, tenor saxophone; Al Viola, guitar; Felix Slatkin, violin; Bill Miller, piano; orchestra.

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



## John Fedchock NY Sextet *Into The Shadows* SUMMIT 765 ★★★★

John Fedchock's writing and arranging skills have been admired since his days with Woody Herman. This smaller unit gives him a near-perfect combination of mobility and weight, and with them, confident modernity, even as Fedchock examines some repertory favorites.

The opening "RSVP" is assertively dissonant in its introduction before the Latin-tinged beats kick in and the band soars away. It's a confident and challenging way to start. But impressive as Fedchock's own writing is, it's his version of "Star Eyes" that really captures attention here: completely reinvented, owing nothing much to classic interpretations and all building toward the trombonist's best solo of the set. He does something similar to "I Should Care," which is played at twice the tempo we're used to. Brazil is clearly much in his mind, too: "Manaus" is seductively textured and Amazonian in expanse. But the star turn here is the title track, opening on a mournful solo trombone line and maintaining the mood of reflective solitude for much of its length. The front line is perfectly balanced, with Fedchock placed in the center of the mix on one of his most poised and assertive recordings yet.

—Brian Morton

**Into The Shadows:** RSVP; Alpha Dog; Manaus; I Should Care; Nature Boy; Into The Shadows; Star Eyes; On The Edge. (57:50)

**Personnel:** John Fedchock, trombone; Scott Wendholt, trumpet, flugelhorn; Walt Weiskopf, tenor saxophone; Allen Farnham, piano; David Finck, bass; Eric Halvorson, drums.

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



## 3D Jazz Trio *I Love To See You Smile* DIVA JAZZ 2020 ★★★★

Let's have some fun, shall we? God knows we all deserve a break. But how? Glad you asked: Get a copy of 3D Jazz Trio's *I Love To See You Smile* and give it a spin. It'll take just a few minutes before the group's wish, expressed in the name of the album, comes true.

The recording begins with the title track, which, in terms of achieving its intention, is perfect. The band lays out the tune at the top, with Sherrie Maricle focusing on the classic "one-and-a-two" hi-hat pattern. On the chorus, the trio heats up a bit, then pulls back for the next verse and keeps it on simmer until a snare roll marks the switch to backbeat and ride. Nothing revolutionary, but it's done with such spirit that even those who seek messages in their jazz can't help but surrender. Of course, there's plenty to talk about in terms of performances: Maricle's nuanced rhythm, threaded and complemented by Amy Shook's bass on "Bésame Mucho"; and pianist Jackie Warren's energy, melodic inventiveness and tasty blues/funk phrasing, which Shook mirrors with a playful touch in her solo on "Moonglow."

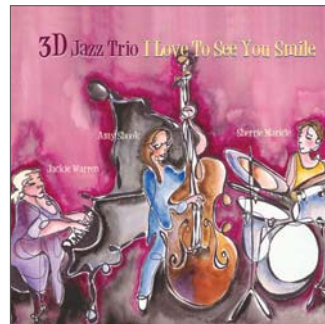
It's a joy to even write about this music. But you won't really get *I Love To See You Smile* by dissecting or transcribing what these three do. It's far better to scale down the analytical and open to the visceral.

—Bob Doerschuk

**I Love To See You Smile:** I Love To See You Smile; Bésame Mucho; Moonglow; Back At The Chicken Shack; Angel Eyes; Recado Bossa Nova; When You And I Were Young, Maggie; L.O.V.E. (56:36)

**Personnel:** Jackie Warren, piano; Amy Shook, bass; Sherrie Maricle, drums.

**Ordering info:** [3divasjazztrio.com](http://3divasjazztrio.com)



## Spirit Fingers *Peace* ROPEADOPE 574 ★★★★½

The second album from keyboardist Greg Spero's Spirit Fingers quartet documents an impressively expanded sonic palette.

On its own, the group's music is similar to its 2018 debut: a taut, lyrical style of fusion that falls somewhere between Return To Forever and solo Jean-Luc Ponty. However, Spirit Fingers is doing a lot of new things this time out, assisted by a clutch of guests: Baby-voiced singer Judi Jackson appears on four tracks, of which the quiet storm-ish "Goodbye" is the best. "Cokes With Gregs" is a sharp-edged, hard-driving jazz-rock piece where guest altoist Greg Ward wails and emits speedy, post-bop runs. But it's really drummer Mike Mitchell's show: He's assaulting the kit like it's done him some personal offense, playing a beat so complex it's like an endless solo. Spero leaps and crashes around the keyboard, sometimes seemingly anchoring the music, while other times he attempts to shove it off course. Spirit Fingers does quite well by themselves, of course. On "Earthbound," the group lays down a thick, syrupy dub rhythm, with Spero's piano heavily reverbed and Mitchell's sharp, precise strikes repeatedly cut off, vanishing into echo; Gerl's bass is frenetic and intricate, but never bounces out of the groove.

—Philip Freeman

**Peace:** Nails; Spirit Food; Kalashnikov; Goodbye; London Blues; Earthbound; Nolo (Yeslo); Cokes With Gregs; Cross Twine; Lamella; I'll Be Around; Lest We Forget; Saltwater. (60:36)

**Personnel:** Greg Spero, piano; Dario Chiazzolino, guitar; Max Gerl, Bubby Lewis (7), bass; Mike Mitchell, drums; Braxton Cook (2), Greg Ward (8), alto saxophone; Jonathan Scales (10), steel pans; Judi Jackson, vocals (4, 5, 11, 12).

**Ordering info:** [ropeadope.com](http://ropeadope.com)



## Omer Avital Qantar *New York Paradox* JAZZ&PEOPLE/ZAMZAMA 003 ★★★★

Five Israeli ex-pats living in Bed-Stuy sounds like the start of a feel-good movie. But these fellas are here for collective improvisation, rather than a new take on a buddy movie.

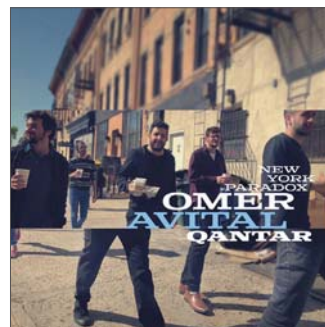
Bassist Omer Avital has been a fixture on the New York scene for more than 25 years and nods to the past with "It's All Good (Late '90s)." It's a laid-back shuffle that features the band at its most casual. Drum breaks and vocal encouragement from deep in the mix spotlight pianist Eden Ladin's soulful hands; saxophonists Asaf Yuria and Alexander Levin pop with tight staccato support and unadorned blues. But up until that tune, the band is charging at full speed. With a wailing, reedy front line, "Shabazi," the album opener, arrives at full-tilt as a fluttering blend of tight harmonies soar over drummer Ofri Nehemya's pummeling sticks. Avital, who wrote all the material here, supplies strong melodies and intricately structured tunes that defy expectation, the music moving from hard-bop to complex African grooves. Solos arrive unexpectedly, the featured musicians offering refreshingly unpredictable moments. Qantar's acoustic sounds acknowledge history, but add a unique, forward-thinking approach worthy of any listener's time.

—Sean J. O'Connell

**New York Paradox:** Shabazi; Zohar Smiles; New York Paradox; Just Like The River Flows; It's All Good (Late '90s); Today's Blues; C'est Clair; Bushwick After Dark. (59:53)

**Personnel:** Omer Avital, bass; Asaf Yuria, tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone; Alexander Levin, tenor saxophone; Eden Ladin, piano; Ofri Nehemya, drums.

**Ordering info:** [jazzandpeople.com](http://jazzandpeople.com)



## Eva Novoa Satellite Quartet

FRESH SOUND NEW TALENT 587

★★★★

*Satellite Quartet*, the latest release from Brooklyn's Eva Novoa, is, first and foremost, aptly named. After all, the project is really out-there, even for someone who already has established herself as one of the more surprising pianist-composers on the scene.

A recording about "seeking new worlds of expression," *Satellite* is magically innovative, reaching past the furthest limits of imagination, but sometimes overly so. While some magnificently creative improvisations are offered up, they often ring random and hollow. We're meandering for meandering's sake, with very few collective resolutions or points of understanding to provide a tether to tradition. That said, there are some shining moments of connection: "Satellite Earth" is the strongest song here, offering an incisive straight-eighth melody that stair-steps over a jazz-funk groove and angular chord pattern. Novoa and company eventually proceed to deconstruct the familiar patterns and reconstruct something new from the leftover parts. It lands brilliantly, because listeners were privy to the process.

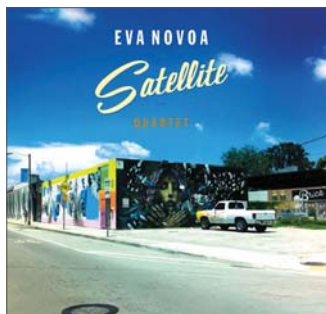
Still, *Satellite* as a whole is stubbornly open-ended. Fans of deeply "out" music likely will enjoy "Inefficient 39T" and its intoxicating on-edge quality. But for listeners who appreciate a nod to the familiar, *Satellite* could present as a shock of directionless electricity.

—Alexa Peters

**Satellite Quartet:** Three Nine Turner; Interim Song; Inefficient 39T; Satellite Earth; Big Moose Road; 203. (51:04)

**Personnel:** Eva Novoa, piano; Rainer Davies, guitar; Kenneth Jimenez, bass; Arturo Garcia, drums.

**Ordering info:** [freshsoundrecords.com](http://freshsoundrecords.com)



## Dave Stryker & WDR Big Band Blue Soul

STRIKEZONE 8820

★★★★½

There's a lot to be skeptical about in this summit of guitarist Dave Stryker, tenor saxophonist/composer/arranger Bob Mintzer and the WDR Big Band. Eight of the nine tunes here appeared on previous Stryker albums, most of them recently; the other is a Mintzer original, "Aha," whose arrangement hasn't been at all altered from its initial 2012 recording.

Stryker's role on "Aha" seems particularly disposable: He doubles the reeds on the written themes and comps some chords during Mintzer's solo. The pieces from the guitarist's own catalog don't make much imagination evident, either. Mintzer puts more verve into Stryker's three originals than the cover material here, though not enough to carry a full album. Yet, the album does carry, because, dammit, it just sounds so good. Novelty in the orchestral arrangements isn't needed if you've got horns that sparkle like WDR's; every yelp and holler they offer on Marvin Gaye's "Trouble Man" makes it that much more engaging, with the undulating reed response giving it a smooth cohesion. It's all a good and necessary reminder that in jazz, it's not the material, it's the people who play it.

—Michael J. West

**Blue Soul:** Trouble Man; Aha; What's Going On; Came To Believe; Blues Strut; When Doves Cry; Wichita Lineman; Shadowboxing; Stan's Shuffle. (58:02)

**Personnel:** Dave Stryker, guitar; Johan Hörlén, Karolina Strassmayer, alto saxophone; Olivier Peters, Paul Heller, Bob Mintzer (2, 5, 9), tenor saxophone; Jens Neufang, baritone saxophone; Wim Both, Rob Bruynen, Andy Haderer, Ruud Breuls, trumpet; Ludwig Nuss, Raphael Klemm, Andy Hunter, trombone; Mattis Cederberg, bass trombone; Billy Test, piano, organ; John Goldsby, bass; Hans Dekker, drums.

**Ordering info:** [strikezonerecords.com](http://strikezonerecords.com)



## Gary Smulyan Our Contrafacts

STEEPLECHASE 31895

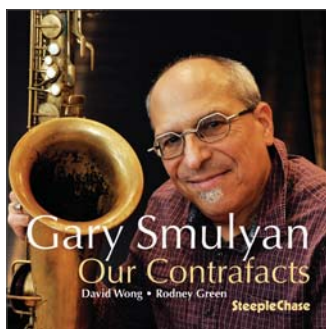
★★★★★

The idea of superimposing new melodies and lines on chord progressions of pre-existing compositions has been around since Tadd Dameron turned Cole Porter's "What Is This Thing Called Love" into the bebop staple "Hot House" and Bird tweaked Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm" into "Moose The Mooche." Smulyan follows suit with *Our Contrafacts*, a sequel to his 2018 SteepleChase date, *Alternative Contracts*. The formula is the same and the playing is similarly fantastic.

In a stripped down trio setting with drummer Rodney Green and bassist David Wong, Smulyan offers new ideas on old themes, conveying them in bold, expressive tones on his baritone saxophone. "Drink Up," a hip stop-time riff on "Angel Eyes," has the leader blowing with gusto and bluesy, hard-boppish authority. On an energized romp through "Homebody," based on "You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To," Smulyan and Wong go toe-to-toe on the chops-busting Tristano-like line, with the bassist demonstrating some impressive arco work and Smulyan unleashing some of his most potent soloing of the program.

Listeners can play their own guessing game in regard to the contrafacts' sources while still savoring those deep, robust tones and double-timed lines from Smulyan's horn along the way.

—Bill Milkowski



**Our Contrafacts:** Quarter Blues; Drink Up; Homebody; It Happens; Miles Tones; Good Riddance; How Deep; Tritonious Monk; What's Her Name; Sourpuss. (66:23)

**Personnel:** Gary Smulyan, baritone saxophone; David Wong, bass; Rodney Green, drums.

**Ordering info:** [steeplechase.dk](http://steeplechase.dk)

## Manuel Valera Trio Live At L'Osons Jazz Club

JAMMIN'COLORS 20-002-2

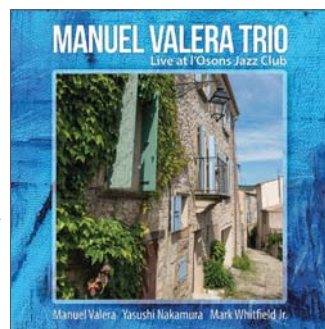
★★★★

*Live At L'Osons Jazz Club* puts on display the delightful chemistry of Manuel Valera's trio. And while the pianist, bassist Yasushi Nakamura and drummer Mark Whitfield Jr. have a history of performing together, this date captures the ensemble performing for the first time in this configuration.

Much of the album is recorded with noteworthy clarity and never gets bogged down with ambient distractions. Still, sonic subtleties, like the natural buzz from Nakamura's bold pizzicato midway through the opening "Sun Prelude I (Mercury: The Messenger)," highlight characteristics of these songs that wouldn't necessarily shine through in the studio. The trio's many tonal colors run together fluidly, like watercolors blending on paper; Whitfield moves with precision among his floor and rack toms during a frenetic solo on "Evidence." It's in sections like these that Valera's grace at the piano creates the strongest contrast. His softer, more flowing approach offers a refreshing stylistic change against the familiar accentuated style of the Thelonious Monk composition.

Listening to this live disc won't supplant the visceral feel of a live gig, but it's a welcome way to explore Valera's repertoire.

—Kira Grunenberg



**Live At L'Osons Jazz Club:** Sun Prelude I (Mercury: The Messenger); From The Ashes; Evidence; Ballade; Mirage; Darn That Dream; Tres Palabras; Neptune; All Of You. (65:56)

**Personnel:** Manuel Valera, piano; Yasushi Nakamura, bass; Mark Whitfield Jr., drums.

**Ordering info:** [jammincolors.com](http://jammincolors.com)



# BLUE NOTE®



**AMBROSE AKINMUSIRE**  
**ON THE TENDER SPOT OF**  
**EVERY CALOUSED MOMENT**

**AMBROSE AKINMUSIRE** follows his acclaimed, genre-busting best-of-2018 manifesto *Origami Harvest* with another visionary statement on his new album *on the tender spot of every caloused moment*, which finds the trumpeter examining blackness on an uncompromising set of modern jazz laced with a heavy feeling of the blues. The album presents 11 new compositions by Akinmusire and features his quartet with pianist **SAM HARRIS**, bassist **HARISH RAGHAVAN**, and drummer **JUSTIN BROWN** with guest vocals from **GENEVIEVE ARTADI** and **JESUS DIAZ**.



**NORAH JONES**  
**PICK ME UP OFF THE FLOOR**

**NORAH JONES'** seventh solo studio album grew out of her acclaimed singles series, as the unreleased songs unexpectedly congealed into an album of tremendous depth and beauty. Featuring a range of collaborators from **BRIAN BLADE** to **JEFF TWEEDY**, *Pick Me Up Off The Floor* is connected by the sly groove of her piano trios, lyrics that confront loss and portend hope, and a mood that leans into darkness before ultimately finding the light.



**GOGO PENGUIN**  
**GOGO PENGUIN**

The Mercury Prize nominated instrumental trio from Manchester, England consisting of pianist **CHRIS ILLINGWORTH**, drummer **ROB TURNER**, and bassist **NICK BLACKA**—have enjoyed a success matched by precious few instrumental groups post-millennium. Now back with their self-titled album out on May 1st, which signifies their conviction that they've arrived at a point they've always striven for by fusing jazz, classical and electronic influences with a thirst for innovation.



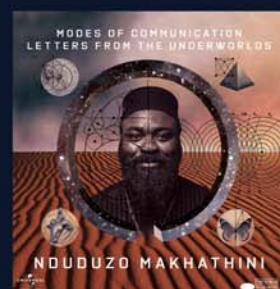
**KANDACE SPRINGS**  
**THE WOMEN WHO RAISED ME**

Singer and pianist **KANDACE SPRINGS** pays tribute to the great female singers who influenced her growing up with this stirring collection of songs by Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Nina Simone, Carmen McRae, Roberta Flack, Dusty Springfield, Astrud Gilberto, Bonnie Raitt, Sade, Lauryn Hill, Norah Jones, and Diana Krall. Produced by **LARRY KLEIN**, the album features guest appearances by **NORAH JONES**, **CHRISTIAN MCBRIDE**, **DAVID SANBORN** & more.



**ART BLAKEY**  
**& THE JAZZ MESSENGERS**  
**JUST COOLIN'**

A never-before-released studio album by **ART BLAKEY & THE JAZZ MESSENGERS** recorded at Rudy Van Gelder's Hackensack, New Jersey studio on March 8, 1959, and featuring the legendary drummer—whose centennial is being celebrated this year—along with trumpeter **LEE MORGAN**, tenor saxophonist **HANK MOBLEY**, pianist **BOBBY TIMMONS**, and bassist **JYMIE MERRITT**. The 6-song set includes 2 previously unissued compositions: "Quick Trick" and "Jimerick."



**NDUDUZO MAKHATHINI**  
**MODES OF COMMUNICATION**

After collaborations with Wynton Marsalis and Shabaka Hutchings, the visionary South African pianist and composer **NDUDUZO MAKHATHINI** is set to release his Blue Note debut *Modes of Communication: Letters from the Underworlds*, an expansive album in which lyrical, plaintive horns mingle with percussion, pained yelps and urgent lyrics in a musical exploration of ancestral realms.

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## Brian Landrus

### *For Now*

BLUELAND 2020

★★★★★

*For Now* is a special kind of baritone saxophone album. True, it would be difficult for Brian Landrus not to attain that distinction with the dream rhythm section of pianist Fred Hersch, bassist Drew Gress and drummer Billy Hart. But what sets the recording apart is the leader's exquisite and seamless interaction with a string quartet—and the compelling role the strings play. *For Now* is largely a collection of love songs, most of them by Landrus. Some are radiant, others bittersweet, all of them shimmering with nuance. The strings are sometimes distant, even faint, as if speaking from the past or out of a dream. But on tunes like "Invitation," dreamy gives way to swinging, as the band circles the themes with a kind of centrifugal power. On his solo bass clarinet reading of Thelonious Monk's "Round Midnight," Landrus maximizes his space with animated trills, tonal effects and a dab of klezmer. For "The Signs"—a medium-swing, classic-sounding original—the unison lines by Landrus and trumpeter Michael Rodriguez sit elegantly in the pocket. *For Now* concludes with a transfixing duo reading of "Ruby, My Dear" by Landrus and Hersch—a Monk specialist who, according to a press release, had never publicly played this classic. He picked an excellent place, and an excellent artist, to start with.

—Lloyd Sachs

**For Now:** The Signs; Clarity In Time; The Miss; JJ; For Now; 'Round Midnight; Invitation; For Whom I Imagined; The Night Of Change; The Second Time; Her Smile; The Wait; Ruby, My Dear. (60:56)

**Personnel:** Brian Landrus, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet, alto flute, C flute; Fred Hersch, piano; Drew Gress, bass; Billy Hart, drums; Michael Rodriguez, trumpet; Sara Caswell, Joyce Hammann, violin; Lois Martin, viola; Jody Redhage-Ferber, cello.

**Ordering info:** [bluebandrecords.com](http://bluebandrecords.com)



## Carolina Calvache

### *Vida Profunda*

SUNNYSIDE 1587

★★★★

Jazz vocals are, at their most basic level, a blend of music and poetry. With the arrangements on just her second album, *Vida Profunda*, pianist Carolina Calvache explores that truth to lovely effect, inspired by the words from a weighty roster of poets.

The title track, based on a work by Colombian poet Porfirio Barba-Jacob, features a yearning performance by Marta Gomez against a backdrop of soaring strings and Calvache's piano. The poem speaks to the vulnerability of mankind, and that sentiment rings through its deliberate pacing. The track gives way to "Pájaro Yo," which features Sofia Ribeiro interpreting the words of Pablo Neruda against delicately drawn runs by flutist Hadar Noiberg. Amid a delicate churn of strings, "El Rastro" finds vocalist Sara Serpa elegantly gliding through lyrics drawn from Colombian author Gabriel García Márquez, and provides wordless counterweight to the flourishes of "Hope." In these pieces, the literary-minded Calvache proves to have stories of her own to share as well.

—Chris Barton



**Vida Profunda:** Vida Profunda; Pájaro Yo; Te Conoci De Nuevo; Sin Un Despido; Hope; Childhood Retreat; Stella; El Rastro; No Te Vi Creer; Let Me Come With You. (42:14)

**Personnel:** Carolina Calvache, piano; Johnathan Blake, drums; Keita Ogawa, drums, percussion; Samuel Torres, percussion; Petros Klampanis, Peter Slavov, Ricky Rodriguez, bass; Tomoko Omura, Adda Kridler, Annalies Place, Leonor Falcon, Ben Russell, violin; Jocelin Pan, Allyn Clare, viola; Diego Garcia, Brian Sanders, cello; Hadar Noiberg, flute; Katie Scheele, oboe; Achilles Liarmakopoulos, trombone; Paul Won Jin Cho, bass clarinet; Grégoire Maret, harmonica; Michael Rodriguez, trumpet; Marta Gomez, Sofia Ribeiro, Rubén Blades, Claudia Acuña, Sara Serpa, Aubrey Johnson, Haydee Milanes, Lara Bello, Luba Mason, vocals.

**Ordering info:** [sunnysiderecords.com](http://sunnysiderecords.com)

## Jonathan Barber

### & Vision Ahead

#### *Legacy Holder*

VISION AHEAD MUSIC

★★★★½

Jonathan Barber's star has been on the rise since his auspicious 2018 debut, *Vision Ahead*, and a 2019 tour in Pat Metheny's trio. The Hartford native's sophomore release, *Legacy Holder*, more than fulfills his promise, showcasing powerfully slick drumming within the context of adventurous writing that bears the unmistakable influence of *Atlantis*-era Wayne Shorter.

The reflective title track highlights some fluid improvising by guitarist Andrew Renfroe and builds toward exhilarating heights through old-school trading of eights between pianist Taber Gable and pungent-toned altoist Godwin Louis. The runaway uptempo swinger "Major" is charged by Barber's forward momentum on the kit in tandem with Matt Dwonszyk's insistent walking bass lines. "Son Of Hartford" opens with Barber slamming against some angular arpeggiated unisons from Renfroe and Louis, recalling classic Mahavishnu Orchestra. If Barber is indeed a legacy holder, he's continuing in a lineage of adventurous drummer-composers spanning Tony Williams and Terri Lyne Carrington. There's an abundance of heightened energy and new ideas here, executed with pristine precision by the bandleader and his future-facing ensemble.

—Bill Milkowski



**Legacy Holder:** The Call; Find My Way; Legacy Holder; Haikus; Major; Seconds & Seasons; Son Of Hartford; 29. (43:13)

**Personnel:** Jonathan Barber, drums; Taber Gable, keyboards; Andrew Renfroe, guitar; Godwin Louis, alto saxophone; Matt Dwonszyk, bass; Mar Vilaseca (fl), vocals, piano.

**Ordering info:** [jonathanbarbermusic.com](http://jonathanbarbermusic.com)

## Joe Fiedler's

### Big Sackbut

#### *Live In Graz*

MULTIPHONICS 005

★★★★★

Given its utility for making rudely corporeal sounds, the trombone is the perfect instrument for a musician with a sense of humor. It's fair to speculate that Joe Fiedler might have been a class clown, but the kind who also aced tests. Nearly a decade ago, inspired by all-reed combos like the World Saxophone Quartet, he named this group of three trombones and one tuba "Big Sackbut," after his instrument's Renaissance-era ancestor. *Live In Graz* is the troupe's third album.

Befitting a musician who's also the musical director of *Sesame Street*, Fiedler knows how to balance good humor with ample professionalism. Tubaist Jon Sass begins the disc's opening tune, "Peekskill," alone. He transitions easily from a waddle to a funky bump, and then the three trombones reply in immaculate formation. This music might simply sound jolly, but it's still as precisely calibrated as a Swiss watch.

The program, which boasts a cover of Charles Mingus' "Devil Woman," also features three compositions by the late trombonist Roswell Rudd: "Bethesda Fountain" and "Yankee No-How" provide opportunities for the group to do a trick that all-horn bands seem to love—pull off a challenging rhythm without a rhythm section.

—Bill Meyer



**Live In Graz:** Peekskill; Devil Woman; I'm In; Bethesda Fountain; Ways; Yankee No-How; Chicken; Su Blah Blah Buh Sib; Tonal Proportions. (60:15)

**Personnel:** Joe Fiedler, Ryan Keberle, Luis Bonilla, trombone; Jon Sass, tuba.

**Ordering info:** [joefiedler.com](http://joefiedler.com)





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# Sam Newsome's Soprano Sax Solo on 'Sub Saharan Dialogue'

Performing a piece as an unaccompanied horn player is quite a feat. To record an entire album like this—without the ability to play chords and accompany oneself—shows tremendous ambition and requires some real ingenuity. To do multiple albums this way displays vision, dedication and maybe a little insanity. Sam Newsome has taken on this challenge, and successfully applied it to the soprano saxophone, creating varied and inventive ways to use the instrument so that we don't miss any other instruments.

One example is the tune “Sub Saharan Dialogue” from Newsome’s 2012 album *The*

*Art Of The Soprano, Vol. 1*. His solo on this track is presented here in concert key.

By playing two low notes at the beginning of each two-measure phrase, Newsome has created a sort of de facto bass line for his solo. Of course, jumping up from these low notes to improvise in the upper octaves requires some serious skills, as well as the lung power required to keep this up for 48 measures with minimal breathing spaces.

Besides the soprano saxophone virtuosity on display here, there are other impressive aspects to this solo. One is how Newsome treats the implied harmonies.

At first glance, we have alternating eight-bar groups of A dorian and B $\flat$  dorian. But Newsome doesn't play it like it's just Am to Bm; he puts some effort into making the harmonies more ambiguous. He hints at this in the second bar, where he starts a line with notes that fit with Am7 and ends it with a D major arpeggio. His lines in measures 7 and 8 start out as more of an Em7 sound, and end with A and F $\sharp$ , which could imply the D chord that he played previously, but also could be heard as F $\sharp$ m or Am6. I think the point is that it could be any of those; it's undefined.

Measure 10 is another example. On the B $\flat$



minor, Newsome plays what is clearly a D $\flat$ maj7 arpeggio. However, D $\flat$ maj7 is also B $\flat$ m9, only without the B $\flat$ , so this isn't that far removed from the parent key. Bar 14 is the same, except Newsome also adds in the ninth (or the 11th, if you're viewing it from the B $\flat$  perspective), making it sound a bit further from B $\flat$ m. Repeating this idea four bars later is no accident. Notice how the scalar passage in measure 12 (which, traversing from C down to G, also adds to the ambiguity of the harmony) reappears in measures 15–16. Newsome also recycles the D $\flat$ maj9 idea in measure 28 and (sort of) in bars 31–32 (which we'll examine a little later).

Newsome also continues the polytonality, with the next A minor section showing a remarkable concept approach: In measure 18, he plays what clearly sounds like a B minor pentatonic lick. All the notes of B minor pentatonic exist within A dorian, so on one hand it's not "out." But at the same time, it makes it sound less like A minor and more like B minor, which are two very different things.

This gets taken up a notch in measures 23–24. Newsome plays descending seventh-chord arpeggios. The chords he plays—D7, Cmaj7 and Bm7—are again all part of the A dorian mode, but playing them as actual arpeggios makes it sound more like he's playing changes rather than playing modally. For this, the lack of a rhythm section actually serves him, as not having anyone else defining whether it's modal or not adds to the mystery of his playing.

As to recycling ideas, at the beginning of the next B $\flat$  dorian section (bars 25–26), Newsome reuses his idea of descending arpeggios within the scale, but here does it mostly with triads (D $\flat$ maj7 to E $\flat$  to D $\flat$ ). He repurposes this idea, as well, playing the D $\flat$ maj7 without the fifth in bar 31, and in the next measure including the #11, while still leaving out the fifth. This makes the sense of the harmony even less defined.

Since Newsome is supplying his own accompaniment in the form of the repeated root notes at the start of every two-bar phrase, he keeps that resolutely consistent. To create contrasting rhythmic variety, notice how he doesn't start his improvisatory lines at the same time after that. There are places where he starts nearly right away, leaving only an eighth-note of silence (bars 5, 7, 13, 19, 21, 23, 25, 29, 31, 35, 37, 39 and 43), and less commonly waiting until the next bar before playing (bars 3–4, 11–12, 17–18, 27–28) and variations in between.

Even in this, there is some consistency, as the places where Newsome lets more time pass typically occur in the first two phrases on each scale. He tends to fill more space in the final two phrases, building up to the scale changes.

Also interesting is how Newsome never anticipates the changes. He seems to be hearing the bar lines as borders, never implying the next chord in his lines. Considering the harmonic vagueness of his lines, this helps to make the changes, as well as the rhythm, abundantly clear in a context where there are no rhythm section players to elucidate these elements.

Newsome's manipulation of range also tells a story. His first phrase stays low, only going up an octave from the bass note. But each subsequent phrase for the A dorian section pushes the boundary further, going up another fifth in bar 4, up to a high G in the following phrase and up another third after that. This last phrase also falls all the way down toward the bottom of the staff, balancing out all the climbing he's done

On the B $\flat$  dorian section that follows, Newsome starts from this bottom but quickly moves up to a high A $\flat$  (close to the ceiling he's set up), and next plays around a higher C (also

near this upper limit). His next two phrases mirror these in range, basically setting up a new upper limit.

This high point remains for the next 11 bars, but in measure 28 he crosses this border, ascending almost an additional octave up to a high G. This is a high point in his improvisation, and it occurs at almost the midpoint of the solo. The next two phrases work their way down, until at bar 34 we're at a middle B $\flat$ , which, with the exception of bar 40, becomes the ceiling for the next 10 bars.

Newsome doesn't just let us down softly, though. For the penultimate lick (bars 45–46) he quite suddenly hits close to that climax, and then plays in between the extremes he's set up for the closing statement. This last phrase has a nice symmetry, starting with A $\flat$ -to-F and then leading up to A $\flat$ -to-F an octave higher. **DB**

Jimi Durso is a guitarist and bassist based in the New York area. Visit him online at [jimidurso.com](http://jimidurso.com).

## Eastman Romeo-SC

*Tonal Versatility, Player Comfort*

Eastman's new Romeo-SC thinline features a completely original hollow-body design that delivers ergonomic comfort and a versatile tonal palette in an extremely lightweight package. It's the second offering in the company's Romeo line created in collaboration with master designer Otto D'Ambrosio, who said he wanted to build a guitar featuring significant ergonomic benefits that offer the player increased comfort.

With the exception of a feather tone bar to support the bridge and tailpiece, the Romeo-SC is basically a hollowbody guitar. The top is hand-carved solid spruce with sides and back of laminate mahogany. It is 14.75 inches at the lower bout and features a slim 1.75-inch depth. What sets this guitar apart is the unique body shape, which shifts everything toward the right side in relation to the player's body—making it extremely comfortable to hold while sitting or standing. It also shortens the reach required to access the lower frets, which, along with its 24.75-inch scale length, keeps everything in optimum playing position. The neck is solid maple with a traditional "C" profile providing easy, relaxed fingering across the fretboard.

According to D'Ambrosio, the goal was to expand the tonal palette of the new Romeo. While the original features two Lollar Imperial Humbucker pickups, the Romeo-SC utilizes a Seymour Duncan '59 Humbucker in the bridge position and a Seymour Duncan Vintage Stack in the neck position.

The guitar is striking in appearance, with an exclusive Red Burst high-gloss nitrocellulose finish framed by a five-ply ivoroid binding. An elongated, asymmetrical headstock completes the look.

Playing the Romeo-SC, I was immediately impressed with its light weight and how well balanced it is. It sits beautifully in your lap and also hangs evenly from a strap. The hollow body chamber provides an acous-



tic resonance that projects sufficiently for unplugged practicing. One of the cooler design elements is the angled neck heel, which enhances access to the higher frets. The two humbuckers are manipulated via a master volume and individual tone pots for each pickup, with a three-way toggle to go between neck, bridge or blended options.

The guitar plays wonderfully, with a solid setup and easy action across the board. Each pickup offers a unique color; I loved the contrast between the standard humbucker and the lipstick-style vintage stack. The Romeo-SC can transition from creamy smooth and mellow to glass-shattering bite while still retaining note clarity and string separation. It's a sweet and versatile guitar that feels as good as it sounds.

—Keith Baumann

[eastmanguitars.com](http://eastmanguitars.com)

## MusicMedic Wilmington Alto

*Simple, Solid Saxophone Plays with Ease, Stays in Adjustment*

The Wilmington Alto Saxophone has gone through many improvements since MusicMedic—the online resource for woodwind repair tools and supplies under the direction of owner/founder Curt Altarac—first began limited production runs of the instrument several years ago. The result is a mechanically sound horn that produces highly desirable tones suitable for a wide variety of musical styles. It was designed and refined by a team of technicians determined to create a simple, solid alto that will last for years and remain ultimately repairable.

The body and neck of the Wilmington alto are crafted of thick, solid nickel, which makes the instrument resistant to bending and denting, and helps maintain consistency of adjustment. The construction minimizes body vibration, allowing the air column to resonate without any interference from the tube itself. The horn's interior bore is designed to produce a tone that's rich in harmonic color, and gives just enough resistance for professional and advancing players to work with. Toneholes are placed superbly, resulting in excellent intonation.

Practical features abound on the Wilmington alto. Its stainless steel screws will never rust or corrode. Rigid key contacts installed on the side B-flat, side C and side E keys prevent bending and keep things in alignment. A similar contact on the G key protects its long lever arm (which frequently becomes bent on other saxophones), contributing to an over-

all solid feel with no flex. A low C-sharp key foot adds to the stability by preventing the key from bouncing—effectively eliminating a distraction that's common among almost all modern saxophones. The octave mechanism has been modified so that the stem is flush with the top of the receiver—it doesn't stick out beyond the top of the horn's body—making it much less susceptible to damage. The touch pieces on the left-hand palm keys have been raised and reoriented for comfort and accessibility, so there's less of a need for players to add risers in order to alleviate awkward ergonomics.

Each saxophone in the Wilmington line is set up by MusicMedic's Sax ProShop prior to shipping. The alto model I play-tested during an outdoor jazz quartet gig arrived ready to go, right out of the case. It felt great under the fingers, sounded wonderful and projected with ease.

—Ed Enright

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More info: [casiomusicgear.com](http://casiomusicgear.com)

## 2. String Advancements

D'Addario has introduced D'Addario X, the company's most technologically advanced series of strings created for electric, acoustic, classical, bass and folk instruments. D'Addario XT, the first portfolio in the series, combines carbon steel cores and the company's most popular alloys for extended-life treatment. D'Addario XT will be available for acoustic, electric, bass and classical guitar, as well as mandolin and banjo.

More info: [daddario.com](http://daddario.com)

## 3. Sizzle & Slosh

Tama has launched the Sizzle Touch Hi-Hat Drop Clutch, which gives drummers better control over their hi-hat sound. The Drop Clutch's variable setting controls the amount of "sizzle" on the open hat sound. Setting the Drop Clutch to a more closed position creates a tighter sound, while the open position suits players looking for a greater "slosh" effect.

More info: [tama.com](http://tama.com)

## 4. Interface/Controller

The PreSonus ioStation 24c audio interface and production controller delivers the tools needed for audio recording and DAW control in a compact desktop design. It combines the recording capabilities of the company's Studio series USB-C 24-bit, 192kHz audio interfaces with the functionality of its FaderPort USB production controller and features two of PreSonus' XMAX Class A analog mic preamps, along with 24-bit, 192kHz analog-to-digital converters. More info: [presonus.com](http://presonus.com)

## 5. Rhythmic Skills-BUILDER

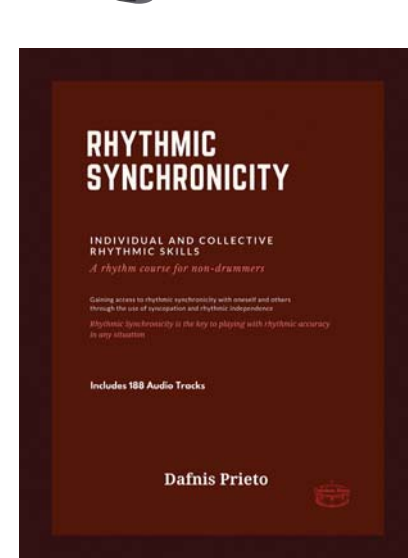
Percussionist, drummer and educator Dafnis Prieto has released a new book, *Rhythmic Synchronicity: Individual and Collective Rhythmic Skills* (Dafnison Music). Designed for non-drummers and inspired by a course of the same name that Prieto developed at the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami, the 56-page book guides the reader through playing with rhythmic accuracy and synchronization in any situation. It includes download codes for 188 audio tracks.

More info: [dafnisonmusic.com](http://dafnisonmusic.com)

## 6. Potter's Piece

RS Berkeley has introduced the CPT066 Chris Potter Elite Series Alto Saxophone Mouthpiece. Developed with jazz saxophonist Chris Potter, the versatile mouthpiece is fashioned from hard rubber and features a .066-inch tip opening.

More info: [rsberkeley.com](http://rsberkeley.com)





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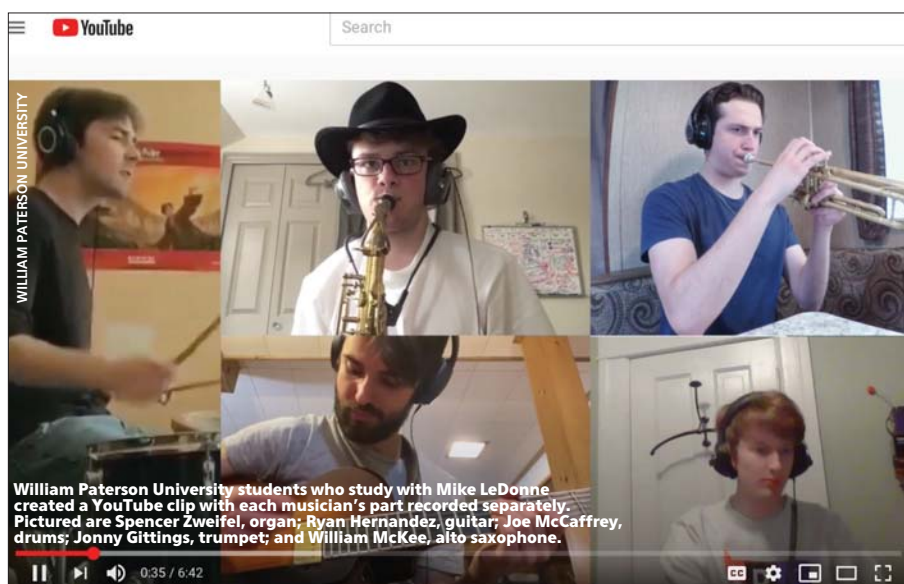
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*Beyond the Notes*



# Programs Restructure To Address COVID-19

## IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR AN AMERICAN

bellwether of the coronavirus pandemic, look no further than the country's jazz education programs, many of which include foreign students.

"We had Chinese students returning after the holidays, early in the new year," said Joyce Griggs, executive vice president and provost of the Manhattan School of Music. "We became aware of the outbreak of this unknown disease in Wuhan, so we began communicating in mid-January, to ensure students knew that everyone was safe."

Six weeks later, on March 1, New York State confirmed its first case of the coronavirus.

"By March 12, we were out of our building," Griggs recalled.

Twenty miles to the east, on the campus of William Paterson University in Wayne, New Jersey, Jazz Studies Coordinator David Demsey and Director of Jazz Studies Bill Charlap also scrambled to respond to the escalating crisis.

"Everything needed to be regearred, rebuilt, restructured," Charlap said. "Faculty had a week to do it."

Across the country, at California State University, Sacramento, Director of Jazz Studies Steve Roach was facing the same challenge.

"All ensembles and live performance were halted," Roach said. "The department had to get very proactive about helping our students finish what they needed to finish."

A now-familiar pattern of Zoom sessions and digital file transfers took the place of band-room lessons and face-to-face instruction. At MSM,

administrators reached out to the school's faculty to assess what equipment they possessed, along with how much technical know-how they had. A peer-to-peer help network was established, and the school staffed a technical support call center six days a week.

In the Midwest, at Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin, faculty members felt that consistency was key to maintaining some semblance of normalcy during those weeks.

"It was helpful to try and keep students' online-learning schedule close to the original course schedule and in-person learning," Jazz Studies Chair José Encarnación wrote in an email. "I started off class by checking in, offering support via Zoom. If a student expressed concern or difficulty with routines, I provided support and/or resources."

At William Paterson, Charlap ensured that students received interactive materials to help them continue learning pieces by ear and working on other requirements.

"The biggest challenge was continuing our work with our ensembles," Charlap said.

"For ensembles, there are definitely latency issues with Zoom and other online platforms," Roach said. "Drums present a real issue."

From her home in upstate New York, trumpeter Ingrid Jensen, the newly appointed interim associate dean and director of jazz arts at MSM, said, "As well as latency, the challenge is keeping students engaged, ensuring that everyone is getting what they need. The composition class went really well, because I could call up charts

and share them [via videoconferencing] or move to my keyboard to demonstrate something, or just pick up my horn and play. I think students learned more in that context."

Charlap said some of the results from the new reality of dispersed learning surprised him. "Our students are so adept at using media that you listen to some of the things that they did—one of them is in Korea, another is in Peoria and a third is in central New Jersey—and they sound like they were in a recording studio and did this in real time."

Regardless of location, students were able to finish the semester, and some administrators noted an actual rise in participation and enthusiasm.

"The students really had a good attitude about the whole thing," Roach said. "They, and the department, really pulled together."

"Our students have really shown up—for themselves and each other," Demsey said. "We had 100 percent attendance during the final weeks of the term."

While faculty strove to keep students on track as they completed their coursework, senior management at the institutions looked further down the road.

"We need to be prepared for both in-person and remote learning," Griggs said, regarding classes in the fall. "Once we understand fully what the options are, we can look at establishing policy and protocols."

In California, the situation has been complicated by the state's decision to keep its 23 state university campuses closed for the rest of 2020.

"We're going to have to get a lot more creative," Roach said, noting that Sacramento State has applied for an exemption for some of its creative arts programs, including jazz ensemble rehearsals. "We'll need to conform to state health regulations and figure out how students will enter and exit the band room."

"Our goal right now is to plan for everything," Demsey said. "That's all we can do. Otherwise, we just spin ourselves into the ground, worrying about everything."

Encarnación expressed a common thought: "Whether students are still distance-learning or on campus, the overall well-being of the student body is primary. Students' physical, mental and emotional health must be [protected], so we can best serve them with an education that is high quality and one they deserve."

"Despite the challenges, we haven't lost any of the intimacy that we strive to have with our students and faculty," Charlap said. "Of course, physically, we're all in a much different arena right now. Everybody is trying to manage that arena with as much humanity as possible."

—James Hale



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## Kirk Whalum

During his four-decade career, Grammy-winning saxophonist Kirk Whalum has played numerous genres of music, infusing it all with his gospel and Memphis-soul roots. As a collaborator, he was worked with such high-profile artists as Whitney Houston, Marcus Miller, Bob James and Quincy Jones.

His latest leader album, *Humanité* (Artistry/Mack Avenue), was recorded in Paris, Tokyo, Johannesburg and other cities around the world with an international cast of supporting players and a theme of global peace.

For his first Blindfold Test, Whalum listened to unidentified tracks that were sent to him online. He commented on the music via Zoom from his home studio in Memphis, where he was on lockdown with his family and working on a Christmas album with British producer/trumpeter James McMillan.

### Booker T. Jones

"Rent Party" (*The Road From Memphis*, Anti-, 2011) Jones, organ; Dennis Coffey, guitar; Kirk Douglas, guitar; Owen Biddle, bass; Stewart Killen, percussion; Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson, drums.

Let me think. I wouldn't say Joey D. because by [now] he would've been playing a lot of notes. [after] Oh, really? ... What I know so well of his, he played 50 years ago. I've had a chance to hang with him a little bit. I was CEO of the Stax Museum and Stax Music Academy for a couple of years. We had a chance to host him.

Growing up in Memphis, in terms of radio, is a singular experience. To us, that was the world. I heard Hank Crawford a lot more than probably the average person did, because this is Memphis. I just thought everybody played like that, so that's how I tried to play. And that's the same with Stax Records and Stax artists, and for sure Booker T.; "Green Onions"—my mom played that every Saturday as she cleaned up.

### Keiko Matsui

"Light In The Rain" (*No Borders*, MCA, 1990) Matsui, keyboards; Eric Marienthal, saxophone; Nathan East, bass; Carlos Vega, drums; Paul Jackson Jr., guitar; Bill Armstrong, trumpet; Steve Holtman, trombone; Derek Nakamoto, synthesizer; Lenny Castro, percussion; Michael Fisher, percussion.

That's Paul Jackson Jr. on guitar. There's a crispness and peculiarity to his sound that you can hear. And he has a melodic approach, too, that's tell-tale. Sounds like Dave Koz? Everette Harp? Wow, OK. Michael Paulo?

I give—that's my three. [Hint: *The keyboard player was featured on your last album*] Keiko? With Keiko, oh, man, it's hard to put my finger on. But there's a purity and a benevolence to her music. It just washes over you. Sometimes in jazz, what we consider to be impressive or badass, sometimes it's a ruse. What's really effective—and what's really beautiful and impactful, I should say—is something that comes straight from the heart.

### Christian McBride's New Jawn

"The Middle Man" (*Christian McBride's New Jawn*, Mack Avenue, 2018) McBride, bass; Josh Evans, trumpet; Marcus Strickland, tenor saxophone; Nasheet Waits, drums.

That [saxophonist] could be a lot of people. That sounds like Christian on bass. Chris Potter on tenor? [after] OK, I wouldn't have known [Strickland's] playing. Very cool, though. At least I got Christian. There's a certain kind of something he does. It's the way he plays time. There's a hump. He's pushing along in a certain way that he kind of doesn't need the drummer. It's a lovely gig for drummers to play with him. They're like, "Oh, he's got the time. I'll just have fun."



I've worked with [Christian] a lot. The first time I worked with him, Bob James and I did a record called *Joined At The Hip*. Then he and I toured together with the Mack Avenue SuperBand.

Christian is like Miles and so many others, like Marcus Miller, who legitimizes the broader contextualization of what it is to be a great musician.

### Bill Charlap/Elvis Costello/Joe Lovano

"My Flame Burns Blue" (*Billy Strayhorn: Lush Life*, Blue Note, 2007) Costello, vocal; Charlap, piano; Lovano, tenor saxophone.

I was gonna say Kurt Elling, but he wouldn't have been using that much vibrato. It's a recent recording, I'm gonna say that. It's not legacy. [On saxophone], my first guess is ... Joe Lovano. Who's the singer? [after] Oh, I never would have guessed that.

### Wayne Shorter

"Ponta de Areia" (*Native Dancer*, Columbia, 1975) Shorter, soprano saxophone; Milton Nascimento, vocals; Jay Graydon, guitar; Herbie Hancock, piano; Wagner Tiso, organ, electric piano; Dave McDaniel, bass; Roberto Silva, drums.

Brazilian singer. Gilberto Gil? Ivan Lins? It's an older track, and I've heard it before. [listens more] So, that's Wayne Shorter.

What's the name of that song? Got it. Beautiful. That made my day, actually. When I was in college, listening to him at Texas Southern in Houston—where Ronnie Laws and Wilton Felder and so many great musicians went—the exemplar at that point in my development was Sonny Stitt. If you can play like Sonny Stitt, you're good.

But then here's Wayne Shorter playing kind of off the beat and sometimes out of tune. And why is it that we love him? And I began to figure it out. Having great technique is its own gift. I think it's important to put those things in perspective. Hearing Wayne Shorter, really hearing him and understanding a little bit more what his gift is, freed me to just be who I am.

### Cannonball Adderley Quintet

"You're A Weaver Of Dreams" (*Cannonball Adderley Quintet In Chicago*, Mercury, 1959) John Coltrane, tenor saxophone; Wynton Kelly, piano; Paul Chambers, bass; Jimmy Cobb, drums.

That's Coltrane. Wynton Kelly. [Coltrane] was always pleasantly sharp. Just right on top of the pitch. How beautiful. Trane—God bless him. I was able to tour his house [in High Point, North Carolina], about two months ago. In fact, the last day I was out on tour before the pandemic, I was in High Point, and I took pictures in his house. It's not open yet to the public, so it was a privilege for me to go in there.

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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saxophonists from far and wide were flocking to Jody's New York loft to buy the mouthpieces and in 2000 JodyJazz Inc was formally established. Over the next few years Jody worked tirelessly to create numerous new models and develop the line and in 2008 he moved the operation to its current home in Savannah, Georgia greatly expanding his manufacturing capabilities and capacity. Today JodyJazz mouthpieces are played by many of the world's leading saxophonists and are highly prized by players in all countries across the globe.



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