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& Flutist of the Year

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Guitarist of the Year

Kurt Elling & Samara Joy
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for Jazz, Blues
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of the Year

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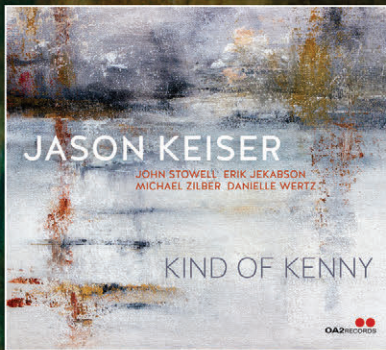
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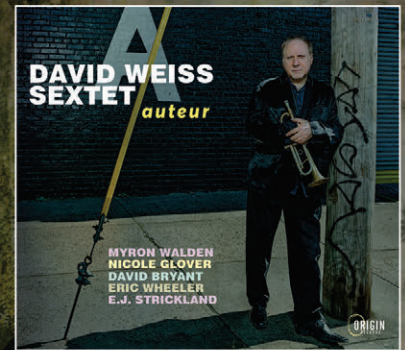
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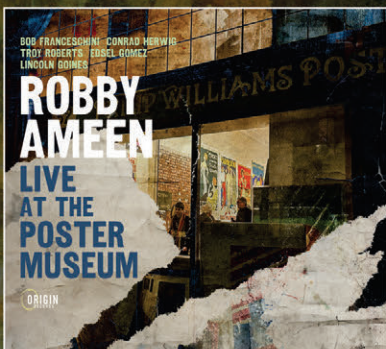
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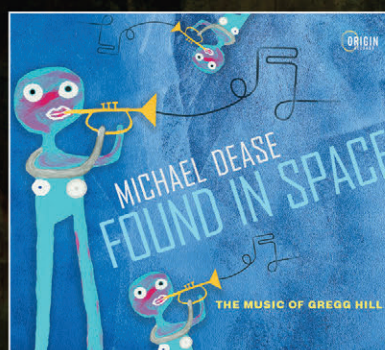
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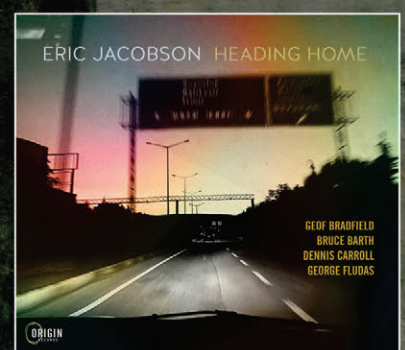
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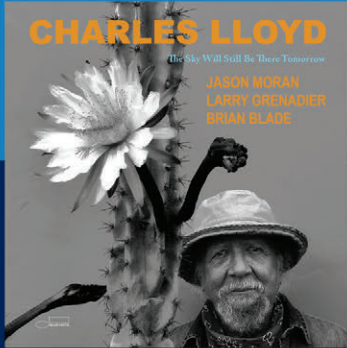
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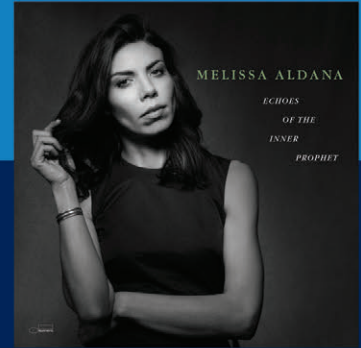
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2024



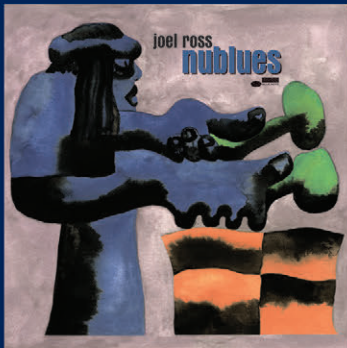
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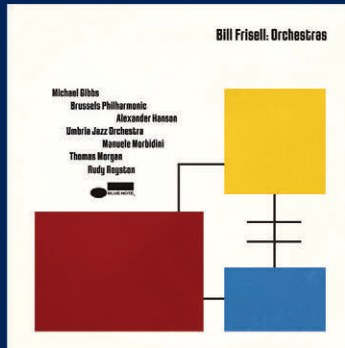
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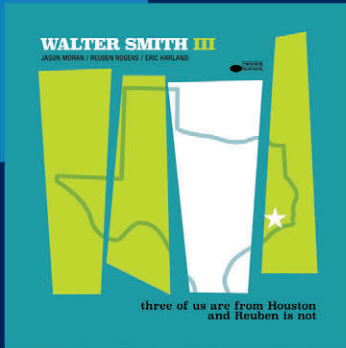
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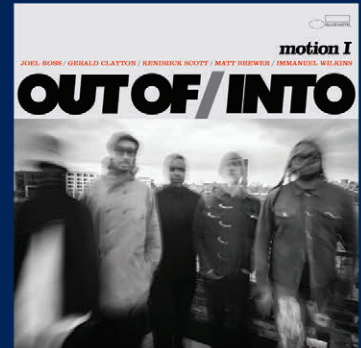
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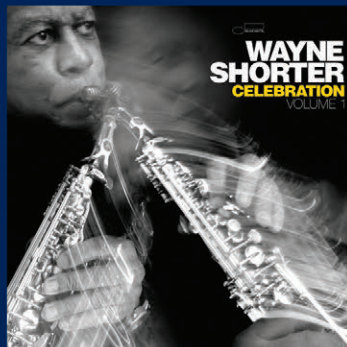
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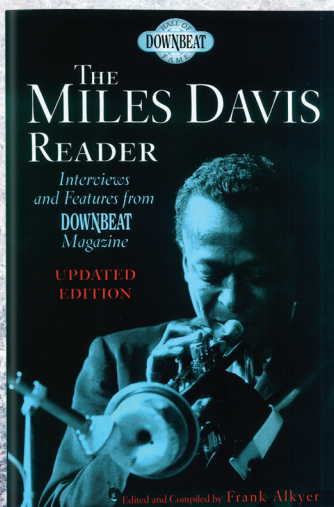
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DECEMBER 2024

Inside

ON THE COVER

DownBeat Hall of Fame Honoree

26 John McLaughlin

John McLaughlin Embraces the World

BY PHILLIP LUTZ

At 15, living near a larger northern city, Newcastle, John McLaughlin gained access to DownBeat, feeding his nascent interest in jazz. "To a teenager living in the upper reaches of northeastern England," he said in accepting his induction into the DownBeat Hall of Fame, "it was the holy grail." Welcome to the Hall of Fame.



Kurt Elling, center, performing with Charlie Hunter, right, in SuperBlue. He may be the most driven vocalist in jazz, seeking new sounds and experiences far and wide.

Cover photo by Mark Sheldon

89TH ANNUAL DOWNBEAT READERS POLL

32 Charles Lloyd *Jazz Artist of the Year*

BY FRANK ALKYER

34 Russell Malone *Guitarist of the Year*

BY YOSHI KATO

38 Kurt Elling *Male Vocalist of the Year*

BY DAN OUELLETTE

42 Samara Joy *Female Vocalist of the Year*

BY SUZANNE LORGE

44 Albums of the Year

45 Historical Albums of the Year

46 Complete Readers Poll listings

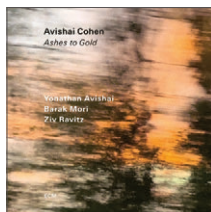
SPECIAL SECTION

71 Holiday Gift Guide

- 72 Boxes of Smiles!
- 74 Vinyl, Please & More
- 78 Holiday Tunes
- 82 Something for Jazz Readers
- 84 Great Gear Gifts



60 Godwin Louis



62 Avishai Cohen



64 Milton Suggs



68 Geoffrey Keezer

DEPARTMENTS

- 15 **The Beat**
- 15 Tord Gustavsen
- 18 Ryan Keberle
- 20 Joel Harrison
- 22 Music Maker Foundation
- 24 Final Bar: Claire Daly
- 25 Final Bar: Dennis Tini

- 57 **Reviews**
- 59 Hot Box
- 62 Historical

- 88 **Master Class**
- Ken Schaphorst on George Russell's Theories & Compositional Approach

- 92 **Transcription**
- Kenny Garrett's EWI Solo on 'Divergence Tu-dah'
- BY JIMI DURSO

- 98 **Blindfold Test**
- Trumpeter Fabrizio Bozzo
- BY ASHLEY KAHN

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First Take > BY FRANK ALKYER



Our 2024 Hall of Fame inductees, John McLaughlin and Charles Lloyd, backstage at the Lobero Theatre in Santa Barbara in 2007.

An Ode to Singing Hearts

WELCOME TO THE 89TH ANNUAL READERS POLL ISSUE.

When writer Phillip Lutz submitted his feature on John McLaughlin, the readers choice for the DownBeat Hall of Fame this year, he asked if we would include a poem that Mr. McLaughlin had written. It's not something that we do, but this is John *freaking* McLaughlin. We had to make it work!

And then things began to fall in place making this column the perfect space to publish Mr. McLaughlin's words.

"Poetry comes right after music in expressing the inexpressible," McLaughlin told Lutz, then followed by saying he most likely wrote it this year coming out of meditation.

"It is unclear to whom or to what he is addressing the sentiment," said Lutz. "But it could very well be the guitar itself."

Maybe, but in the context of these pages, it means much more. Here are his words.

*I have been here only a few brief seconds of your eternal existence
A day will come when I will no longer witness your ineffable beauty and mystery:
Today my heart sings...*

—John McLaughlin

Today this heart sings, too, because DownBeat was able to recognize two true masters of this art form this year with their induction into the Hall of Fame, while they are here on earth, and we can celebrate their contributions. Charles Lloyd, who received four honors in Readers Poll (see page 32), was the choice for Hall of Fame back in August with

the 72nd Annual DownBeat Critics Poll. And now, Mr. McLaughlin takes his rightful place as the 172nd member of the DownBeat Hall of Fame.

When McLaughlin mentions being here for "only a few brief seconds," it reminds us of the very temporary nature of this life. The same is true throughout this issue. On page 34, the readers pay a deep tribute to the late Russell Malone, the Readers Poll Guitarist of the Year. Mr. Malone passed away in August at the age of 63. It is a shame that he is not here to receive this honor.

There are two more passings being marked throughout these pages. On page 25, read about the beautiful humanity of jazz educator Dennis Tini, who used music as a means to show people hope.

And on page 24, find a memorial to baritone saxophonist Claire Daly, someone who's heart was bigger than that darned horn. She wrote several articles for this magazine, one on The Fringe, a band she loved, that long-running Boston trio with George Garzone, Bob Gullotti and John Lockwood. And she adjudicated the DownBeat Student Music Awards for years, loving the chance to hear who's next in jazz.

On a final note, two of our finest critics, Suzanne Lorge and Paul de Barros, have both decided to step down from the Hot Box. We thank them for their thoughtful, honest contributions to that column over the years. They have been terrific arbiters of jazz...and better people to work with. We look forward to bringing in the next members of that esteemed panel.

Enjoy the issue. We hope you find something that makes your heart sing.

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- ... and many more!

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Remembering Russell

I was deeply saddened to learn that Russell Malone passed away on August 23rd after performing with the Ron Carter's Golden Striker Trio. I caught the band's show back in February and, as always, it was great. I also caught them at the Detroit Jazz Festival back in 2015 and 2016, and a Ron Carter/Russell Malone duo show in Washington, DC, in 2017.

Russell had been with the trio since its inception back in 2002 and Donald Vega joined the band after Mulgrew Miller passed away. In Ron Carter's autobiography, *Finding The Right Notes*, he mentions Russell and Donald, "They are both first-class musicians and people."

In their live shows and on records, Ron and Russell's chemistry was incredible.

I have mourned his passing, but now will celebrate his life through his extensive discography (15 as a leader and over 70 as a guest) and memories of all his shows.

MARC NEBOZENKO
EVANSTON ILLINOIS

Editor's Note: So true, Marc. The readers beautifully named him Guitarist of the Year. See Page 34.

Loving the Deer Head Inn

My wife and I spent a long weekend at the Deer Head Inn in Delaware Water Gap, Pennsylvania, recently. We saw wonderful sets by Nancy and Spencer Reed, David Ostwald's Louis Armstrong Band and the magnificent Houston Person. Beyond the amazing music, the accommodations and hospitality were perfect. Mary, Bob and the team are so welcoming and they truly provide the very best in how to experience live jazz on our planet. Deer Head Inn's history and contributions to jazz goes back many, many years and DB needs to acknowledge this, please.

I'm not sure when your venue guide issue is, but you must highlight this amazing place. I felt the spirits of Phil Woods, Al Cohn, Keith Jarrett, Dave Liebman, Bill Charlap and so many others in this historic venue and peaceful town.

BOB SMITH
VIA EMAIL

Editor's Note: Thanks, Bob. Done! We will absolutely highlight the Deer Head in our annual Venue Guide. Look for it in the February issue!

Where's Gary Burton?

I just finished and submitted my Readers Poll. I've been a subscriber for most of the last 40 years, and it's always a highlight. Long ago I stopped worrying about who were the "best" and just started voting for my favorites.



But I have one beef that is both puzzling and maddening.

Please tell me why Gary Burton is not among the 50-plus people you list as suggested candidates for the DB Hall of Fame? I had to write him in. It amazes me that someone with such a long and distinguished career, who has brought pleasure to so many jazz fans over several decades, isn't even worth mentioning as a potential candidate. (Heck, he should be in there already!)

What's going on? Can you elaborate, or at least add him to the ballot next year?

That's my two cents. Otherwise you can call me a loyal DB fan.

HARRY BRIGGS
PRESIDENT & PUBLISHER
MELVIN & LEIGH, PUBLISHERS

Editor's Note: No slight intended, but this is absolutely an oversight. With over 1,000 names on that ballot (I never had the patience to count exactly how many!), we miss things. Thanks for standing up for Mr. Burton. We'll add his name to the ballot for next year.

What Joy!

Samara Joy is representing all those great female vocalists (Vaughn, MaCrae, O'Day, Holiday, Carter, Fitzgerald, etc.) who paved the way for her outstanding artistry. For sure her musicality demonstrates her commitment to those greats.

AL CARTER BEY
WDCB, CHICAGO

That Damned Label!

I look forward to each issue of DB. I retain all my issues, and I really object to a mailing label being attached directly to the magazine cover. The label interrupts the great photography and destroys historical value. No more labels please! Thanks.

BILL HAWKINS
VIA EMAIL

Editor's Note: Bill, that label makes us nuts, too. Ugh! We're working on a better solution. Stay tuned!

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Nov 21 @ 7:30PM
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SAM HARFOUCHE

"The hymns are at the core of my musical self," says pianist Tord Gustavsen. "They are my 'standards' as a European 'jazz' musician."

Tord Gustavsen's Norwegian Soul

ECM Records has long enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with Norwegian jazz. The tradition dates back to its early years in the 1970s, when ECM put saxophonist Jan Garbarek, bassist Arild Andersen, guitarist Terje Rypdal and others on the international jazz map. Decades later, new waves of notable Norwegians emerged through the ECM portal, a list including Arve Henriksen, Trygve Seim, Matthias Eick and pianist Tord Gustavsen, whose 21-year relationship with the label has yielded uncommonly fruitful and quantifiably successful results.

A dogmatically melodic and meditative pianist, Gustavsen has earned a vast and devoted following, both with traditional

jazz audiences and listeners from the ambient and new age circles. Gustavsen's quest continues with the release of *Seeing*, number 10 in a discography dating back to 2003's prominent *Changing Places* album and featuring Gustavsen's sensitive trio, with bassist Steiner Raknes and longtime drummer Jarle Vespestad. The latest album serves as a glowing example of his cohesive brand of jazz steeped in introspective Nordic atmosphere.

In a recent interview, Gustavsen touched on the underlying forces of his musical mission: "I have always felt that there is a huge paradox of forces at play in me between expressivity and elegance, both as a player and as a person — between raw emotion and

cultivated form. Many seem to only notice the restraint, the silence and the spaciousness, but to me, the other side of coin is just as essential in bringing about the totalities, and in forming the piano touch.

"And the subtleties of interplay, in textures, rhythmic nuances, melodic ideas and counterpoint that we develop in the trio are so precious. I am deeply grateful to Steinar and Jarle for being on this journey with me."

Gustavsen has both benefited from, and paled by comparisons to, legendary pianist Keith Jarrett, ECM's flagship artist for decades. Gustavsen style taps a similar vein to the more lyricism-channeling aspect of



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Jarrett's musical voice, but doesn't approach Jarrett's vast virtuosity — nor does the Norwegian claim to have such aspirations.

Seeing, for instance, is partly noticeable for the dearth of actual soloing/improvisational space, leaning instead into a chamber-esque character of structures subject to expansive breathing and stretching. As the pianist asserts, in his view, "Every note should ideally be deeply meaningful, and every groove in deep contact with the center of the universe. The music should feel essential and deeply authentic. A 'head' is never played as an excuse for improvisation: melodies are cherished and interpreted with the same seriousness as a pop band would.

"At the same time, every improvisation should sound like the most meaningful utterance here and now — with structure, sound textures, melodic qualities of the highest order. It's, of course, not possible to always play the best concert of one's life, and to never play a meaningless note. But this focus, this urge for fullness, authenticity, presence and unsweetened beauty is my guide, and the guide of the trio.

"Of course, the focus on melody and clarity may attract listeners not accustomed to the jazz conventions more than other idioms, but that's never an aim in itself for us. If so, it would not have worked."

One easy measure of the pianist's public reach comes algorithmically, in this digital age. For example: his piece "Curves," from 2018's *The Other Places*, boasts over 17 million listens on Spotify, a fairly astronomical figure by the standards of jazz marketing math. "I just realized this myself a while ago," he says, "and was delighted and lightly surprised. I don't know how much of it comes from the specific qualities of this tune, as opposed to our other material, and how much comes from the fact that things tend to have snowball effects on digital platforms.

"Not to be overly modest about the qualities of the track. I do think it's a really good composition of mine, and well played, with a soothing surface and still some subtle mystique and mildly enigmatic intricacies in form and harmony. But I think several of our other tunes could have had the same potential."

Hymn-like elements have long been a critical aspect of Gustavsen's musical output, linked to his upbringing, steeped in church music in the small town of Hurdal, not far from Oslo, where he was born in 1970. The liturgical link is especially notable on *Seeing*, which includes a traditional Norwegian church hymn ("Jesus, gjør meg stille"), variations on chorales by J.S. Bach and the hoary English hymn "Nearer My God To Thee," along with five temperamentally compatible original pieces.

Gustavsen explains, "The hymns are at the core of my musical self. They are my 'standards' as a European 'jazz' musician. They lie deeper than the American songbook for me — although I have also immersed myself in that tradition." He points to three sources of hymn-based musical repertoire he draws on, directly or inspirationally: folk-based Norwegian church music, European chorales and spirituals and gospel music from the rich black church tradition in America.

Diving deeper into the subject, he comments that "the hymns are such a rich heritage, musically and spiritually. One can engage with them in so many ways: dwell in them, meditate on them, struggle with them, turn away from them, open up to them anew, converse creatively with them — or all of the above, which has been the case for me.

"I am deeply grateful for my spiritual heritage, but also for the openness that has allowed me to study other religions and spiritual traditions — to play with Sufi musicians and be open to their poetry, read Buddhist scripture and basically be blessed with moving into an Integral Christianity that embraces everything, yet still feels rooted, and transcends the confusion of post-modern nihilistic relativism."

Closing out *Seeing* is the tune "Seattle Song," so named because of its spontaneous birth during a sound check in that city. The muse strikes in sometimes unexpected times and places. "I cherish these moments," Gustavsen says, "and try to honor them with making a simple phone recording and going back to it to see if there was perhaps something there worth going further with.

"It's precious to play with musicians that every night give me fresh perspectives, real presence, and inspiring responses to my ideas — both during sound check and in concert."

Looking toward future endeavors, Gustavsen plans to explore with his trio and other ensemble settings and delve into side projects alongside former collaborators. The list includes vocalists Simin Tander and Mahsa Vahdat, choirs, saxophonists Trygve Seim and Tore Brunborg and trumpeter Arve Henriksen, partnerships he says "enrich the totality in substantial ways."

The component parts of his artistic whole add up to a creative continuum, more about the journey than specific destinations or "arrival" points. "Every day involves feelings of both arrival and departure," he says. "But I am definitely not at a place of summing up or concluding. What we do these days, includes traces of all phases of the band's life and all the twists and turns in my own development. But it's just as much a new point of departure, with the interplay developing all the time, new compositions being added."

—Josef Woodard

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Ryan Keberle's Incredible Juggling Act

The remarkably productive, restlessly creative trombonist, keyboardist, composer and educator Ryan Keberle recently dropped two separate releases (his 15th and 16th as a leader) on two different labels in the span of just a few weeks. And while there is some overlap between the 44-year-old's superb octet project (*Bright Moments* on Posi-Tone Records) and his fifth outing with the indie-jazz quartet Ryan Keberle & Catharsis (*Music Is Connection* on Alternate Side Records), each showcases different aspects of his profound musicality.

"I feel like being a jazz composer is just as much about taking advantage of the bands and the projects and the individuals in your compositional process as it is putting notes on the page," said Keberle. "For me, that's one of the things that makes Duke and Mingus so unbelievably special. And I do think there is a segment of the jazz world that has kind of either lost sight of that or maybe just no longer cares for that tradition. But for me, a huge part of being a jazz composer is how to take advantage of the people that you're lucky enough to play with. Notes on the page, that's only half the equation."

An accomplished arranger, Keberle has learned from a whole string of mentors who have helped shape his vocabulary, from Rufus Reid, Toshiko Akiyoshi and David Berger early on in his career to Maria Schneider, whose orchestra he has played in full-time for 18 years. He's also been a longstanding member of Darcy James Argue's Secret Society and Ryan Truesdell's Gil Evans Centennial Project and learned invaluable lessons in each set-

ting. "Darcy's process couldn't be more different from Maria's and Ryan's," said Keberle, who grew up in Spokane, Washington, lived in NYC for 21 years and currently resides in the Catskills Mountains, about 130 miles north of Manhattan. "And that's what's fun about working with all of them. And of course, there's really important things to learn from each of those genius composers and arrangers."

Keberle is currently juggling four bands as a leader that tend to overlap at times. Aside from Catharsis and his brass octet, there's his MPB-influenced *Collectiv do Brasil* and his chamber-jazz trio *Reverso*. Aspects of all those bands come together on his recent octet release, *Bright Moments*, which finds him repurposing past compositions for five wind instruments — trumpeter Alex Norris, saxophonist-flutist Patrick Cornelius, tenor saxophonist-flutist Diego Rivera, Keberle on trombone and fellow trombonist and college chum Michael Dease (both of whom shared top honors in DB's 2024 Critics Poll) playing strictly baritone saxophone. Pianist Art Hirshara, bassist Boris Kozlov and drummer Rudy Royston comprise the flexible rhythm section.

The swinging opener, "Quintessence," an Ivan Lins tribute originally written for Catharsis' 2016 album, *Azul Infinito*, showcases the contrapuntal nature of Keberle's writing and arranging style while also highlighting the leader's golden tone and daring improvisational instincts as primary soloist. "Stillness Within" (from *Reverso*'s 2022 album, *Harmonic Alchemy*) is reimagined as a melan-

choly-tinged number with lots of group interplay before building to a swirling crescendo. The dirge-like fugue "All Ears" (from *Reverso*'s 2016 album, *Suite Ravel*) and the beautiful ballad "Sisters of Mine" (from *Reverso*'s 2018 outing, *The Melodic Line*) also get the richly-appointed brass band treatment here.

"Edu," a Keberle original inspired by Brazilian composer Edu Lobo that appeared on *Collectiv do Brasil*'s 2022 album, *Considerando*, is also fleshed out here, as is an ambitious three-part suite of tunes based on Langston Hughes' politically charged poem from 1935, "Let America Be America Again" (a 2018 Chamber Music America commission that originally appeared on the 2019 Catharsis album *The Hope I Hold*).

Another repurposed number, the melancholy "When I'm Away," originally appeared on Keberle's 2007 debut as a leader, *Double Quartet*, which included fellow trombonist (and Alternate Side Records label mate) Marshall Gilkes along with trumpeter Mike Rodriguez, a charter member of Catharsis. "That album also had tuba and French horn," he recalled, "so I was already kind of hinting at my love for Gil Evans on that one."

The lone Keberle composition on *Bright Moments* that hadn't previously been recorded is "To Be and Not to Do," a challenging piece that was originally commissioned by the Belgian trombone ensemble *Crossbones*. "They had reached out to me over the pandemic to write some original music," he recalled, "and at the time I really wasn't writing much. I'm a composer who needs a deadline and a project — a recording or a gig — to really start actively writing. And so I jumped at the opportunity. Listening to that song now, it's probably one of the more frenetic and melodically active songs that I've ever written. I think it reflects a lot of pent-up musical and creative energy that I just hadn't been able to tap into or let loose."

For Keberle, juggling his compositions across four different bands is not a matter of compartmentalizing as much as it is about re-imagining each in a new suit of clothes. "I do compartmentalize the compositional and the arranging processes," he said. "The compositional process is music born from some kind of creative state of flow, if you will. And then the arranging process is how do you take these musical ideas and adapt them to any specific band or personality. And I've been so lucky to get to work with incredible composers, but also incredible arrangers. For instance, just playing in the Gil Evans project for the last 15 years, where every single concert is like getting a lifetime worth of lessons on arranging and orchestration, is a gift. To me, that process is almost as rewarding as the compositional process. That's another thing that I like about revisiting works



Catharsis, clockwise from top left, Keberle, Camila Meza, Eric Doob and Jorge Roeder.

is it allows me to flex my arranger's muscles, as opposed to just always focusing on coming up with new original compositions."

On *Music Is Connection*, Keberle and his Catharsis crew (Camila Meza on guitar and vocals, Jorge Roeder on acoustic bass, Eric Doob on drums) revisit "Key Adjustment," a tune they had previously recorded on their 2013 debut album, *Music Is Emotion*. Like many of the tunes on the new album, it showcases Keberle's use of intricate unison and harmony lines between voice, guitar and trombone. "It's an unexplored sound for me," he said. "And even though I've been working with Camila for almost a decade, she did vocals only on her first two Catharsis albums (2014's *Into the Zone* and 2016's *Azul Infinito*), mainly because the band originally was chordless. That was the hallmark sound of the band in its early years. But Camila's just such an incredible player that it made sense to involve her guitar on the next two recordings (2017's *Find the Common*, *Shine a Light* and 2019's *The Hope I Hold*). She has so much to say on the guitar that we started leaning more and more into it."

Meza's guitar presence is prominent throughout *Music Is Connection*, whether she's comping and arpeggiating or providing some slightly distortion-laced solos on "Throwback Moves," "Shine" and "Hammersparks." It's a different quality from the cleaner, almost Jim Hall-like sound of her own previous outings as a leader. The guitarist also delivers some moving vocal performances on "Lo Único Que Tango," a tune by iconic Chilean singer-songwriter Victor Jara that she recorded on her 2013 album, *Prisma*, as well as on a soulful reading of Milton Nascimento's "Vera Cruz."

And though Keberle's considerable trombone chops may be prominently featured, his keyboard comping (on Wurlitzer electric piano) throughout *Music Is Connection* is key. "I feel totally comfortable and at home playing keyboard but I would never call myself a jazz pianist, because that's not something that I actively studied or practiced," he said. "Jazz piano is mainly about the improvised solos on the instrument, and that's not something that I would do. There's thousands of people out there doing it at such a high level that I don't feel like I have something to contribute there. But I do genuinely feel like I have something to contribute as an accompanist and as a comping device. That's what this album's all about. It's about communicating. And as an accompanying is an idealistic form of communication."

—Bill Milkowski

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"I'm optimistic about the power of creative music to make the world more interesting," says Joel Harrison, noting his motivation for keeping so many projects going at once.

Joel Harrison's Multiverse

GUITARIST, IMPROVISER, COMPOSER, arranger, stylistic polymath, author, educator, producer — each of these functions is a consequential component of Joel Harrison's career mosaic. At 67, Harrison continues to sustain an enviable work ethic, conceptualizing and, more importantly, realizing a stream of projects that showcase his protean investigations into the "Whitmanesque connections," as he puts it, within "the infinity of modern American guitar."

In late September, Harrison spoke in the studio of his Fort Greene flat in Brooklyn, New York. His newest challenge, a week away, was the inaugural Masters of the Telecaster Guitar Camp, a four-day event at a Catskills resort for which Harrison and partner Jim Weider recruited a faculty that included Bill Frisell, Joe Louis Walker, Bill Kircher, Larry Campbell and Guthrie Trapp. A month earlier he'd spent another four days at the same locale for the eighth installment of the Alternative Guitar Summit Camp, named for the 501(c)(3) presenting organization that Harrison launched in 2010. Here the faculty was comprised of jazz virtuosos Kurt Rosenwinkel, Nels Cline, Gilad Hekselman, Camila Meza and Wolfgang Muthspiel, on-site the entire week, while John Scofield, Rodney Jones, Leni Stern and Mike Stern dropped in to teach.

At the AGS "guitar paradise," Harrison explained, "students from 16 to 80 are face-to-face with their heroes — they eat with them, ask any questions they want, and see one-of-a-kind performances." He added: "They're immersed into the inner processes — the fears and breakthrough moments — of what the act of being creative means. It's not just technique. We talk about that a lot."

Harrison's understanding of "the high excitement and miserable drudgery" attendant to the cre-

ative process suffuses the wise, empathetic essays in another project, his new book, *Pity the Genius: A Journey Through American Guitar Music in 33 Tracks* (Cymbal Press). It's a logical followup *Guitar Talk: Conversations with Visionary Players*, his previous guitar tome that included 26 in-depth interviews, many that came from Alternative Guitar Summit concerts and podcasts.

Each chapter in *Pity the Genius* focuses on a guitar hero to whom Harrison "felt personally connected, and thought I could write about with nuance. Some aren't much talked about now but were really important in their day; some are still well-known. Many of them led really hard lives I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy. The more brilliant are sometimes the more tortured. In earlier times, they'd be considered shamans, intermediaries between us and the deities. It's important to respect that and honor them. What does it mean to create this beauty? What happens inside a person?"

The precision and poetry of Harrison's authorial voice mirrors the tonal personality he projects on the Jazz Duos section of *Guitar Talk, Vol. 2* (AGS), an early 2025 release where he plays 11 different guitars on 12 of his compositions in unrehearsed encounters with Cline, Adam Levy, Meza, Muthspiel, Stern, Gregg Belisle, Brad Shepik and Anthony Pirog. "Two guitars — two people communicating — is an orchestra," Harrison said. "You have the groove, the bass, the harmony and the whole history of guitar music to draw from. Anything is possible."

Guitar Talk, Vol. 2 also contains *Pegasus: Music for Two Guitars, Vol. 1*, on which Fareed Haque and Dan Lippel perform a suite of fully notated works for classical guitar generated during the pandemic. "I also started writing for vocal chorus," Harrison said, referencing *Breath*, a requiem for a 12-voice classical chorus and

15-piece jazz band that premiered at Roulette in 2023 that he intends to record and release, along with a now-in-progress companion piece titled *Burn Pit*. "I realized that my life as a performer isn't completely necessary to my happiness."

The lockdown also precipitated the Fall 2024 release *The Middle of Everywhere: AGS Solos, Vol. 1*, an hour-long, trans-genre compilation of bespoke solo works submitted by Cline, Ellman, Rosenwinkel, Meza, Haque, Pirog, Miles Okazaki, Nguyễn Lê, Henry Kaiser and sitarist Anupam Shobhakar. "I was looking for ways to continue AGS's activity, and it seemed simplest to have people play solo wherever they were distancing," Harrison said.

Harrison's pandemic output also included the 10 groove-based songs written for Joel Harrison and the Stardust Reunion Band, on which gifted session singers Everett Bradley, Nikki Richards and Keith Fluit — his bandmates for several decades — raise a joyful noise. Harrison, who has showcased his singing extensively on various past projects, joins them for one track, but primarily plays guitar alongside Liberty Ellman in a band that includes James Brandon Lewis and Jon Cowherd.

Harrison's guitar is the focal point of *Anthem of Unity* (High Note), one of the stronger "straight-ahead" jazz albums of 2023, on which Greg Tardy, Gary Versace and Jack DeJohnette address six originals, along with Sonny Rollins' "Doxy" and Bob Dylan's "The Times They Are A Changin'."

"To me, a jazz record means writing blowing vehicles for great jazz players," Harrison said. Throughout, he rides DeJohnette's unrelentingly efficient, tasteful, signifying flow, refracting vocabularies internalized from a lifetime spent engaging with "country, blues, rock, slide guitar and weird avant-garde soundscape things" — and jazz — into cogent, economical improvisations, delivered with the gorgeous tone that throughlines the 20-plus albums he's made since moving to New York in 1999.

"Joel developed tendinitis that sidelined him awhile during the '90s, and has to be somewhat restrained when he plays," Cline said. "I decided that I needed to do more with less," Harrison commented. "Musicians often build their sound on what they can't do, and I didn't have the physical mechanism to play a lot of super complex and fast stuff that I might have aspired to."

It was suggested that Harrison's perseverance in the face of physical travails and real-world hurdles to the proper presentation of AGS events, denotes an optimistic, even idealistic mindset for an artist eligible for Social Security and Medicare. "I don't think of myself as an optimist, but I guess I must be," he responded. "I'm optimistic about the power of creative music to make the world more interesting. I can't help it. Neither can all of us who are involved in this pursuit. You just keep doing it. I'm hoping that my life is slowly becoming more about US, not about ME."

—Ted Panken

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Freeman Vines, who has been aided by the Music Maker Foundation, with a collection of his Hanging Tree guitars.

Music Maker Foundation's 30 Years of Keeping the Flame

THERE'S A DEVILISH GLEAM IN THE EYE OF the late Guitar Gabriel, who beams beatifically from the cover of the Music Maker Foundation 2024 Annual Report. An ascended master of “the rendition of life” he called the Toot Blues — “cause you’re always on the move” — he’s crowned by a sheepskin hat that Kikiyu tribesmen bequeathed to Music Maker co-founder Tim Duffy, a young white musician/folklorist turned amateur detective and field recorder spending stints in Africa and Appalachia before settling in North Carolina. And that crown never looked more regal than when Gabe wore it to Carnegie Hall and received a standing ovation as the Living Blues Comeback Artist of 1994 for his initial 1993 Duffy-produced CD, *Deep in the South*.

“Whenever you wear this hat, it gives you a feeling of what you are representing,” Gabe observed at the 1995 Bull Durham Blues Festival. The great-grandson of a slave, grandson of a sharecropper and son of an itinerant blues man — and “sideshow geek” called Razorblade — Gabe was also a Philosopher King of the blues and a font of pithy quotes: “Anything you take on to do, you got to have a basis to let people know what it is and what it stands for.”

What Music Maker stands for in 2024 is

being marked with a series of Celebrate 30! festivities that kick off just before Music Maker founding artist Guitar Gabriel would have turned 100 on Oct. 16. It features live concerts with current Music Maker artists and longtime supporters like Jackson Browne and Taj Majal; the dedication of a new state-of-the-art recording and photography studio; and the release of the *Song Keepers: A Music Maker Anthology* boxed set of recordings and accompanying 150-page book documenting the oft-overlooked sounds of traditional blues, bluegrass, gospel and other roots music of the American South.

But it all began with Duffy’s determination to honor the deathbed request of his mentor James “Guitar Slim” Stevenson to “find Guitar Gabriel” by following a convoluted trail of rowdy “drink houses” in the crack-infested projects of East Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Like the juke joints of the Mississippi Delta, where the liquor’s cheap, the tales are tall and your luck can turn fast as a 12-bar chord change, these non-stop house parties are the heart of a marginal community whose soundtrack remains the blues. Unlike the Delta’s well-documented jukes, which have lately become a mecca for white blues buffs, the Carolina drink houses aren’t in any guide books.

“I stumbled into this whole hidden culture,” recalled Duffy, who got shot at by wary locals and hassled by equally wary cops. And when he finally flushed out the elusive guitarist, “it was a war.” New recruit Captain Luke became Duffy’s bodyguard during an all-out battle with Guitar Gabriel’s family, who were dead set against any efforts to revitalize his career. Nor was he welcomed with open arms by Guitar Gabriel himself, who’d been holed up with his axe and a bottle since 1970, when his regional-hit single “Welfare Blues” netted him less than zero in a classic music-biz burn.

“He had the most terrible case of the blues I’ve ever seen,” Duffy said of Gabe, who spat it all out in “Dr. Buzzard” — “Whoa, I feel like a broke down engine, I swear done lost its driving wheel.” But as Gabe himself later observed, “blues takes a lot of animosity out of your heart,” and the best cure for the blues was The Blues.

“Once we started playing together, our relationship evolved into a marriage of sorts,” recalled Duffy, whose real-life marriage to Denise Duffy became the bedrock of what was initially called the Music Maker Relief Foundation.

By sheer numbers alone, what Music Maker has accomplished in its first 30 years

is mind-boggling. Since DownBeat's 25th Music Maker anniversary report in 2019, the number of partner artists whose lives and careers the Foundation helped resuscitate has jumped from 432 to 542. And as of 2024, they've sent those artists on tour in 32 countries, mounted 55 exhibitions, released 2,956 songs, staged 8,776 live performances and delivered 16,668 musician grants. Most remarkable of all? All these achievements serve one singular mission.

"Music Maker meets the day-to-day needs of the artists who create traditional American music, ensures their voices are heard and gives all people access to our nation's hidden musical treasures," explained Music Maker co-founder Denise Duffy, speaking via Zoom from the home she shares with Tim Duffy in Hillsborough, North Carolina. The Duffys had just returned from putting the finishing touches on their new state-of-the-art recording studio down the road in Fountain, which includes a photography studio for Tim, whose Blue Muse collection of old school tintype portraits has been featured in several museums. The new Fountain facility also serves as a living museum of the great Freeman Vines' Hanging Tree Guitars.

"We first encountered Freeman Vines about 2013 and, just like Gabe, he was another totally stone-cold brilliant man," Tim Duffy recalled. "He's from one of the greatest Pan-African musical communities in the world, in eastern Carolina, where gospel music was basically invented. Freeman's family has been there since 1670, so arguably they're the original Americans mixed with pirates and blacks and Indians and whites. The day I met him, he was drawing a picture of a tree with a noose with a guitar hanging from it, and his body of work was called Hanging Tree Guitars because he acquired some wood from a tree where they used to lynch African Americans. The shapes of the guitars are all very different. Some are meant to be played, some are meant to be looked at like modern art. There are over 120 of Freeman's guitars hanging on the walls of our new studio, which are almost like spiritual totems."

Many of the guitars have faces and one favorite looks like a skull. But that's not because he designed them that way. "Those faces were already in the tree where they lifted the [lynched] man off from the wood I bought," Vines explained when reached by phone in Fountain. "All I did was embel-

lishing, got the brown out and cleaned it up and put some clear on. I also did some snake embellishing because the hanging tree wood had snakes on it. Snakes I had to leave alone because the wood just kept right on talking."

A few years back, Vines, who now also makes guitars out of various types of wood, added electric basses to his repertoire,

"Before that, I didn't have the equipment, skill and knowledge of what I really was doing," Vines noted. "I had been making guitars about 50 years before I finally realized that there was more to it than just putting a neck on some wood and shaking it. I got a whole lot better as I got older."

His relationship with Music Maker, now over a decade long, also amped his skills.

"Tim and Ms. Duffy didn't just fix me up like an old car," he explained. "They restored me. They gave me a purpose. Anything they can do to help me get anything, they'll do it. There ain't no way in the world you can lose as long as you got two folks like them right there by your side like two mules in the field. Two mules pulling the wagon, the male and the female, Tim and Denise. They is remarkable people. There ain't no way in the world you can lose as long as you got two folks like them at your side." —Cree McCree

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Claire Daly, right, performs with tenor saxophonist George Garzone at Dizzy's in 2023.

Claire Daily, Rest in Peace ... with Love & Low Notes

CLAIRE DALY OFTEN SIGNED HER CORRESPONDENCES with “Love and Low Notes.”

The baritone saxophonist, who died Oct. 22 at age 66 after a year-long battle with cancer, had a special affinity for frequencies in the depths of the tonal spectrum. Down there, she might burnish a ballad's lingering melody to a chestnut glow, or cause a blues to erupt into craggy, fire-spitting peaks. Her most recent recording, *VuVu for Francis* (2023), with tenor saxophonist George Garzone, finds the pair matching each other phrase by phrase on Charles Lloyd's “Sweet Georgia Bright” and romping merrily through Rodgers and Hammerstein's “The Lonely Goatherd.”

“She came forward with the goods,” says Garzone, who knew Daly for more than 40 years and performed during the album's release party at Dizzy's Club in New York. “I'm not just saying that. She couldn't have known it would be the last record she made, but she played right up to the mark, the best I'd ever heard her. I'm happy and honored to be on it with her.”

Daly won Baritone Saxophonist of the Year from the Jazz Journalists Association and the DownBeat Critics and Readers polls multiple

times. She made seven recordings as a leader. Her 1999 debut, *Swing Low* (Koch), was selected for the collection of the William J. Clinton Presidential Library & Museum because the recording was significant to the former President while he was in office. Daly performed as a leader at the Monterey, Litchfield, Perth and Mary Lou Williams jazz festivals. She served as a faculty member for more than two decades at the Litchfield Jazz Camp, leading combos during the school year for “Litchfield in New York.” She also taught for a decade in Jazz at Lincoln Center's Middle School Jazz Academy, proposing and running a special ensemble for girls.

Widely known for her outgoing and big-hearted nature, Daly was equally gifted at dispensing the love from her signature as the low notes. At her semi-annual Oscars event, which featured music from classic Hollywood films, Daly awarded golden statuettes to audience members based on her own categories, such as the Oscar Peterson, the Oscar de la Renta and even the Oscar Madison. She led rehearsals, hosted jam sessions and threw parties in her Chelsea loft.

A virtuoso of the jazz hang, Daly could, on many nights, be found happily in the audience at other people's gigs — and wherever the action was afterwards, cigar in hand. “Whenever we were at a conference or festival together,” remembers DownBeat editor and publisher Frank Alkyer, “we'd end up somewhere we weren't supposed to be, laughing and having a blast.” Daly contributed features and interviews to DownBeat. She served as an adjudicator for the DownBeat Student Music Awards for more than a decade.

Born Feb. 26, 1958, Claire Anne Daly was the youngest of four siblings and spent her youth in Yonkers, just north of New York City. She studied ballet and acted in commercials as a teen. At Maria Regina High School in Hartsdale, she also distinguished herself as a spelling bee champion, tying for first place in a run-off with the local Catholic boys' school. (She would bitterly recall that only the boy was allowed to advance to the next competition, an injustice she attributed to her gender.)

Daly's early love of jazz was fostered by her father, Patrick, who took her to hear the heroes of the Swing Era. At the loft, she kept framed autographs of Benny Goodman and his band members that she had collected as a girl. Daly began studying the saxophone around age 12. As a student at the Berklee College of Music, she played alto and tenor, studying with Joe Viola and Charlie Banacos; Garzone coached her in an advanced ensemble. Although Daly felt Berklee was a boy's club at that time, she found camaraderie with classmates and fellow saxophonists Carol Chaikin, Laura Dryer and Jenny Hill.

Daly graduated in 1980, playing in an all-female new wave band called Dish before moving to New York in 1985 and transitioning to baritone. Daly was a member of the Kit McClure Band, including tours backing Robert Palmer. She was a founding member of the DIVA Jazz Orchestra, occupying the baritone chair for seven years. Her own long-time quartet included pianist Eli Yamin, bassist Dave Hofstra and drummer Peter Grant.

She was a frequent collaborator and regularly lent her talents to projects by other artists: pianist Joel Forrester's People Like Us, singer Nora York, Two Sisters Inc. with fellow baritone saxophonist Dave Sewelson, TriBeCaStan, IsWhat?! with beatboxer Napoleon Maddox and bassist Joe Fonda, the J. C Hopkins Biggish Band, and trumpeter Matt Lavelle among them.

Announcement of Daly's diagnosis with squamous cell neck and head cancer in 2023 was met by an outpouring of support. Within days, a GoFundMe campaign for her treatment and living expenses had collected donations from hundreds of friends and fans, ultimately raising more than \$75,000. Daly is survived by her brother Frank Daly of Goshen, Connecticut. Information on her memorial will be shared on her CaringBridge webpage. —Lara Pelligrinelli

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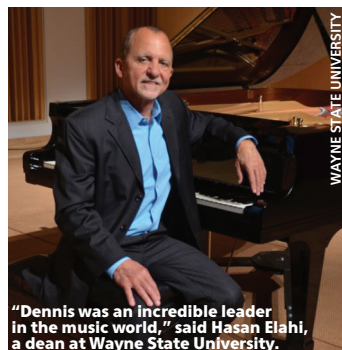
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In Memoriam: Dennis J. Tini, 1948-2024

DENNIS J. TINI, A DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF MUSIC and senior associate dean (retired) of Wayne State University in Detroit, died Oct. 7 at age 76. Professor Tini, as he was known in most circles, taught and administrated at WSU for 42 years, retiring in 2015.

"Dennis was an incredible leader in the music world, and a whole-hearted supporter devoted to our College and the Department of Music," said Hasan Elahi, dean of the College of Fine, Performing and Communication Arts. "Most of all, he was a cherished member of the university community. His creative legacy and love of teaching will live on through the many lives he touched here in Detroit and around the world."



Tini was a gifted jazz pianist and composer, choral conductor and consultant/clinician. He appeared frequently at major music festivals, universities and conferences throughout Europe, South Africa, Canada, Jamaica, Argentina, Haiti and the United States.

"During my brief time here, I have heard such wonderful stories about Dennis, and I am grateful I had a chance to meet him at the Gretchen C. Valade opening in August," said Jeffrey Sposato, Ph.D., who was named Department of Music chair in July.

At Wayne State, Tini served for 13 years as chair of the WSU Department of Music from 1992 until 2005. During his time, he was also the director of jazz studies, co-director of jazz studies and director of WSU choral activities. Tini also served as area coordinator for the WSU Music Business and Music Technology Programs.

Co-founder of the WSU jazz studies program in 1979, Tini was also the founding director of the WSU Jazztet, founding conductor of the select WSU Concert Chorale and Conductor Emeritus of the WSU Choral Union and Orchestra. He received his bachelor's and master's degrees from the Department of Music in 1970 and 1972, respectively.

"Dennis Tini profoundly shaped countless lives by creating opportunities that would challenge, inspire, educate, build confidence and demonstrate the value of pursuing excellence," said Chris Collins, professor and director of jazz studies at WSU's Department of Music and president and artistic director of the Detroit Jazz Festival Foundation.

Professionally, Tini appeared with Buddy Rich, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, the Brazeal Dennard Chorale, Larry Nozero, J.C. Heard, Marvin Stamm and Chris Collins, among many others. He conducted orchestras for Hollywood movies, composed music for documentaries/commercials and performed as musical director for national corporate musical productions.

Tini will also be remembered for his humanitarian efforts. Since 2018, he served as music director and head of security — teaching music monthly and training the security guards — for the Have Faith Haiti Mission and Orphanage in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, operated by internationally acclaimed author and philanthropist Mitch Albom.

"We have lost our Maestro. Dennis was the driving force for the music our kids created at Have Faith Haiti," Albom wrote. "After a long, distinguished career as a musician, university professor, and international artist and composer, Dennis devoted the last seven years of his life to bringing music to orphan children. His dedication, joy, discipline, and relentless belief that people could be better, that students could be better, that human beings could be better, was an inspiration to all of us." —Ed Enright

EMILY REMLER

COOKIN' AT THE QUEENS: LIVE IN LAS VEGAS (1984 & 1988)



First release in 33 years from the unsung jazz guitar great **Emily Remler** is a previously unreleased collection of performances that were broadcast on KNPR Las Vegas from the 4 Queens Hotel & Casino in 1984 and 1988. Limited-edition 180-gram 3-LP set is mastered for vinyl from the original tape reels in the UNLV archives by Bernie Grundman, and includes liner notes by acclaimed author and co-producer **Bill Milkowski**, plus interviews and statements from **Sheryl Bailey, Russell Malone, David Benoit, Mike Stern, Rodney Jones, Mimi Fox, Jocelyn Gould, Amanda Monaco** and many others.

AL JARREAU

WOW! - LIVE AT THE CHILDE HAROLD



This powerful and passionate performance by the legendary **Al Jarreau** was captured at his first appearance in Washington, DC in August of 1976. Originally recorded for WHFS radio, the tape remained tucked away for nearly 50 years until now. The limited-edition 180-g 2-LP set is mastered and cut all-analog by **Matthew Lutthans** at **The Mastering Lab**. Includes essays by acclaimed music writers **A. Scott Galloway** and **Richard Harrington**; plus interviews with **Nile Rodgers, Dionne Warwick, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Will Downing**, and more.

SUN RA

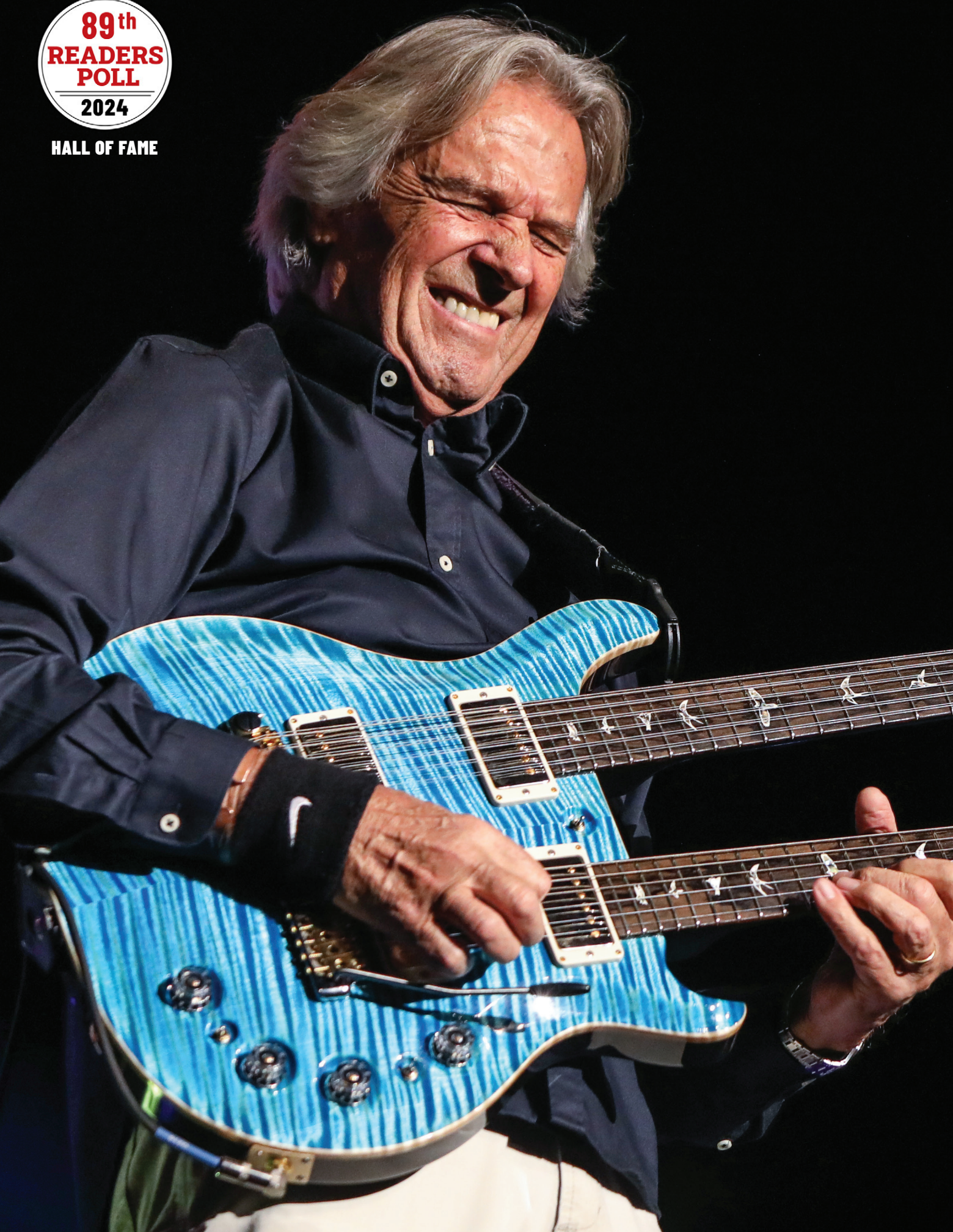
LIGHTS ON A SATELLITE: LIVE AT THE LEFT BANK



Previously unissued music by **Sun Ra** live at the Left Bank from July 23, 1978. Limited-edition 180g 2-LP contains bonus tracks from the acclaimed filmmaker **Robert Mugge's** film **Sun Ra: A Joyful Noise**, and liners by the veteran music journalist **J.D. Considine**, plus new interviews with centenarian alto sax icon **Marshall Allen**, NEA Jazz Master and alto sax legend **Gary Bartz** and visionary pianist **Craig Taborn**.

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HALL OF FAME



JOHN MCLAUGHLIN EMBRACES THE WORLD

By Phillip Lutz Photo by Mark Sheldon



In the aftermath of World War II, the deprivations felt throughout the United Kingdom were particularly acute in John McLaughlin's native Kirk Sandall, a tiny village in the north of England where a munitions factory that had dominated the local economy was struggling to reorient itself in peacetime.

But to the 5-year-old McLaughlin, all that mattered little. A coal fire burned in the grate, his stomach was full thanks to his mother's judicious use of ration coupons and, owing to her penchant for Western classical music, the sounds of Beethoven, Bach and Benjamin Britten filled the air — providing a steady diet of cultural enrichment.

So it is perhaps unsurprising that when a potentially transformative cultural moment presented itself, he was, despite his tender age, primed to respond. And that is what McLaughlin did when, sitting in the living room listening to the radio with his mother, he heard the vocal quartet near the end of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony burst forth.



McLaughlin onstage during the 50th anniversary tour of Shakti with, from left, Zakir Hussain, Ganesh Rajagopalan, Shankar Mahadevan, McLaughlin and V. Selvaganesh.

“Something happened to me,” he said. “I got goose bumps all over my body. I didn’t know what it was and I told my mother. She was really happy. She said, ‘That’s music, real music. That’s what it does to you.’ I think this marked me deeper than I could have imagined. It might be the point of departure for me in future years.”

Those years have seen plenty of goose bumps raised — on both McLaughlin and those who have witnessed his mystical guitar powers applied to some of the most potent music of our time, from the swinging ’60s London scene of Jack Bruce and Ginger Baker; to the breakout bands of electric Miles Davis and post-Miles Tony Williams; to the monumentally successful Mahavishnu Orchestra, the pioneering Shakti synthesis and beyond.

“I wanted this kind of provocation, musical provocation,” he said. “I need it to this day.”

Now 82 years old, McLaughlin takes his provocation in smaller doses. Though a short swing around India with the latest incarnation of Shakti is likely next year, he insisted he has finally quit touring after the band traveled the world in celebration of its 50th anniversary last year. His recent public performances have been largely limited to charity concerts and presentations of graduates from jazz academies near his home in Monaco.

Nonetheless, he said, the performances provide that bit of kick he craves. The young talent is abundant and obviously appreciative of the chance to work with a master. And Monegasques are culturally astute: A recent performance with three of the most gifted graduates, he said, “was a thrill for us, a thrill

for them and a thrill for the audience.”

In between the performances, his contemplative side seeks the restorative stimulation of the natural environment. While the summer season was tropically wet — in fact, pouring rain on both ends of an early-autumn Zoom call between Monaco and London nearly derailed this interview — he still managed to enjoy hiking amid the splendors of the ocean, forest and a 1,500-foot mountain abutting his home.

Famous for his discipline, McLaughlin regularly begins his morning with a swim and meditation. But his asceticism these days only goes so far. He uses only wheat milk on his muesli, but he admitted — with a smile — to “compromising” by using cow’s milk in his cappuccino before turning to one of his artistic projects.

Currently, he is putting together a live Shakti album. Set to be released next year, it will include performances recorded on last year’s world tour and will feature both classics and new hits from the group’s studio collection *This Moment* (Abstract Logix), which won the 2024 Grammy for best global music album.

At the same time, he is working on a sketchbook. For the book, in which a U.K. publisher has expressed interest, he both draws likenesses of and relates anecdotes about people who, since the early 1960s, have helped, inspired or connected with him.

“It’s a personal homage,” he said. “It’s fascinating because it’s allowed me to recapitulate my personal history and my musical history. They are intertwined.”

That history began well before the ’60s, when his mother, an amateur violinist, tried to teach him the instrument. He rebelled and turned quickly to the family piano, taking lessons from a rap-on-the-knuckles teacher who, in retrospect, seemed “a real monster.”

By the age of 10, the teacher’s influence was waning as that of his brothers waxed. When the early ’50s blues boom swept across the universities in the U.K., the oldest brother, a university student, bought a guitar that was ultimately passed down to him. He was 11.

“I quit taking piano lessons immediately and it was love at first hearing,” he said.

Exposed to blues albums by his brothers, he began absorbing that music’s language. At 15, now living near a larger northern city, Newcastle, he gained access to DownBeat, feeding his nascent interest in jazz. “To a teenager living in the upper reaches of northeastern England,” he said, “it was the holy grail.”

Meanwhile, his fondness for flamenco music was growing, and he began to skip school and trek 150 miles to a pub in Manchester to see live performances by a celebrated exponent of the music, guitarist Pepe Martinez.

“That was really another pivotal period in my life,” he said, “and I’m sure it manifested itself all those years later when I hooked up with Paco [de Lucia, with whom he formed an acclaimed trio with, alternately, Al Di Meola or Larry Coryell].”

He was also falling for Spanish-inflected jazz, courtesy of “Blues For Pablo,” off *Miles Ahead*, the 1957 album by Davis with Gil Evans’ orchestra. His passion for that work

presaged his later identification with a mindset that became a movement melding disparate musical forms.

“What they were doing between this big band, the blues and the Hispanic thing,” he said, “that’s fusion, jazz fusion right there. It just blew me away.”

After stumbling initially at jazz — an attempt at negotiating “Cherokee” at the expected breakneck pace with experienced musicians in a local pub resulted, he said, in “blood on the floor” — he recovered and his reputation as a teen whiz grew to the point where a touring musician hired him. He was on his way to London.

“That’s what I’d been dreaming of for a year,” he said. He was around 19 years old.

In London, he made ends meet with odd jobs like driving cars and selling caviar until he landed a position at Selmer’s legendary music shop on Charing Cross Road, a musicians’ hub where he sold Pete Townsend what he believed was Townsend’s first guitar.

Gigging soon won out over Selmer’s. At Soho’s Flamingo Club he became a regular in Georgie Fame’s popular R&B-laced jazz band. At the nearby blues venue the 100 Club, he met Eric Clapton. Players mixed after hours, and he met Bruce and Baker.

When organist Graham Bond invited McLaughlin to form a quartet with the bassist and drummer — who would, of course, achieve renown with Clapton in Cream — he “couldn’t say no.”

Fame’s smooth sound, he said, was no match for the promise of playing with passionate — “sometimes over-passionate” — musicians who would “push me out of what I know to what I don’t know.”

And when that group broke up, McLaughlin signed on with the rigorous Ray Ellington, with whom he polished his sight-reading. That, in turn, led to session work that was well-paying but unsatisfying and, after 18 months, he unceremoniously quit.

But he fortuitously hooked up with a couple of fellow northerners, organist Mike Carr and drummer Jackie Denton. They provided entrée to London’s premier jazz club, Ronnie Scott’s, periodically playing opening sets. That put him on the road to New York and an association with Williams.

The road involved some benign subterfuge. Bassist Dave Holland, McLaughlin’s sometime roommate, played in the house band accompanying traveling jazz headliners. When drummer Jack DeJohnette came

through — with pianist Bill Evans’ complete trio, relegating Holland to playing opening sets — DeJohnette set up an afternoon jam session at Ronnie’s. Holland brought McLaughlin.

“Jack recorded it with these *Mission Impossible* tape machines,” McLaughlin recalled, noting the surreptitious nature of the taping, “and that’s how I got the gig with Tony. Back in New York, Tony was saying, ‘I’m leaving Miles, I’m looking for a guitar player.’ Jack said, ‘I made a tape with this guy in London. Listen to this.’ And I got the call from Tony. How lucky.”

In 1969, the year he arrived in New York, Williams, coming off his time with the second great Davis quintet, was leading a charge among jazz players seeking to unleash their inner rocker. His answer was the incendiary Lifetime, with McLaughlin and organist Khalid Yasin, then known as Larry Young.

Baffling to some and beloved by others, the trio’s tightly wound, highly volatile interplay signaled the emergence of an audacious new sort of collective performance rendered by a group of impossibly resourceful 20-somethings operating in fly-by-the-seats-of-your-pants mode.

“We didn’t know really where we were going except that we wanted to play together

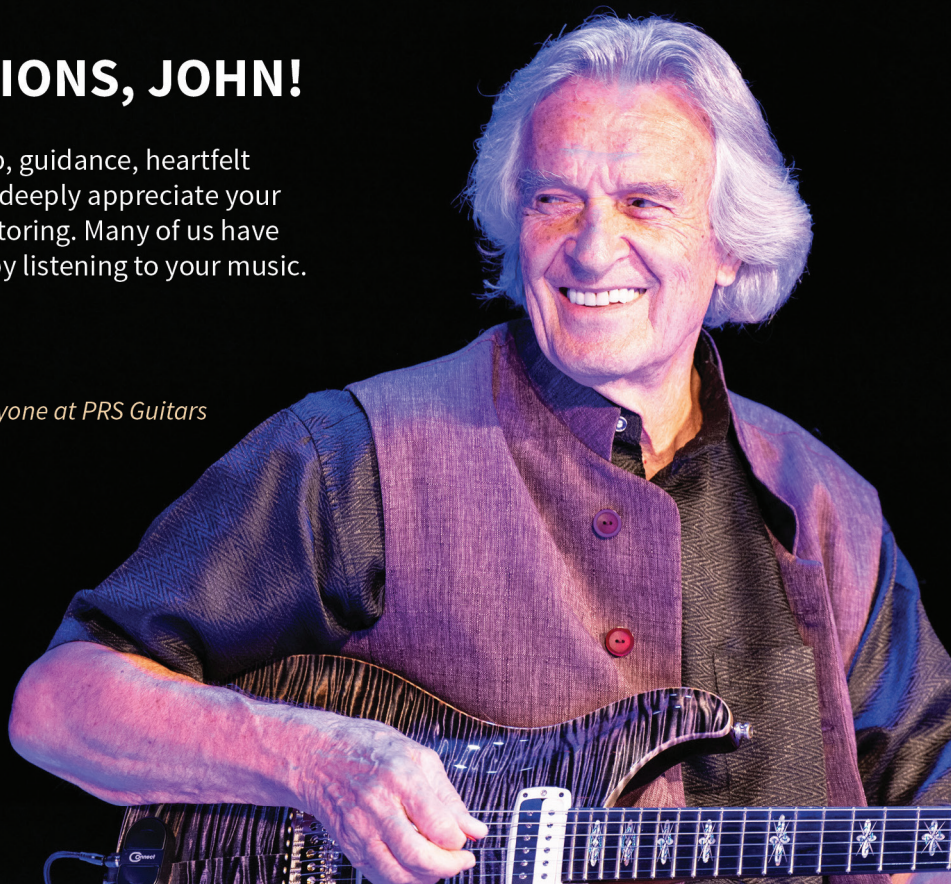
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McLaughlin with Chick Corea, left, at the Blue Note in New York circa 2016.

and discover as we went along,” McLaughlin said. “It was constant learning and experiments. Tony was pretty free with Miles but with his own band he was really free.”

The interplay’s apotheosis is arguably an 8-plus-minute “Spectrum,” a McLaughlin composition off their debut album, *Emergency!*, that manages to project a quality both raw and highly defined. By comparison, the 3-minute quartet version on McLaughlin’s debut album, *Extrapolation*, seems tame. Both were recorded and released in 1969.

Like Williams, McLaughlin said, Davis was flying blind as the ’60s were ending. “Miles was going on intuition when we moved into *Bitches Brew*,” he said. “He didn’t really know what he wanted to do. But he knew what he didn’t want to do, which was what he’d been doing for the last five years.”

When the trumpeter sought to gain direction via the guitarist’s input, McLaughlin, drawing on his London experience, was happy to oblige.

“I had been hanging out a lot with Miles at his home in between *In A Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew*,” he recalled. “I’d always take the guitar over there. He made sure I survived. He’d stuff money in my pocket. And he’d be picking my brain about all the stuff I’d been doing in the ’60s with R&B and funk bands.

“What would you do if I played two chords like this, John?” McLaughlin said, quoting Davis in a reasonable imitation of his raspy voice. “I’d say, ‘I could do this and this, and if I turned around I could do that.’” That simple advice seems to have been liberally incorporated in some of the most provocative jams Davis — or anyone — has ever produced.

For a time, McLaughlin played with both Davis and Williams. But he was moving on musically while Williams was seeking broader appeal for Lifetime. Having met Bruce through McLaughlin, Williams hired the bassist and asked him to sing, giving the band, McLaughlin said, “a slightly more Cream element.

“Tony wanted us to have more success. We were struggling. People were looking at us like, ‘What are they doing?’ And the jazz community, they were saying, ‘Jazz? We don’t even know what it is.’ I was surviving basically because I was doing Miles’ gig.”

That gig came to an end as a full-time endeavor when, after a less-than-satisfying night at Lenny’s on the Turnpike in Massachusetts, Davis advised McLaughlin to start his own group.

Enter The Mahavishnu Orchestra, which instantly became a juggernaut, revered for its technical prowess, to be sure, but also its tran-

scendent writing and execution that, powered by Billy Cobham on drums, tempered with deep groove the complex Carnatic rhythms and melodic systems it had assimilated.

Tablaist Zakir Hussain, a lynchpin of Shakti, recalled that on hearing the first strains of McLaughlin’s guitar amid the disorienting swirl of sound on the oddly accented opening bars of “Birds Of Fire,” at the Berkeley Community Theater in November 1972, “my jaw dropped to the floor.”

But the band, in its first incarnation, flew high only to crash and burn — a turn of events that, in McLaughlin’s telling, reflected the stress of sudden success compounded by the members’ differing lifestyles.

“It was multiplying and multiplying too quickly,” he said. “And don’t forget by this time I’m meditating every day. I’m not hanging out. The other guys can do that. I go back to my room, have a salad and go to sleep and meditate. I was on another trip.

“Too much success is very dangerous, because it actually destroyed the band in the end.”

Among McLaughlin’s bands, none has had the longevity of Shakti. It may not have been the first to mix Western and Eastern music: John Coltrane most famously did so, even titling a tune “India,” off his 1962 album *Live At The Village Vanguard*.

But McLaughlin has taken a risk Coltrane didn't by surrounding himself and documenting his work with Indian musicians, thus subjecting himself to the necessity of adjusting to their culture of sound, even as they adjusted to his.

Fast-forward to the pandemic, and that process advanced with the 2020 landmark *Is That So?* In it, McLaughlin, working with Shakti singer Shankar Mahadevan and Hussain, integrates a full harmonic soundscape with Mahadevan's raga-based impro-

ing that the process of accommodation has continued.

Shakti's impact is clear. Pianist Vijay Iyer, who at 52 has done as much as anyone to reconcile Eastern and Western musical perspectives, said of the group: "As a musician coming of age in the South Asian diaspora, it gave me a point of reference that was important. That stuff really clarified a lot for me in terms of what was possible."

Saxophonist Charles Lloyd, a contemporary of McLaughlin's who met Hussain through the guitarist and has for the past two decades played with him in the trio Sangam, spoke more broadly about McLaughlin:

"John is a deep sensitive. He knows that we live in a world that's gone mad and he's looking for the right note."

Lloyd, who like McLaughlin has been inducted into the DownBeat Hall of Fame this year, added, "He has great facility but has a mind that can deal with the eternal verities in the sound. That's where we meet: at a place where there is no space or time."

For McLaughlin, time indeed seemed to fold in on itself as he likened his feeling about the guitar to the emotion he expressed 71 years ago on receiving his first one.

"It's the same to this day," he said, "the love I have for that instrument." **DB**

'He has great facility but has a mind that can deal with the eternal verities in the sound.'

—CHARLES LLOYD ON JOHN MCLAUGHLIN

Hussain, who has been in the band since its inception, detected movement toward a full accommodation by their second album, *A Handful Of Beauty*. Unlike the first, *Shakti With John McLaughlin*, it was a studio recording in which "we found a way to give back to John from our side of the world." Both were released in 1976.

visions — "a dream I had for years," as McLaughlin put it — in such a way that he fully asserts his Western identity without compromising the Eastern side.

"There is no way any Indian maestro would listen to Shankar riffing over what the harmonic base lays out and say that it is messing up the raga," Hussain said, add-

ADRIAN CUNNINGHAM

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ARTIST OF THE YEAR
ALBUM OF THE YEAR
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FLUTIST OF THE YEAR

CHARLES LLOYD

A LIFE WELL IMPROVISED!

By Frank Alkyer Photo by Douglas Mason

What can we say about the shamanistic Charles Lloyd that this magazine hasn't said during the past three years? After being voted into the DownBeat Hall of Fame and being honored as Artist of the Year, Album of the Year, Group of the Year and Tenor Saxophonist of the year in this year's DownBeat Critics Poll, the legend just keeps growing.

The readers agree, naming the brilliant composer and saxophonist Artist of the Year, Tenor Saxophonist of the Year and Flutist of the Year, while naming his latest recording, *The Sky Will Still Be There Tomorrow* (Blue Note), Album of the Year.

Lloyd graced DB's cover in August for those quadruple honors. And he graced the cover back in October 2022, when he was in the heat of producing and touring his brilliant Trio of Trios project that led to him being named DownBeat's 2023 Artist of the Year and Tenor saxophonist of the Year. More honors!

What's been on his mind during these past three years? Here are four recent quotes from the magazine that give a hint.

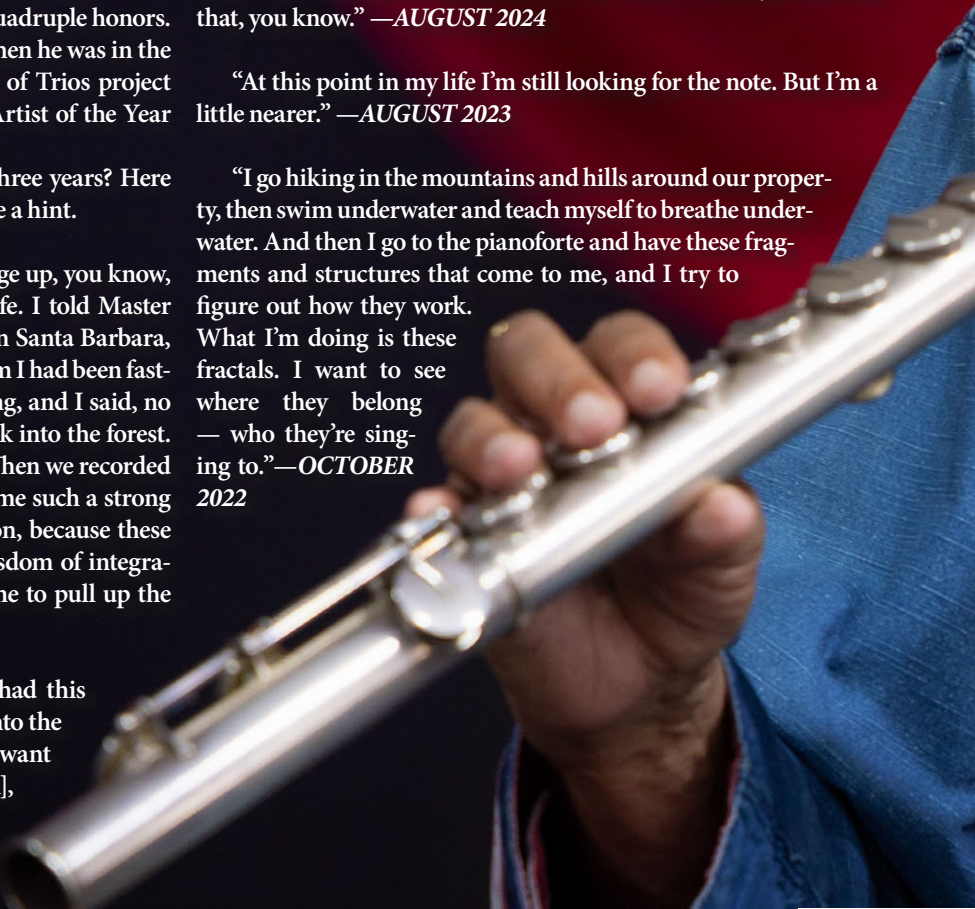
"I was always thinking about pulling the bridge up, you know, and staying in meditation and living a simple life. I told Master [Billy] Higgins when he showed up at our place in Santa Barbara, before he left town [passed away] in 2001, I told him I had been fasting for a couple of weeks, thinking and meditating, and I said, no one cares about this music so I'm going to go back into the forest. He looked at me and said, 'Fuck them. We care.' Then we recorded *Which Way is East* [ECM]. Master Higgins gave me such a strong rebuke that I renewed and reupped my dedication, because these masters who come before me, they bring this wisdom of integration of life. It's not for me to decide when it's time to pull up the bridge." —AUGUST 2024

"Three years ago, just before COVID hit, I had this naïve notion that I could bring some tenderness into the world, and these great artists were the ones that I want to serve this mission with me — Jason [Moran],

Larry [Grenadier] and Brian [Blade]. So we sent out the call and it came back affirmative, and it took a while to get us all together because of our schedules. And it was very beautiful and very magical... but this idea of tenderness to the world I've always been like that, you know." —AUGUST 2024

"At this point in my life I'm still looking for the note. But I'm a little nearer." —AUGUST 2023

"I go hiking in the mountains and hills around our property, then swim underwater and teach myself to breathe underwater. And then I go to the pianoforte and have these fragments and structures that come to me, and I try to figure out how they work. What I'm doing is these fractals. I want to see where they belong — who they're singing to." —OCTOBER 2022







GUITARIST
OF THE YEAR

RUSSELL MALONE

1963 - 2024

By Yoshi Kato Photo by Mark Sheldon

As Russell Malone is voted Guitarist of the Year by DownBeat readers, his friends and fans are pondering his legacy.

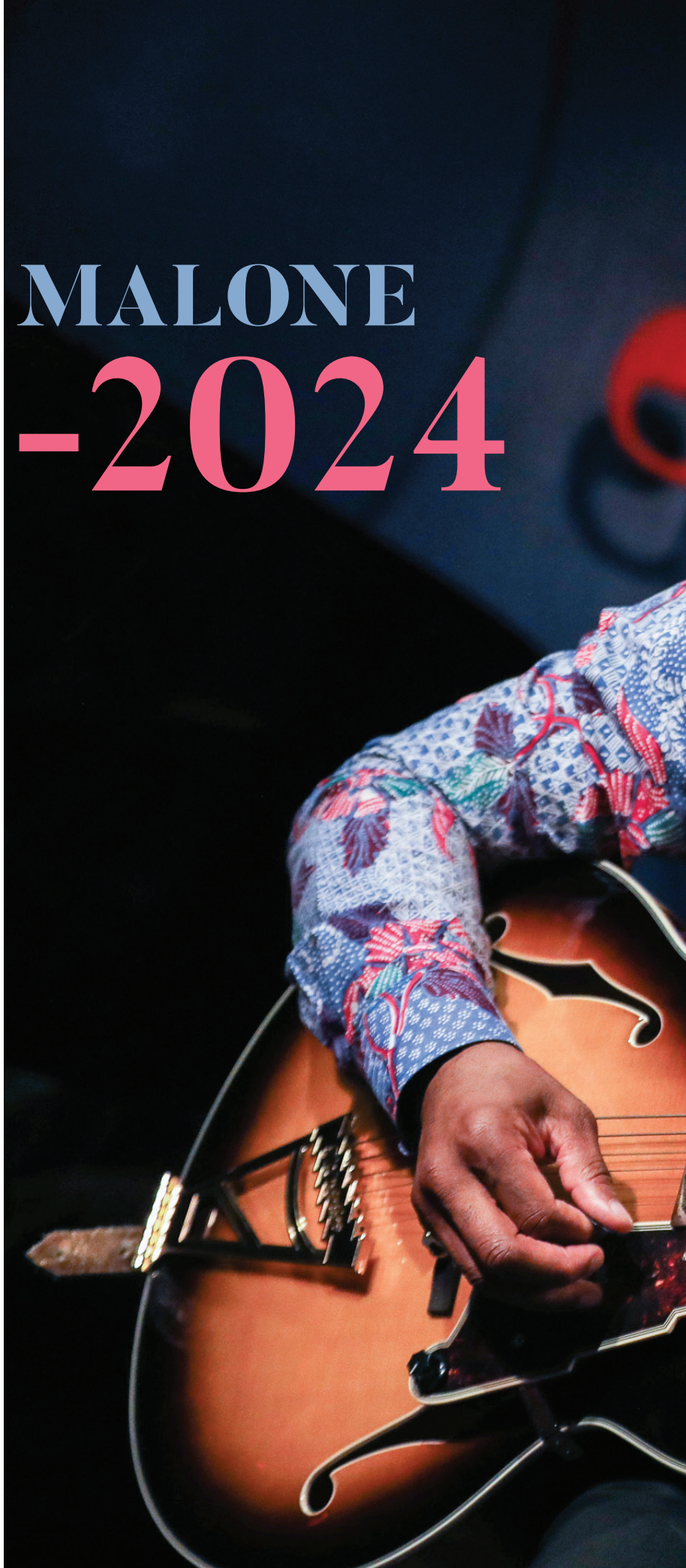
While the late bandleader and first-call guitarist made twin impacts as a singular instrumentalist and a selfless member of the musical community, his other trademark qualities also cemented his beloved status in the jazz community.

Malone died Aug. 23 while on tour in Japan, after battling end-stage kidney failure, at age 60. Bassist Ron Carter, who was leading The Golden Striker Trio with Malone and pianist Donald Vega on tour at the time, issued a statement soon after saying: “Mr. Malone suffered a heart attack upon completion of our performance at Blue Note Tokyo. Donald Vega and I are completing this tour as a duo in respect and honor of the memory of Mr. Malone.”

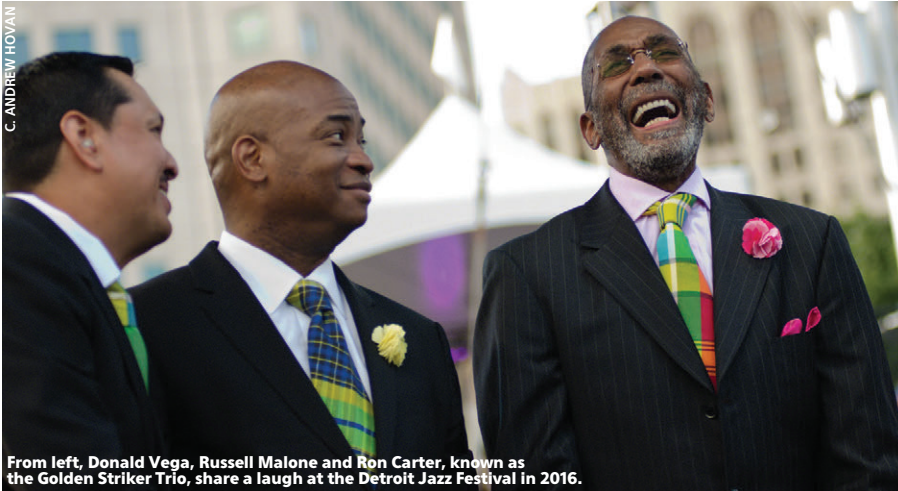
“I really think Russell Malone was one of those generational talents,” said scholar, educator and tenor saxophonist Loren Schoenberg in a phone interview. “People like him don’t appear often.”

Born in Albany, Georgia, Malone first explored guitar at age 4 and was playing in church two years later. Largely self-taught, he moved to Houston after graduating from high school and played with organist Al Rylander. He relocated to Atlanta in 1985 before settling in New York, where he played with organ legend Jimmy Smith from 1988 to 1990.

Malone’s profile increased when he joined Harry Connick Jr.’s band in 1990. He played with the then-rapidly rising star until 1994 and made a deep impact on the pianist, vocalist and actor. “From the moment I met Russell, well over 30 years ago, I knew my life was about to change for the better,” Connick wrote, in an email to DownBeat. “Russell’s musical brilliance, his encyclopedic







From left, Donald Vega, Russell Malone and Ron Carter, known as the Golden Striker Trio, share a laugh at the Detroit Jazz Festival in 2016.

knowledge of American music and deeply soulful, skillful artistic personality were unmatched. But what I'll miss the most are his giant, sensitive, goofy heart and fierce sense of humor."

While playing with Connick, Malone recorded his self-titled debut for Columbia. It featured bassist Milt Hinton, who praised Malone in the liner notes: "I've had the opportunity to record with many of the guitar greats from the jazz world — Charlie Christian, George Barnes, Kenny Burrell, Herb Ellis, Barry Galbraith, Barney Kessel, Mundell Lowe, Bucky Pizzarelli and Wes Montgomery, to name just a few. Russell Malone extends the musical traditions begun by these and many other guitarists.

"His amazing dexterity is evident throughout the album. His decisions to use an electric or acoustic instrument on a particular piece are impeccable. They show me that he truly appreciates the beauty of his instrument at the same time he is aware of its limitations."

The easy rapport that Malone and Connick enjoyed can be heard on that debut album's recording of "I Don't Know Enough About You." It's a rare vocal showcase for Malone, who receives expert support on piano from his then-bandleader boss.

The warmth and charm and slight mischief of Malone's personality comes through in his singing, with Connick's accompaniment alternately elegant and playful. Malone verbally encourages Connick as he starts to solo, and Connick returns the enthusiasm as Malone does his only playing on the track (tastily choosing an acoustic guitar).

Guitarist, vocalist and educator Doug Wamble's life changed as a result of Malone's collaboration with Connick. An ensemble director and guitar instructor at Juilliard, Wamble was introduced to Connick's music by his mother, who was a fan and took him to see Connick in concert in Memphis in the fall of 1990.

"Russell played a couple of solos that totally blew my mind. Harry was taking questions from the audience at one point, and I raised my hand and asked what kind of guitar Russell played,"

Wamble said. "I was a recording engineering major at the time at what's now the University of Memphis, and the next day I changed my major to jazz guitar because of Russell. It was him who made me think, 'Maybe I can do this.'"

After touring and recording with Connick, Malone then teamed up with another high-profile vocalist/pianist, Diana Krall, playing in her trio and quartet from 1994 to 1998. Collaborations with Carter and also pianist Benny Green and vocalist Dianne Reeves followed, as did tours and albums as a leader.

"I don't think that there is a song that Russell didn't know the lyrics to," said Reeves, by phone from her home in Denver. "And when you're singing with someone who knows the lyrics to the song, they understand the interpretation. They understand you know what the spirit of the song is about."

Reeves first brought Malone aboard to record her 2001 album *The Calling: Celebrating Sarah Vaughan* and then 2008's *When You Know*, which were both released on Blue Note. She later formed her Strings Attached trio with Malone and Romero Lubambo, her regular guitarist.

"It was this hybrid of Brazilian music and jazz, and I had wondered how it was going to work out," Reeves said. "But sitting in that space between two different-sounding guitarists with different approaches, it was natural. There was respect for everyone on stage."

Like Connick, Reeves also resonated with Malone's personal side: "Russell, he knew so many people. He was just really good about being in touch with people," she shared. "He could sit up for hours and talk to you about people's stories. It was beautiful."

In addition to an infectious smile and an unimpeachable dress sense, Malone's generosity with other musicians and particularly fellow guitarists was a personal hallmark. "There are many great players who are wonderful mentors, but Russell outdid them all in the sense of seemingly showing up at every gig of the players that

he admired or wanted to support and also sitting in and playing," Schoenberg recalled. "He was just so approachable."

"Wherever he was, he was always eager to get out and hear the local guitarists. He had a list of them in every city," wrote Ottawa-based journalist and author Paul Wells on Facebook.

Wamble's personal introduction was through cold-calling the several Atlanta-residing Russell Malones whom he found listed in the phone book: "I mentioned that night in Memphis, which was maybe three years before, and Russell remembered me. He was really cool and talked to me on the phone for like an hour," Wamble recalled. "And later, when I moved to New York, I took the PATH train to Jersey, where he was living, and we hung out for the day. We had some lunch and just played tunes on a bunch of his guitars."

Throughout his three-decade-plus recording career, Malone released albums on labels such as Verve, Telarc, MAXJAZZ and HighNote Records. He contributed to projects by the likes of Natalie Cole, Rickie Lee Jones and Joss Stone as well as ones by B.B. King, Ray Brown, Marian McPartland and many others.

Because of his skill and openness, he was an in-demand guitarist for projects as varied as late trumpeter Roy Hargrove's Afro-Cuban Crisol project; late pianist/composer Geri Allen's Erroll Garner Project for the 2015 Monterey Jazz Festival; and in June a performance of Oscar Peterson's large-ensemble, long-form compositions produced by SFJAZZ. He was also a member of the Monterey Jazz Festival's MJF52 All-Star Tour in 2010 with vocalist Kurt Elling, violinist Regina Carter, pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Kiyoshi Kitagawa and drummer Johnathan Blake.

"The thing about Russell was he really could play with any musician. I knew Hank Jones very well for many years, and there was something in Russell's attitude, something in his generosity and his dignity, that reminded me so much of Hank Jones," Schoenberg noted. "People would hire Hank Jones or Russell Malone for any kind of musical setting because they knew both left their ego at the door when they walked in and that their only goal was to make things better and also to bring a positive spirit to the whole thing."

"Russell knew so much music, too. He could play the blues — just straight-up, Buddy Guy stank, nasty blues. And he would have fun on the bandstand. He took the music, but never himself, so seriously," Wamble concluded. "Every time you heard Russell play, it was humanity."

A blossoming educator, Malone had served on the jazz faculty of William Paterson University since the 2021–22 academic year. It was his sole official teaching position, though the number of musical and life lessons he gave over his lifetime is immeasurable. **DB**

M Manhattan School of Music

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR WINNERS of *DownBeat's* 89th Annual Readers Poll



GROUP

Artemis

featuring MSM Dean of Jazz Arts
Ingrid Jensen, trumpet



TRUMPET

Ambrose Akinmusire

(BM '05)



TROMBONE

Steve Turre

(MM '88, MSM faculty)



KEYBOARDS

Herbie Hancock

('61, HonDMA '23)



LARGE ENSEMBLE

Maria Schneider Orchestra

featuring Donny McCaslin (MSM faculty),
Nadje Noordhuis (MM '05), Ryan Keberle
(BM '01, MSM faculty), and Jay Anderson
(MSM faculty)

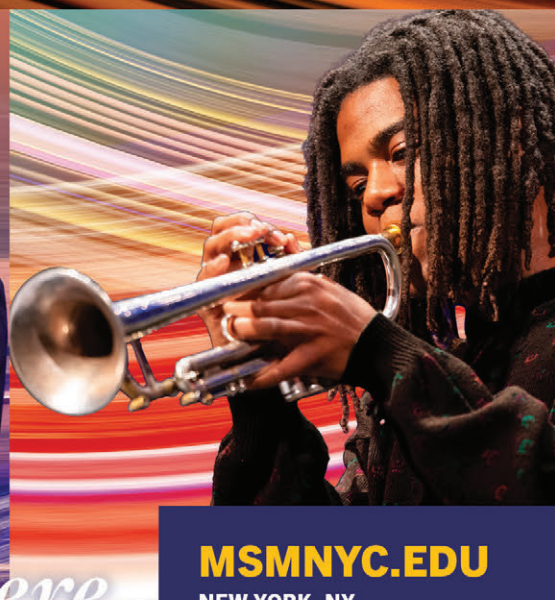
And to the countless others who were short-listed across most categories.



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MALE VOCALIST
OF THE YEAR

KURT ELLING CAN'T SIT DOWN FOR LONG

By Dan Ouellette Photo by Mark Sheldon

This year's Male Vocalist of the Year, Kurt Elling also scored the top spot in the Critics Poll back in August. He says he's thrilled with the honors that have stretched for multiple years beginning in 2000.

"I'm gratified," he says, while in the midst of yet another round of performances and recordings ranging from singing with big bands to his newly hatched idea of spontaneous duo offerings in his *Wildflowers* series. "It's my heart's desire. I like to keep busy. How's that for being a kid from Rockford, Illinois, who grew up singing in the church choir? It's crazy how far I've come to fall in love with the jazz sound and culture."

What's extraordinary about Elling is that he delivers a special melding of smart, poetic, romantic, cool renderings of music with a jazz sensibility marked by bold innovations of interpretation, inventive phrasing and occasionally hip scats.







Elling, left, working with Cécile McLorin Salvant and Sullivan Fortner.

DAVE STAPLETON



In the studio with Joey Calderazzo and Ingrid Jensen.

KURT SNEDDON

He says he's still learning by deliberately placing himself into challenging settings. Kurt Elling will not go stale. "There's a whole universe of music yet to be explored," he says. "There's something to learn from every musician you play with."

Case in point: collaborating with North Carolina-based guitarist Charlie Hunter for the supergroup SuperBlue, the COVID project that truly stretched Elling. He admits that it was a radical departure from the music he usually plays. "I was scared, but that tells me that I've got to keep going," he says. "I never had as much to write my own for music that didn't have a melody line I was familiar with or even unusual chord changes. It was a big challenge."

SuperBlue started as a result of the Elling team bringing in Hunter to co-produce an album that was built on an upbeat electric groove. "I always wanted to hear Kurt in a different setting that's not as acoustic as a piano trio," says Hunter, who has been a friend since their early '90s Blue Note days, when Bruce Lundvall signed them both in the same week. "But I know that musically he could sing over everything. So I got together with my Butcher Brown friends DJ Harrison and Corey Fonville in Richmond, Virginia, and we made a lot of music. We sent Kurt a ton of tunes, and he wrote lyrics to create the final product. We sent him so much that a lot ended up on the cutting room floor."

"Like so many people, I was depressed,"

says Elling. "Even though we were in different studios because of COVID, when it was over we were able to hit it right away for dates. That was huge. It was important for me to get in front of audiences to play this beat music, and I didn't have to wear a suit and tie."

"Kurt realized that he can exist in this new world of groove and hip-hop beats," Hunter says. "I knew he was the guy to do this because, really, is there any other person who can sing like Kurt? Sure, it was a challenge for him, especially with a songbook that's not the ordinary. Everyone knows the standard tunes. You let them play themselves. But this was different. You have to be in the trenches. It's a totally contrasting approach. Still, he didn't have anything to worry about."

The group recorded two albums for the Edition Records label, 2001's *SuperBlue* and 2023's *SuperBlue: The Iridescent Spree*. They toured the world for three years. Plus, Elling and Hunter spun out their side project as *The Guilty Pleasures* with the first EP volume including country singer Nate Smith. "Kurt said, let's just go into the studio for a quick run through our favorite AM radio songs from our youth," says Hunter. "Kurt picked the tunes and then we made them new with funky grooves — music from AC/DC, Fleetwood Mac, the Eagles, ZZTop. That was a lot of fun."

Obviously never one to sit still for long, Elling says sometimes the action these days makes his head spin. "This is a humble brag

about this amazing day in New York I had recently," he says. "I got up in the morning, went to the Sear Sound studio and did a spontaneous *Wildflowers, Vol. 2* recording with Joey Calderazzo. The album took four hours. From there I headed up to Lincoln Center and put on my suit to play the last of my three nights with Wynton's orchestra. After that I went straight uptown on the 1 train to Smoke and sat in with Branford Marsalis' quartet. From there, we hung out, then headed to Birdland to catch the last set by Artemis. That's a hell of a lot of action for a jazz singer. There it is. Dreams do come true to have all these kinds of friendships and collaborators."

And the blur of Kurt Elling's activity doesn't stop there. After trying out new material for a live recording with WDR Big Band in Cologne, Germany, and an acoustic session with Scottish saxophonist Tommy Smith at the Akbank Jazz Festival in Istanbul, he returned stateside in November and December for dates with SuperBlue. In January he launches his ambitious Weather Report project of dynamic reinventions on compositions by Joe Zawinul and Wayne Shorter. Expect lots of honorable tributes, but also get ready for the twists and turns that Elling will surely put into the mix, lyrically and arrangement-wise. He'll be breaking some rules for Weather Report fans.

Elling also serves as the jazz advisor for the classical music-oriented Ravinia Festival

in Chicago. "I help hone the blade," he says. "For example, I'm insisting they bring in Robert Glasper."

On *Wildflowers, Vol. 1*, like wildflowers growing from seeds sleeping in the ground, Elling harvests a fine, colorful crop of intimate songs from yesteryear — dating back to Johnny S. Black's 1915 tune "Paper Doll," put on the standard song list by the Mills Brothers with their 6-million-copy bestseller in 1942. "I have to have a Mills Brothers tune in all the series," Elling says. "The first vinyl I ever bought was a Mills Brothers album. I was either square or hip, but that's how I heard a whole bunch of those classic standards. They swung so hard and had a mellow sound, and I had a fondness for their phrasing."

Elling has always danced into many pools of music, but this spontaneous six-track collection (really an EP) showcases his brilliance as a baritone vocalist in step with rising-star pianist Sullivan Fortner — and in a guest slot, Cécile McLorin Salvant, on the gorgeous Fred Hersch/Norma Winstone ballad "Wish (Valentine)." The vocals/piano duo covers Mumford & Sons' emotive "After The Storm," as well as strike gold with the Mercer Ellington gem "Things Ain't What They Used To Be," made famous by Elling's hero Jon Hendricks.

"Everyone out here playing at a certain level holds a whole new world for me," says Elling. "My goal is to play with incredible musicians to learn from them, to collaborate so that I can sing in a way that I wouldn't otherwise. That's what I'm after. I want to sing better. That's what *Wildflowers* is all about."

Vol. 1 came about when Elling and Fortner happened to be in town in between their own projects. They texted each other song ideas, then met in the studio without rehearsals to create an impromptu recording. "It's like capturing lightning in a bottle," Elling says. "Or in this case, grabbing wildflowers. You cut a bunch of wildflowers, put them in a vase with water and place them on the dining room table."

For McLorin Salvant's guest performance, Elling says he viewed her and Fortner on Instagram playing "Wish (Valentine)" as a practice session for the pianist. "Cécile texted me to ask if she could come to the session," says Elling. "I told her, yes, but the price of admission was that she sing with us on 'Wish.' That's the kismet I was hoping for in this series."

As for including Wayne Shorter's tune "Ana Maria," Elling says, "Wayne continues to inspire. And Herbie. With SuperBlue, we did an electric twist on their tune from their *I+I* album, 'Aung San Suu Kyi,' with my lyrics and retitled as 'Where To Find It.' One of my goals is to keep getting people to know the music of Wayne and Herbie. The world would be a better place. I'm a singer and add lyrics to discover Wayne, it's a win for everybody. So, of course I wanted to do 'Ana Maria' on *Wildflowers Vol. 1*."

Vocalist Tessa Souter had recorded her lyrical version of the song on her 2018 album *Picture In Black And White*. Elling wanted to "enlarge" her lyrics to add to her "initial trajectory." He reached out to Souter for her permission, then contacted Carolina Shorter for her permission to add more lyrics to her late husband's song. "We were in the studio getting ready to record this when I heard back from Carolina," says Elling. "She replied, 'It's a beauty. Please proceed and we'll talk later.'"

The recent Elling adventure with more wildflowers arrived in November as *Wildflowers, Vol. 2*, his surprising collaboration with pianist Joey Calderazzo and a special guest contribution from trumpeter Ingrid Jensen.

The future holds a wish list for Elling to pick more wildflowers with his favorite artists, including pianists Fred Hersch, Bill Charlap and Renee Rosnes, for starters. The series will continue as schedules permit for Elling and his admired guests.

DB

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89th
READERS
POLL
2024

FEMALE VOCALIST
OF THE YEAR



SAMARA JOY: 'DREAMS COME TRUE'

By Suzanne Lorge Photo by AB+DM

It's exciting to watch a megawatt talent unfold in real time. When Samara Joy won the Sarah Vaughan Vocal Competition in 2019, she was still a student who'd only started scatting a couple of years earlier.

Today she's an ever-touring headliner with a massive online following and two Grammy wins. But the most astonishing thing about her rapid rise in the music world is how her artistry continues to develop right before our eyes.

In an interview with *DownBeat* in late 2023, Joy put forth a few things she'd like to try next. Top of the list was to work with orchestration; this dream comes to fruition, she says, on *Portrait*, her October release and third album for Verve. This record — eight tracks of full band arrangements constellated around her rich vocals — promises to solidify her reputation as a front woman of extraordinary power.

"I was inspired by big bands and strings and large ensembles," she said in a call from the road last September. "But I wanted to have my own compact version of it — a little big band that I could travel with. And even though there are eight musicians on stage, with the way that we play together, dynamically, it sounds as if it's a larger band than it is. I'm really proud of the music that we've recorded over the past year."

Another of her goals was to continue developing the creative relationships that she'd formed with peers from SUNY-Purchase, her alma mater. Two of these long-time col-

laborators play on the record: trombonist Donovan Austin, who contributed the original "A Fool In Love (Is Called A Clown)," and tenorist Kendrick McCallister, who arranged three tracks: "Reincarnation Of A Lovebird (Pursuit Of A Dream)," "Autumn Nocturne" and "Now And Then (In Remembrance Of)." It is with these instrumentalists in particular that Joy surpassed two other milestones: furthering her skills as a lyricist and stepping out as a songwriter.

Joy has been writing lyrics since her first album, but these were lyrics to known solos, rather than complete texts for an instrumental melody line. She handles this risky task masterfully on Charles Mingus' rangy, tricky "Reincarnation Of A Lovebird" and Barry Harris' romantic, mellifluous "Now And Then."

"I'm glad that I had the practice of writing lyrics to solos to guide me," Joy said. "I wanted the words to flow and not compete with the melody, because the melody tells a story on its own. It took a lot of time, and it was definitely a process. I wanted to make sure that I wasn't just saying a bunch of gibberish over a beautiful melody, but that it all made sense, that the melody and lyrics were working together to tell the story."

Joy pushed herself further on this record, including a medley that combines her first tune as a composer (with McCallister), "Peace Of Mind," and the Sun Ra/Jae Mayo composition "Dreams Come True." From the blazing, gospel-tinged original she segues easily into the happy swing of the Sun Ra classic — a most promising debut.

These latter tunes also signal a deepening in Samara's choice of material. Though songbook favorites have been her mainstay to date, the young singer is now looking to incorporate greater complexity into her work.

"I won't say that I was getting tired of standards, but my ear was opening up," she said. "I've been listening more to jazz compositions, as opposed to jazz standards. Listening to melodies that would challenge me to sing in a different way than I would on a standard."

"Mingus is obviously sophisticated and complex — modern, if you will. And the song that he wrote for Bird has an insane melody that I don't think I would have even dreamed of singing two years ago. It's really such a beautiful composition. But I found myself getting inspiration [for this] from my peers, listening to the songs and albums that they listen to. With all of this inspiration around me, I started asking questions, and the music grew as a result."

This ongoing awakening brings Joy to one of her most ambitious goals: to be a contributing writer to the new American songbook, alongside singers like Jazzmeia Horn and Cécile McLorin Salvant.

"It's pretty scary, because that's one thing that I said I wanted to do — to write my own songs eventually," she said. "I don't want to rush that process, but I really want to strengthen that muscle. And this song in particular ['Peace Of Mind'], I wanted it to be an adequate representation of where my musical mind is now. It also was a way for me to get out how I was feeling about all of this success, for lack of a better word. All of this stuff that I wasn't expecting to happen to me in my life — at least as quickly as it has. It's been happening all at one time, and I wasn't sure how to handle becoming an adult and, in the process, how to speak up for myself and communicate with people and make decisions."

"Writing this song helped me to verbalize those overwhelming feelings of deciding which path to go down. And I hope that it's a perfect first song, one that people can relate to. [At first], I didn't know how to finish it: I had ended it on, 'Sometimes you feel like giving up, but don't ever lose hope, just remember.' And I was, like, just remember *what?* So I combined it with the Sun Ra composition 'Dreams Come True.' It was a perfect answer to my song — just remembering that so much good has happened, that you just have to keep on going and understand that there is no bad, really, just lessons."

DB

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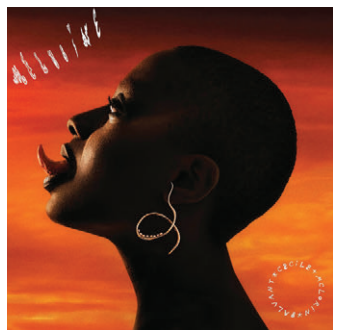
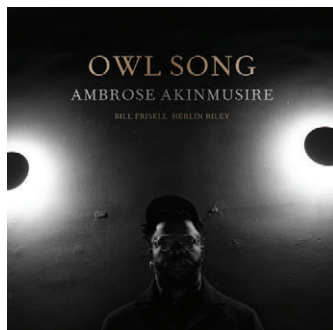
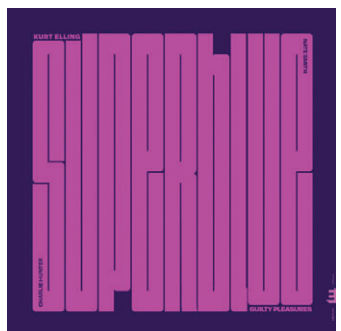
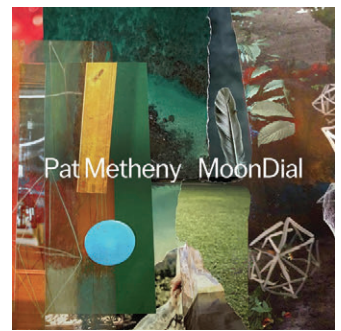
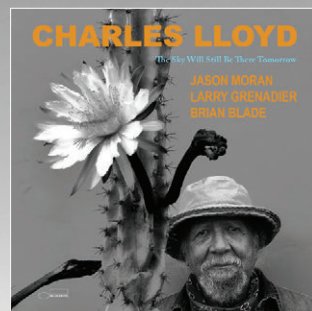


TOP 11 JAZZ ALBUMS OF THE YEAR

D. DARR



Charles Lloyd



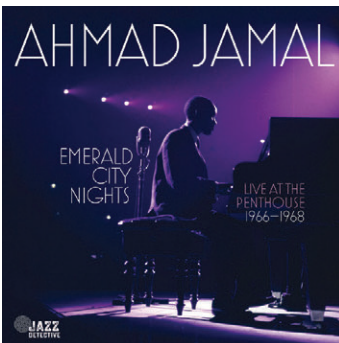
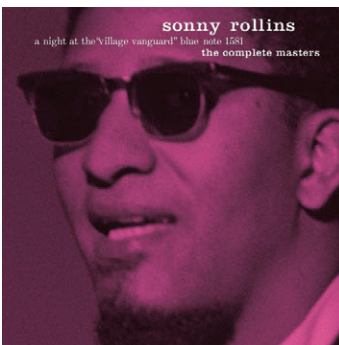
Charles Lloyd, *The Sky Will Still Be There Tomorrow* (BLUE NOTE) ... 1,169
Joshua Redman, *where are we* (BLUE NOTE) 683
Pat Metheny, *MoonDial* (BMG) 647
Artemis, *In Real Time* (BLUE NOTE) 566
Julian Lage, *Speak To Me* (BLUE NOTE) 440

John Scofield, *Uncle John's Band* (ECM) 431
Kurt Elling & Charlie Hunter, *SuperBlue: Guilty Pleasures* (EDITION)..... 377
Béla Fleck/Zakir Hussain/Edgar Meyer, *As We Speak* (THIRTYTIGERS)..... 377
Darcy James Argue, *Dynamic Maximum Tension* (NONESUCH)..... 323

Ambrose Akinmusire, *Owl Song* (NONESUCH) 314
Vijay Iyer Trio, *Compassion* (ECM) 314
Cécile McLorin Salvant, *Melusine* (NONESUCH) 287
[For the complete list of Jazz Albums of the Year, see page 47.]



TOP 11 HISTORICAL ALBUMS OF THE YEAR



John Coltrane with Eric Dolphy, <i>Evenings At The Village Gate</i> (IMPULSE!)	Ahmad Jamal, <i>Emerald City Nights: Live At The Penthouse 1966-1968</i> (JAZZ DETECTIVE/ELEMENTAL)	Alice Coltrane, <i>The Carnegie Hall Concert</i> (IMPULSE!)
1,943	836	683
Sonny Rollins, <i>a night at the village vanguard: the complete masters</i> (BLUE NOTE)	Bill Evans, <i>Tales: Live In Copenhagen (1964)</i> (ELEMENTAL)	Dave Brubeck Quartet, <i>Live From The Northwest 1959</i> (BRUBECK EDITIONS)
1,016	737	584
Chick Corea Elektric Band, <i>The Complete Studio Recordings 1986-1991</i> (CANDID)	Roy Hargrove, <i>The Love Suite: In Mahogany</i> (BLUE ENGINE).....	Keith Jarrett, <i>Solo Concerts: Bremen-Lausanne</i> (ECM)
899	728	584
Geri Allen/Kurt Rosenwinkel, <i>A Lovesome Thing</i> (MOTÉMA/HEARTCORE)	Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Bud Powell, Charles Mingus, Max Roach, <i>Hot House: The Complete Jazz At Massey Hall Recordings</i> (CRAFT).....	
881	719	

[For the complete list of Historical Albums of the Year, see page 47.]

COMPLETE RESULTS



EBRU YILDIZ

ARTEMIS



CAROL FRIEDMAN

Kenny Barron



TAKEHIKO TOKIWA

Maria Schneider

HALL OF FAME

John McLaughlin	1,025
Jack DeJohnette.....	989
Kenny Burrell.....	980
Joey DeFrancesco.....	962
Bobby Hutcherson.....	710
Ramsey Lewis.....	656
Shirley Horn.....	629
Bob Brookmeyer.....	602
Billy Higgins.....	584
Anthony Braxton.....	530
Buddy Guy.....	530
Maria Schneider.....	503
Abdullah Ibrahim.....	431
Ellis Marsalis.....	413
Randy Brecker.....	395
Bill Frisell.....	395
Dave Holland.....	395
Dianne Reeves.....	377

Albert "Tootie" Heath.....	350
Kenny Wheeler.....	341
Terence Blanchard.....	332
Henry Threadgill.....	332
Dr. John.....	323
Dr. Lonnie Smith.....	323
ARTIST OF THE YEAR	
Charles Lloyd	1,295
Christian McBride.....	1,223
Kenny Barron.....	1,061
Pat Metheny.....	899
Samara Joy.....	854
Emmet Cohen.....	845
Bill Frisell.....	494
Chris Potter.....	467
James Brandon Lewis.....	440
Brian Blade.....	431
Terence Blanchard.....	413
Jon Batiste.....	404

Terri Lyne Carrington.....	404
Wynton Marsalis.....	404
Brad Mehldau.....	404
esperanza spalding.....	404
Cécile McLorin Salvant.....	395
Ambrose Akinmusire.....	377
Kenny Garrett.....	341
Joshua Redman.....	341
Vijay Iyer.....	332
Kamasi Washington.....	323
Jack DeJohnette.....	314
Mary Halvorson.....	314
Julian Lage.....	305
GROUP	
ARTEMIS	1,160
Charles Lloyd Sky Quartet.....	1,070
Emmet Cohen Trio.....	908
Snarky Puppy.....	827

Joshua Redman Group.....	692
Bill Frisell Trio.....	611
Vijay Iyer Trio.....	539
Terri Lyne Carrington & The E-Collective.....	503
Kenny Garrett and Sounds from the Ancestors.....	503
The Cookers.....	467
Terence Blanchard & The E-Collective.....	449
Jon Batiste & Stay Human.....	404
Trombone Shorty & Orleans Avenue.....	404
Dave Holland Trio.....	377
Julian Lage Trio.....	368
Fred Hersch Trio.....	323
SFJAZZ Collective.....	323
Christian McBride & Ursa Major.....	314
Kurt Rosenwinkel Quartet.....	305
Kurt Elling & Charlie Hunter SuperBlue.....	305



Kenny Garrett

JIMMY KATZ



Marcus Miller

COURTESY MARCUS MILLER.COM

The Bad Plus 287
 James Brandon Lewis
 Red Lily Quintet 287
 Joe Lovano & Dave Douglas'
 Soundprints 287
 Billy Childs Quartet 278
 Shakti 269
 Miguel Zenón Quartet 269

LARGE ENSEMBLE

Maria Schneider Orchestra ... 2,375
 Christian McBride Big Band 1,358
 Jazz At Lincoln Center Orchestra 1,340
 Darcy James Argue's
 Secret Society 1,160
 WDR Big Band Cologne 872
 Sun Ra Arkestra 836
 Count Basie Orchestra 827
 Mingus Big Band 710
 Anat Cohen Tentet 503
 Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra 494
 Arturo O'Farrill
 and the Latin Jazz Ensemble 458
 John Beasley's MONK'estra 386
 Gordon Goodwin's Big Phat Band 386
 Metropole Orkest 341
 Vanguard Jazz Orchestra 323
 Ulysses Owens Jr. Big Band 296
 DIVA Jazz Orchestra 242
 Chicago Jazz Orchestra 233
 Bill Warfield and the Hell's Kitchen
 Funk Orchestra 224
 Miho Hazama's M.Unit 215
 NDR Big Band 188
 Ed Palermo Big Band 188
 Steven Bernstein's Millennial Territory
 Orchestra 161
 Fire! Orchestra 161
 Frankfurt Radio Big Band 161

ALBUM OF THE YEAR

Charles Lloyd, *The Sky Will Still Be There Tomorrow* (BLUE NOTE) 1,169
 Joshua Redman, *where are we*
(BLUE NOTE) 683
 Pat Metheny, *MoonDial* (BMG) 647
 ARTEMIS, *In Real Time* (BLUE NOTE) .566
 Julian Lage, *Speak To Me*
(BLUE NOTE) 440
 John Scofield, *Uncle John's Band*
(ECM) 431
 Kurt Elling & Charlie Hunter,
SuperBlue: Guilty Pleasures
(EDITION) 377
 Béla Fleck/Zakir Hussain/Edgar
 Meyer, *As We Speak*
(THIRTY TIGERS) 377
 Darcy James Argue, *Dynamic*
Maximum Tension (NONESUCH) 323
 Ambrose Akimusic, *Owl Song*
(NONESUCH) 314
 Vijay Iyer Trio, *Compassion*
(ECM) 314
 Cécile McLorin Salvant, *Melusine*
(NONESUCH) 287
 Billy Childs, *The Winds Of Change*
(MACK AVENUE) 260
 Bill Frisell, *Orchestras* (BLUE NOTE) .. 260
 Lizz Wright, *Shadow*
(BLUES & GREENS) 260
 Eric Alexander, *A New Beginning:*
Alto Saxophone With Strings
(HIGHNOTE) 242
 Kurt Rosenwinkel, *Undercover-*
Live At The Village Vanguard
(HEARTCORE) 242
 Melissa Aldana, *Echoes Of The Inner*
Prophet (BLUE NOTE) 233
 Johnathan Blake, *Homeward Bound*
(BLUE NOTE) 233
 Fred Hersch,
Silent, Listening (ECM) 233

jaimie branch, *Fly Or Die Fly Or Die*
Fly Or Die (WORLD WAR)
(INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM) 224
 Kris Davis, *Diatom Ribbons*
Live At The Village Vanguard
(PYROCLASTIC) 197
 Tyshawn Sorey Trio, *Continuing*
(PI) 188
 Kenny Garrett & Svoiy, *Who Killed Al?*
(MACK AVENUE) 179
 Mary Halvorson, *Cloudward*
(NONESUCH) 179
 Joe Lovano Trio Tapestry, *Our Daily*
Bread (ECM) 179
 David Murray Quartet, *Francesca*
(INTAKT) 179
 Hiromi's Sonic Wonder,
Sonicwonderland (CONCORD JAZZ) 170
 Etienne Charles, *Creole Orchestra*
(CULTURE SHOCK) 152
 Wadada Leo Smith/Amina Claudine
 Myers, *Central Park's Mosaics Of*
Reservoir, Lake, Paths And Gardens
(RED HOOK) 152
 Bobo Stenson Trio, *Sphere* (ECM) 152
 Steve Turre, *Sanyas*
(SMOKE SESSIONS) 152
 Bill Warfield and the Hell's Kitchen
 Funk Orchestra, *Time Capsule*
(PLANET ARTS) 152

HISTORICAL ALBUM OF THE YEAR

John Coltrane/Eric Dolphy,
Evenings At The Village Gate
(IMPULSE!) 1,943
 Sonny Rollins, *A Night At The Village*
Vanguard: The Complete Masters
(BLUE NOTE) 1,016
 Chick Corea Elektric Band, *The*
Complete Studio Recordings
1986-1991 (CANDID) 899
 Geri Allen/Kurt Rosenwinkel, *A*
Lovesome Thing
(MOTÉMA/HEARTCORE) 881

Ahmad Jamal, *Emerald City Nights:*
Live At The Penthouse 1966-1968
(JAZZ DETECTIVE/ELEMENTAL) 836
 Bill Evans, *Live In Copenhagen* (1964)
(ELEMENTAL) 737
 Roy Hargrove, *The Love Suite: In*
Mahogany (BLUE ENGINE) 728
 Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Bud
 Powell, Charles Mingus, Max Roach,
Hot House: The Complete Jazz At
Massey Hall Recordings (CRAFT) 719
 Alice Coltrane, *The Carnegie Hall*
Concert (IMPULSE!) 683
 Dave Brubeck Quartet, *From The*
Northwest 1959
(BRUBECK EDITIONS) 584
 Keith Jarrett, *Solo Concerts:*
Bremen-Lausanne (ECM) 584
 Joni Mitchell, *Archives-Volume 3:*
The Asylum Years (1972-1975) 467
 Nina Simone, *Four Women: The Nina*
Simone Complete Recordings
1964-1967 458
 Wes Montgomery-Winton Kelly Trio,
Maximum Swing: The Unissued 1965
Half Note Recordings
(RESONANCE) 413
 Duke Ellington, *Copenhagen 1958*
(STORYVILLE) 404
 Oscar Peterson, *Alma: Live In Lugano,*
1964 (MACK AVENUE) 404
 Jimi Hendrix Experience, *Hollywood*
Bowl August 18, 1967
(SONY LEGACY) 386
 Wes Montgomery, *The Complete Full*
House Recordings (CRAFT) 350
 Brian Auger's Oblivion Express,
Complete Oblivion (SOUL BANK) 296
 Dexter Gordon, *Bouncin' With Dex*
(STEEPLECHASE) 296
 Don Byas, *Sessions 1944-1946*
(MOSAIC) 278
 Jan Garbarek, *Afric Pepperbird*
(ECM) 233

SHERVIN LAINEZ



Anat Cohen



Ambrose Akinmusire

MARK SHELDON



Branford Marsalis



James Carter



Steve Turre

ANNA YATSKEVICH

Art Pepper, <i>Complete Maiden Voyage Recordings</i> (OMNIVORE)	233
Paul Bley, <i>Notes On Ornette</i> (STEEPLECHASE)	206
Cal Tjader, <i>Catch The Groove—Live At The Penthouse 1963–1967</i> (JAZZ DETECTIVE/ELEMENTAL)	206
Terri Lyne Carrington, <i>TLC And Friends</i> (CANDID)	188
Nina Simone, <i>You've Got to Learn</i> (VERVE)	179

TRUMPET

Ambrose Akinmusire	1,637
Terence Blanchard	1,538
Wynton Marsalis	1,259
Randy Brecker	1,241
Ingrid Jensen	818
Nicholas Payton	647
Bria Skonberg	638
Tom Harrell	611
Wadada Leo Smith	557
Herb Alpert	485
Dave Douglas	467
Eddie Henderson	458
Terell Stafford	458
Jeremy Pelt	449
Sean Jones	440
Chief Adjuah	386
Avishai Cohen	332
Enrico Rava	332
Marquis Hill	323

Etienne Charles	296
Kirk Knuffke	287
Brian Lynch	224
Theo Croker	215
Nadje Noordhuis	206
Jason Palmer	197
Charles Tolliver	179

TROMBONE

Steve Turre	1,889
Trombone Shorty	1,799
Wycliffe Gordon	1,160
Steve Davis	845
Michael Dease	791
Robin Eubanks	737
Delfeayo Marsalis	701
Conrad Herwig	656
Ray Anderson	548
Jennifer Wharton	512
Marshall Gilkes	458
Nils Landgren	413
John Fedchock	404
Ryan Keberle	323
Alan Ferber	251
Gianluca Petrella	242
Nick Finzer	197
Steve Swell	197
Jacob Garchik	188
George Lewis	170
Papo Vázquez	152

Nils Wogram	152
Ku-umba Frank Lacy	143
Jeb Bishop	134
Craig Harris	125
Wayne Wallace	125

SOPRANO SAXOPHONE

Branford Marsalis	2,024
Dave Liebman	1,034
Kenny Garrett	1,016
Joshua Redman	944
Jan Garbarek	845
Ravi Coltrane	773
Joe Lovano	755
Chris Potter	728
Jane Ira Bloom	710
Jane Bunnett	665
Steve Wilson	521
James Carter	404
Tia Fuller	404
Ingrid Laubrock	332
Ted Nash	269
Émile Parisien	269
Roscoe Mitchell	260
Walter Smith III	251
Wayne Escoffery	242
Sam Newsome	242
Alexa Tarantino	242
Donny McCaslin	224
Christine Jensen	206
Isaiah Collier	188

Evan Parker	179
Marcus Strickland	161

ALTO SAXOPHONE

Kenny Garrett	1,916
Immanuel Wilkins	1,115
Greg Abate	980
Lakecia Benjamin	917
Chris Potter	827
Paquito D'Rivera	638
Miguel Zenón	620
Charles McPherson	530
Gary Bartz	476
Marshall Allen	395
Grace Kelly	386
Rudresh Mahanthappa	377
Bobby Watson	350
Anthony Braxton	332
Tia Fuller	314
Donald Harrison	314
Christine Jensen	314
Alexa Tarantino	296
John Zorn	278
Steve Wilson	260
Sherman Irby	242
Jim Snidero	233
Steve Coleman	224
Darius Jones	206
Greg Osby	206
Ted Nash	197
Tim Berne	188

TENOR SAXOPHONE

Charles Lloyd 1,439

Chris Potter	1,241
Joshua Redman	1,142
Branford Marsalis	962
Melissa Aldana	944
Joe Lovano	899
James Brandon Lewis	647
Kamasi Washington	566
Eric Alexander	557
Pharoah Sanders	485
Houston Person	467
David Murray	359
Walter Smith III	323
James Carter	296
Wayne Escoffery	287
Nubya Garcia	287
Jerry Bergonzi	278
Billy Harper	269
JD Allen	242
Jeff Coffin	233
Donny McCaslin	224
Joel Frahm	215
Ingrid Laubrock	179
Mark Turner	170
Anna Webber	170

BARITONE SAXOPHONE

James Carter 2,060

Gary Smulyan	1,943
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John Surman	1,115
Grace Kelly	962
Scott Robinson	809
Claire Daly	782
Tim Berne	440
Alexa Tarantino	440
Stephen Doc Kupka	431
Mats Gustafsson	404
Michael Dease	368
Dave McMurray	341
Lauren Sevian	332
Patience Higgins	314
Jason Marshall	314
Brian Landrus	296
Ken Vandermark	260
Frank Basile	242
Colin Stetson	206
Vinny Golia	197
Roger Lewis	197
Alex Harding	179
Roger Rosenberg	161

CLARINET

Anat Cohen 4,184

Paquito D'Rivera	1,439
Ken Peplowski	1,133
Don Byron	971
Eddie Daniels	782
Victor Goines	449
Ben Goldberg	368
Shabaka Hutchings	332

Greg Tardy	323
Chris Speed	287
Ted Nash	278
Gabriele Mirabassi	260
Louis Sclavis	224
Evan Christopher	215
Dr. Michael White	197
Angel Bat Dawid	161
François Houle	152
Aurora Nealand	152
Beth Custer	143
Gianluigi Trovesi	143
Marty Ehrlich	125
Michel Portal	125

FLUTE

Charles Lloyd 1,907

Hubert Laws	1,853
Nicole Mitchell	1,061
Lew Tabackin	674
Elena Pinderhughes	656
Jane Bunnett	521
Ted Nash	476
Jamie Baum	440
Tia Fuller	422
Shabaka Hutchings	422
Andre 3000	413
Dave Liebman	341
Henry Threadgill	332
Lakecia Benjamin	314
James Newton	305

Anna Webber	287
Steve Wilson	260
Nubya Garcia	242
Holly Hofmann	242
Roscoe Mitchell	242
T.K. Blue	224
Ali Ryerson	224
Anne Drummond	197
Jeff Coffin	179
James Spaulding	170

PIANO

Kenny Barron 1,493

Emmet Cohen	1,304
Herbie Hancock	1,295
Brad Mehldau	1,232
Bill Charlap	791
Monty Alexander	557
Jon Batiste	530
Sullivan Fortner	530
Fred Hersch	485
Kris Davis	467
Vijay Iyer	431
Jason Moran	422
Eliane Elias	332
Robert Glasper	296
Chucho Valdés	287
Helen Sung	260
Gerald Clayton	233
George Cables	215
Craig Taborn	215



GEORGE CABLES I HEAR ECHOES

HighNote Records HCD 7356

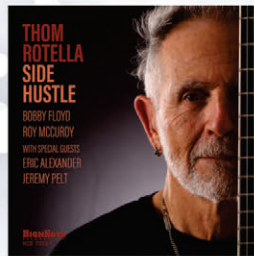
George Cables celebrates his 80th birthday with a stunning new recording, showcasing the timeless artistry that has defined his illustrious career.



LOUIS HAYES ARTFORM REVISITED

Savant Records SCD 2218

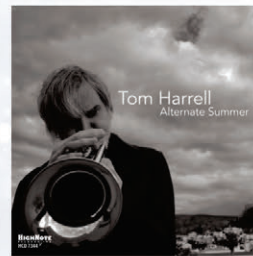
Louis Hayes proves himself not just a great drummer but also a charismatic leader delivering a recording standing on the summit of today's post-bop sessions.



THOM ROTELLA SIDE HUSTLE

HighNote Records HCD 7355

Guitarist Thom Rotella swings, smolders and sizzles through a great set list, with Eric Alexander and Jeremy Pelt on hand to welcome him to HighNote.



TOM HARRELL ALTERNATE SUMMER

HighNote Records HCD 7344

Trumpet player, composer, and arranger Tom Harrell unveils ten new works on his latest offering, performed by perhaps one of his finest bands to date.



CONRAD HERWIG THE LATIN SIDE OF MCCOY TYNER

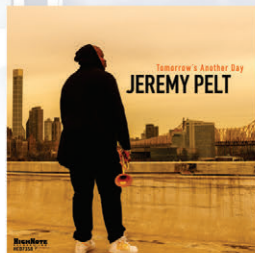
Conrad Herwig goes directly to the core of Tyner's compositions and imbues them with the vibrant essence of Afro-Cuban and Afro-Caribbean traditions.



NICOLE GLOVER PLAYS

Savant Records SCD 2213

Nicole Glover's sax trio is joined by vibes master Steve Nelson in music that is challenging but communicative with a sly sense of playfulness peeking out.



JEREMY PELT TOMORROW'S ANOTHER DAY

HighNote Records HCD 7358

The creativity of Jeremy Pelt provides an intense, mesmeric weave of some of the most imaginative and communicative music he has given us so far.



JIM SNIDERO FOR ALL WE KNOW

Savant Records SCD 2215

Soaring over a classic sax trio format, Jim Snidero places himself in the most exposed setting he's ever inhabited, reaching the apex on the saxophone.



JD ALLEN The Dark, the Light, the Grey and the Colorful

Savant Records SCD 2217

Tenor saxophonist JD Allen blurs the boundaries of contemporary jazz by creating a dynamic fusion of tradition and modernity.



BRANDON SANDERS THE TABLES WILL TURN

Savant Records SCD 2219

The whispery light touch of drummer Brandon Sanders sparkles throughout his new recording and marks another important chapter in his career.



Taylor Eigsti	206	DOMi	188
Orrin Evans	206	Omar Sosa	188
Benny Green	206	Matthew Shipp	179
Eric Reed	206	George Colligan	161
Abdullah Ibrahim	179	Kit Downes	161
Myra Melford	179	Jamie Saft	161
Aaron Parks	179		
Danilo Pérez	170		
Marilyn Crispell	152		
Aaron Diehl	152		
Geoffrey Keezer	143		
Matthew Shipp	134		

KEYBOARDS

Herbie Hancock	3,626		
Jon Batiste	1,052		
Larry Goldings	989		
Robert Glasper	926		
Hiromi	683		
Craig Taborn	503		
Danilo Pérez	449		
Cory Henry	431		
James Francies	386		
John Medeski	386		
Nik Bärtsch	359		
John Beasley	341		
Leo Genovese	314		
Geoffrey Keezer	314		
Uri Caine	305		
Eddie Palmieri	305		
Patrice Rushen	287		
Gary Versace	251		
Wayne Horvitz	197		

ORGAN

Larry Goldings	3,167
Booker T. Jones	1,466
John Medeski	1,007
Brian Auger	863
Mike LeDonne	836
Cory Henry	827
Pat Bianchi	629
Gary Versace	593
Barbara Dennerlein	557
Amina Claudine Myers	539
Tony Monaco	377
Rhoda Scott	368
Craig Taborn	368
Delvon Lamarr	359
Kit Downes	350
Brian Charette	287
Jared Gold	233
Jamie Saft	188
Ståle Storløkken	188
Wayne Horvitz	179
Greg Lewis	143

GUITAR

Russell Malone (DIED AUG. 23)	1,988
Pat Metheny	1,826

Bill Frisell	1,421	Larry Grenadier	359
Julian Lage	1,115	Buster Williams	359
Mary Halvorson	791	John Clayton	296
John McLaughlin	764	Peter Washington	296
John Scofield	710	Avishai Cohen	278
Peter Bernstein	683	William Parker	278
Kurt Rosenwinkel	584	Thomas Morgan	251
Pasquale Grasso	503	Rufus Reid	242
John Pizzarelli	494	Dezron Douglas	188
Dave Stryker	359	Kyle Eastwood	170
Kevin Eubanks	314	Scott Colley	152
Lionel Loueke	287	Arild Andersen	143
Ralph Towner	251	Jorge Roeder	134
Charlie Hunter	233	Ben Allison	125
Ben Monder	197	Luques Curtis	116
Cory Wong	197	Cecil McBee	107
Jeff Parker	179	Luke Stewart	107
Bobby Broom	170		
Nels Cline	161		
Romero Lubambo	161		
Gilad Hekselman	152		
Marc Ribot	152		
Miles Okazaki	143		
Wolfgang Muthspiel	134		

ELECTRIC BASS

Marcus Miller	1,988
Stanley Clarke	1,610
Christian McBride	1,277
Steve Swallow	1,178
John Patitucci	1,115
Victor Wooten	872
esperanza spalding	800
Meshell Ndegeocello	710
Tony Levin	665
Linda May Han Oh	467
Thundercat	386
Brian Bromberg	341
James Genus	287
Richard Bona	278

BASS

Christian McBride	3,122
Ron Carter	2,474
Linda May Han Oh	980
Dave Holland	881
esperanza spalding	872
John Patitucci	557
Stanley Clarke	521

Pino Palladino	269
Larry Grenadier	242
Avishai Cohen	224
Tim Lefebvre	215
Ingebrigt Håker Flaten	152
Trevor Dunn	143
Matthew Garrison	143
Felix Pastorius	134
Jamaaladeen Tacuma	134

VIOLIN

Regina Carter	4,445
Jean-Luc Ponty	1,610
Sara Caswell	980
Mark Feldman	710
Jenny Scheinman	710
Jerry Goodman	440
Mark O'Connor	440
Zach Brock	422
Michal Urbaniak	305
Sarah Bernstein	269
Mat Maneri	269
Jason Kao Hwang	224
Tomoko Omura	215
Miguel Atwood-Ferguson	170
Eyvind Kang	170
Scott Tixier	70
Christian Howes	161
Mads Tolling	161
Jeff Gauthier	116

Carla Kihlstedt	116
Aaron Weinstein	116

DRUMS

Brian Blade	1,934
Terri Lyne Carrington	953
Jack DeJohnette	899
Steve Gadd	836
Johnathan Blake	629
Billy Cobham	548
Tyshawn Sorey	548
Jeff Hamilton	458
Jeff "Tain" Watts	440
Roy Haynes	422
Albert "Tootie" Heath (DIED APRIL 3)	359
Billy Hart	341
Allison Miller	341
Lewis Nash	341
Peter Erskine	332
Nate Smith	305
Kenny Washington	305
Matt Wilson	305
Joey Baron	296
Bill Stewart	296
Herlin Riley	278
Ulysses Owens Jr.	215
Cindy Blackman Santana	206
Makaya McCraven	206
Rudy Royston	188
Eric Harland	170

PERCUSSION

Zakir Hussain	1,448
Sheila E	1,286
Poncho Sanchez	1,205
Alex Acuña	1,124
Airto Moreira	1,052
Trilok Gurtu	584
Pedrito Martinez	548
Kahil El'Zabar	539
Marilyn Mazur	476
Cyro Baptista	431
Bobby Sanabria	404
Dafnis Prieto	368
Pete Escovedo	314
Hamid Drake	305
Mino Cinelu	296
Ches Smith	296
Giovanni Hidalgo	287
Manolo Badrena	251
Rogério Boccato	251
Chad Taylor	251
John Santos	197
Susie Ibarra	188
Han Bennink	152
Kate Gentile	152

VIBRAPHONE

Warren Wolf	1,970
Stefon Harris	1,862
Joel Ross	1,754

Joe Locke	1,088
Jason Marsalis	917
Steve Nelson	737
Patricia Brennan	512
Sasha Berliner	485
Joe Chambers	467
Kenny Wollesen	395
Mulatu Astatke	296
Cecilia Smith	296
Jason Adasiewicz	287
Chien Chien Lu	269
Karl Berger	197
Hendrik Meurkens	188
Matt Moran	188
Warren Smith	170
Tomas Fujiwara	143
Simon Moullier	143
Behn Gillece	125

MISCELLANEOUS INSTRUMENT

Béla Fleck (BANJO)	1,916
Brandee Younger (HARP)	1,088
Tomeka Reid (CELLO)	836
Jon Batiste (MELODICA/ HARMONABOARD)	737
Chris Potter (BASS CLARINET)	665
Marcus Miller (BASS CLARINET)	530
David Murray (BASS CLARINET)	530
Steve Turre (SHELLS)	476
James Carter (BASS SAXOPHONE)	449

All is
Merry and Bright
Donald Vega Trio



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from Donald Vega

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and Streaming Everywhere

A ANDERSON AUDIO
NEW YORK

DXD
Digital eXtreme Definition



Carla Bley



Taj Mahal

Wycliffe Gordon (TUBA) 431
 Richard Galliano (ACCORDION) 395
 Grégoire Maret (HARMONICA) 395
 Scott Robinson
 (BASS SAXOPHONE) 395
 Chris Thile (MANDOLIN) 386
 Gary Versace (ACCORDION) 341
 Howard Levy (HARMONICA) 314
 Toumani Diabaté (KORA) 305
 Theon Cross (TUBA) 287
 Charles Lloyd (TAROGATO) 278
 Anouar Brahem (OUD) 269
 Greg Leisz (PEDAL STEEL GUITAR) 251
 Edmar Castaneda
 (COLOMBIAN HARP) 242
 Hendrik Meurkens (HARMONICA) ... 224
 Dino Saluzzi (BANDONEÓN) 215
 Peggy Lee (CELLO) 197
 Erik Friedlander (CELLO) 188

FEMALE VOCALIST

Samara Joy 2,546
 Cécile McLorin Salvant 1,493
 Diana Krall 1,061
 Dianne Reeves 791
 Cyrille Aimée 683
 esperanza spalding 674
 Dee Dee Bridgewater 611
 Cassandra Wilson 530
 Veronica Swift 494
 Laila Biali 485
 Lizz Wright 485
 Jazzmeia Horn 440
 Catherine Russell 332
 Gretchen Parlato 287
 Roberta Gambarini 269
 Sheila Jordan 260
 Patricia Barber 242
 Gabrielle Cavassa 224
 Madeleine Peyroux 224
 Norma Winstone 206

Melody Gardot 197
 Tierney Sutton 188
 Luciana Souza 170
 Nicole Zuraitis 152
 Sara Gazarek 143
 Stacey Kent 143

MALE VOCALIST

Kurt Elling 3,527
 Gregory Porter 2,213
 Bobby McFerrin 935
 Harry Connick Jr. 854
 Jacob Collier 566
 José James 539
 Benny Benack III 530
 Theo Bleckmann 521
 John Pizzarelli 476
 Andy Bey 431
 James Blood Ulmer 368
 Kenny Washington 314
 Leslie Odom Jr. 287
 Jamie Cullum 278
 João Bosco 251
 Allan Harris 197
 Giacomo Gates 188
 Dwight Trible 161
 Bilal 152
 John Boutté 143
 Johnny O'Neal 143
 Sachal Vasandani 134
 Phil Minton 125
 Jamison Ross 125

COMPOSER

Maria Schneider 1,709
 Terence Blanchard 989
 Pat Metheny 791
 Carla Bley 701
 Benny Golson
 (PASSED SEPT. 22) 647

Wynton Marsalis 539
 Darcy James Argue 503
 Renee Rosnes 476
 Christian McBride 458
 John Zorn 359
 Brad Mehldau 350
 Robert Glasper 341
 Mary Halvorson 323
 Tyshawn Sorey 314
 Bill Frisell 287
 Tom Harrell 278
 Vijay Iyer 278
 esperanza spalding 278
 Henry Threadgill 278
 Kamasi Washington 269
 Fred Hersch 242
 Vince Mendoza 242
 Ambrose Akinmusire 233
 Dave Holland 224
 Jim McNeely 206
 Melissa Aldana 197
 Kris Davis 179

ARRANGER

Carla Bley 1,007
 Christian McBride 944
 Darcy James Argue 908
 Wynton Marsalis 755
 Terri Lyne Carrington 629
 John Beasley 602
 Vince Mendoza 566
 Bob Mintzer 557
 John Clayton 530
 Billy Childs 458
 Robert Glasper 440
 esperanza spalding 422
 Gordon Goodwin 404
 Kamasi Washington 386
 Jim McNeely 278
 Miguel Zenón 278

Sullivan Fortner 269
 Christine Jensen 260
 Arturo O'Farrill 242
 Ed Palermo 242
 Lakecia Benjamin 233
 Steven Bernstein 233
 Gil Goldstein 215
 John Hollenbeck 197
 Miho Hazama 188
 Myra Melford 179
 Ted Nash 161

RECORD LABEL

Blue Note 3,932
 ECM 1,412
 Mack Avenue 656
 Smoke Sessions 620
 Mosaic 314
 MoonJune 296
 Nonesuch 287
 Origin 260
 Impulse! 251
 Verve 224
 Cellar Live Music Group 215
 Whaling City Sound 206
 Concord 197
 Intakt 197
 Pi Recordings 188
 Jazz Is Dead 179
 Posi-Tone 179
 Resonance 179
 ACT 170
 Sunnyside 152
 ArtistShare 143
 Ropeadope 134
 Criss Cross Jazz 125
 Justin Time 125
 SmallsLIVE 125
 Delmark 116
 Clean Feed 107



Bela Fleck

SteepleChase	107	Robert Cray	458
Tzadik	107	Eric Bibb	242

PRODUCER

Christian McBride	1,511	Samantha Fish	197
Manfred Eicher	1,304	Elvin Bishop	161
Don Was	1,088	Ruthie Foster	161
Terri Lyne Carrington	1,034	Duke Robillard	161
Michael Cuscuna	818	Sue Foley	152
Robert Glasper	584	Bobby Rush	152
John Zorn	476		
Zev Feldman	467		
Dave Holland	467		
John Beasley	440		
Cory Weeds	413		
Dave Douglas	296		
Makaya McCraven	296		
Ambrose Akinmusire	287		
Bill Laswell	287		
Charlie Hunter	260		
Kris Davis/David Breskin	233		
Larry Klein	197		
Paul Stache	179		
Tyshawn Sorey	170		
Miguel Zenón	170		
JD Allen	143		
Terrace Martin	134		

BLUES ARTIST OF THE YEAR

Buddy Guy	1,709	John Primer & Bob Corritore, <i>Crawlin' Kingsnake</i> (VIZZTONE)	251
Tedeschi Trucks Band	1,133	Tracy Nelson, <i>Life Don't Miss Nobody</i> (BMG)	242
Christone "Kingfish" Ingram	809	Kenny Wayne Shepherd, <i>Dirt On My Diamonds</i> (PROVOGUE)	224
John Mayall	737	Matt Anderson, <i>The Big Bottle Of Joy</i> (SONIC)	197
Taj Mahal	692	Duane Betts, <i>Wild & Precious Life</i> (ROYAL POTATO FAMILY)	197
Joe Bonamassa	674	Various Artists, <i>Tell Everybody</i> (21ST CENTURY JUKE JOINT BLUES), (EASY EYE)	170
Gary Clark Jr.	647	The Cash Box Kings, <i>Oscar's Motel</i> (ALLIGATOR)	161
Shemekia Copeland	602		
Keb' Mo'	602		
Robben Ford	467		
James Blood Ulmer	467		

BLUES ALBUM

Taj Mahal, Savoy (STONY PLAIN)	2,087
Joe Bonamassa, <i>Blues Deluxe, Vol. 2</i> (J&R ADVENTURES)	1,196
Gary Clark Jr., <i>JPEG Raw</i> (WEA) ...	1,034
Christine Kingfish Ingram, <i>Live In London</i> (ALLIGATOR)	818
Various Artists, <i>The Memphis Blues Box</i> (BEAR FAMILY)	548
Gov't Mule, <i>Peace ... Like A River</i> (FANTASY)	449
Sue Foley, <i>One Guitar Woman</i> (STONY PLAIN)	422
Samantha Fish and Jesse Dayton, <i>Death Wish Blues</i> (ROUNDER)	359
Eric Bibb, <i>Live At The Scala Theatre</i> (REPUTE/STONY PLAIN)	278

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Coco Montoya, <i>Writing On The Wall</i> (ALLIGATOR)	161
Tinsley Ellis, <i>Naked Truth</i> (ALLIGATOR)	152
Fenton Robinson, <i>Somebody Loan Me A Dime</i> (ALLIGATOR)	152
Cedric Burnside, <i>Hill Country Love</i> (PROVOGUE)	143
Rick Estrin and the Nightcats, <i>The Hits Keep Coming</i> (ALLIGATOR)	125
Slash, <i>Orgy Of The Damned</i> (GIBSON)	125

BEYOND ARTIST

Jon Batiste	1,106
Rhiannon Giddens	899
Béla Fleck	656
Tedeschi Trucks Band	557
Robert Glasper	512
Bob Dylan	485
Tower of Power	485
Bonnie Raitt	467
Van Morrison.....	404
Billie Eilish	287
Kendrick Lamar	287
Ralph Towner.....	269
Ruben Blades	260
Gregory Porter	260
Björk	251
Melody Gardot	251
Neil Young	251
Rickie Lee Jones	242
Arooj Aftab/Vijay Iyer/Shahzad Ismaily	233
DOMi & JD Beck	233
The Baylor Project	206
Laufey	206
Antonio Sánchez	197
Fiona Apple	188
Beyoncé	188
Khruangbin	188
Ivan Lins	188
Taylor Swift	188
Trombone Shorty	188
Caetano Veloso	188

BEYOND ALBUM

Béla Fleck, <i>Rhapsody In Blue</i> (THIRTY TIGERS)	1,745
Joni Mitchell, <i>At Newport</i> (RHINO) 1.....	511
Brad Mehldau, <i>After Bach II</i> (NONESUCH)	1,367
Rhiannon Giddens, <i>You're The One</i> (NONESUCH)	1,007
Ralph Towner, <i>At First Light</i> (ECM)	854
Bettye LaVette, <i>LaVette!</i> (JAY-VEE)	611
Ivan Lins, <i>My Heart Speaks</i> (RESONANCE)	449
Andre 3000, <i>New Blue Sun</i>	404
Ceramic Dog, <i>Connection</i> (ENJAYELLOWBIRD)	323
Edmar Castañeda World Ensemble, <i>Viento Sur</i> (INDEPENDENT RELEASE).....	314
PJ Harvey, <i>Inside The Old Year Dying</i> (PARTISAN)	278
Khruangbin, <i>Live At Sydney Opera House</i> (DEAD OCEANS)	260
Brittany Howard, <i>What Now</i> (ISLAND)	251
Corinne Bailey Rae, <i>Black Rainbows</i> (THIRTY TIGERS)	242
Yo La Tengo, <i>This Stupid World</i> (MATADOR)	206
John Lurie, <i>Painting With John</i> (ROYAL POTATO FAMILY)	188
Ryan Truesdell, <i>Synthesis: The String Quartet Sessions</i> (ARTIST SHARE)	188
Olivia Rodrigo, <i>GUTS</i> (GEFFEN)	170
The Smile, <i>Wall Of Eyes</i> (XL).....	52
Sufjan Stevens, <i>Javelin</i> (ASTHMATIC KITTY)	143
Hurray For The Riff Raff, <i>The Past Is Still Alive</i> (NONESUCH)	134

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Duke Ellington
& Billy Strayhorn, arrangement
Pyotr Illyich Tchaikovsky, composer

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Reviews

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



Jazzmeia Horn makes music as colorful as her wardrobe on *Messages*.

Jazzmeia Horn

Messages

EMPRESS LEGACY

★★★★½

Every listener's taste in vocalists is highly subjective, as is each individual's concept of creative limits. So when Jazzmeia Horn pushes her voice to what surely must be the very highest parts of her range on a long jam of "You're Getting To Be A Habit With Me," or creates a "song" from a collection of voicemails, you're best to forgive her those few excesses if they result in this kind of powerful declaration of artistic and emotional freedom.

The engaging "Happy Livin'" sets the tone, with crisp backing by keyboardist Keith Brown, bassist Eric Wheeler and drummer

Anwar Marshall, as well as uninhibited scatting by Horn. The rhythm section — with Victor Gould on keys — also powers an exceptional musical journey on "Submit To The Unknown," which roams from an Afro-centric introduction through bop-inflected blowing by saxophonist Anthony Ware to compelling vocals from the leader.

From that appealing opening pair, Horn moves from strength to strength, building to the soulful swing of "Mother's Love," a showcase for both her and the band, and the gorgeously textured "Sing Your Own Song."

Given the range and power of the opening half-dozen pieces, it's easy to forgive the frivolity of "Voicemail Blues" as the tone shifts to the closing four songs — noticeably more relaxed, including the breezy

"Don't Forget Your Love," the 13-minute, range-stretching blowout of "You're Getting To Be A Habit With Me" and the fierce wordplay on the valedictory "Flip 'D' Switch." She goes out swinging and proud.

However you regard those upper-range notes, give Horn her due; she has unlimited avenues for emotional expression and the chops to deliver with impact, whichever way she chooses to go.

—James Hale

Messages: Happy Livin'; Submit To The Unknown; Destiny; Tip; Mother's Love; Sing Your Own Song; Voicemail Blues; Mysteries Of Us; Don't Forget Your Love; You're Getting To Be A Habit With Me; Flip 'D' Switch. (75:47)

Personnel: Jazzmeia Horn, vocals; Marquis Hill (8), Trunino Lowe (2, 11), trumpet; Anthony Ware, flute, tenor saxophone (2, 3, 11); Stacy Dillard, soprano saxophone (3, 9, 11); Keith Brown (1, 6, 10, 11), Victor Gould (2-5, 7-9), piano, keyboards; Eric Wheeler, bass; Anwar Marshall, drums; Khalil Kwamé Bell, percussion (2, 3, 8).

Ordering info: artistryofjazzhorn.com

TYSHAWN SOREY TRIO *The Susceptible Now*

Tyshawn Sorey *The Susceptible Now*

PI

★★★★★

Remember the first unexpected kiss with your greatest lover: Lips first caressing one another before mouths slowly opening, allowing moist, hungry tongues to explore each other. That sensation matches the first 30 seconds of this album.

The Susceptible Now begins with pianist Aaron Diehl playing approximately six notes, brimming with contemplative splendor as the space in between the notes conveys time suspension. That moment enraptures the listener im-

mediately. Instead of knocking you off your feet with thundering note clusters or pyrotechnical runs, the intro beckons softly like a lusty kiss. From there, the music blossoms into a garden of sonic ecstasy as Tyshawn Sorey's trio conjures a spell that enchants throughout the entire album.

The magic of the first piece is even more wondrous considering that it's an imaginative reading of McCoy Tyner's "Peresina," a hypnotic, late-'60s modal jazz gem on which Tyner showcases his speedy, spiraling improvisations across a samba-inflected groove. Sorey expands it to a 15-minute, episodic rendezvous, allowing the comeliness of the melody to reveal itself leisurely, not only through Diehl's pithy rendering but also Harish Raghavan's undulating contrapuntal bass lines and Sorey's sensitive, cocurating rhythms.

That extravagant first song becomes the template for the remaining cuts: a verdant retooling of Joni Mitchell and Charles Mingus' "A Chair In The Sky," a suspenseful reimagining of Vividry's "Your Good Lies" and a transfixing reading of Brad Mehldau's "Bealtine." As on the first cut, each seduces with the power of sauntering dance, flickering melodicism and emotional immediacy. This is music that makes listeners yearn for sensual, everlasting love.

—John Murph

The Susceptible Now: Peresina; A Chair In The Sky; Your Good Lies; Bealtine. (79:24)

Personnel: Tyshawn Sorey, drums; Aaron Diehl, piano; Harish Raghavan, bass.

Ordering info: pirecordings.com

Chucho Valdes *Cuba And Beyond*

BLUE NOTE

★★★★★

In the 1970s jazz threw open its doors to the call of freedom ... and watched 20 million fans walk away. It was a depressing decade — "the worst in jazz history," Peter Watrous wrote — that simultaneously alienated and pandered, while greats of earlier decades labored on to sustain the finances.

Yet, *Cuba And Beyond* reminds us that the decade gave us some very complete players too, among them Chucho Valdes, whose creative probing and nimble virtuosity remain locked and loaded on this CD, his first for Blue Note in 22 years (60 years after his first recording). As founder and leader of Irakere in 1973, Valdes stands as a one-man Preservation Hall of the modern convergence of Cuban and American jazz.

Backed here by his Royal Quartet, he feeds off of its voltage and delivers an eager piano set that exudes both energy and coherence even on ballads like "Nosotros" and "Habanera Partida." Valdes sets the essential pace with "Punto Cubana," which begins with a deceptive wistfulness, misleading us the way Erroll Garner used to lure us in with his decorative prefaces then peel into a streamlined jet



stream. Valdes invests about a minute in such mischief, then starts the engine with a light vamp. The rhythm engages, and we're off on a series of choruses, each climbing to its own climax before starting over from scratch.

Six of the eight pieces are by Valdes, one by bassist Jose Gola; and "Armando's Rhumba" is an homage to Chuck Corea. Plenty of time and space for the timekeepers to breathe, too.

—John McDonough

Cuba And Beyond: Punto Cubana; Son de Almendra; Congalues; Habanera Partida; Mozart a la Cuba; Armando's Rhumba; Nosotros; Tatormania. (51:42)

Personnel: Jose A. Gola, bass; Horacio El Negro Hernandez, drums; Roberto Jr. Vizcaino, percussion.

Ordering info: bluenote.com



Tigran Hamasyan *The Bird Of A Thousand Voices*

NAÏVE

★★★★★

Armenian pianist Tigran Hamasyan has spent the past 15 years since the release of his debut *Red Hail* establishing a uniquely percussive, melodically intricate sound on his instrument. Often coupling lightning-fast runs across the keys with doubled vocalisations, Hamasyan's work is as wide-ranging as it is instantly identifiable. On his latest, *The Bird Of A Thousand Voices*, Hamasyan confounds expectations once more to deliver a blistering 24-track fusion odyssey, retelling an Armenian folktale through synth, electric bass, pounding drums and his signature piano stylings.

At first glance, the record seems an overwhelming proposition: a prog-jazz opera tracing the story of a prince searching for a mythical bird, accompanied by a short film, video game and live theatrical performance. It's a sprawling work with a wide-ranging sound, encompassing the buzzing analog synths and snare drum onslaught of opener "The Kingdom," the melodic ambience of the title track and the beautiful solo piano melodic of "Postlude—After Seven Winters."

This is ultimately an album of many guises: one that feels just as apt reverberating around the hushed auditorium of the Paris Philharmonie as it does thrashing through a sweaty basement club. In his open-mindedness, Hamasyan proves his place as one of his generation's great piano players, willing to subvert the rulebook as much as study it. —Ammar Kalia

The Bird Of A Thousand Voices: The Kingdom, The Curse, The Bird Of A Thousand Voices, Areg's Calling, The Path Of No Return, The Quest Begins, Areg And Manushak, The Saviour Is Condemned, Guidance, Flaming Horse And The Thunderbolt Sword, Red, White And Black Worlds, Bells Of Memory, Only The One Who Brought The Bird Can Make It Sing, Prophecy Of A Sacrifice, The Demon Of Anatak, Temptations, Forty Days In The Realm Of Bottomless Eye, He Refuses To Be Immortal, The Return, Betrayed By Brothers, The Well Of Death And Resurrection, Sing Me A Song When You Will Be At The Place Where All Is Bliss, The Eternal Birds Sing And The Garden Blooms Again, Postlude—After Seven Winters. (91:05)

Personnel: Tigran Hamasyan, piano, analog synthesizers, vocals; Nate Wood, drums; Areni Agbabian, vocals; Mark Karapetian, electric bass; Sofia Jernberg, vocals; Vahram Sarkissian, vocals.

Ordering info: tigranhamasyan.com

The Hot Box

Critics	James Hale	John Murph	John McDonough	Ammar Kalia
Jazzmeia Horn <i>Messages</i>	★★★★½	★★★	★★★★½	★★★
Tyshawn Sorey <i>The Susceptible Now</i>	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★½
Chucho Valdes <i>Cuba And Beyond</i>	★★½	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★
Tigran Hamasyan <i>The Bird of A Thousand Voices</i>	★★★	★★½	★★	★★★★

Critics' Comments

Jazzmeia Horn, *Messages*

A commendable continuation of Jazzmeia Horn's forging her own path as a commanding singer and songwriter. —John Murph

Horn has range, precision, a gently abrasive identity better anchored than her songwriting. Choruses of commentary and tape loops intrude. More craft, fewer diary entries would raise her game to match her musicianship. Let the pros write the songs. —John McDonough

A beautifully tender collection of deep-swinging compositions and soulful melodies showcasing Horn's rich voice. Unafraid to leave her warm vocal tone exposed with minimal backing, *Messages* reaches an apex on "Mysteries Of Us," featuring the interweaving trumpet accompaniment of Marquis Hill. —Ammar Kalia

Tyshawn Sorey, *The Susceptible Now*

Weighty yet highly fluid, Sorey's trio represents the apex of triangulated independence. And there's a fourth element: an exceptional sound mix that adds substance to the tonality of each instrument. —James Hale

In covering and reshuffling four obscure pieces, Sorey makes obscurity his friend. Few will fully appreciate what's going on (I didn't). Despite some drowsy stretches, Diehl sustains interest with a responsive spontaneity. It's his show. —John McDonough

A good cover prizes apart its original and transforms its parts. Sorey's latest trio record does exactly that with its quartet of covers from McCoy Tyner, Joni Mitchell and others, embellishing and altering to produce something new entirely. —Ammar Kalia

Chucho Valdes, *Cuba And Beyond*

Sounds too safe by half, and the Mozart-goes-Cuban piece pushes it all into the realm of Cayo Coco tourist kitsch. —James Hale

Unimpeachable fire and finesse. —John Murph

Valdes' latest is a charming trip through his trademark sound, journeying effortlessly over clave, son and rumba rhythms to produce a satisfying collection that delivers on expectation but fails to explore much new ground. —Ammar Kalia

Tigran Hamasyan, *The Bird of A Thousand Voices*

Hamasyan's ambitious piece is most effective at the margins: When he bares its prog-rock soul and — conversely — when he creates jeweled miniatures of sonic beauty. But he also seems to feel obliged to use an array of devices that sound like filler. —James Hale

A lot of virtuosic prog-rock-inspired bombast that eventually becomes the musical equivalent of a boorish Michael Bay movie. —John Murph

This stand-alone soundtrack, dependent on an unseen medieval myth, conveys little meaning. Asks much of one expecting a jazz experience. Hamasyan's piano skills are buried under crushing electronic landslides narrating a *Game of Thrones* folk tale. Many ways to tell a tale; this doesn't seem one of them. —John McDonough



between the lines



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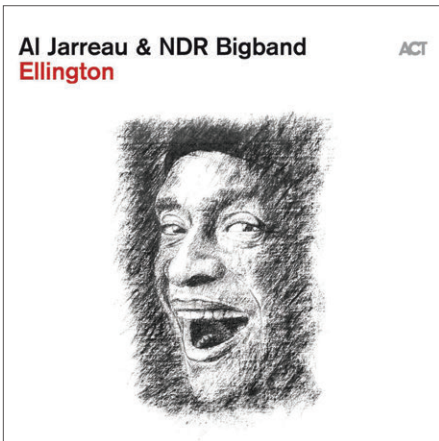


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Al Jarreau & NDR Bigband Ellington

ACT
★★★★½

Al Jarreau and the NDR Big Band made this live recording of Duke Ellington standards during a tour of Germany in 2016. Less than a year later, Jarreau passed away, making this album a fitting swan song. Stuart Nicholson's liner notes tell you everything you need to know about Jarreau's career, his connection to German audiences and Hamburg-based public radio broadcaster NDR. The album's

arranger, Jörg Achim Keller, left plenty of room for Jarreau's improvisational style, making every track a treat, with more peaks than can be mentioned. "Come Sunday" starts quietly, with Hans Vroomans' Rhodes and subdued horns. This leaves Jarreau free to deliver vocal improvisations that run up and down the scale, with melismas that wouldn't be out of place at a Sunday gospel service. "Take The 'A' Train" has a minimal lyric, so Jarreau uses the space between solos by Tini Thomsen's sax and Vroomans' piano to give us a description of taking his gal uptown for a date. The band takes a rock 'n' roll approach to "I Ain't Got Nothing But The Blues," with Peter Tiehuis adding distorted electric guitar fills to Jarreau's growls, shrieks and humorous asides. Jarreau's deconstructs the lyrics to "I'm Beginning To See The Light," adding and repeating lines, scatting playfully and dropping a quote from another hit of the time into the band's light swing arrangement. He digs deep for "I Got It Bad (And That Ain't Good)," with an understated performance that makes you feel the loss and regret he's describing. —j. poet

Ellington: Drop Me Off in Harlem, I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart, Lush Life, Come Sunday, In a Mellow Tone, Take the "A" Train, I'm Beginning to See the Light, Sophisticated Lady, I Ain't Got Nothing but the Blues, I Got it Bad (and That Ain't Good), Satin Doll. (55:07)
Personnel: Al Jarreau vocals; NDR Big Band, Jörg Achim Keller, conductor.
Ordering info: actmusic.com

Godwin Louis Psalms And Proverbs

BLUEROOM
★★★★★

At the start of Godwin Louis's sophomore release, *Psalms And Proverbs*, there is a dab of Coltrane's "A Love Supreme" and a taste of Wayne Shorter's "Footprints" before Louis takes over with searing sermon-like bursts from his horn that the trumpet of Etienne Charles intensifies. In effect, the global church of the holy ghost merges with the spirit of Eshu and traverses the music and languages of the African diaspora. The fire and brimstone Charles ignites continue on "Psalm 6" via the trumpet of Billy Buss, and his energy is pervasive throughout.

On "Vini Non," the album's religious theme has a less sanctified fervor with a prelude from Johnny Mercier's organ, but this is momentary and Louis's robust saxophone and Axel Tosca Laugart's piano once again command the symphonic reverence. "Pelo Malo" is a featured track, and the entire ensemble wastes no time delivering a jumpy exuberance; suddenly the church has morphed into a carnival of sound. On "Kpikpa Han," a song of praise from Benin, Lecokpon's vocals and percussion are a lively, condensed version of a ceremonial ritual.

The final tracks for the most part are solemn,



laced with a hymnal aspect, and Louis leads his congregation back to where the Lord may be heard as his shepherd on "Thy Will Be Done" and "Now and Forever," his horn given additional heft from Obed Calvaire's drums. —Herb Boyd

Psalms And Proverbs: Showers of Blessings/Kpolanuyiade; Psalms 6; Vini Non; Pwoblém Yo; Kpikpa Han; Psaumes 121/ Proverbs; Collective Bovarysm; Pelo Malo; Psalms 23 Part II (I Shall Fear No Evil); Psalms 23 Part III (Surely Goodness and Mercy); Thy Will Be Done; Now and Forever. (45:25)
Personnel: Godwin Louis, alto and soprano saxophones, vocals, percussion; Billy Buss, trumpet and flugelhorn; Axel Tosca Laugart, piano; Johnny Mercier, organ; Obed Calvaire, drums; Hoggy Kwang, bass; Markus Schwartz, percussion; Etienne Charles, trumpet 1, 8; Maruricio Herrera Tamayo, percussion 1, 8; Melissa Stylianou, vocal 1, 8, 12; Pauline Jean, vocal 1, 2, 8, 10, 12; Lecokpon, vocal, percussion, 2, 5; Tina Adjih, vocal 2, 5; Emeffa Dzeffi, vocal 2; Akama, vocal, percussion 5; Xiomara Laugart (8), Lea Lórien (8), vocals.
Ordering info: godwinlouis.com



Charlie Apicella & Iron City Meet The Griots Speak Call To Action/Call To Prayer
ORIGIN
★★★★★

Knowing that *Call To Action/Call To Prayer* is a companion to *Destiny Calling* — another album by Charlie Apicella, The Griots Speak, and Iron City, recorded during the same studio session in 2022 — sparks the notion of having missed out on something important. That said, it's certainly commonplace to enjoy an album out of order from an established series or without knowledge of an overarching concept and there are plenty of elements that make *Call To Action/Call To Prayer* that are noteworthy and memorable on its own.

The sheer variety of colorful sounds from the doson ngoni, gralla, gembri, madal drum, and Tibetan singing bowls — instruments uncommon to modern Western music — makes for an intriguing and culture-widening listening experience. Countless delicate details and musical volleys made between the musicians can be realized even after several playthroughs. The tonal and rhythmic potpourri, blended with the generally calm demeanor of the album (save for "Cascading Wave of Change," which at its peak is frenetic chaos), gives this improvisational session an air of inspired innocence. Those not as keen on wandering parts and disjointed performance may not find much enjoyment here, though it's not without glimpses of conventional structure. Penultimate track "These Boxes Are Mostly Empty" makes for the strongest example of such to satisfy an ear looking for more traditional musical form.

—Kira Grunenberg

Call To Action/Call To Prayer: Call to Action: An Invocation of Those Who Came Before; Call to Action: With One's Elders; Call to Action: Concerted Effort; Call to Prayer: Zen Flesh; Zen Bone; Call to Prayer: Il Nostro Sogno; Call to Prayer: Rapid Synthesis of Novel Patterns; Call to Prayer: These Boxes Are Mostly Empty; Call to Prayer: Cascading Wave of Change. (40:53)
Personnel: Charlie Apicella, madal drum, Tibetan singing bowls; Daniel Carter, saxophones, flute, clarinet, trumpet, piano; William Parker, bass, doson ngoni, double reed, gralla, gembri, pocket trumpet; Juma Sultan, congas, shakers, percussion; Brad Whiteley, organ; Austin Walker, drums.
Ordering info: originarts.com



Mulatu Astatke and Hoodna Orchestra

Tension

BATOV

★★★★½

The title track of *Tension* announces the intent of this record. The often-frenetic pulse of Afrobeat and funk that has defined the approaches of the Hoodna Orchestra meets the cool of Ethio-jazz's champion, Mulatu Astatke. At the heart of the tension is an approach to composition that privileges “play” rather than “chops.” The collaboration honors the latter through a deft handling of what’s most significant about Ethio-jazz

and Afrobeat alike: rhythm. Yet the differences between the two forms matters.

For Hoodna, this was a long hoped-for collaboration that originated in their interest in recording with Astatke after being opened to this sound through their earlier collaboration with Tesfaye Negatu in 2017. Most of the program here features originals, making for a welcome site of collaborative energies. Where “Tension” unwinds and reattaches the dual strands of the sound, with other tunes, one finds direct engagement with this music’s DNA. “Hatula” feels like a blues, with a groovy inflection before leaping into a moment of intensity. In his solo on the tune “Yashan,” Astatke’s vibraphone is immersed in a calm, spaced-out expression that remains rife with the same tension of the record. He is followed by baritone saxophonist Elad Gellert, whose stretching out punctuates the efforts to trade and learn from the various strands that weave together African diasporic musics. In that sense, bringing in the legend was more than just an interesting convergence. It was a master class in exploring the promises of form. So yes, there can be tension. But that works here. —Joshua Myers

Tension: Tension, Major, Hatula, Yashan, Deillah, Dung Gate. (30:59)

Personnel: Mulatu Astatke, vibraphone, piano, percussion; Ilan Smilan, guitar; Eitan Drabkin, organ; Nadav Bracha, bass; Eylon Tushiner, tenor saxophone, flute; Elad Gellert, baritone saxophone; Bar Ashkenazi, trumpet, flugelhorn; Matan Assayag, drums; Raz Eytan, percussion; Shahar Ber, Percussion; Ran Birnbaum, percussion; Neal Sugarman, tenor saxophone, alto saxophone (5); Udi Raz, trombone (3).

Ordering info: batovrecords.com

Tom Harrell

Alternate Summer

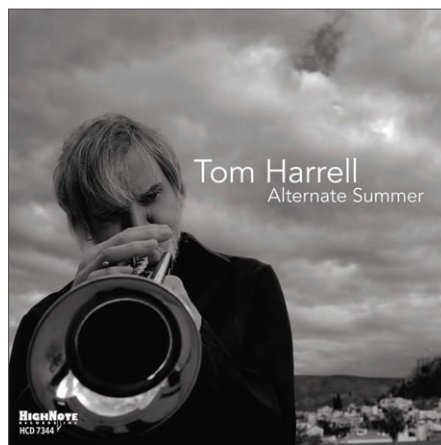
HIGHNOTE

★★★★½

What exactly is an *Alternate Summer*, you ask? Trumpeter/composer Tom Harrell says it’s “a bossa nova that suggests warmth and the tropics of Brazil and the beach and a happy time; it could also convey loneliness—the Portuguese melancholy, saudade. But also hope.” The sheer number of meanings behind this album’s title only hints at how many competing moods are housed within it.

The title track (and this album, more broadly) certainly hints at a certain emotional purgatory. The album covers a lot of ground: warm and bouncy at times, as in on the fun-loving track “Peanut,” and yet there are also beautifully desolate moments, as on that title cut.

Highlights include the interplay between Harrell and saxophonist Dayna Stephens (strung together by Adam Cruz’s effervescent hi-hat licks) on “Chalcedon,” the heavy wash of Luis Perdomo’s Hammond B-3 that perfectly evokes the summer-in-the-city feeling of heat rising off of fresh asphalt on “UV,” and the sweetly romantic, hammock swing-paced “Heliotrope.”



Although there is clearly an enticing heartbeat throughout *Alternate Summer*, the album doesn’t deliver a sustained mood, let alone a season. If anything, *Alternate Summer* performs as an old, yellowed photo album, collecting somewhat disparate moments into an hourlong, lucid dream.

—Ayana Contreras

Alternate Summer: Miramar, Peanut, Alternate Summer, Intermezzo, UV, Chalcedon, Heliotrope, Plateau, Wind Radius (58:58)

Personnel: Tom Harrell, trumpet; Luis Perdomo, piano, Fender Rhodes, B-3 organ; Ugonna Okegwo, bass; Adam Cruz, drums; Dayna Stephens, tenor saxophone (4, 5, 6, 8); Mark Turner, tenor saxophone (1, 2, 3, 9, 10); Charles Altura, acoustic and electric guitar (2, 3, 5, 7).

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com



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Miles Davis and Ron Carter at Antibes, 1963

Le Deuxième Grand Quintette

In the realm of storytelling, one shouldn't believe in the concept of spoilers if the story is crafted well enough. How is always a more interesting question than What. Plot is easy, but the devil is in the details. When it comes to how Miles Davis made his Second Great Quintet, we may know the band and the nominal facts of Tony Williams on the drums, Ron Carter on bass, Herbie Hancock on piano and Wayne Shorter on tenor saxophone. We may even know George Coleman was on tenor sax before he left the group, Sam Rivers served a short stint, and then came Shorter. However, for a music that lives in the moment and is formed through connections, hearing this group's difference from one guy changed out from July 1963 to October 1964 in a live setting is definitely one of those moments when hearing how they're different is more interesting than hearing the mere what that they are. As a document, *The Bootleg Series, Vol. 8 (Legacy A&R; ★★★★★ 346:27)* is important for this alone, but it's also important to remember the notion of being the young band touring the material in Miles' song book up to and fresh off of *Seven Steps to Heaven*, which isn't that long since *Kind of Blue*. It helps to remember this is the new stuff, the live stuff when Miles was touring off one of the most pivotal albums of the canon with the youngsters who would rise to the occasion and more. This is what documents are for.

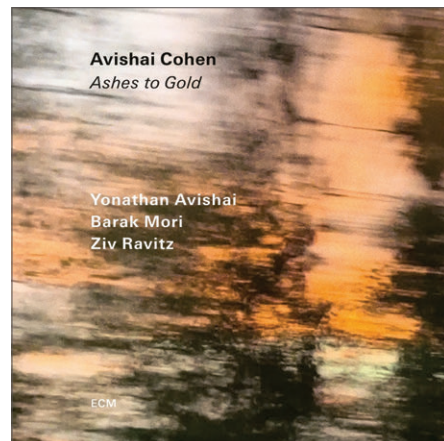
There's a tightness to this band in their 1963 dates. It's right, proper, correct, and running at breakneck speed. Tony is definitely snapping on the kit. Herbie sparkles on the keys. Ron is running wild on the bass. This is the band we know and love. George Coleman is hitting his marks and he's hitting them well. His solo on "Stella By Starlight" from their July 26 performance at the Festival Mondial Du Jazz at Antibes-les-Pins bounces and seems to set the vibe for the rest of the band. Coleman's style of play is boisterous. Even when it's out, it's quite direct. He's making flurries of flurries all over

the July 27 performance of "Walkin'," but it's all in service of the ice. However, due to the pacing the band is taking on this material, space is filled rather than explored. Their take on "My Funny Valentine" is a fun listen, but it doesn't ripen on the vine like we know it should. These festival dates are an interesting curiosity of a listen, a "What If?" that never needed to be hypothetical because we have the answers right here.

Contrast this with the relaxed approach they all have in the Oct. 1, 1964, performance of "My Funny Valentine," so laid back even Miles' crooked start to his return to the head feels like he was just enjoying everyone else too much to perfunctorily shut things down. The runs on "Joshua" in the middle of the second set at Salle Playel for the 1964 Paris Jazz Festival have a different kind of stank on them. The deconstructions start a little earlier. That space the quintet inhabits in 1964 is where so many new things were possible that 1963's bounce couldn't do, even while keeping the same relative pacing. It's natural to say they play it different live, and faster makes sense as a decision for this time with this material, but Shorter is finding different nooks and crannies here.

Marcus J. Moore's liner notes, contextualizing this period in Miles' career and the early exploits on the road for the young men who were learning their way in the world with these France dates under their belts, finds wonderful insights from Carter and Coleman about this early time on tour. This collection of essays is welcome accompaniment for the music and a reminder of the fact that this is music made in its time, even when it's still ahead of it. These were young men learning touring at their start, in a land where their creative works were truly appreciated, at a time when they were just beginning to break music into new directions, and they were still just five guys playing some gigs in France. It's all part of the necessary documentation to put a thing in its moment and give it breath again. **DB**

Ordering info: sonymusic.com



Avishai Cohen *Ashes To Gold*

ECM

★★★★★

There's a world of hurt in Avishai Cohen's horn on this dramatic five-part suite, composed in the immediate wake of Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel that killed more than 1,200 people, triggering the tumult that continues to this day.

It opens on a pastoral note with the Tel Aviv-born trumpeter on flute, accompanied by Yonathan Avishai's delicate piano accompaniment and Barak Mori's bowed bass. Things turn hauntingly dissonant around the three-minute mark, with Avishai's pounding left-hand statements on the keys and Cohen's trumpet bursts reflecting the violence and chaos that ensued on that terrible day. By the five-minute mark, drummer Ziv Ravitz kicks off a military cadence while Cohen's high-register volleys signify the missiles dropping from the sky on Gaza. The long pauses, eerie silences and keening long tones and drones that hang in the air in movements II-V convey more than notes can about the tragedy of Oct. 7 and the ensuing war in Gaza and beyond.

While the five-movement suite reflects a full range of emotions, from enraged (the discordant Part I) to profoundly melancholic (the funeral Part III), to anxious (the tension-release of Part V), Cohen concludes *Ashes To Gold* on a somewhat hopeful note with a sparse, stately reading of "Adagio Assai" from Maurice Ravel's Piano Concerto in G major, followed by a lovely rendering of his teenaged daughter Amalia's simple, melodic offering, "The Seventh." Out of madness and sadness, Cohen created a cathartic thing of beauty on his sixth ECM outing.

—Bill Milkowski

Ashes To Gold: Part I; Part II; Part III; Part IV; Part V; Adagio Assai; The Seventh. (43:38)

Personnel: Avishai Cohen, trumpet, flute; Yonathan Avishai, piano; Barak Mori, bass; Ziv Ravitz, drums.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

**Gary Smulyan-
Frank Basile
Quintet**
Boss Baritones
STEEPLECHASE
★★★★

Boss Baritones is the latest page in Gary Smulyan's book of baritone saxophone-centric recordings, taking its place alongside other classics of the big horn.

The fellow boss baritone and quintet co-leader is Pepper Adams acolyte Frank Basile, who joins Smulyan in a program of bop standards — known and unknown — and inventive arrangements of contrafacts. Mathew Gee's "Oh Ghee," from a 1965 session with Johnny Griffin, sets the stage for this lively blowing session, with each baritone unleashing strong torrents that might make a jittery weatherman seek shelter-in-place. Matty Malneck's "I'll Never Be The Same" is taken at an unusually brisk tempo with outro based around a single, Latin-inspired repeated note. Like most bop recordings, this one has its share of quotes: bassist Mike Karn drops a phrase from Oscar Pettiford's "Swingin' Till The Girls Come Home" into "Star Eyes" and we hear a bit of "Bluesette" while the drummer trades 8's on Johnny Griffin's "Fifty-Six."

Both horns go for broke on J. R. Montrose's fiery blues "Straight Ahead" while drummer Aaron Seeber calls everyone home to an exhilarating close. Even a reed squeak doesn't spoil the fun.

—Larry Appelbaum

Boss Baritones: Oh Ghee; I'll Never Be The Same; Star Eyes; Hey Lock; Black Velvet; Fifty Six; Land of Dreams; Byas-A-Drink; Straight Ahead. (71:27)

Personnel: Gary Smulyan, Frank Basile, baritone saxophones: Steve Asch, piano; Mike Karn, bass; Aaron Seeber, drums.

Ordering info: steeplechase.dk



Emmet Cohen
Vibe Provider
MACK AVENUE
★★★★½

With *Vibe Provider*, Emmet Cohen, the soul-stirring jazz pianist and force behind *Live At Emmet's Place* — a popular livestream performance series born amidst the pandemic — lifts the mood in honor of dearly departed friend and "vibe provider" Funmi Ononaiye. Cohen brought together some of his friend's favorite musicians for *Vibe Provider*: bassist Philip Norris, drummers Kyle Poole and Joe Farnsworth, and on select tracks, saxophonist Tivon Pennicott, trumpeter Bruce Harris and trombonist Frank Lacy.

Vibe Provider features standards and originals from Cohen, including several inspired by his friend. There's the groovy "Unblock the Love" and the album's title track, a rousing Afro-Cuban-meets-swing tune that features Cecily Petrarca on the koshkah, a West African instrument Ononaiye played with mastery. The record also showcases spirited interpretations of standards including "Surrey with a Fringe on Top," a jaunty tune from the 1943 musical *Oklahoma!*, and an electric, lightning-quick rendition of "If This Isn't Love."

The nine-track record shimmers with a ferocious command of jazz tradition and with the positivity, enthusiasm and emotional depth Ononaiye shared with Cohen and his band of "pals."

—Alexa Peters

Vibe Provider: Lion Song; Surrey With the Fringe on Top; Vibe Provider; Unblock the Love; Henei Ma Tov; If This Isn't Love; Everlasting; Time on My Hands; Emmet's Blues. (43:00)

Personnel: Emmet Cohen, Piano; Phillip Norris, bass; Kyle Poole, drums (1, 4, 8); Joe Farnsworth, drums (5, 6, 7, 9); Tivon Pennicott, tenor saxophone (3, 4, 9); Bruce Harris, trumpet (3, 4, 9); Frank Lacy, trombone (3, 9); Cecily Petrarca, koshkah (3).

Ordering info: mackavenue.com



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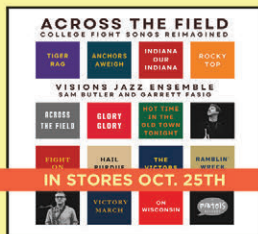
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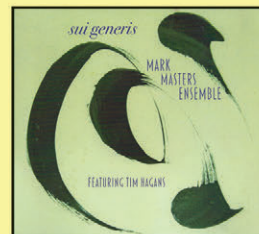
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Ebo Taylor

Jazz Is Dead 022: Ebo Taylor

JAZZ IS DEAD

★★★★½

Since its founding in 2017, the Jazz Is Dead global movement has generated a rebirth of unsung musical legends across various genres, giving them a platform to perform for modern audiences and create visual media and new music. Co-founders and music producers Adrian Younge and Ali Shaheed Muhammad are living out their dream of collaborating with these artists, the latest of which is Afrobeat guitarist and composer Ebo Taylor.

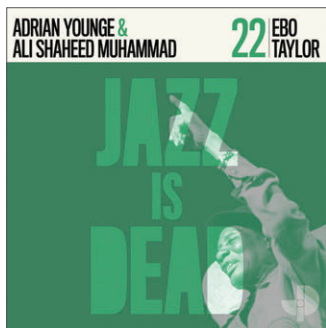
Taylor, 88 years old, is a pioneering presence whose work has played an instrumental role in Ghanaian music culture since the early 1960s. Taylor has played a major hand in the evolution of Afrobeat, which fuses Nigerian and Ghanaian music with jazz and funk. His raw, rhythmic take on the music has been present on countless recordings and is just as piercing on this one. The opening “Get Up” sets the tone for the album with its intense rhythmic pulse combined with Taylor’s cool, raspy vocals. On “Obi Do Wa (If Someone Loves You)” and “Feeling” there’s a strong percussive intro followed by chanting from Ghanaian vocalists. If nothing else, listeners should get a spiritual awakening and good vibes from the beginning until the very end.

—Veronica Johnson

Ebo Taylor JID022: Get Up; Obra Akyedzi; Kusi Na Sibo; Obi Do Wa (If Someone Loves You); Nsa a woanye edwuma ondzidzi; Beye Bu Beye Ba; Feeling. (25:43)

Personnel: Adrian Younge, guitars, keyboards; Ali Shaheed Muhammad, organ; Ebo Taylor, vocals; Henry Taylor, Fender Rhodes; Philip Andy Biney, drums, Samson Olawe, congas; plus 11 others.

Ordering info: jazzisdead.com



Mette Rasmussen/ Craig Taborn/ Ches Smith

Weird Of Mouth

OTHERLY LOVE

★★★★½

I used to take my small son to improv gigs and workshops just so he could pose the questions I was too old and stiff-necked to ask: Is that thing heavy? Does it hurt when you play so loud? Did you write that, or were you making it up as you went along? Miss you, kid. *Weird Of Mouth* is pretty heavy, and the dynamics get pretty excitable, but it’s the compo/impro question that’s relevant here, for this is an album of improvisations that seem to follow compositional logic. Or, they’re compositions that partake of improvisational freedom. Or we really are in some debatable land in between.

Mette Rasmussen has played Red Riding Hood to Mats Gustafsson’s wolf but turns out to pack a lot of heat and doesn’t scare easy. Her saxophone sound is both wild and contained, making her a perfect foil for Taborn, who brings a kind of Apollonian grace to free playing, and to Smith, who can play all over the kit and still sound like he could back a swing band if you asked. So there’s an intriguing drama of chaos and order, direction and none, in these seven pieces. The opening “Wolf Cry” put the fairy tale analogy in mind, but it works throughout.

—Brian Morton



Weird Of Mouth: Wolf Cry; Dogs In Orbit; Existension; Brooders Of Joy; Planisphere; In Search Of Soul Pane; Proven Right, Then Left, Then Right. (42:00)

Personnel: Mette Rasmussen, alto saxophone, preparations, bells; Craig Taborn, piano, preparations; Ches Smith, drums, percussion.

Ordering info: otherlylove.net

Matt Mitchell

Zealous Angles

PI

★★★★

I can’t read music, but I understand that there are people who bring scores to classical concerts and read along as they listen. Those people would love Matt Mitchell’s work. In fact, this album should come packaged with its sheet music. Like much of the “jazz” coming out of Brooklyn for the last couple of decades, the 17 tracks on this 75-minute album are intricate and detailed compositions; each player has precise and crucial responsibilities if a given piece is to come off successfully.

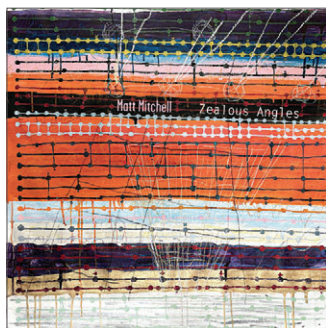
Mitchell’s melodies cycle over and over as the bass and drums go through their own patterns; from time to time they lock in together, but only for a few seconds before something changes. Some twinned pieces provide a Rosetta stone, teaching us the language. He favors a particular type of hunt-and-peck melody, and small repeated gestures, and he seems to desire dynamic punctuation and occasional interruption from drummer Dan Weiss more than a steady rhythmic bed. Bassist Chris Tordini is also on an independent journey, frequently playing fast when Mitchell slows down, or vice versa. There are moments where the music attains “jazz feel”; “synch” kicks off with some almost Vince Guaraldi-esque chords, but they’re teetering atop a stuttering Squarepusher-style beat from Weiss. Even that feels almost incidental, though, if not accidental. Nothing here is accidental.

—Phil Freeman

Zealous Angles: sponger; apace; jostler; angled languor; rapacious; zeal; traipse; cinch; apical gripes; rejostled; grail automating; gauzy; lunger; pre-traipse; synch; optical gripes; radial mazing. (75:12).

Personnel: Matt Mitchell, piano; Chris Tordini, bass; Dan Weiss, drums.

Ordering info: pirecordings.com



Milton Suggs

Pure Intention

IMANI

★★★★★

Milton Suggs returns after an eight-year hiatus with a powerful album with words Suggs wrote for tunes composed by some of his favorite artists: folks like Cedar Walton, Horace Silver and Donald Byrd. He’s accompanied only by pianist

Michael King, whose discrete support gives Suggs’ remarkable vocals and his insightful lyrics the space to express a wide range of emotion.

The lyrics express music’s power to heal the body and soul. “Old Folks” is a standard from the ’30s by Willard Robison and Dedette Lee Hill, about a man, or a generation, that fought in the Civil War. Suggs updates it to describe an elder who marched for Civil Rights and mourns the death of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. “Toxic” is based on Lee Morgan’s “Helen’s Ritual.” It’s reinvented as a vocalese ballad, with Suggs adding a scatted solo midway through, as he sings about a self-destructive relationship he can’t, and doesn’t want to, escape from. The flip side is “Holding Your Hand,” a serene song of young love based on Mulgrew Miller’s “Holding Hands.” The set also includes covers of “Golden Time Of Day” by Maze and The O’Jays’ “Cry Together,” featuring Suggs’ vocal improvisations on the extended outro.

—j. poet

Pure Intention: Sing A Song Of Song (There Is A Song); Sunrise In Malibu (A Pleasant Surprise); Nzingah (Pure Intention); Cry Together; Change Your Mind; Firm Roots (What We Really Need); Old Folks; Along Came Betty (The Day She Came Along); Pretty Eyes (Those Eyes); Helen’s Ritual (Toxic); Holding Hands (Holding Your Hand); To Wisdom The Prize (Wisdom); Golden Time Of Day. (59:25)

Personnel: Milton Suggs, vocals; Michael King, piano.

Ordering info: imanirecords.net



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Nate Mercereau’s *Excellent Traveller* (Third Man; ★★★★★½ 171:58) is an ambitious project that weaves together real-world soundscapes with acoustic improvisations to create an immersive, richly textured aural experience. **Kinkajous’ *Nothing Will Disappear*** (Running Circle; ★★★★★ 40:11) offers a more structured fusion of jazz and electronic music, while **Daniel Sommer’s *Sounds and Sequences*** (April; ★★★★★½ 42:36) explores the whimsy of the Nordic fjords through a classic bass, horns and drums trio. Danish duo Jonathan **Bremer and Morten McCoy’s *Kosmos*** (Luaka Bob; ★★★★★½ 35:28) and **YAI’s *Sky Time*** (AKP; ★★★★★ 37:31) opt for more stripped-down instrumentation and somber improvisation.

Excellent Traveller stands out for its imaginative use of environmental sounds and vast range of samples from collaborators such as Laraaji, Luis Pérez Ixoneztli, Idris Ackamoor, André 3000, Carlos Niño, and others. Mercereau transforms the world around him into a living vessel to create an album that is constantly traveling in time and space. The sounds of Manhattan, Brooklyn, San Francisco, Oakland, Amsterdam, Köln, concerts at home with his daughter, and many other moments are peppered throughout the record, allowing us to intimately experience the many worlds he moves through. In cerebral meditations like “Sound Within Sound,” textural layers of sound build on top of each other. “For The Highest Quality Listener Testing The Limits” evokes the cosmic, Sun Ra-esque vibrations of a world beyond our own. Mercereau mixes spontaneous, one-take improvisations with recorded samples in a way that is at once introspective yet deeply rooted to physical places and tangible vignettes.

Ordering info: natemercereau.bandcamp.com

YAI’s sophomore album veers toward more atmospheric lullabies “Obsidian Sun” is a waltz between lanky reeds and astral synthesizers, punctuated by bird calls and ambient jungle sounds. The title track features a magnetic flute melody that imitates a cascading waterfall. The album becomes progressively more rhythmic and electronics-driven with tracks like “Lotus Eater” and “The Spiral” delving into ancestral soundscapes and industrial house beats.

Ordering info: yaisounds.bandcamp.com

In contrast, the other records are ground-



COURTESY NATE MERCEREAU

Nate Mercereau channels the environment.

ed in more familiar forms of improvisation and instrumentation. *Sounds and Sequences*, the second installment of Sommer’s “Nordic Trilogy” project, highlights the interplay between electronic and acoustic sounds in contemporary Nordic jazz. The songs evoke the epic vastness of fog-laden fjords with floating melodic lines and lush woodwinds. “Vejen til Epidemin” opens with spacey, eerie drums, while “Blue-Seven” is a subtle study of rhythmic waves and mystical woodwinds.

Ordering info: aprilrecords.com

Kosmos is a serene meditation on love and life, with bassist Bremer’s deliberate grooves anchoring McCoy’s somber piano. On “Higher Road,” McCoy’s piano flows effortlessly alongside Bremer’s introspective bass. On “Mere Liv,” Bremer’s ambling phrases float above McCoy’s gentle piano ballad. Over the course of the album, the duo vacillates between joyful, melodic phrases and somber, bluesy reflections.

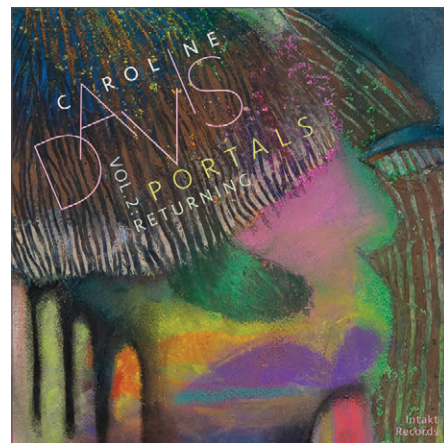
Ordering info: bremermccoy.com

Of the five albums, Kinkajous’ has perhaps the most atmospheric, otherworldly quality to it. The London-based group, led by drummer/producer Benoît Parmentier and saxophonist Adrien Cau, crafts sound motifs that are ethereal yet elemental. “AARA” opens with bright, curious electronics and understated reeds, a delicate dance between digital and organic elements. “Shifting Sands” embraces a more orchestral arch reminiscent of Floating Points and Pharoah Sanders’ *Promises*. “In the Void of All Things” is a soft, cinematic lull, filled with moonlit saxophone and jangly drums.

Ordering info: knkjs.bandcamp.com

Collectively, these albums show us new dimensions of improvised music through their fusion of classic jazz instrumentation with natural and industrial sounds. Through cinematic soundscapes, extended techniques and hypnotic electronic grooves, they elevate the sacred connection between music and our surrounding environment.

DB



Caroline Davis *Portals, Vol. 2: Returning*

INTAKT

★★★★

There are few things more personal than family and mortality, yet few experiences more universal than grief, remembrance, and love. *Portals, Vol. 2: Returning*, saxophonist Caroline Davis’ tribute to her English grandmother, the poet Joan Anson-Weber, plays off both, using poet poems, family recordings, and her own compositional ingenuity to create something that’s as much an evocation as it is a memorial.

Augmenting her working band with over half a dozen studio guests, Davis takes a broad range of compositional approaches, sometimes featuring the band, sometimes reducing them to background ambience. Words are sung, rapped, declaimed and overheard. Some songs are tuneful and pop-adjacent, others abstract and atmospheric.

Through it all, we get a stronger sense of Davis as a composer than as a saxophonist. That’s not to slight her playing — the tart abstraction of her solo on “Gate of the Year” evokes the sort of pensive, probing lines Lee Konitz favoured — but to note there’s not a lot of it. Fortunately, we do get an impressive turn, urgent and measured, from trumpeter Marquis Hill on “Olympian Air,” and a wonderfully ferocious cameo by flautist Nicole Mitchell on “City Flora.”

But the writing is the thing. “Cover Up,” which features Jen Shyu speaking and singing one of Anson-Weber’s poems, feels utterly spontaneous in the way the players interact, but follows the emotional logic of text too closely to have happened by chance, concluding with a hymnlike final cadence that lands like an amen. An amazing album. —J.D. *Considine*

Portals, Vol. 2—Returning: Gate of the Year; Coming ‘Round; Back Again; Olympian Air; Kites; Only the Names are Changed; Darien; Only the Names are Changed, Part 2; Everlasting Fire; City Flora; Oblivion; Cover Up. (48:28)

Personnel: Caroline Davis, alto saxophone, compositions; Marquis Hill, trumpet; Julian Shore, piano; Chris Tordini, acoustic bass; Allan Mednard, drums; with Jen Shyu, voice (4, 9, 12); Nappy Nina, spoken word (8,10); Julia Easterlin, voice (5); Alexa Barchini, voice (9); Nicole Mitchell, flute (10, 11, 12); Michael King, organ, Rhodes, synthesizers (5); Ben Hoffmann, synthesizers (9).

Ordering info: intaktrec.com

Ben Wolfe *The Understated*

RESIDENT ARTS

★★★★★

Ben Wolfe's *The Understated* speaks to the bassist's notion of jazz as a subtle field in which ensemble depth trumps individual virtuosity. It goes down easy, but it's edgy, too.

The song titles are as minimalist as the songs themselves. Both enigmatic and inviting, most of these songs feel like trail markers to a quieter, more introspective world. Only the final, ambiguously named track, "Barely Spoken," makes more of a statement than an understatement.

Half the 10 tracks are ballads, and several update earlier versions. The uptempo tunes, particularly "Occam's Razor" and the sinewy "Anagram," hook the listener immediately. The warm "So Indeed" (featuring Sullivan Fortner on piano) and opener "The Poet Speaks" take more time to work their magic.

The musicianship is exceptional; no surprise when Wolfe's regulars include tenor saxophonist Nicole Glover, drummer Aaron Kimmel, guitarist Russell Malone, pianist Orrin Evans and Fortner. Malone's lean, precise lines drive "Occam's Razor" and the shimmering "Beautiful You." (Malone died in August. This is likely his last recording.)

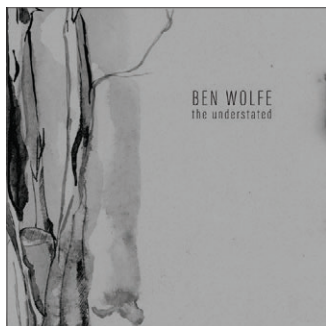
"Triangle Man," bop-based like the cutting "Occam's Razor," gives Kimmel an opportunity to push Glover to one of her most passionate and intricate solos. *The Understated* is a beauty.

—Carlo Wolff

The Understated: The Poet Speaks; Occam's Razor; Ballad in B; Anagram; So Indeed; Waltz; Beautiful You; Triangle Man; Love Is Near; Barely Spoken. (39:39)

Personnel: Orrin Evans, piano; Sullivan Fortner, piano; Nicole Glover, tenor saxophone; Aaron Kimmel, drums; Russell Malone, guitar; Ben Wolfe, bass.

Ordering info: benwolfe.com



Anna Butters *Mighty Vertebrate*

INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM

★★★★★

This Adelaide-born bassist flocked to the U.S. West Coast via the Midwest, with some like-minded regional transplants: saxophonist Josh Johnson, guitarist Gregg Uhlman and drummer Ben Lumsdaine.

This album reflects the broad diversity of the band's musical experiences, while retaining what roots this wild-flowering project in jazz: meticulous attention to nuance and groove, superimposition of modality within diatonic harmony, and explorations into tonal, timbral and rhythmic variation. Butters' compositional process often begins with a single concept, for instance grouping phrases into three-bar units, as in the head-bobbing opener, "Bishop," paired metrically with the next track, "Shorn," featuring an ostinato bass line in 9/8.

The delight is in the details, from the infinite aural smorgasbord Uhlmann concocts on guitar to the succulent sounds of Lumsdaine's drums, and certainly Butters' immaculate bass playing throughout. Johnson picks his spots to shine as a soloist. The crown jewel on this diadem is "Breadrich," where hip-hop beats and samples meld with '80s rock elements to foment an absolute banger, something that could be said of the entire album.

—Gary Fukushima

Mighty Vertebrate: Bishop; Shorn; Dance Steve; Ella; Lubbock; Pokemans; Breadrich; Seeing You; Counterpoint. (38:40)

Personnel: Anna Butters, upright bass, electric bass, guitar, synths, flute, drum machine; Josh Johnson, alto saxophone, effects; Gregory Uhlmann, guitar, effects; Ben Lumsdaine, drums, percussion, guitar, lap steel, drum programming; Jeff Parker, guitar (3).

Ordering info: intlantem.com



Jerome Sabbagh *Heart*

ANALOG TONE FACTORY

★★★★★

Tenor saxophonist Jerome Sabbagh has called Al Foster his favorite living drummer, so it shouldn't be surprising that the reading of Ellington's "Prelude to a Kiss" that opens this superb trio album shares the spotlight with him. As bassist Joe Martin holds down the changes of the pin-drop ballad, Foster offers an extended solo of exquisite cymbal play and tom-tom patter while Sabbagh subtly extrapolates on the gorgeous melody to deliver a duet of rare tenderness and tonal richness; neither musician is soloing so much as reducing the performance down to constituent elements with relish. *Heart* is the latest release on the saxophonist's Analog Tone Factory label, an audiophile imprint that not only presses its releases on vinyl, but also makes them available on reel-to-reel tape.

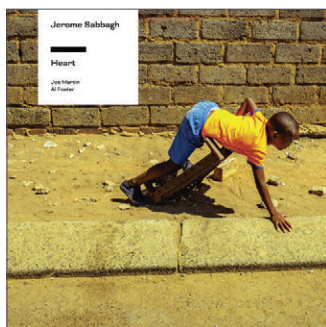
Of course, the audio quality would be irrelevant if the musicians didn't possess the goods, and Sabbagh convincingly showcases his postbop bona fides. A selection of standards is complemented by the leader's title theme, a breezy gem that can't help but summon the spirit of Sonny Rollins, whereas the leader taps into altissimo range that evokes Paul Desmond on "Gone With the Wind." More impressive might be a pair of collective improvisations that reveals how in sync the trio is, embracing the tension that arises when musicians wordlessly search for common ground.

—Peter Margasak

Heart: Prelude to a Kiss; ESP; Heart; Gone with the Wind; Right the First Time; When Lights Are Low; Lead the Way; Body and Soul. (38:57)

Personnel: Jerome Sabbagh, tenor saxophone; Joe Martin, bass; Al Foster, drums.

Ordering info: analogtonefactory.com



Arun Ramamurthy *Trio*

New Moon

GREENLEAF

★★★★½

In so-called "Indo-jazz," musical agendas can come in many flavors and patinas. For violinist Arun Ramamurthy's trio, the cultural hybrid lands somewhere between his Carnatic music roots and a post-fusion language.

Fittingly, the first of four pieces in Arun Ramamurthy's "New Moon Suite" is called "Bangalore to Brooklyn": the literal trajectory his father took from birthplace to expatriation. The piece opens in pulse-free rubato, like the ruminative alaap section of a raga, and leaps into a fast, odd-timed groove section. The longest and most varied, adventurous track on the album is "Amavasya" ("new moon" in Sanskrit), the endpiece to the "New Moon Suite." This mini-suite-in-itself ventures from an open-spirited intro through a Jean-Luc Ponty-esque jazz-rock-Carnatic zone through a free-improv passage with solo outings on drums and bass, and back up to speed.

The fact of this trio's lack of a "chordal instrument" is less significant than it would be in a more Western-oriented setting. Ramamurthy's violin clearly plays a protagonist role here, asserting his facile and entrancingly nuanced voice — and it does adhere to the Carnatic reverence for vocal expression — over fixed rhythm section beds. He has conjured up yet another individualistic incarnation in the ongoing saga of "Indo-jazz."

—Josef Woodard

New Moon: Walk As One; Bangalore to Brooklyn; Aaji; Mirrors; Amavasya; Sri Valli. (48:05)

Personnel: Arun Ramamurthy, violin; Sameer Gupta, drums; Damon Banks, electric bass.

Ordering info: greenleafmusic.com



Today, Helsinki; Tomorrow...

Born in Helsinki but now globally influential, We Jazz Records also runs two festivals, operates a record store and publishes a luxuriously collectible quarterly magazine. Despite having to deal with the heavy competition that makes vinyl pressing plants sluggish, they now seem to be more prolific than ever, their fall schedule crammed with high quality releases. The label is interested in dynamic adventurers, with feet in groove and free, advanced yet accessible.

Unionen haven't played many gigs yet, but your scribe was wowed by their recent Cologne Jazzweek set, which revealed an approach that meshes roiling themes with abstract outcropping. Their debut **Unionen** (★★★★ 35:43) finds this half-Swedish, half-Norwegian starry assemblage confidently arranging original material into zones of placid reflection or gripping tension, their individualist palette delivered by Per 'Texas' Johansson (reeds), Ståle Størlokken (keyboards), Petter Eldh (basses) and Gard Nilssen (drums). Johansson and Størlokken possess a particularly wide vocabulary, the former using five horns, including oboe and contrabass clarinet; the latter dancing all the way from clear-water piano to brutally distorted Fender Rhodes.

Looking forward and back, **Unionen** can have harmonious lyricism coupled with entangling organ solo sinews, thoughtful themes meeting interactive abstraction. Johansson rises gently in the flute flotation environment, until his contrabass beard-diving imposes gruffness supreme. **Unionen's** palette diversity is a strong point. Nilssen powers with agile stick-strikes and springing skin-deftness.

Extra (33:45 ★★★★★) is equally impressive, as highwire trumpeter **Peter Evans** debuts a new trio with Eldh (him again) and drummer Jim Black. This group stands at the summit of assured virtuosity, without forsaking adept visceral pouncing capabilities. Evans composes, but the tunes sound in-the-moment, flashing with lightning risk. **Extra** are more indebted to mainline jazz than **Unionen**, but Evans is nevertheless committed to taking chances, as in a derailed chase sequence, although always in control, with few casualties. Eldh's walking bass becomes striding, "In See" being a wonderfully propulsive tune, its trumpet solo working out phrasing possibilities with an elastic spring attack. The tonally panoramic Black uses metal parts for mechanoid repeats, although the electro-cycles of "Movement 56" could come from any trio member. The middle tracks probe spaciousness but "Underworld" brings back the groove for the album's final run.

Berke Can Özcan and **Jonah Parzen-Johnson** are a Turko-Brooklynite drums/baritone saxophone duo, their **It Was Always Time** (39:08 ★★★★★) the result of a



Superposition, a Finnish quartet.

sudden improvisatory encounter. Their shared rapport has led to a frequently tuneful unspooling, with rhythmic progressions. Spontaneity often arrives via a looped foundation, supplying an opening into the improvisation, resulting in a dubby swarm of compulsion. On "A Cloud," an insistent baritone drone develops into a solo, then "São Paulo" opens with gongs, cymbals and mystery, again developing structure as it progresses. These are improvisations with riffs and grooves, although "Folk Memory" has a sore softness, with "That's Not What This Is" returning to a dub lope.

Lampen are another duo, this time from Finland, with guitar (Kalle Kalima) and percussion (Tatu Ronkko). Their second album, **Halogen** (42:47 ★★), has a predictable mainstream fusion approach, deriving from a traditional rock jamming style. Kalima's fuzzed axe trawls through transient themes, overplaying the harmonic resonances and adopting a lumbering, purposeful pace. Ronkko's drums tend to be secondary to the guitar, the tracks amassing a sludgy, leaden inevitability.

Superposition's II (42:38 ★★★★★) is a brighter proposition, now issued four years after the quartet's debut. Driven by the twinned horns of Linda Fredriksson and Adele Sauros, this all-Finnish roster is completed by bass and drums. Original numbers are collectively contributed. Alto, tenor and baritone saxophones are wielded to contrasting and complementary effect, nudged by the sensitised rhythm-pulse team. It's cool jazz in the current sense, observant of closely married horns with close-up reed textures, providing room to breathe in the music. One solo will engage, and the second saxophone will shadow and respond to its lines, before the primary positions switch. **Superposition's** front line conversing constantly. We Jazz are consistently releasing new sounds of substantially dynamic creativity. **DB**

Ordering info: wejazzrecords.bandcamp.com



Geoffrey Keezer *Live At Birdland*

MARKEEZ

★★★★★

The self-released *Live At Birdland* documents a high-level 2023 concert on which Geoffrey Keezer, John Patitucci and Clarence Penn improvise with virtuoso chops and an unfailingly equilateral triangle spirit on four compositions by Wayne Shorter, three by Chick Corea and two by Keezer. For the fourth time in Keezer's 35-year career, he documents his no-limits conception of the piano-bass-drums function; it's only the second of his two-dozen albums to focus on composers other than himself (he first did so on *Sublime*, a 2003 Hank Jones homage, in duos with Corea, Kenny Barron, Mulgrew Miller and Benny Green).

Here, Keezer unleashes his inner Art Tatum while probing the harmonic worlds of Corea and Shorter, upholding his contemporary and once frequent bandmate Christian McBride's evaluation in my 2005 *DownBeat* profile of Keezer after the release of *Wildcrafted: Live At The Dakota*, his second album in this format: "Technically, I don't believe there's anything on the piano Geoffrey can't play, and he comes up with the most brilliant ideas that you could ever think of." Patitucci displays his unmatched fluency in both languages in question with a succession of mighty basslines and far-flung solos on both acoustic and electric six-string bass. Penn spins out a shifting web of apropos rhythm timbre, whether the environment is rubato, "odd-meter" or — on Keezer's "Take the Coltrane"-influenced set-closer, "Madame Grenouille" — surging swing.

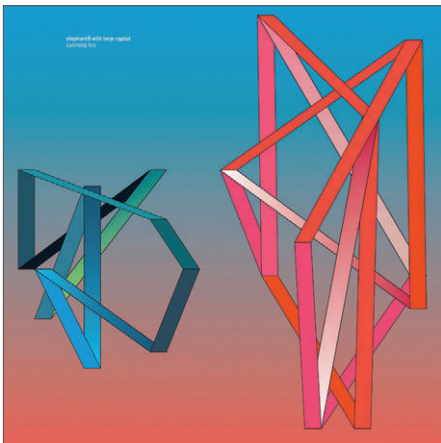
Together, inspired by the 53-year-old grandmaster, they've set a high bar for the state of the art of the trio circa 2024.

—Ted Panken

Live At Birdland: High Wire-The Aerialist; Flagships; Eternal Child; Song of the Canopy; Imp's Welcome; Joy Ryder; Dance Cadaverous; Virgo Rising - Cathay (digital only); Madame Grenouille. (79:09)

Personnel: Geoffrey Keezer, piano; John Patitucci, bass; Clarence Penn, drums.

Ordering info: geoffreykeezor.bandcamp.com



Elephant9 with Terje Rypdal
Catching Fire
 RUNE GRAMMOFON
 ★★★★★½

Terje Rypdal's career as a solo artist spans five and a half decades. Recording mainly for ECM, the guitarist has explored a variety of settings while remaining connected to jazz. Through it all, the spare, piercing lyricism of his instrumental voice has remained a recurring touchstone. It is often characterized as a chilly evocation of his native Norway's icy landscapes, but he brings plenty of heat to *Catching Fire*.

This 2017 concert recording pairs Rypdal, then nearing his 70th birthday, with Elephant9, a trio led by keyboardist Ståle Storløkken. It's hardly a blind encounter, since Storløkken's been in Rypdal's bands since the turn of the century, but it does require Rypdal to relinquish control, since the compositions all come from the trio's early albums and the working aesthetic is theirs. Elephant9 usually pursues a hybrid of jazz and prog that puts places Storløkken's open-ended Hammond organ solos over a crisp, hard-hitting rhythm section.

During the album's best moments, Rypdal pushes the ensemble to extremes, but spirited give and take attests to their mutual attunement. His unfurling leads enhance the spaciness of the opening passages of "I Cover The Mountaintop," and he engages Storløkken in a fiery, unruly duel during that track's closing moments. And the passages where organ and guitar braid textures and layer tones over the fleet but responsive rhythm section's breakneck tempo on "Fugal Fønix" are quite thrilling. Elsewhere, as on the Golden Earring-tinged boogie "John Tinnick," the balance tilts in favor of a less nuanced display of brawn. But if you've been waiting for a fusion recording that does not forget to rock, *Catching Fire* is at your service.

—Bill Meyer

Catching Fire: I Cover The Mountain Top; Dodovoodoo; Psychedelic Backfire; John Tinnick; Fugal Fønix. (79:46)

Personnel: Terje Rypdal, guitar; Ståle Storløkken, Hammond organ, Rhodes piano, mellotron; Torstein Lofthus, drums; Nikolai Haengsle, electric bass.

Ordering info: runegrammofon.com



Randy Ingram
Aries Dance
 SOUNDERSCORE
 ★★★★★½

Pianist Randy Ingram enjoys playing polychords (two or more chords simultaneously) and creating harmonically advanced structures. Even with the density, Ingram swings and melodies pop through in his improvisations. *Aries Dance* teams him with bassist Drew Gress and drummer Billy Hart, performing the leader's originals plus fresh versions of two standards and a Wayne Shorter piece. Gress and Hart have occasional solos and follow the pianist closely, but this is largely a showcase for Ingram.

The thoughtful and somber opener "Towards Polaris" sets the standard for the program. The freely improvised "Into The Night" musically expresses the wonder and mystery of the night, managing to be both stormy and introspective. It serves as an introduction

to "You And The Night And The Music," the lightest and most swinging performance of the album. Ingram considers Wayne Shorter to be his "compositional hero" and does his idol justice on "Penelope," setting a mysterious mood on the ballad and never quite resolving the piece.

"Aries Dance" is the closest that the trio comes to performing a joyful romp. "Castle And Fog" is an introduction to one of Ingram's finest melodies, "Guimaraes," which has some of his most expressive playing. Named after the ancient Portuguese city, Ingram had previously recorded the song as a duet with Gress in 2017. The consistently stimulating trio set concludes with a medium-tempo version of the standard "Dedicated To You" that would be considered reasonably conventional except that it's in 5/4 time.

—Scott Yanow

Aries Dance: Towards Polaris; Para Milton e Pedro; Into The Night; You And The Night And The Music; Penelope; Aries Dance; Castle and Fog; Guimaraes; Dedicated To You. (46:40)

Personnel: Randy Ingram, piano; Drew Gress, bass; Billy Hart, drums.

Ordering info: sounderscore.com

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OH, CHRISTMAS TREE-O!

Matt Wilson's Christmas Tree-O with Paul Sikive (left), Jeff Lederer (center) and Wilson are back! (Photo by Michael Jackson)

BOXED BEAUTIES | 72

SPIN-WORTHY VINYL | 74

A LITTLE HOLIDAY CHEER | 78

SOMETHING FOR READERS | 82

GIFTABLE GEAR | 84



BOXES OF SMILES!

BY FRANK ALKYER

CHICK COREA

Trilogy (Concord Jazz)

For the first time ever on vinyl, Concord Jazz offers up a limited-edition, eight-LP set that places Corea's *Trilogy* and *Trilogy 2* in one neat, lovingly prepared package. The trio features Corea on keyboards along with Brian Blade on drums and Christian McBride on bass, capturing the band live, on tour in full improvisatory glory.

concordjazz.com

DANISH RADIO BIG BAND

XL-LX (Storyville)

This five-LP box offers nearly two hours of one of the world's great big bands playing the music of Marilyn Mazur, Carla Bley, Palle Mikkelborg, Carl Nielsen and Miho Hazama. The package is a

tribute to the group's 60th anniversary (as slyly referenced in with the Roman numeral LX, for 60). One of the beauties of this set is a nod to history, but also another to the future of big band music.

storyvillerecords.com

MILES DAVIS

'54: The Prestige Recordings (Craft)

This 20-track, four-LP collection includes a wide array of music Miles Davis created in 1954 — Miles and Sonny Rollins, the Miles Davis Quintet, the Miles Davis All Star Sextet and the Miles Davis Quartet. The music has been remastered by Paul Blakemore with laquers cut by Kevin Gray at Cohearent Audio and pressed on 180-gram vinyl. The album celebrates the 70th anniversary of the creation of this music as well

as the 75th anniversary of Prestige Records.

craftrecordings.com

HERBIE HANCOCK

Possibilities (Rhino)

Hancock's star-studded project earned him two Grammy nominations after it was released back in 2005 with the likes of Annie Lenox, Christina Aguilera, John Mayer, Santana, Sting and many more joining in. But it has never been released on vinyl until now. A Record Store Day Exclusive, the three-LP set comes in ruby red vinyl, newly remastered and including four bonus tracks. It's a limited run of 3,000 records.

recordstoreday.com/SpecialReleases

LEE MORGAN

Blue Note Review Volume Three: Truly, Madly, DeepLee Morgan (Blue Note)



For the latest addition to the Blue Note Review series, the label turns its attention and love to the music of trumpeter Lee Morgan. Curated by Don Was, Blue Note's president, the set includes a new, two-LP compilation on 180-gram vinyl (and includes a CD version) of current Blue Note artists paying homage to the music of Morgan. Joel Ross, Bill Frisell, Derrick Hodge, ARTEMIS, Chris Botti, Chief Xian aTunde Adjuah and Keyon Harrold all contribute to the recording. There's also a 10-inch vinyl release of a never-before-issued jam session from the Gate of Horn club in Chicago around 1959. The session was led by Philly Joe Jones and features Morgan, Ira Sullivan, Nicky Hill, Bobby Timmons and Spanky DeBrest. Beyond that, the box reissues Morgan's 1967 classic *Sonic Boom*, as well as 7-inch vinyl reissues of three Morgan singles. The included 'zine *Out Of The Blue* features essays on Morgan by Wynton Marsalis, Randy Brecker, Ambrose Akinmusire and

more. Each set also features two 12- by 12-inch lithographs of Morgan taken by Francis Wolff, Blue Note's co-founder. It's a treasure trove of sight and sound. bluenote.com

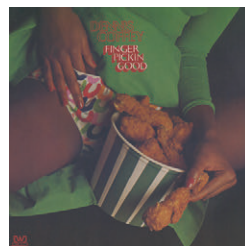
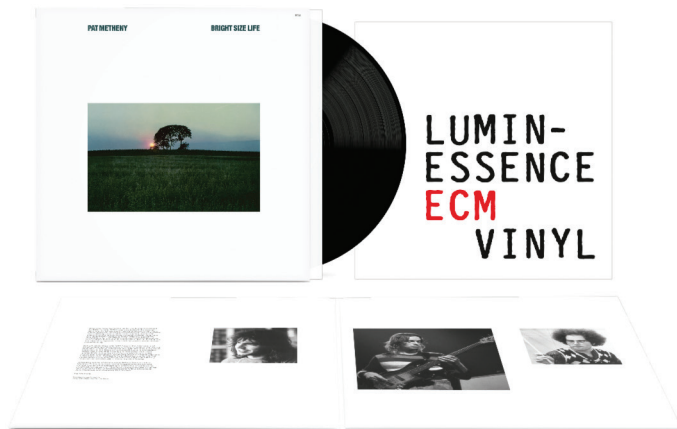
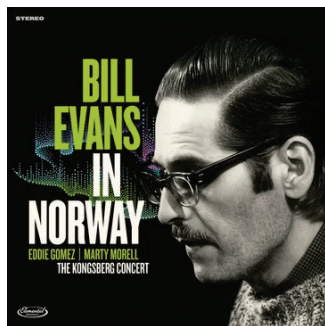
EMILY REMLER
Cookin' At The Queens:
Live In Las Vegas 1984 & 1988
 (Resonance)

While not strictly a boxed set, *Cookin' At The Queens* sure acts like one. The three-LP collection offers a glimpse into the music of guitarist Emily Remler, a shooting star of jazz who passed away at the age of 32 in 1990. With 33 years since Remler's last musical release, *Cookin' At The Queens* serves as a reintroduction of a tremendous guitar player, caught here in Las Vegas at the 4 Queens jazz club. Great photography and extensive liner notes help tell the story, but the pristine recordings that were first broadcast on KNPR in Vegas are proof of her legendary status. This is a Record Store Day Black Friday

First Release and is limited to 1,400 copies. recordstoreday.com/SpecialReleases

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Classic V-Disc Small Group Jazz Sessions
 (Mosaic)

During World War II, the V-Disc program was formed as a record label to send music to the U.S. military. And that's the short version! This 11-CD monument collects some of the best small-group jazz of the 1940s, capturing some of the greatest artists of the day in settings that would never otherwise be allowed. The results are astounding, including an all-star jam with Jack Teagarden and Louis Armstrong. The box includes sets by Sidney Bechet, The Original Dixieland Band, Bunk Johnson, Muggsy Spanier, Wild Bill Davidson and many more pioneers of early jazz. With 220 tunes and an extensive booklet packed with detail and photography, the music has been meticulously restored by the team at Swan Studios. It's a limited edition of 5,000 boxes. mosaicrecords.com



VINYLS, PLEASE ...

B.B. KING

In France: Live At The 1977 Nancy Jazz Pulsations Festival (Deep Digs/Elemental)

Here's a previously unissued live concert recorded by the ORTF in France. The vinyl edition comes in as a limited edition, 180-gram, two-LP set with liner notes from French author Jean Buzeline and much more. Limited to 2,800 copies, the extensive booklet includes many rare photos and tributes. It's a Record Store Day Black Friday First release.

recordstoreday.com/SpecialReleases

BILL EVANS

In Norway: The Kongsberg Concert (Elemental)

This two-LP deluxe edition features 180-gram virgin vinyl capturing the master pianist with his classic trio mates — Eddie Gomez on bass and Marty Morell on drums. Recorded live at the Kongsberg Jazz Festival in Norway, this document of the 1970 concert features comprehensive liner notes complete with never-before-seen photos.

recordstoreday.com/SpecialReleases

CHET BAKER

When Sunny Gets Blue (SteepleChase)

The latest in SteepleChase's terrific vinyl program, *When Sunny Gets Blue* captures the trumpeter/vocalist in 1986 and is the last recording Baker made for the label. This

is late-period Baker captured just two years before his tragic passing in Amsterdam at the age of 58.

steeplechase.dk

CHRISTIAN SANDS

Embracing Dawn (Mack Avenue)

Pianist/composer Christian Sands creates a cinematic narrative of healing, reflecting his personal experience of loss. He stretches the outer boundaries of the jazz adjacent sounds of gospel, rock, soul and more. Sands is joined here by a powerful group that includes bassist Yasushi Nakamura, drummer Ryan Sands, guitarist Marvin Sewell, vibraphonist Warren Wolf and harmonica artist Grégoire Maret.

mackavenue.com

COREY BELL/JAMES COTTON/JUNIOR WELLS/BILLY BRANCH

Harp Attack! (Alligator)

An absolute blues hit when it was originally released in 1990, this meeting of four of the greatest blues harp players in history is still pure delight. Alligator president and album producer Bruce Iglauer told *DownBeat* magazine that *Harp Attack!* is "the summit meeting of Chicago's four best blues harmonica players, close friends who loved each other and also loved to 'cut heads.' We created different combinations of players on different

tracks, with the harps sometimes soloing, sometimes playing together like a horn section, sometimes trading licks, always challenging each other."

alligator.com

DENNIS COFFEY

Finger Pickin' Good

Detroit's Westbound Records has teamed with vinyl specialist label Org Music to relaunch the label starting with a series of remastered funk and soul albums. The series kicked off with the Ohio Players' 1973 classic *Pleasure* followed by a string of great music. The latest addition is Dennis Coffey's 1975 funk guitar masterpiece *Finger Pickin' Good* (retitled from *Finger Lickin' Good*). It's been remastered by Dave Gardner and includes the previously unissued bonus song "What It Is It Ain't."

westboundrecords.com

THE GERRY MULLIGAN QUARTET

Spring In Stockholm: Live At Konserthuset, 1959 (New Land)

Working with the Swedish Radio Archives and Gerry Mulligan's estate, New Land brings this 1959 recording of the Mulligan Quartet to life. With a crack band featuring Art Farmer on trumpet, Bill Crow on bass, Dave Bailey on drums and Mulligan on baritone sax and piano, the LP was manufactured at Pallas with the label's house-style, reverse-board sleeves



& MORE!

BY FRANK ALKYER

that feature newly created art.
newlandrecords.co.uk

HOUND DOG TAYLOR & THE HOUSEROCKERS

Beware Of The Dog (Alligator)

This 1976 document catches Hound Dog Taylor's raucous musical nature on one of the best blues albums you'll ever hear. "The Ramones of the blues," said Robert Christgau of the Village Voice, calling the album "a celebration for those who like their blues hot." Taylor was inducted into the Blues Hall Of Fame in 1986.

alligator.com

MCCOY TYNER/JOE HENDERSON

Forces Of Nature: Live At Slugs' (Blue Note)

Here's a meeting of true masters, both in the DownBeat Hall of Fame. Add to that Henry Grimes on bass and the amazing Jack DeJohnette on drums and you've got a classic live album from 1966. Recorded at Slugs' Saloon, one of the lost jazz shrines of New York City, it's available as a two-LP or two-CD set, complete with rare photos and liner notes by noted jazz journalist Nate Chinen and commentary by Jason Moran, Joe Lovano, Joshua Redman, Christian McBride, Nasheet

Waits and Terri Lyne Carrington.
bluenote.com

OSCAR PETERSON

City Lights: The Oscar Peterson Quartet – Live In Munich, 1994 (Mack Avenue)

One year after suffering a stroke that rendered his left hand weakened, Oscar Peterson took the stage in Munich to prove to his collaborators, fans and himself that his earned title of "Maharaja of the keyboard" by Duke Ellington still rang true. He had to reinvent his playing style at 68 years old, displaying undiminished inventive prowess with Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen on bass, Lorne Lofsky on guitar and Martin Drew on drums.

mackavenue.com

PAT METHENY

Bright Size Life (ECM)

This is Pat Metheny's first studio recording as a leader, the album that put him on the map. Recorded in Ludwigsburg in December 1975 and produced by Manfred Eicher, the album featured Metheny's regular touring band of the day, with Bob Moses on drums and the virtuosic but then largely unknown Jaco Pastorius on bass guitar. "I could happily play all

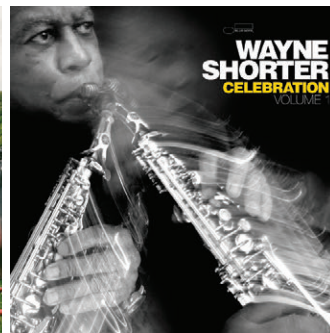
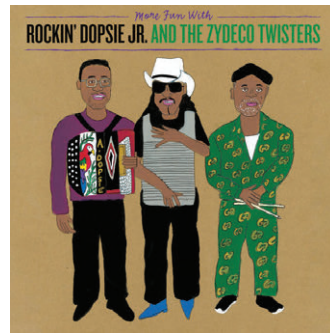
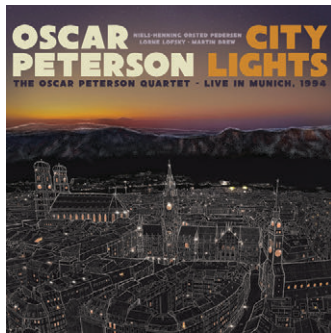


CLUB VERVE!

Verve and Impulse records have introduced a gift that keeps giving – The Verve Record Club. This membership program for jazz vinyl aficionados offers members new pressings mastered from analog sources and pressed on 180-gram vinyl at RTI.

The club also offers numbered releases limited to 2,500 copies, and an annual exclusive release available only to members as well as early access to new titles. Some of the initial offerings for club members include the John Coltrane Quartet, Coltrane; Nina Simone, High Priestess of Soul; and, Louis Armstrong, Hello Dolly with many more titles to come.

A link to join can be found at
store.ververecords.com.



the music from *Bright Size Life* right now,” Metheny said in an interview for the Library of Congress in 2021. “It still seems viable; the arguments there still seem valid and worth thinking about . . . My sense at the time was that I wanted to make a record that might be the only record I would ever make. I hoped to make a statement on things that were important to me in terms of melody, harmony, trio playing and even kind of life in general.” The reissue is part of ECM’s Luminessence audio-file series.

ecmrecords.com

PETER ERSKINE QUARTET
McIntosh Sessions, Volume No. 1
(McIntosh Laboratory)

The kickoff to a new series by McIntosh Laboratory aimed at capturing true analog sound on vinyl, it’s much more. In addition to the painstaking dedication to recording to tape and mastering (done by Sterling Sound), the music is pretty awesome. Drum legend Peter Erskine’s quartet with Bob Mintzer on saxophone, Alan Pasqua on piano and Darek Oles on bass play lived together in Studio A at Henson Studio in L.A. This one’s for true audiophiles . . . and jazz lovers, too.

mcintoshlabs.com

ROCKIN’ DOPSIE JR.
More Fun With Rockin’ Dopsie Jr. And The Zydeco Twisters (ATO)

For those getting through the dog days of winter, here’s a pick-me-up. The Dopsie family has been making smile-inducing, rhythm-busting dance music for generations, and this is no exception.

shop.atorecords.com

SUN RA
Lights On A Satellite: Live At The Left Bank 1978
(Resonance)

Available for the first time, this live show was recorded on July 23, 1978, at the Famous Ballroom in Baltimore, Maryland, by the Left Bank Jazz Society. It’s a limited-edition, 180-gram, two-LP set with audio from the Sun Ra Archives, researched and compiled by Sun Ra archivist Michael D. Anderson, mastered by engineer Joe Lizzi and lacquers cut by Matthew Lutthans at The Mastering Lab.

Independent filmmaker Robert Mugge has also provided audio from recordings he made at the Left Bank that were featured in his 1980 film *Sun Ra: A Joyful Noise*. The deluxe package includes liner notes by music critic J.D. Considine, plus interviews with the centenarian Arkestra saxophonist Marshall Allen, NEA Jazz Master saxophonist Gary Bartz and pianist Craig Taborn. This is a Record Store Day Black Friday Exclusive limited to 1,500 units.

recordstoreday.com/SpecialReleases

NOTE: The current iteration of the Arkestra, led by Allen, has a great new record out with the same title. It’s on IN+OUT Records.
inandout-records.com

VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA
Centennial: The Music Of Thad Jones
(BCM+D Records)

Recorded live at New York’s Village Vanguard in February of this year, the album is already out and a true celebration of a band that has been playing Monday nights

at the Vanguard since 1965. After 2,700 gigs there, the VJO’s illustrious history sentimentally turned to the music of one of its founders. Trumpeter Thad Jones and drummer Mel Lewis decided to try the band as an experiment, and it took off from there with this recording featuring an all-star ensemble that includes Dick Oatts, Gary Smulyan, Terrell Stafford and more. This one’s not on vinyl, but available via CD or streaming.

boyer.temple.edu/about/bcmd-records

WALTER SMITH III
three of us are from Houston and Reuben is not
(Blue Note)

Saxophonist Walter Smith III has a sly wit as witnessed in this album’s title as well as the music that he makes. Here he pays tribute to his home town with fellow Houstonians pianist Jason Moran and drummer Eric Harland along with the obvious non-Houstonian Reuben Rogers on bass. (Rogers is from the Virgin Islands, for the record.) This one’s a terrific set about people and the places we come from.

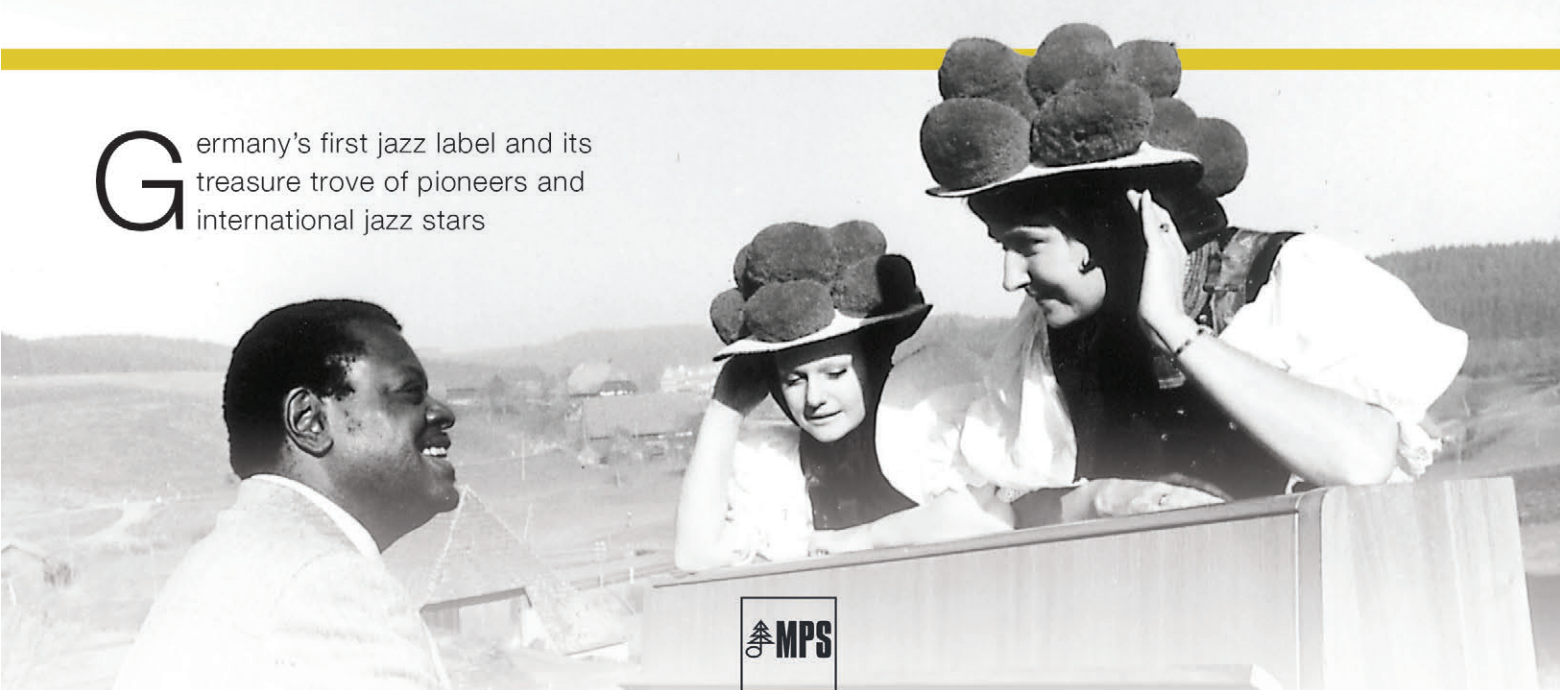
bluenote.com

WAYNE SHORTER
Celebration, Volume 1 (Blue Note)

Before the legendary composer, saxophonist and bandleader passed away in 2023, he began curating the catalog of his live performances. *Celebration, Volume 1* is the first offering from that archive featuring a stellar 2014 set at the Stockholm Jazz Festival with his classic, late-period quartet: Danilo Pérez on piano, John Patitucci on bass and Brian Blade on drums. It’s a beauty!

bluenote.com

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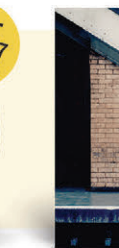


Oscar Peterson
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The Oscar Peterson Trio
Another Day
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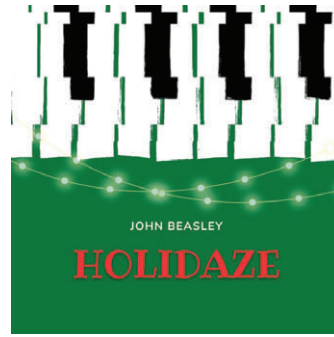
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YULE BE SWINGIN'

BY FRANK-JOHN HADLEY

ELLA FITZGERALD

Ella Wishes You A Swingin' Christmas (Deluxe Edition) (Verve)

No force in creation could have stopped Ella Fitzgerald from following her heart as she authoritatively swung a dozen holiday favorites for this 1960 release, widely considered one of the most sterling of all holiday albums. Available digitally and on vinyl in its latest reappearance, the “Deluxe Edition,” not only has the famous album lineup and six bonus tracks from a 2002 CD reissue but also six newly added songs, some co-starring Louis Jordan or Louis Armstrong. Praise be, it’s the entirety of the holiday music Fitzgerald recorded for Verve and Decca.

store.ververecords.com

RAY CHARLES

The Spirit Of Christmas (Tangerine)

Simply stated, Brother Ray infused every song he sang and played piano on with 100-proof soul — even “Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer.” The genius, well into a remarkable career, got around to recording his first Christmas album in 1984, elevating “Rudolph” and 10 others of greater seriousness to a lofty art-and-entertainment plain.

With a swinging jazz big band featuring soloist Freddie Hubbard or smaller genre-bending ensembles, Charles sounds as if he were genuinely thrilled to have the opportunity to target the warmth in a lyric. His holiday music perennially gives the gift of year-end generosity and optimism.

raycharles.shop.musictoday.com

MATT WILSON'S CHRISTMAS TREE-O

The Shape Of Christmas To Come (Palmetto)

Any fan worth their salt can easily point to favorite jazz holiday albums. People may find a new one to specially admire in world-class drummer Matt Wilson’s first holiday album, an assortment of creatively reconditioned Xmas and Hannukah songs. Working together for about a month every year since 2009, he and Tree-O heralders Jeff Lederer on reeds and Paul Sikive on bass have developed a striking interaction. The tone of the performances is generally fun-loving but the musicians also negotiate complex emotions. They lacerate the uncommon carol “I Heard The Bells Of Christmas,” and Lederer’s bluesy “I Shine Your Life” has a cryptic core of sentiment. The album title? Think Ornette Coleman.

palmetto-records.com

BAND OF OTHER BROTHERS

This Year At Christmas (Ear Up)

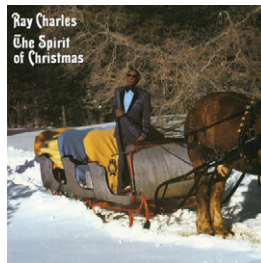
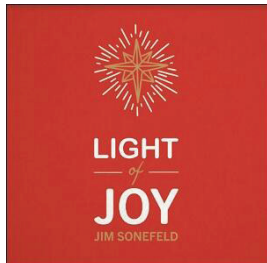
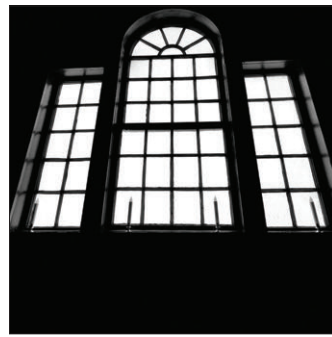
Band of Other Brothers — keyboardist Jeff Babko, drummer Keith Carlock, saxophonist-flutist Jeff Coffin, guitarist Nir Felder, bassist-singer Will Lee — serve up a holiday album that has a point to prove: that more than hired hands for headliners like Dave Matthews and Steely Dan, they are diversifiers with abundant ideas. No doubt wearing big smiles in the studio, the quintet rewires familiar frosty fare and introduces thoughtfully constructed original Yuletide numbers. Jazz? “Sleigh Ride” surprisingly connects to the Coltrane quartet, and a fascinating cover of Miles Davis Sextet’s “Blue Xmas” finds guest Ben Sidran filling the Santa boots of original singer Bob Dorough. Beyond jazz, there’s a diversity of styles reflecting their work-day eclecticism: soul-r&b that references Donnie Hathaway, Bootsy Collins-inspired funk and even sugar cane pop.

earuprecords.com

DONALD VEGA TRIO

All Is Merry And Bright (Imagery/Anderson Audio)

Here’s a jazz piano trio album that is well-nigh perfect for listening to on quiet Christmastime evenings when admiring the



decorated tree. Pianist Donald Vega, a Juilliard professor best known for working with Ron Carter and the late Russell Malone, sets his sights on drawing out the lyricism in popular hymns and carols. Vega's great sense of quietly merry relaxation imparts swing to his delicate touch on the keys. Though usually favoring a gentle pace, he quickens things with a cha-cha version of "O Come, Emmanuel." Appropriate low-key support is provided him by string bassist Clovis Nicholas and drummer Pete Van Nostrand. natedsd.com

ROMERO LUBAMBO & PAMELA DRIGGS
Christmastime In Rio (Sunnyside)

Possessing an air of seasonal cheer on a set of classic winter warmers and likable originals that merge Brazilian music and jazz is the married couple Romero Lubambo and Pamela Driggs. Note the sweet purity of her voice as she sings in English and Portuguese plus a vocalise dialect of her own. Listen to the superb musicianship of her partner and the steady-handed familiarity the two and Brazilian sidemen have with samba, bossa nova and waltz rhythms. Excuse a few appearances of sentimentalism. sunnysiderecords.com

JOHN BEASLEY
Holidaze (Tiger Turn)

Back again after a flawed release two Christmases ago, *Holidaze* is a proper and precise holiday celebration from long-acclaimed pianist John Beasley and cohorts Edwin Livingston on bass and Christian Evman behind the kit. Beasley, once part of Freddie Hubbard's group, brings a keen intelligence and a mature conviction to his arrangements of "Greensleeves" and seven more seasonal standards. The best present of all might be the redesigned *Nutcracker Suite* gem "Dance Of The Sugar Plum Fairy," where his lyricism is touched by the fanciful. johnbeasleymusic.com

DYLAN JACK QUARTET
Winter Panes (Creative Nation Music)

Started up in 2016, the Dylan Jack Quartet — the bandleader on drums, trumpeter Jerry Sabatini, electronics-savvy guitarist Eric Hofbauer, bassist Tony Leva — delights in its approach to a holiday album by focusing on traditional red-white-and-blue music and the music of other cultures. They've painstakingly picked numbers for reinvention, ones that suit their questing spirit and musicali-

ty. There's trombonist Grachan Moncur III's "New Africa," which connects with Kwanzaa, and the Sephardic Hannukah song "Ocho Kandelikas" and, to mention one more, the south-of-the-border "Las Mananitas." The performances of the musicians, all of whom are in tune with the salutary messages of the music, are of the highest order. dylanjack.bandcamp.com

RICH WILLEY
Baptism Christmas (Boptism Music)

The respected North Carolina-based trumpeter-educator and eight musicians he knows from attending jazz clinics around the country execute Xmas chestnuts with bonhomie and technical proficiency, the latter attested to in particular by a raft of solos. It's a wonder that the players are so engaged with the material because the songs, starting with "Rudolph" and "The Christmas Song," are stale. What's this, Santa? Willey pushes the arrangement of "Silver Bells" toward reggae with Jah riddim. boptism.com

RICK BRAUN
It's Christmas (Brontosaurus)

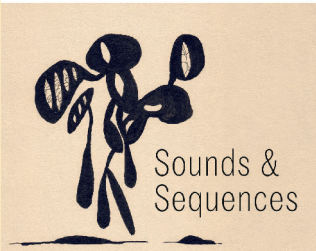
At Christmastime, contemporary jazz trumpeters are said to stake out a spot in Santa's Village where they polish holiday tunes to an artificial sheen, in the process stripping them of heart and soul. Rick Braun, whose third holiday album is now out, is an exception. Like a modern-day Ruby Braff, he shows rich feeling for the melodies of classics and new originals. He traverses many with uncloying tenderness, ruminating about the season in a way that makes known his largesse and humility. Braun's singing on two numbers is agreeable to the ears, as is a bit of,

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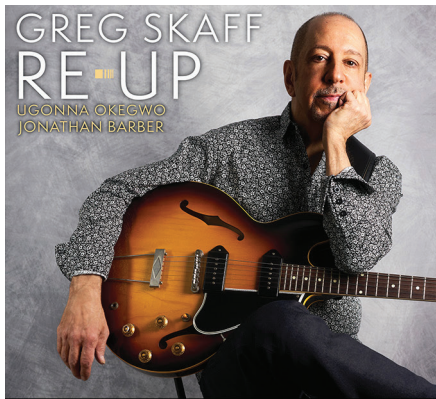


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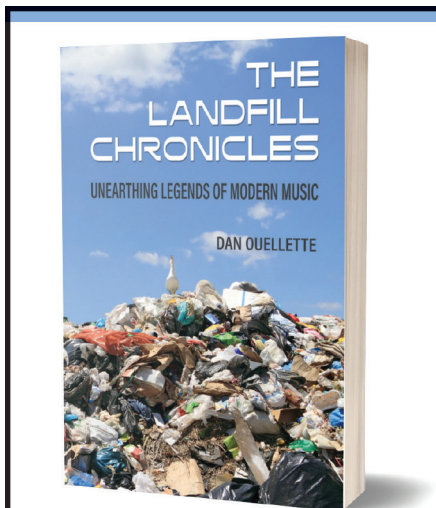
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www.gregskaff.com

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Longtime DownBeat contributor Dan Ouellette's *The Landfill Chronicles: Unearthing Legends of Modern Music* reveals intimate insights into 27 enduring music icons from Wayne Shorter to Frank Zappa. By retrieving lost articles buried in landfills and sharing unpublished encounters with legendary artists, Ouellette creates a groundbreaking collection—part archive, part memoir, and wholly entertaining.

Find it on Amazon!

ahem, smooth whistling. The festivities also involve strings, brass, an orchestra, good mainstream jazz playing and a scintilla of credible blues.

rickbraun.com

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Get Ready For A Groovy And Bluesy Christmas (Bear Family)

Trust Nico Feuerbach and liner notes scribe Bill Dahl to take you on a rewarding tour of blues, r&b and jazz singles waxed for Black record buyers in the late 1940s, the 1950s and the early 1960s. The latest compilation in a Bear Family series leads with a staggering fiasco from a group called The Jackson Trio but then, praise be, immediately finds its footing for a long stretch of 19 good or excellent tunes. Obscure Santa's elves Moose Jackson, the Marcells and Washboard Pete are just as in touch with the passionate fun or the aching feeling of the music as luminaries B.B. King, Sonny Boy Williamson, Charles Brown and the Drifters.

bear-family.com

JIM SONEFELD

Light Of Joy (Vere Music, EP)

The initial holiday mini-album by Jim Sonefeld, the drummer with heartland rock band Hootie & the Blowfish, proffers five original compositions that signal the compassion he expresses through intelligent pop music at Christmastime. No poseur, Sonefeld seems sincere about his longing for a missing loved one on "I Wanna See You." Only "It's Love" has the high sugar content of a holiday dessert like peppermint Bavarian cream pie.

jimsonefeld.com

BEN LEVIN

Ben Levin Presents A Holiday Blues Revue (VizzTone)

Motivated by holiday spirit, rising star Ben Levin reaches for old-school blues and r&b authenticity on eight self-composed tunes (a couple having witty lyrics about Mr. and Mrs. Claus) and two rebuilt classics, Charles Brown's "It's Christmas Time" and Vince Guaraldi's charming "Skating." An unexceptional singer, the 22-year-old Cincinnati excels at playing piano and organ in various styles that befit jolly or downhearted moods; at all times, Levin accords past blues keyboard masters the respect they deserve. He's just part of the show. Veterans in good form include blues-jazz singer Candice Ivory, Chicago slide guitar wild man Lil' Ed Williams and notable Louisiana bluesman Lil' Jimmy Reed. Warning! Reed soaks "Lump Of Coal" in miserableness.

vizztone.com

DB

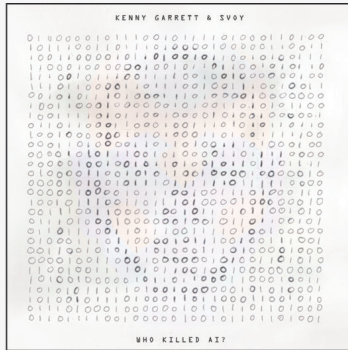
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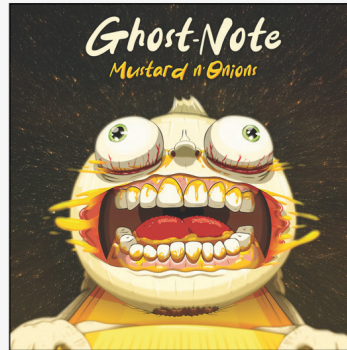
**Christian McBride
& Edgar Meyer**

But Who's Gonna Play the Melody?



**Kenny Garrett
& Svoy**

Who Killed AI?



Ghost-Note
Mustard n'Onions



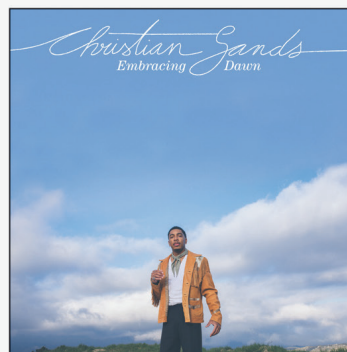
Kirk Whalum
Epic Cool



Emmet Cohen
Vibe Provider



Mike Stern
Echoes and Other Songs

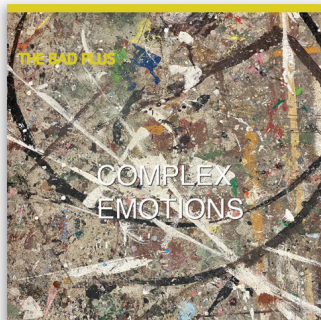


Christian Sands
Embracing Dawn



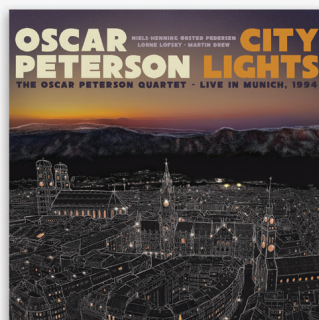
Michael Mayo
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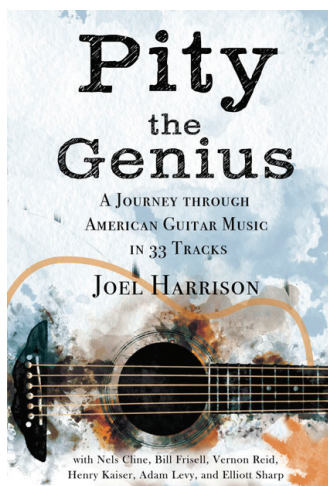
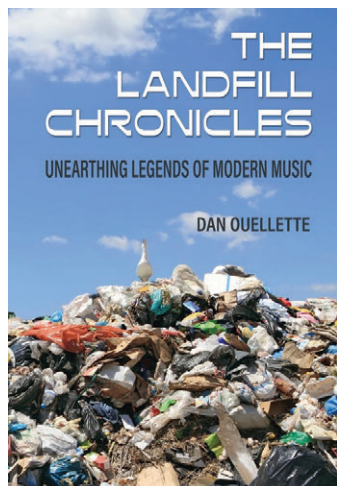
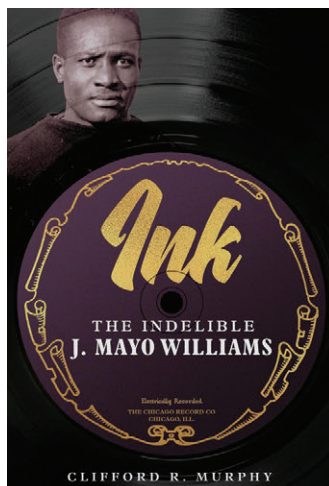
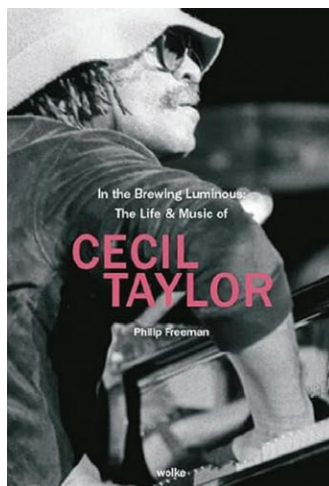
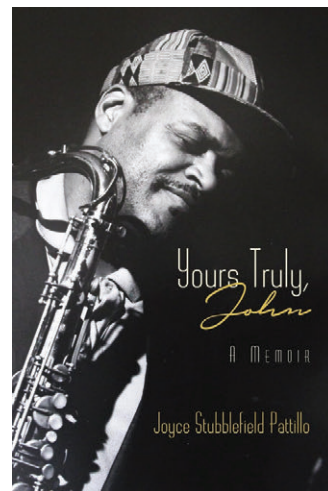
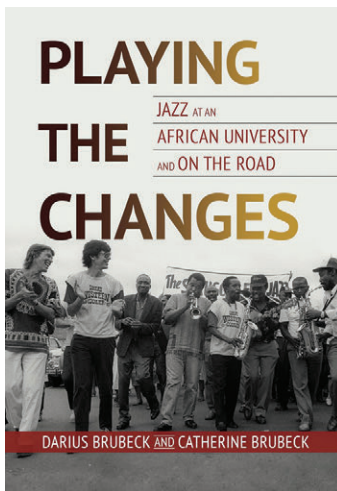
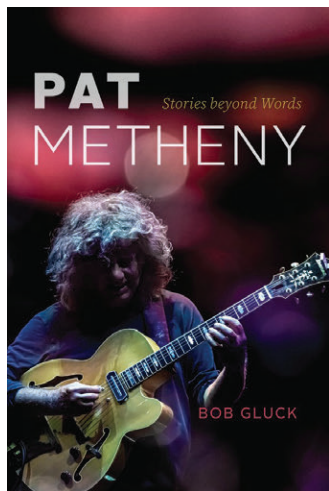
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Oscar Peterson
City Lights: The Oscar Peterson Quartet – Live in Munich, 1994



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GIFTS FOR JAZZ READERS

BY FRANK ALKYER

PAT METHENY: STORIES BEYOND WORDS
(University of Chicago Press)

Author Paul Gluck delivers a deep dive into one of our greatest living jazz artists, not with a biography, but a close study of guitarist Pat Metheny’s words and music. Gluck, who has previously written about the music of Herbie Hancock and Miles Davis, concentrates on new interviews and a study of Metheny’s music to offer a fresh look at Metheny’s skill as a storyteller of the highest order. As a pianist, composer and music educator, Gluck is able to shed new light in a very interesting way. press.uchicago.edu

THE NOTEBOOKS OF SONNY ROLLINS
(New York Review of Books)

Edited by Sam V.H. Reese, *The Notebooks of Sonny Rollins* offers an incredible glimpse into the mind of one of our greatest jazz artists ever. After a detailed, insightful introduction, Reese lets the notebooks Rollins kept do the talking, and it’s fantastic. Rollins writes as if no one is reading, with constant self evalua-

tion — sometimes outlining the details of the day, other times demonstrating honesty about falling short in his music or life. nyrb.com

EARLY JAZZ: A CONCISE INTRODUCTION, FROM ITS BEGINNINGS THROUGH 1929
(SUNY Press)

Fumi Tomita, an associate professor of jazz pedagogy and performance at the University of Massachusetts, offers a fine overview of jazz from its humble beginnings through 1929. Tomita digs in deep, not only covering the major stars of the burgeoning movement, but also many lesser-known, but important, artists along the way. While he analyzes 20 songs in depth, the book is meant to be read by fans and students as well as musicians and historians. sunypress.edu

PITY THE GENIUS: A JOURNEY THROUGH AMERICAN GUITAR MUSIC IN 33 TRACKS
(Cymbal Press)

Guitarist Joel Harrison has always also

been a guitar historian. *In Pity The Genius* he dives into the music and lives of 33 guitarists without regard for style or genre, choosing to tell their stories through 33 quintessential songs. He hits the jazz maestros like Pat Martino, Jim Hall and Wes Montgomery, but also blues, folk, rock, soul and uncategorizable artists, both well known and under the radar. It’s a terrific read for guitar geeks, and regular fans, too. cymbalpress.com/guitar

YOURS TRULY, JOHN: A MEMOIR
(Nandina Books)

Joyce Stubblefield Patillo, sister of the late saxophonist John Stubblefield delivers this highly personal biography of his life and times including her recollections as well as dozens of interviews with those who knew him best. “My brother was not just a musician,” writes Patillo. “He was a maestro. I remember the first time I heard him play; he played from his soul, and his long fingers would wrap around those notes painting a sound that lingered in

the air long after he had stopped playing.”
amazon.com

PLAYING THE CHANGES: JAZZ AT AN AFRICAN UNIVERSITY AND ON THE ROAD
(University of Illinois Press)

Darius and Catherine Brubeck, the son and daughter-in-law of famed pianist Dave Brubeck, detail their move to South Africa in 1983 and their time at the University of KwaZulu-Natal where they taught and developed a community of musicians that changed lives and creating bands, some that toured the world.
press.uillinois.edu

LANDFILL CHRONICLES
(Cymbal Press)

Veteran music journalist Dan Ouellette has compiled nearly 30 of his favorite articles from over the years into this terrific new book. Although he often writes about jazz for this magazine, Ouellette adeptly covers a broad spectrum of music — from Frank Zappa, Henry Threadgill and esperanza spalding to Astor Piazzolla, Abdullah Ibrahim and Elvis Costello.
cymbalpress.com/landfill

JAZZ OMNIBUS: 21ST CENTURY PHOTOS AND WRITINGS BY MEMBERS OF THE JAZZ JOURNALISTS ASSOCIATION
(Cymbal Press)

This is a terrific anthology from members of the

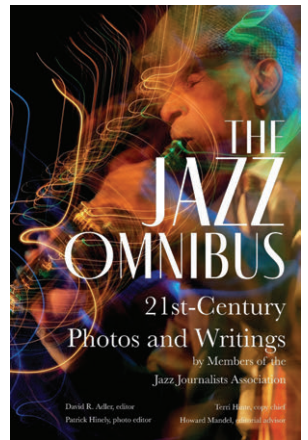
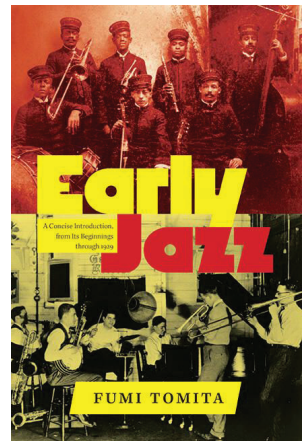
JJA, an organization that has promoted jazz journalism since 1987. With 90 contributors to the book, expect to read the work of many of your favorite DownBeat authors — Ted Panken on Sonny Rollins, Michael Jackson on Keith Jarrett, Ashley Kahn on jazz expatriots, Howard Mandel on Ornette Coleman’s birthday party, Suzanne Lorge on Carla Bley and more!
cymbalpress.com/omnibus

INK: THE INDELIBLE J. MAYO WILLIAMS
(University of Illinois Press)

Clifford R. Murphy details the fascinating life of one of music’s first Black producer’s of Black music in the 1920s and 1930s, who also happened to have an early career in professional football with the NFL. He recorded Ma Rainey and Blind Lemon Jefferson and was as well known for being a hard-nosed (even exploitative) businessman as he was a football player.
press.uillinois.edu

IN THE BREWING LUMINOUS: THE LIFE & MUSIC OF CECIL TAYLOR
(Wolke Verlag)

Veteran music journalist and DownBeat contributor Philip Freeman offers an insightful look into one of the godfathers of avant garde jazz piano. The first full-length biography on Taylor, the book details his journey from 1929 to 2018 with in-depth interviews and crafty story telling.
wolke-verlag.de

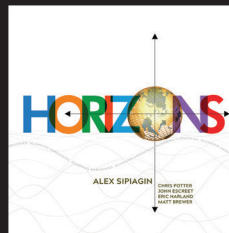


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| 3. Clean Cut | 8. Horizon 2 |
| 4. Jumping Ahead | 9. Horizon 3 |
| 5. When Is It Now? (Pat Metheny) | 10. AIVA-tion |

1014 Alex Sipiagin, Trumpet and Flugelhorn
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John Escreet, Piano and Keyboards
Eric Harland, Drums
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| 3. departure no.1 | 7. lifeline |
| 4. meltdown | 8. other side |

1015 John Escreet, Piano
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| 2. Psalms 6 | 8. Pelo Malo |
| 3. Vini Non | 9. Psalms 23 Part II (I Shall Fear No Evil) |
| 4. Pwoblèm Yo | 10. Psalms 23 Part III (Surely Goodness and Mercy) |
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Markus Schwartz, Percussion Mauricio Herrera Tamayo, Percussion
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Designed to accelerate the technical, rhythmic and musical development of today's drummers, the Cympad STX is a compact drum pad that's ideal for both workouts and warmups. The STX features three cellular foam playing zones that provide a natural rebound and a comfortable feel; four "sticky" feet that reduce vibration and increase stability for quiet, secure practice sessions; and a durable carry case. cympad.com

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On-Stage's TCM500 Smartphone Holder for Mic Stands securely attaches to a mic stand and holds a smartphone for ease of reading music or lyrics. Additionally, the holder can be attached to other objects such as a music stand or desktop, making it possible to mount a phone in any convenient location to aid in practice, performance, streaming or recording. on-stage.com



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Livestreaming USB Mixer
Audio-Technica has launched the AT-UMX3 livestreaming USB audio mixer, the company's first USB audio mixer for streaming and other applications. The AT-UMX3 is a compact desktop audio mixer equipped with all the functions needed for livestreaming. Even first-time users will find the plug-and-play AT-UMX3 easy to operate, with no need to install any special drivers. The all-in-one interface is equipped with one XLR/quarter-inch microphone input, two line inputs and a headphone jack for monitoring. audio-technica.com



Worry-Free Audio Capture
Zoom North America's H1 XLR recorder is a flexible, two-channel, 32-bit float recorder designed for the modern-day creator. It comes with multiple input options: two locking XLR/TRS combo jacks and a 3.5mm stereo input. With Zoom's ultra-clean preamps, dual AD converters and 32-bit float recording, the H1 XLR ensures worry-free audio capture every time. The new recorder is also designed with accessibility for the blind and visually impaired. zoom-na.com



Lightest in Class
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Wireless In-Ears
Samson's EarAmp EWM100 wireless in-ear monitoring system delivers superior audio and superb clarity. EarAmp enhances performance, reduces clutter and provides protected listening, empowering performers with customizable mixes, reliable connectivity and sound isolation. The ER100 receiver is a compact stereo bodypack featuring a 1/8-inch stereo output connector for in-ear monitors. samsontech.com



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Intuitive Tools
Roland's GO:KEYS 3 and GO:KEYS 5 Music Creation Keyboards are portable instruments boasting intuitive tools for learning music, with no previous experience required. The streamlined GO:KEYS 3 offers a core feature set with a touch-sensitive 61-note keyboard and an onboard stereo speaker system. GO:KEYS 5 includes all the primary features of its sibling, plus a speaker system with extended bass response, a mic input with vocal effects and enhanced audio connectivity. roland.com



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After releasing two acclaimed albums this year, trumpeter/multi-instrumentalist/composer Darren Barrett, who has played on Esperanza Spalding's GRAMMY-winning album *Radio Music Society*, will release a Christmas single "*O Tannenbaum*" on Thanksgiving Day November 28 2024, featuring WALTER SMITH III and KURT ROSENWINKEL.

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Without George Russell, there would be no *Kind Of Blue*, Schaphorst asserts.

ANDREW HURLBUT

George Russell: Inspiring Theorist & Composer

George Russell was a leader in several key developments in the history of jazz. His innovative compositions for jazz artists including Benny Carter, Buddy DeFranco, Bill Evans and Dizzy Gillespie are landmarks in modern jazz composition. And George was the first jazz musician to see the potential of the system of modes developed in Gregorian chant during medieval times. George's theory, the *Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization*, first published in 1953, was the first major theoretical work addressing jazz, analyzing the logical and practical connections between chords and scales used throughout jazz education today. And George's theory inspired many of his friends and contemporaries such as John Coltrane, Miles Davis and Bill Evans to com-

pose and improvise music that would have never been created without George's influence. Without George Russell, there would be no *Kind Of Blue*. When George began teaching at New England Conservatory in 1969, he brought this wealth of knowledge and experience to his interactions with students. And his interest in theory, composition and creativity laid the foundation for NEC's innovative approach to teaching jazz.

I was lucky enough to work with George when I started teaching at NEC in 2001. And since I was intimidated by George during my time as a student in the 1980s, I was a bit shocked when George went out of his way to encourage me personally, suggesting that I perform more of my own music with the NEC Jazz Orchestra. Under his guidance, I

conducted the NEC Jazz Orchestra's performance of "The African Game" in December 2003 as part of a celebration of George's 80th birthday. And when the band performed that piece again at the 2004 IAJE Conference in New York, I was struck by how many jazz legends were there in the room, paying respect to George and his legacy. Last October, we celebrated George's 100th birthday with performances of "All About Rosie," "Ezz-thetic," "Stratusphunk" and parts of "The African Game." It was wonderful to rehearse that music again, and feel George's powerful spirit.

George's Lydian Chromatic Concept steers clear of dualistic ideas of dissonance and consonance, along with references to "avoid" notes or problematic intervals. Instead, George's theory introduces a broad spectrum of pitch

choices and relationships that the improviser and composer can freely draw from. Melodies and chords can be ingoing (towards the tonic) or outgoing (away from the tonic), depending on the particular goal of the artist. Lines can be connected to the chord changes (vertically oriented) or they can be connected more to the overall tonality (horizontally oriented). In his music, George freely mixed together all of these various techniques, often including multiple approaches at the same time.

I've always loved George's term *tonal gravity*. The harmonic series is often discussed in music theory circles, but George's theory is the only one that I'm aware of that extends the physical reality of the harmonic series to analyze the almost magnetic attraction of one pitch towards another. But perhaps my favorite aspect of the Lydian Chromatic Concept is the fact that it isn't tied to any one particular musical style. Although George is best known for his contributions to jazz, his theory applies to all music. And by focusing on abstract principles rather than style, George encouraged his students to develop their own unique approaches to composition and improvisation. The Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu famously stated that the Lydian Chromatic Concept "is not simply a musical method—we might call it a philosophy of music, or we might call it poetry."

But as much as I love George's theory, it's his music that's had the biggest impact on me. When I first heard it, George's uniquely creative lines, rhythms and harmony immediately stood out from other jazz compositions, while still connected to the blues, swing and groove. Although there's no way to describe the richness and variety of George's music in a short essay, I'll try to mention a few of my favorite moments, along with some of his techniques that have influenced me.

Melodic Writing for Rhythm Section

One of my discoveries after getting a chance to study George's scores was that he tends to avoid having the rhythm section instruments "comp" in the traditional sense, filling out harmony through improvised accompaniment. The piano, guitar and bass are more often playing melodies that George carefully crafted to fit together in a specific way, furthering the structural goal of the composition. One of my favorite examples is the bass line that starts "Stratusphunk," the title track from the George Russell Sextet's 1961 Riverside release. (See Example 1.) At first listen, one might hear this as an unusually chromatic improvised walking bass line. But after the melody enters, we realize that the bass line is actually a composed melody, starting with the same four pitches — D \flat , E \flat , E, B \flat — played 12 bars later by the trumpet.

At the Brandeis University Festival for the Arts in 1957, six new pieces were commissioned, premiered and recorded in the studio shortly afterwards. Featuring three "classical" composers (Milton Babbitt, Gunther Schuller and Harold Shapero) and three "jazz" composers (Jimmy Giuffre, Charles Mingus and George Russell), the resulting recording *Modern Jazz Concert* was released in 1958 by Columbia. Russell's contribution, "All

About Rosie," is one of his most celebrated pieces, featuring a famous solo by Bill Evans. And the first movement begins with a call-and-response between the trumpet and trombone, a motive based on the African-American children's game song "Rosie, Little Rosie." (See Example 2.) That first theme is organized into 10-beat phrases, although it's notated in 4/4.

Then, 10 bars later, an unusual bass line enters, constructed out of a cycle of four pitch-

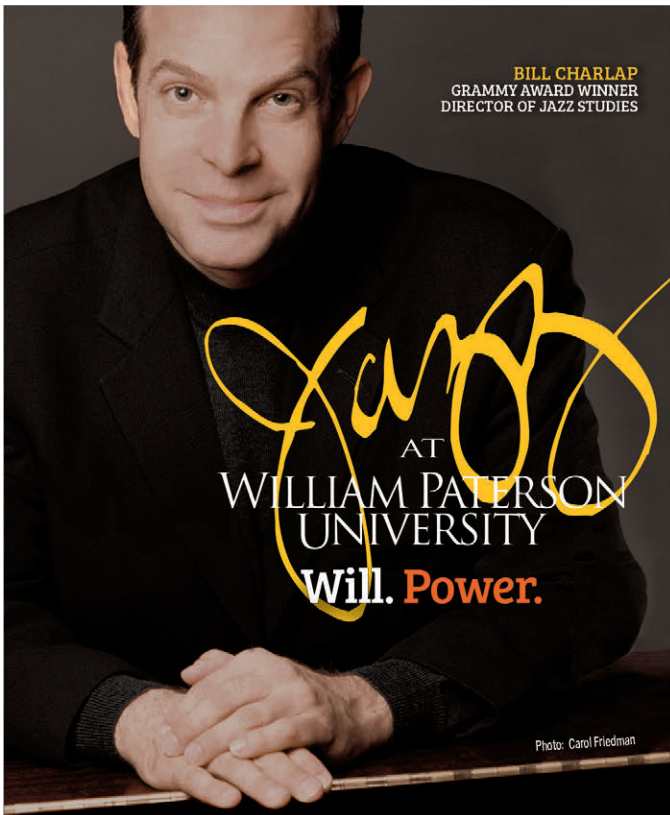
Example 1

Example 2

Example 3

Example 4

Example 5



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es (D, G, C, F) and a cycle of five clave-like rhythmic durations lasting 10 beats (2, 2, 1.5, 1.5, 3). (See Example 3.) This 10-beat rhythmic cycle supports the 10/4 implications of the first theme. And the fact that the pitch and rhythmic cycles don't line up means that each of the first four rhythmic cycles starts on a different pitch. Since this sequence of pitches reminds us of a typical circle-of-fifths bass line, one might not notice how carefully organized it is the first time you hear it, just like "Stratusphunk." And this is something I've discovered again and again in George's music: He presents familiar material (walking bass lines, circle-of-fifths patterns, clave-like rhythms) in ways that make those ideas sound fresh, more integrated into the specific logic of the composition.

Polytonality & Polymodality

At first, the "All About Rosie" bass line and bluesy theme establishes the tonality of F. But after 30 measures, the melody is transposed up a major second (in the sharp direction) and the bass line is transposed down a major third (in the flat direction). These are examples of what George called *outgoing melodies*. And this is another unique quality of George's music, how he can express two musical ideas in two different keys and somehow make those ideas feel integrated. In this particular case (see Example 4), the transposed melody ends up in G and the bass line is in D \flat , echoing the tritone substitution relationship, which might provide a bit more stability than other potential relationships.

Another of my favorite examples of George's combinations of conflicting tonalities and modes is from "The Paleolithic Game," part of *The African Game*, released on Blue Note in 1986. George introduces three melodic strands over a kind of prehistoric funk beat, all connected to the tonality of B in some way. (See Example 5.) The saxophone melody is the most clear in its expression of the B minor pentatonic scale. At the same time, the voicings played by guitar and keyboards center around an unusual B chord with a suspended #4 and \flat 9 (no third or seventh). And the bass line focusses on three pitches (D#, E and F#) associated with the B major scale. Yet somehow, the combination of these three elements works together beautifully, due to the disparate registers and the strength of each musical character.

Unity

George Russell uses the term *unity* to describe the connection between the Lydian mode and the major chord. And I would argue that there's a unity in George's approach to composition in a much more general sense. George's music is always tonal, with pitches having a clear hierarchy and sense of purpose. And it's always rhythmically engaging. And yet his compositions involve an unusual degree of creativity and freedom, often pushing against traditional ways of organizing pitch and rhythm.

In some ways, George's polytonal and polymodal investigations may be heard as connected to the blues, in which major and minor scales and chords often coexist. But by expanding this connection between harmony and melody, George has been able to discover new models for musical unity, far beyond the relationship between the Lydian mode and the major chord, or between the blues scale and the I-IV-V progression. George's investigation into tonal gravity led him to create startlingly new relationships between scales and chords for each new piece he composed. And I will always appreciate the lessons that I've learned by studying George Russell's theory and music. **DB**

Ken Schaphorst is a composer, performer and educator currently serving as co-chair of the Jazz Studies Department at New England Conservatory in Boston, where he teaches courses in jazz composition, arranging, theory and analysis, and directs the NEC Jazz Orchestra. He is a founding member of the Jazz Composers Alliance, a Boston-based non-profit promoting new music in the jazz idiom since 1985. Schaphorst studied at Swarthmore College, New England Conservatory and Boston University, where he received the Doctor of Musical Arts. Schaphorst has received numerous awards including Composition Fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Wisconsin Arts Board, as well as Meet the Composer Grants. He won the Achievement Award for Jazz Education from DownBeat, and has released seven acclaimed recordings as a leader.

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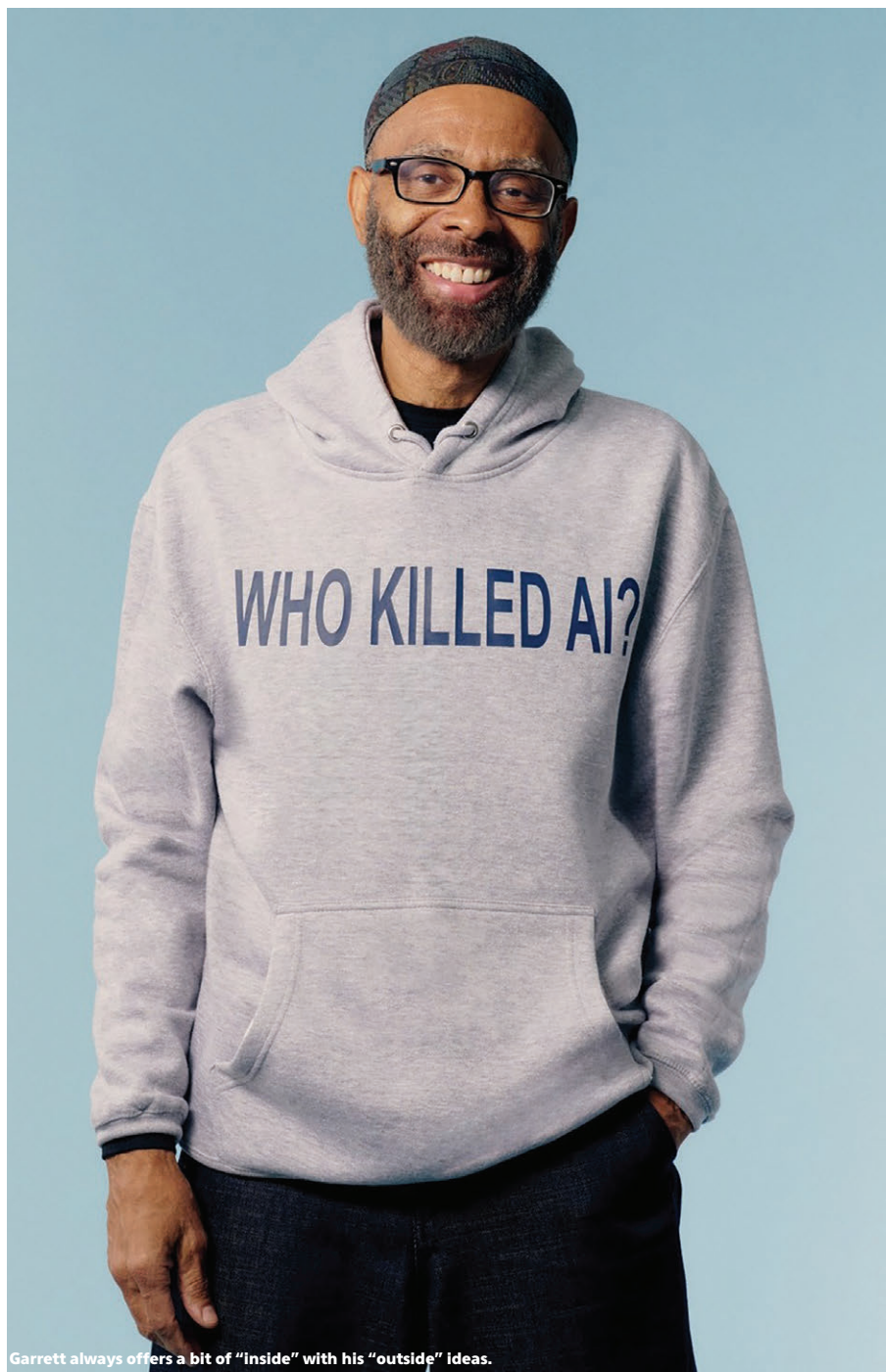
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Garrett always offers a bit of “inside” with his “outside” ideas.

Kenny Garrett’s EWI Solo on ‘Divergence Tu-dah’

At first listen, it took me a number of measures before I stopped wondering who the guest guitarist was on “Divergence Tu-dah,” from saxophonist Kenny Garrett’s latest, *Who Killed AI?* (Mack Avenue). Turns out, it was Garrett himself on the EWI, an electronic wind instrument that enables wind players to trig-

ger synths and samplers. And Garrett does a fantastic job imitating a guitarist. His bends often have the character of a guitar string.

And dig Garrett’s phrasing: We don’t hear a single note on the downbeat until measure 9. (See the full solo transcription on page 94.) And a significant amount of his playing here is syncopated, so he’s creating a jagged sound quite in opposition to the rest of the song — both previous and subsequent sections as well as the backing he’s playing over.

Then, from bar 13 we have a string of measures with accented notes on the first beat, reversing what we’ve been hearing. And later, in bars 20, 23, 24, 28, 30 and 31 (and sort of in 29), Garrett plays over the downbeat. So, he’s given us three different approaches to the “1,” and for the most part segmented them. The emphasis on downbeats starts about one-third of the way through, and the mixing of the three occurs about two-thirds in. These proportions are approximate, but it does create a sense of three almost equal segments.

Garrett combines this with subdivisions. Although notes smaller than a 16th appear infrequently in the first half of his solo, we start hearing strings of them starting in bar 18, and he really leans into those 32nds in measures 19–20, 23–24, 27–28, and the end of 30 through the middle of 32 (the effective final measure). So they start a little over halfway in, and then occur basically every other two-bar phrase.

And, of course, let’s not overlook his approach to chromaticism. We hear a lot of chromatic scale lines, which is common in jazz, but notice how his lines don’t always end up on or accent chord tones (or even scale tones) as would be common in older jazz. Measure 14 is a great example: descending by half steps from G all the way down to C#. If he’d resolved this back to the tonic D, it would make sense (in a textbook manner); but he leaves it hanging.

Earlier (in bar 9) we heard something similar. Though not approached chromatically Garrett hits an Eb on the “and” of 3 and never resolves it to D, or to anything else. Some might consider these “wrong notes,” but they don’t sound wrong. In this setting they add to the mysterious mood conveyed by the backing and earlier part of the song. I would say that up until Garrett’s improvisation the vibe was somewhat chill, though also a bit shadowy. Garrett appears to be using his solo to turn the mood darker and more aggressive. Even though Garrett

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in improvising over the same track that has made up the beginning section of the composition, the emotion is a striking contrast.

This brings up an important point about solos: They exist within songs and arrangements. Here Garrett doesn't seem (to my ear) to be just using this improvisation as just a place to "do his schtick," but to make a statement that moves the music in a certain way. He could've picked a sound that was less acerbic, an approach that was more "inside," in keeping with the atmosphere that's been set up. Choosing the timbre and angular approach means Garrett wanted this section to be in opposition to the feeling of the background.

Another manner in which Garrett pursues this goal is his use of larger intervals. This makes things more angular, less smooth (and the rest of the instrumentation has certainly been very smooth).

He hits us with this right from the start, covering a range of more than an octave in the first two bars. But in the beginning these leaps are separated by rests, which makes them less jarring. It's in measure 6 where he strings some large intervals together, though these are mostly fourths and fifths: big leaps but not dissonant. As the improvisation goes on, we hear some more "colorful" jumps.

There's the tritone at the end of bar 10, but in the following two bars we hear something much more extreme. The B \flat jumps up to a high C \sharp , an interval of a sharp ninth, which shouldn't be too dissonant, except neither of these are chord tones. Also, the C \sharp isn't even a scale tone, and like the C \sharp in bar 14, Garrett makes no attempt at resolving it in a conventional manner. In the next bar, he leaps higher, to an F, and then drops to a B \flat . At least these are consonant with the underlying chords. (Incidentally, the chords aren't totally defined in this piece. It comes off to my ear as more of a D minor wash with a moving bass line. But that bass vamp, shown on the top line of this transcription, does give the sense of the chord changes I've presented here.)

There are other examples of this kind of motion. Over the bar line from 17 to 18 we have a minor seventh (C \sharp to B natural, neither is a scale tone) followed by a fourth (consonant interval up to a scale tone, but it's the tritone of the bass note) and then down a major third. In fact, this entire measure seems at odds with the underlying harmony. Measure 25 is also wonderful, with a major sixth coming down a half step and back up. Each sixth contains both a non-scale tone and a scale tone.

So Garrett always has a bit of "inside" with his "outside" ideas, presenting a solo

that adds a wonderful contrast, especially with how the drums drop out after his improvisation, making the next section even more different than the solo section. Divergence, indeed.

Jimi Durso is a guitarist and bassist based in the New York area. He recently released an album of Indian classical music played on the string band, titled *Border Of Hiranyaloka*. Find out more at jimidurso.bandcamp.com. Durso can often be witnessed performing/rehearsing/teaching/pontificating online at [twitch.tv/CoincidenceMachine](https://www.twitch.tv/CoincidenceMachine).

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Fabrizio Bosso

Fabrizio Bosso is one of Italy's — make that Europe's — strongest melodicists, a passionate, lyrical trumpet player who's tragically unmentioned in the U.S. In Italy, he's jazz royalty, a prodigy who turned professional at 17. Since 1997, he's recorded more than 30 albums as leader or co-leader, including tributes to the music of Duke Ellington, Nino Rota, Stevie Wonder and various genres. He's a top-choice soloist for many large band projects, and for more than 10 years he's consistently developed his own compact, finely tuned quartet. Bosso agreed to this live Blindfold Test — his first — as part of the 51st Umbria Jazz Festival in Perugia, Italy, which took place on Thursday morning this past July in the city's historic Sala di Notari, one Perugia's oldest official chambers.

Duke Ellington

"El Gato" (70th Birthday Concert, Solid State, 1969) Ellington, piano; Cat Anderson, lead trumpet; Mercer Ellington, Rolf Ericson, Cootie Williams, trumpets; Russell Procope, Johnny Hodges, Norris Turney, Harold Ashby, Paul Goncalves, saxophones; Lawrence Brown, Chuck Connors, trombones; Victor Gaskin, bass; Rufus Jones, drums.

It sounds really amazing. I hear a very clean and defined sound, in terms of technique. He tends to be very lyrical when he plays fast. Technically speaking, it reminds me of Harry James, although I know it's not him. Maybe he's someone contemporary. The tune is fantastic, I think it's a contemporary composition. I think it was recorded around the '50s or '60s. That's why it reminds me of Harry James. The orchestra reminded me of that sound. [After] Ah, Cat Anderson! What tricked me was the fact he doesn't really hit a lot of high notes, otherwise I would have immediately recognized him. It's quite strange, his playing seems more tame in this solo.

Erik Truffaz

"La Strada" (Rollin', Blue Note, 2023) Truffaz, trumpet; Matthis Pascaud, electric guitar; Alexis Anérilles, electric piano; Marcello Giuliani, electric bass; Raphael Chassin, drums.

Could it be Italian, Franco Ambrosetti? I recognize the tune — "La Strada" by Nino Rota. Is it someone who recorded with Enrico Pieranunzi, maybe Kenny Wheeler? [After] Ah, OK — Truffaz! I don't know his music that well, still, it's a good version — a very personal sound and approach which is quite far from the composer's. I think the attempt was successful!

Sarah Vaughan

"September Song" (Sarah Vaughan, EmArcy, 1954) Vaughan, vocals; Clifford Brown, trumpet; Herbie Mann, flute; Paul Quinichette, tenor saxophone; Jimmy Jones, piano; Joe Benjamin, bass; Roy Haynes, drums.

Sarah Vaughn! With Roy Eldridge? I'm stuck! [laughs] Is it Clifford, maybe? So strange though, I'm used to listening to Clifford playing in a more virtuoso style, although my go-to album is *Clifford With Strings*. His sonic depth and his timing while executing the melodies are quite remarkable, something the great jazz singers used to do. Musical intelligence — knowing exactly what to do at the right time. He was in fact my first big love as far as trumpet playing. He was only 26 years old when he died.

Paolo Fresu/Rita Marcotulli/Jacques Morelenbaum

"Non ti scordar di me" (Live at Umbria Jazz Festival, YouTube video, 2022) Fresu, flügelhorn; Marcotulli, piano; Morelenbaum, cello.

Paolo is one of those trumpet and flügelhorn players — I say flügelhorn because he uses it a lot — who's pretty easy to identify. Who was playing piano? Ah, Rita, so it's a recent recording. I believe Paolo's strength is his curiosity and letting himself get influenced by many worlds. I think that in every situation he creates there's always a big sense of concreteness. He's very aware of what he's doing. In a way, I believe he has found ultimate inner peace



"Oof, I wish it was me!" says Fabrizio Bosso of Randy Brecker's trumpet playing.

because he found his own unique sound that he's able to bring anywhere.

Riley Mulherkar

"King Porter Stomp" (Riley, Westerlies Records, 2024) Mulherkar, trumpet; Chris Pattishall, piano; Russell Hall, bass; Kyle Poole, drums.

It could be one of the young jazz trumpet players, Marquis Hill or Jason Palmer. I did recognize the tune at the beginning but can't quite recall the title. The way they use the electronics is very interesting, and musically speaking, I find it to be very well put together, yet it doesn't really move me. You can tell he's very well trained. He has a modern approach and extremely skilled. I'm curious to listen to the whole album.

Kenny Dorham

"Angel Eyes" (This is the Moment!, Riverside, 1957) Dorham, trumpet, vocals; Curtis Fuller, trombone; Cedar Walton, piano; Sam Jones, bass; Charlie Persip, drums.

His playing is excellent. It's not Lee Morgan. The sound could be Kenny [Dorham]. It's incredible how clean and precise it sounds as well as his intensity and his timing. I keep thinking it's the '50s, recorded only with room mics. It makes me almost think of a European trumpet player who would play in that style. [After] You can hear there's complete mastery and awareness of the lyrics and whatever the melody conveys, so his solo is extremely coherent. It's truly like building a brand-new tune, without adding any unnecessary notes, a natural development of the song.

Ambrose Akinmusire

"Cora Campbell" (Beauty is Enough, Blue Note, 2023) Akinmusire, trumpet.

OK, Ambrose Akinmusire? This is the new solo album. I love Ambrose! I truly believe he is one of the most interesting trumpet players of the last decade. His sound is quite dark, not too fat, with lots of nuances. He goes deep within the instrument's accents. Musically speaking, he's never conventional when he improvises, yet the beautiful thing is that you can always hear the presence of the blues in his music. You can tell there's a high level of spirituality in his music. In this space you can hear his bluesy side rather than his cerebral approach. It's very courageous.

NEXT Collective

"No Church In The Wild" (Cover Art, Concord Jazz, 2013)

Christian Scott, trumpet; Matthew Stevens, electric guitar; Gerald Clayton, piano; Ben Williams, bass; Jamire Williams, drums.

Could it be Christian Scott? I recognized some of his typical phrasing as well as his approach to the high range. It's rare he would search for a specific note with the intention of playing that exact note. He would use it as a passing tone, as an effect. I saw him play live, and he's quite physical. He's not so much looking to catch the audience's attention, rather he expresses whatever he's playing with his body. Sometimes it's too much for me.

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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