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President Kevin Maher
Editor & Publisher Frank Alkyer
Contributing Editor Ed Enright
Reviews Editor Michael J. West
Creative Director Žaneta Čuntová
Assistant to the Publisher Sue Mahal
Bookkeeper Evelyn Hawkins

ADVERTISING SALES

Record Companies & Schools
 Jennifer Ruban-Gentile
 Associate Publisher
 630-359-9345
jenr@downbeat.com

Musical Instruments & East Coast Schools
 Ritche Deraney
 Vice President of Sales
 201-445-6260
ritched@downbeat.com

Record Companies & Schools
 Dan Kulasik
 Advertising Sales Associate
 630-359-9338
dank@downbeat.com

OFFICES

188 W. Industrial Dr., Ste. 310, Elmhurst, IL 60126
 630-941-2030
<http://downbeat.com>
editor@downbeat.com

CUSTOMER SERVICE

877-904-5299 / service@downbeat.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Senior Contributors:
 Aaron Cohen, Howard Mandel, John McDonough

Atlanta: Jon Ross; **Boston:** Frank-John Hadley, Allen Morrison; **Chicago:** Alain Drouot, Michael Jackson, Jeff Johnson, Bill Meyer, Paul Natkin, Howard Reich; **Chicago:** Ayana Contreras; **Indiana:** Mark Sheldon; **Los Angeles:** Gary Fukushima, Josef Woodard, Scott Yanow; **Michigan:** John Epland; **Minneapolis:** Andrea Canter; **Montana:** Philip Freeman; **Nashville:** Bob Doerschuk; **New Orleans:** Cree McCree; **New York:** Herb Boyd, Bill Douthart, Kira Grunenberg, Stephanie Jones, Ashley Kahn, Matthew Kassel, Jimmy Katz, Suzanne Lorge, Phillip Lutz, Jim Macnie, Ken Micallef, Bill Milkowski, Ivanna Ng, Dan Ouellette, Ted Panken, Tom Staudter, Jack Vartoogian; **Philadelphia:** Shaun Brady; **Portland:** Alexa Peters; **San Francisco:** Mars Breslow, Yoshi Kato; **Seattle:** Paul de Barros; **Washington, D.C.:** Willard Jenkins, John Murph, Michael Wilderman; **Canada:** J.D. Considine, James Hale; **France:** Jean Szlamowicz; **Germany:** Peter Margasak, Hyou Vielz; **Great Britain:** Ammar Kallia, Tina Edwards; **Portugal:** José Duarte; **Romania:** Virgil Mihaiu; **Russia:** Cyril Moshkov. **Contributor Emeritus:** Fred Bouchard.

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John Maher, President 1950-1969

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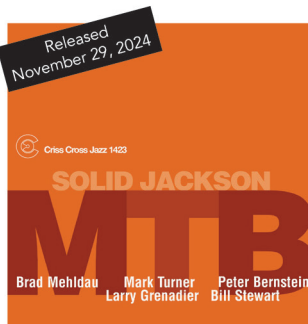


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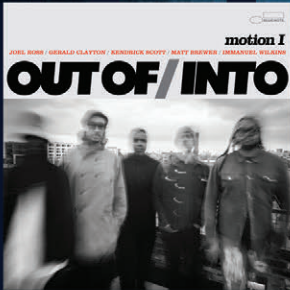
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Takes on Brazil!

BY ALLEN MORRISON

For her latest album, *Crossing Paths* (Smoke Sessions), pianist/composer/bandleader Renee Rosnes has put aside composition, temporarily, to focus on an early and abiding love — Brazilian music.

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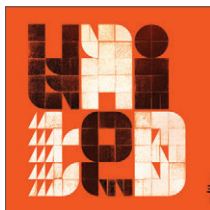


DIMITRI LOUIS

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"I started traveling around the world to places that still had living traditions where music is conversation," says Steve Coleman of his quest for sound. "It was most obvious in the village I went to in Ghana, where every day the drummers got up and beat out the story of their tribe."

Cover photo by John Abbott



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Roy Haynes rests in peace.

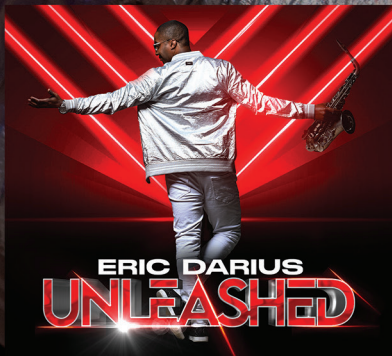
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First Take > BY FRANK ALKYER



The late Roy Haynes at the Charlie Parker Jazz Festival in Harlem in the early 1990s.

Time to Be Thankful

NOV. 21, 2024 — AS WE WRAP UP THIS issue of *DownBeat*, it's one week before Thanksgiving Day in the United States. That means a ton of family traditions — roast turkey (or maybe fried in a vat of grease, if that's how you roll), gravy, mashed potatoes, stuffing, someone's secret-recipe greens and a pumpkin pie. And nostalgia, lots of nostalgia.

Whenever we put a bow on the January issue, nostalgia sets in heavy! It puts me in a state of mind to think back and be thankful for what we have here at *DownBeat*: a crazy-cool gig, truly lovely workmates, the opportunity to brush elbows with some of the greatest artists ever placed on planet Earth and the daily wonder of listening to, and learning from, their music.

This issue is packed with nostalgia. For starters, just look at page 21. We've lost a lot of masters recently from one of the golden eras of this art form, those musicians who came up in the '40s and '50s, when the explosion of bebop fueled a musical revolution. As a result, we've been celebrating the 100th anniversaries as well as the passings of the biggest names in jazz.

So, on page 21, you'll see short tributes on Roy Haynes, Quincy Jones, Lou Donaldson and Charlie Fishman in this issue, just to mark that they've gone to the ancestors. We'll do a special tribute in the next issue on Roy, Quincy and Lou. Charlie's legacy lives on, and brightly, through the DC JazzFest, which he founded.

Note that I mentioned these legends came from *one* of the golden eras of jazz. There have been many. There will be more.

In the '90s, we had the Young Lions movement, bringing a slew of fresh, young musicians to the world stage. One of the leading voices of that group was the great trumpeter Roy Hargrove, who left us too early in 2018. But his legacy continues to burn brightly, kindled by the care of his wife Aida Brandes-Hargrove, who has been overseeing the release of a variety of "found" recordings from Hargrove's archive. The latest example is the terrific recording *Grande-Terre* (Verve), a lost-and-found recording of Hargrove's Crisol band. The story of how it was unearthed begins on page 16.

Speaking of unearthed, we also detail the impact of the late guitarist Emily Remler beginning on page 36. She, too, left this life early in 1990, at the age of 38. It was right about the time Hargrove's career began to blossom. *Cookin' At The Queens Live In Las Vegas 1984 & 1988* (Resonance) serves as the first new release from her archive in 34 years.

Love, loss, longing, nostalgia — it's all part of our human condition. But there's a lot of living, hope and beautiful dreams realized in this issue, too. We hope you enjoy all of it.

With that, it's a good time to step back and be thankful for the music the ancestors have left us, for our living artists who continue the tradition while blazing the next golden era. **DB**

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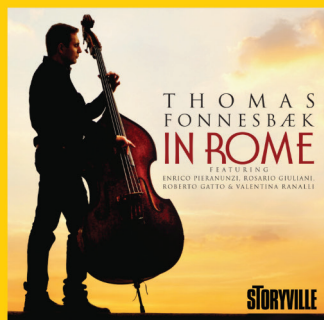
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Respect Russell!

I love DownBeat, however, I felt compelled to write in response to the October 2024 issue in the Hot Box record reviews section.

John Murph's 3-star review of Catherine Russell/Sean Mason's *My Ideal* was four words, "It has its charm." I feel this is a slight to the artist, regardless of what the critic actually felt about the recording. If a critic is to review an artist's work, it deserves a little more thorough explication of his view, especially if it's featured in the Hot Box section, otherwise it can sound rather snide and dismissive. Respect, please, for an artist's hard work, regardless whether you like it or not. Especially one of the caliber of Ms. Russell. (I am less familiar with the work of Mr. Mason.)

RICK HEYMAN
TUCSON, ARIZONA

Editor's Note: Thanks, Rick. Critics write what they think about a recording, then let the debate begin. Murph did exactly that. On this recording, he was tasked with writing a secondary review, not the main Hot Box review, so it's a sentence or two. He did give it 3 stars, which means he thought it was good. No disrespect was intended.

Clarifying Bill Holman's Legacy

I am the stepdaughter of Bill Holman, and was happy to see the obituary you published recently. Thank you. I would appreciate it if you would correct two errors in the obit:

1) BH was born in Olive, California, but he died at home in the Hollywood Hills, attended by his son Jeff and a close family friend.

2) We do not think he studied with Wesley LaViolette. He did study with Russ Garcia, and was a student at Westlake, the music school which used to be in Hollywood. He was my dad, so I'm not an authority on him from the standpoint of jazz history, so I consulted people who are experts on him and his work. Marc Myers, who did an extensive five-part interview with BH for his blog JazzWax, says he made no mention of studying with LaViolette; and Ken Poston, who, aside from being the president of the L.A. Jazz Institute and the presenter of the Bill Holman Band for decades, and did a 10-part (2–3 hours per episode) radio documentary series about BH, was the first person to call that detail into question, he says it is incorrect.

Otherwise, we were very pleased to see McDonough's piece, and were moved by the warmth of his tone overall.

KATHRYN KING
HUDSON, NEW YORK

Editor's Note: Thanks, Kathryn, for clearing that up.



Respect Creed, Too!

50 years on and people still think it makes them "hip" to take shots at the first great commercial jazz music producer. (As Laurence Svirchev did in Chords & Discords June 2024.)

Creed Taylor implicitly understood that great jazz musicians deserved to be heard and deserved to make money. When Creed started producing, selling 5,000 jazz records was unheard of, much less tens of thousands.

Randy Weston's CTI album *Blue Moses* was Weston's most successful in sales. It is considered by many to be one of the best albums on CTI, which is saying something alongside Hubbard's *Red Clay*, Stanley Turrentine's *Sugar* and others.

Weston himself acknowledged in his autobiography (*African Rhythms: The Autobiography of Randy Weston*, Duke University Press) that *Blue Moses* was a miracle, saying, "If it wasn't for *Blue Moses*, I never would have been able to pay all those musicians. It was truly a miracle."

MARK CATHCART
VIA EMAIL

Corrections & Clarifications

We fight for accuracy, but errors slip in. We offer our deepest apologies!

- The album *Cuba And Beyond*, by Chucho Valdés and the Royal Quartet, which was reviewed in the December issue, is on InnerJazz Records distributed by InnerCat Music Group.
- In the December issue, the author of *Pat Metheny: Stories Beyond Words* (University of Chicago Press) is Bob Gluck.
- Also, in an early version of our online obituary for Russell Malone, Donald Vega is, of course, a pianist, not a trumpeter.

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The new Bad Plus, from left, Chris Speed, Reid Anderson, Dave King and Ben Monder.

The Bad Plus ... and Then There Were Four

Especially by the fickle standards of jazz band shelf lives, it's a self-evident truth that The Bad Plus has enjoyed a very good run. With the recent release of *Complex Emotions*, the 19th album in a discography now stretching back a quarter century, the epic Bad Plus saga continues — with a few twists along the way.

The salient capital-T twist of the last few years witnessed the core founding duo and songwriting machinery of drummer Dave King and bassist Reid Anderson in sharp pivot mode. The group's 21-year status as a subversive-yet-accessible piano trio — 17 with Ethan Iverson and a few years with Orrin Evans — shifted into the current neo-jazz-rockier sound of a quartet with tenor saxophone and distorted electric guitar (Chris Speed and Ben Monder, respectively).

After Evans left to pursue his own thriving

solo career, currently enjoying deserved kudos and attention, King and Anderson pondered the long-brewing idea of playing with a quartet or wondering if The Bad Plus had run its course. As King explains, they opted to call on Speed and Monder, whom they'd played with for years in various situations, and see "what happens if we pivot this thing completely to a different instrumentation, and then we kind of started to lean in and go. It's fun to restart something that has in it a DNA continuation. It continues the connection of Reid and I. We started playing music together when we were 14 years old. Now we're 54. We're at 40 years of playing music together, and we're still trying to stay fresh."

Speaking of the current incarnation and the new album, King describes the prevailing company spirit in the band: "Here we are, we are on record number two with this new

band, and there's no signs of slowing and no signs of needing to explain ourselves. We're not in the world to make things hoping people understand. We feel just sort of, "This is what we have to offer."

"Maybe the album captures three years of nonstop road work and the idea that there's a tune of Chris' on it [the funky "Cupcake One"] and a tune of Ben's on it [the impressionistic album closer "Li Po"], which stretches the compositional view even further. It's an exciting time for us."

As heard on the new album and this group's 2022 debut, cagily entitled simply *The Bad Plus*. (note the period for emphasis), and in live forum — such as a livewire set at the 2023 Monterey Jazz Festival — the textural game has changed, but the evolutionary arc and story remains true to Bad Plus form. Holding down the core identity and essence

of The Bad Plus is the kinship of King and Anderson, whose musical connection goes back to their formative years as musically curious teens in Minneapolis. Among their Twin Cities musical pals were pianist Craig Taborn and bassist Anthony Cox.

King and Anderson share a certain dry, absurdist sense of humor and a will to create a fresh sound by writing infectious and sometimes quirky songs blessed with ... well, complex emotions and forms. They

know, The Bad Plus will not use some jazz harmony, only every now and again. That must mean that they don't know jazz harmony.' That was always so laughable to us, like the idea that Jackson Pollock didn't know how to paint. We'd have to painfully listen to that kind of observation.

"We're not creating out of limitation. Sometimes we've used blatant minimalism as a tool, whereas in modern jazz, you don't hear a lot of people using blatant minimal-

gonna do whatever it takes and stay together. And we just pounded it for a few years, touring in vans, and we released that little record. And it just kind of caught fire, which led to the Columbia debut, which we were able to make into an impactful album.

"We had this idea to look at the piano trio, look at its history. Now what can we do to it? How do we reconceptualize and recontextualize the piano trio?"

The audience and critical response was strong, immediate and surprisingly broad in its appeal. King notes, "It was a huge point of pride for us that we would have jazzheads at the show and also a very large demographic of age differences, generational differences, sitting together at our shows.

"It was this idea that we drew not only learned, diehard jazz people, but indie rock people, hip-hop people and electronic music fans — different people coming from different backgrounds, checking us out and being kind of turned on to whatever information was in there. It was a more complex relationship, more of a mixed media art relationship. It wasn't like, 'I like rock music, so I want the rock beats in the jazz songs.'

"It was much more like, there was an energy to our openness that I think made people feel like it was OK to enter those hallowed halls and maybe not have Mal Waldron records in your collection," he laughs, "but be able to go, 'You know what? I like this.'

"Our ethos has always been, 'We love this, and we think you will, too.' It's not about exclusion, it's about inclusion from note one. And we believe that if Thelonious Monk, you know, we believe Thelonious Monk translates to many, many people that wouldn't know anything about jazz or anything. I've always felt like I could play a Thelonious Monk record for my 5-year-old son. He was like, 'I love this.'

"I think that art, in general, would be appreciated more across the board if people were less intimidated by it. If you could contribute to that energy by being open, by being unpretentious and not insulting your audience and avoiding hierarchical thinking, then your audience is gonna grow naturally."

Cryptic and drolly funny titles for both albums and songs are part and parcel of the Bad Plus spirit. In one example, they tapped into a seeming work ethic motto for the 2010 album title *Never Stop*, then jokingly dubbing their first album with Evans, in 2018, *Never Stop II*. Could there be a *Never Stop III* in the future?

King says, with a laugh, "Maybe in 20 years when Chris and Ben finally retired from The Bad Plus, and it's just Reid and I, finally making that duo album we always wanted to make."

—Josef Woodard

'It's not about exclusion, it's about inclusion from note one.' —Dave King

also heed a self-defined doctrine of tapping into various musical directions, in jazz and beyond.

This, after all, is a group whose "cover" material ranges from Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" and Black Sabbath's "Iron Man" to an ambitious trio arrangement of Igor Stravinsky's Modernist masterpiece *Rite of Spring* (after several performances about a decade ago, they had to cease and desist, for legal reasons).

King notes that he and Anderson "grew up listening to all kinds of jazz music and rock music and classical music. Instead of turning things away and thinking hierarchically, we would just let it all in naturally. Whether or not [The Bad Plus is] a rock band, a jazz group, has fusion elements, whether or not it was this or that, at the end of the day, it's more of an art project statement."

Another matter of complexity in the band approach is a playful exploration of odd and compound meters, but deployed in a natural and artful way.

On the new album, tunes like King's 5/4 "Casa Ben" (about a historic house, not about Ben Monder, King clarifies), the slippery metric schemes of Anderson's "French Horns" (so named because the composer felt there weren't enough songs about or for French horns) and other tunes make the foursquare 4/4 groove of Speed's "Cupcakes One" feel like a misfit.

Among the barbs from critical detractors, the band has endured. King cites the misguided comment along the lines of, "Oh, you

ism. It widens our sound. We're creating out of conceptualization.

"To restrain yourself from all the tools that you have was an important idea to us. We could sit and play everything in odd meter. We could sit and play polyrhythmic fractures and could use chromatic harmonic systems. We could do all these things all the time, and then have long solos and blow at the end. That's never been enough for us — ever.

"We're interested in song structure and the idea of some sort of hook in the music that you can hang your hat on. Then we can, scorched-earth-style, improvise together, mess with structure, stress the foundation of structure, and then see what it can withstand. And from that, we feel like that can be an interesting, more complex space to inhabit artistically."

On paper, the Bad Plus success story suggests an overnight sensation, which led to the trio becoming a collective variation on the venerable piano trio tradition, a neo-trio for the 21st century.

The group's 2000 album *Motel*, on the Fresh Sounds New Talent label, garnered a major buzz of critical attention, from the New York Times on down, luring the attention of Columbia Records.

That buzz, according to King, "was the way we went into the world, like an open door. We shot through it because we had been kind of pounding around for so many years. We were off the radar, and were 32 years old when we signed with Columbia Records. We had put the band together and we were just

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"With Roy, everything was like full throttle," says Willie Jones III. "Every time we hit the bandstand, it was almost like it was the last time you were going to play a set."

Roy Hargrove's *Grande Archives*

WILLIE JONES III REMEMBERS PLAYING with Roy Hargrove for the first time in spring of 1997 at the old Catalina Bar and Grill on Cahuenga Boulevard in Hollywood — and realizing he was on stage with one of the all-time greats.

"I knew it from the jump, from day one," the drummer said. "Roy was a throwback to what it would have been like to play with Lee Morgan, exactly like that back in the day.

Before I even [officially] joined the band, that kind of put the stamp on me moving to New York."

He was speaking from his home in Brooklyn, the neighborhood he relocated to from Los Angeles, mere months after their run at Catalina's.

Jones soon became part of a working sextet Hargrove put together, with altoist Sherman Irby, trombonist Frank Lacy, pia-

nist Larry Willis and bassist Gerald Cannon. The following year, in the middle of their tour, the band made a detour down to Guadeloupe, an island in the Lesser Antilles chain of the Caribbean Sea. There, they met up to record with other musicians Hargrove had gotten to know after he visited Havana, Cuba, to play at a festival with the legendary pianist Chucho Valdés.

Hargrove was so enamored with Valdés, and his countrymen, that the young trumpeter formed a band with some of them: Crisol (Spanish for "crucible"). They recorded an album, *Habana* (Verve, 1997), which won a Grammy for Best Latin Jazz Performance the following year. In Guadeloupe, many new faces, including Jones, would be the next iteration of Crisol, albeit unknown to the world until this past October, when the music they recorded (and presumed lost) was miraculously unearthed as the album *Grande-Terre* (Verve), named after the eastern region of Guadeloupe where Hargrove and company spent a week recording and relaxing.

"Maybe you hear stories of rock bands back in the day," Jones said. "They went to some city, some country, some farm, and they just chill out, make a record in the studio for like two weeks or whatever — that was kind of what we did." They were there at the invitation of tenor saxophonist Jacques Schwartz-Bart, who hailed from Guadeloupe. Two percussionists, Miguel "Anga" Diaz and Jose Luis Changuito Quintana, were also on *Habana*, but in addition to Schwartz-Bart, three other musicians were new to Crisol: guitarist Ed Cherry, pianist Gabriel Hernandez and drummer Julio Barreto. From Roy's sextet, only Lacy was a returning member of the original band from *Habana*.

It was a true collaborative project, with many of the musicians contributing their own compositions and arrangements. (Hargrove added two of his own.) "A lot of those songs we just ran down while we were in the studio," Jones recalled. "We rehearsed it and got a vibe, and then Roy would be like, 'OK, you play on this' It was really easygoing."

Hargrove mixed and matched the musicians, an intermingling of musical backgrounds and cultures.

They ended up making an exceptional, high-energy Latin-bop album that elucidates a notable period in Hargrove's early career, reinforcing the young trumpeter's fully formed attributes — incredible technique, musical instincts, fearless bravado and his ability to inspire all the other musicians around him.

"With Roy, everything was like full throttle. Every time we hit the bandstand, it was almost like it was the last time you were going to play a set," said Jones. "And in turn, the

whole band played like that.”

And Hargrove, through *Habana* and now posthumously with *Grande-Terre*, seamlessly infused his signature sound and persona into Latin jazz, the same way he did with every other kind of music from straightahead jazz to hip-hop.

“I think it shows a lot of the range of Roy,” said Aida Brandes-Hargrove, who met her future husband in 2006 and was with him until he passed away in 2018 at age 49, succumbing to a kidney disease that had plagued him for all the time they had known each other. “[Range] is really not a good term, because I know that he wasn’t looking at it that way. For Roy, if it’s music, it’s music. If it sounds good, it sounds good. If it swings, it swings. It’s not a surface, ‘just do a Latin album,’ you know? Actually, we’re gonna dig deep and really play this music.”

Brandes-Hargrove is the president of Roy Hargrove Legacy, which she co-founded to preserve and extend her husband’s memory through music, sometimes through the release of previously unheard recordings of him. She hadn’t planned on doing this.

“After Roy passed, I was tasked with taking care of the estate, you know, just that sort of normal thing for any spouse would usual-

ly do,” she said. Brandes-Hargrove dealt with copyrights, publishing, tribute concerts — and a slew of unauthorized recordings that people wanted to put out.

“I initially had to be the police on that, but once we had it all sorted out, it became the question of what are we going to do? There’s a space that needs to be filled, there’s a need for all of these things. Situation by situation, I started doing what people were asking for.”

The first release she oversaw was *In Harmony* (Resonance, 2021), a live album of duo performances by Hargrove and the pianist Mulgrew Miller (who passed away unexpectedly in 2013 at age 57), followed by *The Love Suite: In Mahogany* (Blue Engine, 2023), a work for large ensemble commissioned by Jazz at Lincoln Center and recorded live at Alice Tully Hall. (Jones was tapped to produce the record.)

But Hargrove’s former bandmates had been asking about the lost *Crisol* album. “[Roy] had talked about it, but I never heard it,” remembered Brandes-Hargrove. “It wasn’t until a few years after he passed that I was looking through — he has a lot of cassette tapes, so I forgot why, but I was looking through them, and I saw ‘Crisol.’”

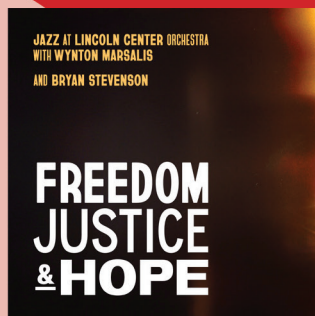
She had to buy a new cassette player that

could digitize the audio, and brought the music to Verve, who agreed to release it on the label, so long as she could find the original master tracks. Thankfully, she received a tip about a young assistant engineer who had made the trip with Hargrove down to Guadeloupe. He had brought the recording back to New York, mixed it, and made a cassette for Hargrove to listen to, the same one Brandes-Hargrove discovered 25 years later. Amazingly, the engineer still had the digital master. “Without those, I don’t know if we would have gotten there,” she said.

There are many more recordings to come. “We did a lot of sessions back then,” said Jones. “There are at least three or four records that I was a part of — they’re just in the vault, never came out. I’m glad [they’re] seeing the light of day now.” Jones would love to hear a live recording he and the sextet made at the Village Vanguard, before they went to Guadeloupe.

“That’s another one they’ve been talking about for six months,” replied Brandes-Hargrove when relayed Jones’ inclination. “OK,” she laughed, resigned to the prospect of jumping into yet another lost classic project, inserting another chapter into an already historic account of a modern legend. —Gary Fukushima

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Louis Armstrong, the Musical

LOUIS ARMSTRONG'S CAREER WAS LONG, diverse and full of the unexpected — both on stage and off. DownBeat often recognized Armstrong's noteworthy presence as a musician through cover articles and even columns in his own words. He became a major presence in movies and on television, taking his larger-than-life persona well beyond music. And he was beloved. Armstrong was the very first artist inducted into the DownBeat Hall of Fame in the 1952 Readers Poll.

Some 123 years after his birth, Armstrong's legacy lives on. And now, *A Wonderful World: The Louis Armstrong Musical* serves as the next vehicle for bringing his life and times to a new generation.

Just as Armstrong donned more than one hat over his career, Tony-winning actor James Iglehart not only chose to embrace the lead role, but also is making his directorial debut with *A Wonderful World*, alongside co-director and fellow Broadway actor Christina Sajous.

During the pandemic, Iglehart watched a Ken Burns documentary on Armstrong and subsequently suggested to his agent that a musical should be made about Armstrong's life. Coincidentally, there were folks already hard at work on this very idea. A few phone calls later and the like minds agreed to connect post-shutdown. Iglehart and Sajous eventually found themselves at the helm of a project that was hardly a typical bio-pic production. This depiction of Louis Armstrong comes from the perspective of his four wives: Daisy Parker, Lil Hardin Armstrong, Alpha Smith and Lucille Wilson.

Much like Armstrong's life, *A Wonderful World* has come a long way and evolved since its initial conception in 2019 by theater director Christopher Renshaw, the late novelist/director Andrew Delaplaine and playwright Aurin Squire. Persistence and creativity would eventually take the production from its COVID-labored, but highly praised, beginnings in Miami to the achievement of a Broadway run that was set to open at New York's Studio 54 in November.

Speaking by phone, Iglehart discussed his experience getting to know Louis Armstrong, portraying him on stage, and the duality of acting and directing.

Kira Grunenberg: *What about this portrayal of Louis Armstrong did you find most compelling?*

James Iglehart: It was the guy behind the trumpet that I found so interesting, and that I really saw a kinship with. There was something about the spirit of [Louis Armstrong], going through all these things, having this talent and yet being told, "You're not Black enough," or, "You're only playing for the white folks," or, "You can't do this, you can't do that." I saw that and went, "Oh, gosh, I know this guy very well. And I think I could do justice to this."

Grunenberg: *How has your knowledge of directing influenced your approach to acting — particularly for this leading role?*

Iglehart: When you're an actor, you try to see the whole picture but you really try to focus on what you're doing. Like, "Where is my character's journey, and how do I get from A to B? How does this

character react to this?" When you're the director, you have to see the whole thing — all of the characters. Where are they going? Where are their arcs? Where do their arcs meet and how do they match up? How do they affect the other person to get to the end? And so [being a co-director on this project] helped me. I'm looking at the whole [show] and going, "OK, so to get from here to here, I have to affect these people, and these people affect me here."

Grunenberg: *What are some ways your development of this role and show differed from experiences when you were solely acting?*

Iglehart: [Christina Sajous and I] help [Christopher Renshaw] find the vision he wants to do. And so we're guides in certain places, saying, "I think that's a good idea." He says, "OK well, you facilitate that and do that." And then we throw in our ideas and we discuss, sometimes debate, on what it should be and how it should be.

Grunenberg: *Which element of Louis Armstrong's personality did you find most challenging to capture and portray?*

Iglehart: Playing those moments where [Armstrong] would say or do something I knew I wouldn't do, because I want to only show the best of him. You can't have a whole story where someone is a saint the entire time. I had to go to some of my dark places and say, "James, you're not perfect. I know you try to smile and see the shiny side, but there's a greedy side, too. So take that moment and go with it."

Grunenberg: *How has your view of jazz changed since working on this production?*

Iglehart: It's changed dramatically. I'm a hip-hop kid, so my first real introduction to jazz was like Gang Starr and the Guru rapping over jazz, or A Tribe Called Quest or Q-tip putting jazz beats out, you know? Studying [Armstrong] and realizing where those rhythms come from, where certain chords and progressions come from, or just the idea that these brothers got together and made something different, it was like hip-hop and it made me realize, "Our folks aren't just reinventing the wheel. Each generation has their own version of this jazz as a metaphor." And it was all of a sudden really, really cool to see these guys, the King Olivers or the Lil Hardins, or the Louis Armstrongs. They were like different MCs coming up with different styles. And certain jazz musicians would do certain things that would change the trajectory of the music.

Not only is jazz an American-created music, but it's an African American-created music. We made that — or I should say, the older brothers made that — and that was something to appreciate. When I was younger, I didn't look at it like that; I was like, "Oh, this is older music." And now I'm like, "No, it's not older music. It's our music."

—Kira Grunenberg

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Out of/Into is Blue Note's latest all-star ensemble, assembled for the label's 85th anniversary. From left, Matt Brewer, Immanuel Wilkins, Joel Ross, Kendrick Scott and Gerald Clayton.

Out of & Deep Into Blue Note History

EASTWEST STUDIOS, A STATE-OF-THE-ART, multi-roomed recording facility on Sunset Boulevard in the heart of Hollywood, has a history that reaches back to the early 1960s and before. Back then it was known as United Western Recorders and hosted era-defining sessions by Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley and the Beach Boys.

On a Monday evening after Grammy weekend in February, Blue Note chief Don Was sat in the control room of Studio 1, taking notes as the all-star Blue Note ensemble Out of/Into — consisting of Immanuel Wilkins, Joel Ross, Gerald Clayton, Matt Brewer and Kendrick Scott — recorded the music for what may well be the group's sole recording, *Motion 1*. Qmillion (Keith Lewis) engineered. (See

Hot Box, pages 54–55.)

The Blue Note-focused group Out of/Into was initiated by Was as a tribute to the label's 85th anniversary, to both record and tour. The members had been tasked with composing tunes for the project, and after spending more than two weeks on the road preceding the two-day session, the music was honed and ready. The group recorded original tunes; no Blue Note covers, which might have been expected. Titles like "Aspiring To Normalcy," "Synchrony," "Nacho Supreme" and "Brothers In Arms" were listed on Was' iPad.

"I think people are going to be blown away by this album — this is a real jazz album," Was said, a sly comment that the

label under his guidance was touting a wider range of music styles and sounds than ever. "This record will be around for a while."

Most tunes required no more than one or two takes. After each, the group collected in the control room to hear playbacks, discussing if corrective measures were needed. "Did we get the form right?" someone asks after "Nacho Supreme." The tempo on another track sagged noticeably and the decision was made to paste the alto saxophone solo and out-theme of one take on another, a digital fix that would have required razor-blade precision in earlier days of tape recording. Scott mentions hearing such an edit coming out of the piano solo on the tune "Chico-San," from Donald Byrd's 1967 album *The*

Creeper. Fixes of this sort were part of the Blue Note tradition.

“Too bad Rudy [Van Gelder] didn’t have Ableton,” someone mentions, referring to a modern-day digital audio workstation. “An analogue Ableton!” chuckles Was at the thought.

Out of/Into represents an ongoing label tradition, another chapter to the label’s ongoing saga. This group is the latest in a succession of groups assembled by the label.

85th and Scott responded to the call again. He serves as a link to this ritual: the rhythmic foundation in *Out of/Into* and its reigning elder. In a hangout room adjacent to the recording studio, he spoke first when the group was asked how they approached traveling down this road again when the ruts have been cut so deep by past tributes. How best to deal with this challenge?

“I think you have to have courage enough

abandoning others in service of that exploration. It’s not always so black-and-white that way, but I like being able to check out how the music has evolved.”

On the road, Clayton assumes the role of emcee for *Out of/Into*, making onstage announcements and triggering interview snippets of Blue Note heroes like Billy Higgins, Wayne Shorter, Duke Pearson, Lee Morgan and Sonny Rollins, who can be heard commenting on the label and general musical philosophy.

It’s impossible to avoid mentioning classic recordings and specific tunes when speaking of Blue Note. In concert, the quintet performs only a few covers — like Thelonious Monk’s “Evidence” and Wayne Shorter’s “Infant Eyes” (the latter as a soul-stilling encore to their New York City concert in February).

“If I think about paying tribute to those cats, the challenge really is those records,” noted Brewer. “It’s already so beautiful. Some of my favorite Blue Note records really changed my life — like Wayne Shorter, Andrew Hill. It’s an enormous list of music that was ahead of its time. So, no, we can’t just recreate that. What we need to do is live up to that example.”

A discussion ensued of what Blue Note recording should be the gateway for a young listener, rather than just a personal favorite.

“That’s hard,” said Scott, who then pondered the question silently.

“My 12-year-old self wasn’t hip to Bobby Hutcherson,” said Ross. “The first Blue Note record I was privy to was Bags and Monk. I didn’t have really any other vibraphone perspective. Now I’ve fallen in love with Bobby.”

“Andrew Hill, *Point Of Departure*,” said Wilkins. “The writing is ridiculous. Andrew’s playing is really crazy and the interactions amazing. I definitely learned a lot about composing from that record.”

Clayton nodded, adding, “Andrew Hill’s *Black Fire*. I didn’t know that music when I was a kid. I listened to a ton of Blue Note records but that part of the catalogue I didn’t really get to until much later, like in college.”

“If I was giving myself a baby-step encouragement,” Brewer said, “I would say check out Sonny Clark and some of the cats who were coming a little bit more from the New York edge kind of a sound.”

And Kendrick Scott?

“Come on, man,” he said. “It’s got to be [Herbie Hancock’s] *Maiden Voyage*. It’s always in my head: I hear the sound of the drums, the sound of Van Gelder Studio, and each of those musicians. Freddie Hubbard changed the way I thought about trumpet. Each one of them changed the way I thought about things.”

—Ashley Kahn

‘I think people are going to be blown away by this album.’

—Don Was

The collectives have all been temporary all-star affairs, often linked to a significant anniversary, with recordings released and a support tour.

Some focused on reinterpreting classic tracks from the label’s enduring catalogue. Others — like the current lineup — are primarily about introducing new music. For many participants, the brief side project served as career-boosters.

In 1985, when Bruce Lundvall revived Blue Note after the label’s brief mothballing from 1981–’84 (the sole dormant period in the label’s history), the band OTB (*Out of the Blue*) was created, featuring future headliners like Kenny Garrett, Steve Wilson, Michael Philip Mossman, Renee Rosnes, Ralph Bowen, Harry Pickens, Robert Hurst, Ralph Peterson and Billy Drummond. In 2000, Greg Osby led *New Directions*, which helped introduce new arrivals like Jason Moran, Stefan Harris, Mark Shim, Tarus Mateen and Nasheet Waits. The *Blue Note 7*, marking the label’s 70th year in 2009, featured more established names (Bill Charlap, Nicholas Payton, Ravi Coltrane, Peter Bernstein, Peter Washington and Lewis Nash), while 2014’s *Blue Note Allstars* commemorated the label’s 75th with a newer breed: Robert Glasper, Ambrose Akinmusire, Marcus Strickland, Lionel Loueke, Derrick Hodge and Kendrick Scott.

Ten years later, the label is celebrating its

to be yourself and not think of a tribute band as only doing what all the masters have done, but by showing how we learned to be ourselves, being ‘downstream of the masters,’” Scott noted, adding that what makes it easier is an abiding sense of connection the label historically fostered. “In an interview, Billy Higgins talked about how Blue Note is a family. It was true then and it still is now.”

“Yeah, we already call each other in ‘real’ life,” Wilkins added, laughing. “We’re all honestly invested because we have pretty deep ties to one another outside of being the guys in a tribute band.”

Ross echoed the idea that in this iteration of revisiting Blue Note, the priority is clearly originality, noting, “I don’t think Don [Was] put us together with the purpose of nostalgia. No, he put us together to be ourselves because that’s the best thing that we can do, and I think that’s what we’ve been doing.”

Clayton suggested a view of the group as a means of measuring change and forward movement in the music.

“If you take a tribute band from a certain generation, and if they’re honestly expressing themselves and not thinking about doing the best impression of what came before them, you can check out the way the language has morphed,” he said. “Every 10 years or so, it’s guaranteed you see another group of family members come along, start exploring new ideas — honoring certain values but also

Roy Haynes, 1925–2024

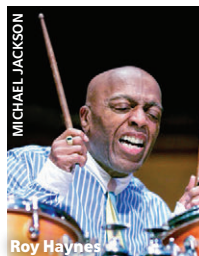
LEGENDARY DRUMMER AND BANDLEADER Roy Haynes died Nov. 12 in Nassau County, New York. He was 99. One of the few remaining figures from jazz's bebop revolution, Haynes' long résumé included bandstand associations from the late 1940s and early '50s with legendary artists like Lester Young, Bud Powell, Thelonious Monk, Miles Davis and Sarah Vaughan.

Haynes was the recipient of many awards and honors throughout his career, including a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award, France's Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, the Danish Jazzpar Award, numerous

DownBeat awards and induction into the magazine's Hall of Fame.

Even as an octogenarian and nonagenarian, Haynes maintained a touring and recording schedule. For his 85th birthday, he celebrated the milestone with a stretch of shows at the Blue Note jazz club in Manhattan, the dates spiced with special guests like piano great Chick Corea. More recently, in March 2018, Haynes was back at the Blue Note for yet another birthday celebration.

Remarkably, Haynes was able to maintain



Roy Haynes

his instrumental mastery at an advanced age. Asked about his secret to such a long, productive life and career, he remarked, "Truth is, I can't say that I did anything different than anybody else. I keep truckin'. Keep moving, maybe that's it. Make sure there are no dull moments. I like the fresh air and breeze in my face — I think that helps. And I don't try to overindulge, although there certainly have been times when I did. I treat every day like it's Thanksgiving."

—Tom Staudter

Quincy Jones, 1933–2024

QUINCY DELIGHT JONES JR., MUSICIAN, bandleader, composer and producer, died in his home in Bel Air, California, on Nov. 3. He was 91. No cause was given in a statement from his publicist, Arnold Robinson, who said Mr. Jones died peacefully in his sleep.

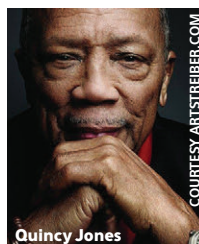
Jones' path to success was as unique as it was unexpected and open-ended. Ultimately it made him the only musician in jazz history to achieve the status of an authentic entertainment mogul.

He got his first taste of the big time at age 18 as a trumpeter with Lionel Hampton. He wrote

and arranged for everyone from Dinah Washington, Count Basie, Sarah Vaughan and Clark Terry to Frank Sinatra and a boyhood friend from Seattle named Ray Charles.

He became a remarkable businessman, and was promoted to a vice presidency at Mercury, the first African American to achieve such rank in a major record company.

In 1975 he founded Qwest Productions, which became the parent operation of his various record and TV projects.



Quincy Jones

He met Michael Jackson in 1978, becoming Jackson's mentor and almost a father figure. By the time Jones accepted his Grammy as Producer of the Year in 1982, *Thriller* was about to become the biggest-selling record in history.

He collected 79 Grammy nominations and 27 wins, the National Medal of Freedom and, most importantly, the Kennedy Center Honor in 2001 — where Ray Charles moved him to tears singing "My Buddy" from the stage.

—John McDonough

Lou Donaldson, 1926–2024

ALTO SAXOPHONIST LOU DONALDSON, the final surviving member of the original Art Blakey Quintet that in 1954 introduced "hard-bop" into the growing jazz lineage of classification, died on Nov. 9 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, eight days after his 98th birthday.

Born in Badin, North Carolina, Donaldson grew up in Louisville, Kentucky, and began studying clarinet in his mid-teens. By 1945, he was good enough to join the Navy band at the Naval Station Great Lakes base near Chicago.

Donaldson worked with Hot Lips Page, and sat in with Charlie Parker and Sonny Stitt.

Then destiny took over. In 1952, Donaldson had been invited to record for Blue Note Records. He participated in sessions with Thelonious Monk, Max Roach, Milt Jackson, Kenny Clarke and others. He recorded for the first time with Horace Silver; the album came out that year as *New Faces, New Sounds: Lou Donaldson Quintet/Quartet*, the first issued under Donaldson's name. Donaldson's Blue Note profile rose quickly. He and Silver, and now Art Blakey recorded together for the first



Lou Donaldson

time, again as the Lou Donaldson Quartet. Together they would find a way to bridge the brainy experimental elements of bebop with the emotional fundamentalism that had made jazz entertaining and popular — hard-bop.

Donaldson composed two songs that have found a place in the jazz repertoire, "Blues Walk" (his theme song) and "Alligator Bogaloo."

In 2012, Donaldson was named an NEA Jazz Master.

—John McDonough

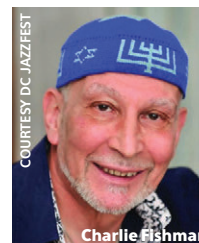
Charlie Fishman, 1942–2024

CHARLIE FISHMAN, FOUNDER OF THE DC Jazz Festival, passed on Nov. 12. He was 82.

Born in Brooklyn, Fishman's first major contribution to jazz was opening a jazz club called Django in Jerusalem. And he began to learn how to attract money for jazz when he brought Stan Getz to the country in 1977, which became the basis for the documentary

Stan Getz: A Musical Odyssey.

He came back to the States, promoting the arts in Houston through the Jewish Community Center's Kaplan Theatre. As his career grew, he formed a production company, Charismic, and represented a wide array of art-



Charlie Fishman

ists including Paquito D'Rivera, Danilo Pérez, Steve Turre and Dizzy Gillespie.

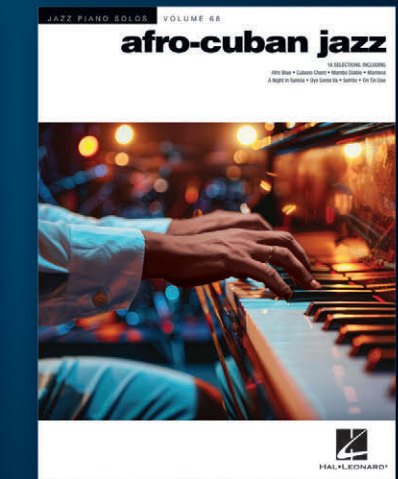
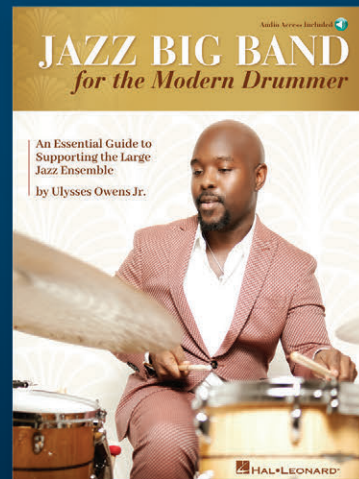
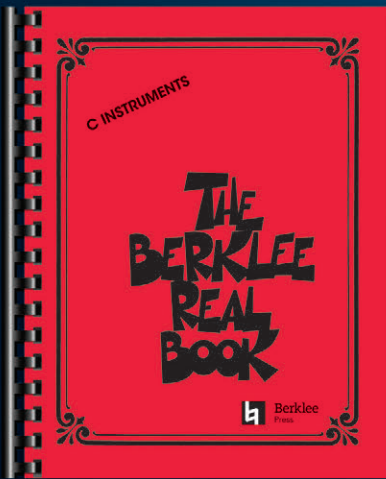
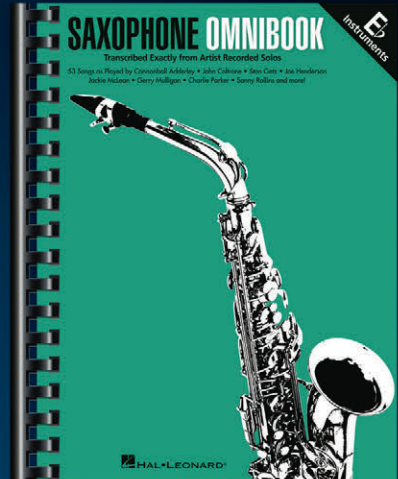
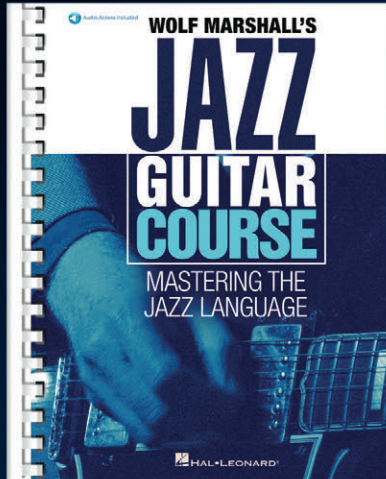
The DC Jazz Festival was a long-time dream. After starting in 2004 as a gala, the first true festival took root in September of 2005.

—Frank Alkyer

Editor's Note: DownBeat will offer more in-depth tributes to Roy Haynes, Quincy Jones and Lou Donaldson in our February issue.



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Renee Rosnes

BRAZILIAN DREAMS COME TRUE

BY ALLEN MORRISON

PHOTO BY JOHN ABBOTT

In her four-decade career, Renee Rosnes has been recognized as a singular voice, both as a jazz composer and a superlative pianist.

She's also a bandleader, the founder of Artemis — DownBeat readers' choice as Jazz Group of Year for 2024 — and a favorite side-person of legendary masters including Ron Carter, in whose Foursight Quartet she has been a member for more than a decade. She has played with Joe Henderson, J.J. Johnson, Wayne Shorter, James Moody and Bobby Hutcherson, just to drop a few of the names on her remarkable resume.

Her post-bop compositions are informed by her classical education, employing advanced harmonies and lush, unpredictable melodies; they often serve as a showcase for her quietly extravagant piano technique. Besides Artemis, many other major artists have recorded her works, including Phil Woods, J.J. Johnson,

Michael Dease and the SFJAZZ Collective, of which she was a founding member. With their ambition, formal structure and depth of feeling, her songs put Rosnes in the company of the best jazz composers.

Or as Bill Charlap, the celebrated pianist and her husband of 17 years, puts it, "You know, I can compose, but Renee is a composer."

And yet, for her latest album, *Crossing Paths* (Smoke Sessions), she has put aside composition, temporarily, to focus on an early and abiding love: Brazilian music. For some of her fans the celebration of Brazil may come as a bit of a surprise.

Her previous albums — nine on Blue Note and three on Smoke Sessions — have included occasional forays into Brazil. But none fore-

shadowed this fusion of classic Brazilian songs and jazz. To fully realize the project, Rosnes recruited an all-star band of musicians from Brazil and the U.S., including bassist John Patitucci, guitarist Chico Pinheiro, drummer Adam Cruz and percussionist Rogério Bocato, with the addition of saxophonist Chris Potter and trombonist Steve Davis on several tracks.

Moreover, she secured the participation of two of the most significant Brazilian singer-songwriters of the last 50 years, Edu Lobo and Joyce Moreno, to sing their own songs; as well as singer Maucha Adnet — a 10-year veteran of performing with Antonio Carlos Jobim in his Banda Nova — to sing two songs by the maestro.



"The first recording I owned with Brazilian music on it was Wayne Shorter's *Native Dancer*," says Renee Rosnes. "And then I just started to go down the rabbit hole, checking out all kinds of Brazilian artists."

"I was honored to have all three of them on this album," she said.

Rosnes' performances on piano sound like nothing she has recorded before. She acknowledged the departure from her usual piano style, saying, "I think you're finding an authentic Renee in there as well because I've loved this music for so long."

She spoke to DownBeat in a Zoom interview from the two-Steinway home in New Jersey that she shares with Charlap. (For the record, her name is pronounced "Ree-nee" — an affectionate version of Irene, her given name.)

But what is her usual piano style? Her husband describes it as an egoless devotion to what the song demands. On Egberto Gismonti's frenetic "Frevo," for instance, she intertwines high-energy solos with Pinheiro, darting and weaving. On another tune, Lobo's "Pra Dizer Adeus," she plays the melancholy bossa nova much like Jobim would have done, with an elegant simplicity, even singing along with her piano solo in a very Jobim-like manner. "When Jobim recorded that song," she said, "he started to spontaneously sing while he was playing. I deferred to Edu about it. I said if he didn't like it, I wouldn't do it. He liked it."

But *Crossing Paths* contains more than the usual bossa novas that casual fans of Brazilian

music might expect; it includes sambas and northeastern regional styles like frevo.

Her love for Brazilian music, like that of many North American fans, goes back to Jobim. "I suppose my first exposure to Brazilian music was through his music. But the first recording I owned with Brazilian music on it was Wayne Shorter's *Native Dancer*," which introduced Milton Nascimento to North Americans. "And then I just started to go down the rabbit hole, checking out all kinds of Brazilian artists." One in particular attracted her: "Elis Regina — you couldn't help but fall in love with her; she had so much flair and joy and passion! And all the singer-songwriters (whose songs) she recorded — that led me to Edu Lobo and Gilberto Gil."

She first had the idea to make a Brazilian album 30 years ago, she said, but the time didn't seem right. Instead, she recorded occasional Brazilian songs like Gismonti's "Sanfona" and the Jobim songs "Modinha" and "Double Rainbow" — the latter in a two-piano version with Charlap — but her original music took precedence.

For this album she was ready to do something different. "I started putting together wish lists of (Brazilian) tunes I love, and not pieces that were so commonly played. But, as I learned from Chico and Rogerio, even

the pieces I did choose are Brazilian classics, songs that everybody there knows. There's so much beautiful music. I could have done a whole album of Edu's music, or Gilberto Gil, or Jobim. And there are so many composers I didn't feature.

"Once I understood that Edu and Joyce would (participate), I wanted to present their music," she said. Lobo sings two of his songs ("Casa Forte" and "Pra Dizer Adeus") and Joyce sings one of hers ("Essa Mulher," which Elis Regina made famous). There are also songs by Caetano Veloso ("Trilhos Urbanos"), Milton Nascimento ("Estórias da Floresta"), Gilberto Gil ("Amor Até O Fim") and Egberto Gismonti ("Frevo"). The two songs by Jobim, "Caminhos Cruzados" and "Canta, Canta Mais" — deeper cuts to non-Brazilian audiences — each feature vocals by Adnet.

"Each of these songs is a world unto itself," she said. In her arranging, Rosnes was trying to get to the essence of the melody and to stay "as true as I could be to the composer's intention, the emotion of the piece, even if there was no vocalist on that particular song." She arranged all the songs in advance, decided which instruments she needed for each, and only then chose the musicians. "I needed musicians who I was comfortable with, but also musicians who loved and respected the Brazilian tradition."

Her relationship with Lobo, now 81, began via email two years ago after he sent her a message on Instagram. "I had recorded his song 'Upa Neguinho' on my *Ancestors* album in 1996. He thanked me for recording the song and said, 'Nobody recorded it like you did,' which absolutely floored me."

One of the legendary singer-songwriters of the second generation of bossa nova, Lobo still sings movingly on the rueful "Pra Dizer Adeus" and with vigor and precision on "Casa Forte," a one-of-a-kind instrumental with wordless vocals over an intense northeastern baião rhythm. ("It's similar to a 'frevo,'" Pinheiro said, "but it's called a 'dobrado,'" a kind of Brazilian march.) The song, written at the time of Brazil's military coup in the 1960s, was mindlessly banned by government censors. "He told me they prohibited him from performing the song live. But he performed it anyway, because he knew there were no lyrics," Rosnes said.

Rosnes first met Joyce Moreno, universally known as Joyce, in 1998 when she played piano on her album *Astronauta: Songs Of Elis*, which also featured Joe Lovano, Romero Lubambo and Mulgrew Miller. "In fact, I played on that same song, 'Essa Mulher.' It's about a woman going through her day and all the different roles she plays: mother, maid, organizer, cook, lover. It's a beautiful song with a very original melody."

Guitarist Pinheiro, a native of São Paulo who now lives in New York, met Rosnes for the first time at the session, although he knew her work with Ron Carter and Artemis. He was impressed by her feel for Brazilian music.

“She is a consummate and spectacular jazz musician,” he said via Zoom, “but Brazilian music is different. And it’s not just the ‘time feel,’ like many people think. It’s not just the eighth notes. It’s way deeper than that. It’s a way of approaching the harmony. ... It’s not based on ‘two-fives’ and ‘functional harmony.’ You can’t analyze it like a jazz musician.

“And Renee was perfect. Her approach to the songs was all about the melody, the vibe, the atmosphere. ... As soon as we finished the recording, Patitucci and Chris Potter came to me, and they said, ‘Man, this is really special.’ All of them could feel it.”

Rosnes offers abundant praise for her collaborators. “I hadn’t worked with Chico before this album, but I was a fan; he’s a great player, composer and singer. He has a very positive energy about him. He has a wonderful flow to his playing. He’s all about the music.”

Boccatto, Patitucci and Cruz had played together before. “Rogerio is very empathetic and creative,” she said. “We all know John’s a virtuoso. He’s also a lover of Brazilian music,

having worked with numerous Brazilian musicians. Like all my favorite players, he has the ability to go anywhere musically. He has huge ears.

“This was my first time playing with Adam [Cruz]. He and John had done a lot of playing together. It was important to have a rhythm section that was comfortable playing together. Adam was just perfect, giving the music just what it needs.

“I absolutely love playing with Chris Potter. He’s so popular because of his interpretative skills. He’s also a lover of Brazilian music. And Steve Davis’ round, burnished tone and flowing lyricism were a perfect match for the music. He added another layer of depth to the songs.”

The one non-jazz musician on the album, flutist Shelley Brown from Toronto, nonetheless plays a crucial role. “Shelley is one of my oldest friends,” Rosnes said. “She’s a lover of jazz.” While Brown doesn’t improvise on the record, her playing is exceptional. “Frevo’ is not easy to play, and she nailed it.”

“And Maucha — her voice is so poetic; it has such an original sound, a beautiful vulnerability. I did my homework and knew what the lyrics were about, but even if you don’t know the language, you can tell she’s a gifted story-

teller. There were moments when she would comment, ‘Oh, Jobim would do this here. ...’ Learning from a person who was close to the composer, that’s a treasure.”

Rosnes was born in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, and raised in Vancouver, where she studied classical piano, sang in a vocal group and played jazz piano at local clubs while still in her teens. She attended the University of Toronto as a classical performance major. In 1985, on a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts, she came to New York to study and live for a year. “After a year, I realized I wasn’t ready to leave. Musically, I felt like I was growing. I was ecstatic to be in a scene with so many musicians in my age group and of like mind.”

Her first steady gig was at the late-night jam session at the Blue Note, run at the time by trumpeter Ted Curson. “It was great because I got to hear all the artists who were performing there before I played, so it was a nice perk.”

Word was spreading about a young female Canadian pianist who was tearing it up. Charlap recalled hearing her before they ever met. At the time, he was still getting established as a jazz pianist and was taken under the wing of the Canadian drummer



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Artemis taking bows at the 2022 Detroit Jazz Festival. From left, Rosnes, Ingrid Jensen, Alexa Tarantino, Noriko Ueda, Nicole Glover and Allison Miller.

'Renee is a profound listener; she hears everything. It's what I call perfect hearing.' —Bill Charlap

Terry Clarke, with whom he played in the Joe Roccisano Orchestra.

"Terry's saying to me, 'Man, you've got to hear Renee Rosnes,'" Charlap recalled in a separate Zoom interview from their home. "She was a new pianist in town, and I'm very young and filled with vim and vigor, and I'm thinking to myself, 'Yeah, yeah, sure, you're excited about her, but who's that?' you know?"

"Then the first time I heard her was at the Blue Note after hours. And she sounded like an angel. I knew it was, like ... 'Oh, buddy!' She was so advanced. I could hear she was on a totally different level, both from where my playing was at and [from other pianists]. It was like, OK, she's a master — listen up, kid!"

A week later he heard her playing at the Village Gate in a group with a horn player. "They were playing 'If I Were A Bell.' And I remember just being rapt, and saying, 'Oh, what a perfect pianist. Magnificent!' She's got everything — beautiful time, gorgeous line, beautiful touch, great harmony. She plays for the group. It's totally humble. There's no showing off, yet her mastery shines through all the way."

Despite leading Artemis and being a

renowned solo artist, Rosnes remains a member of Ron Carter's Foursight Quartet, now going on 12 years.

"I treasure the experience of playing with one of the greatest masters of the bass," she said. "When Ron is the leader, he's guiding the band musically at all times, even when somebody is soloing. I still find it to be a valuable experience being a sideman. I'm always going to be learning something. And I think we have a beautiful musical rapport."

Carter recalled the night he decided to hire Rosnes. Pianist Stephen Scott had just left his quartet, and he needed a replacement. "I heard Irene playing a couple of sets with Joe Henderson's band at Fat Tuesday's. She could follow where he was going and meet him at the corner. Sex didn't matter to me; race didn't matter."

He praised her work ethic and her understanding of harmony. Moreover, she has the capacity to play the same set repeatedly but to find something different in the tunes every night. "Her solos are thought out. She's a complete player — that's why she's in the chair, man."

Charlap and Rosnes love to play two-piano duets and do so whenever it's possible to arrange a gig with two Steinways — but it doesn't happen as often as they would like. Their duet album, *Double Portrait* (Blue Note), came out in 2010. They also played together on four tracks accompanying Tony Bennett on his 2015 album *The Silver Lining: The Songs Of Jerome Kern*.

"We very happily hear the beat in the same place, which makes it easy to play together," Rosnes said. "Playing duo with Bill is just so much fun: He obviously has such a gorgeous touch. It's not a competition in any way. It's all in service of the music, what can we do to make the piece shine."

Speaking of their unique marriage, Charlap said, "Even in an intimate relationship there is mystery. She's also one of the most empathetic players on the scene. When she came to New York, she made it right away. You have to be an extraordinary musician to play with Joe Henderson and have him say, 'Yes, that's what I want in my pianist.' Then Wayne Shorter. These are not just gigs. They are people who hired her to be in their bands."

"There's something else about her," Charlap added. "Renee is a profound listener; she hears everything. It's what I call perfect hearing. It's beyond perfect pitch. No matter how harmonically dense or simple it is, Renee instantly knows every single note from the top to the bottom. No matter how large the ensemble. It seems impossible."

"But she's Canadian — she'll never brag to you about something like this."

With all her talents and skills, her intuition and depth of feeling, Rosnes took a brief hiatus from composing to concentrate on the work of other composers, Brazilian ones. Why?

Charlap's suggests an answer:

"Renee is a true composer who writes with great meaning. And, you know, a real composer can recognize a real composer. Sir Richard Rodney Bennett is probably the greatest musician that I ever knew. He was one of my best friends, and he was a giant, a student of Boulez, a major composer."

"And I remember he heard a piece of Renee's. And he said something right away. He said, 'Now that's a pianist.' First of all, about her piano playing. Then he said, 'That's a composer.'"

"He knew the depth of the melodic line, the depth of her ability to intuit form and structure, the nuanced, emotional and spiritual areas that she is able to mirror and explore within 12 notes that are just notes. But she's able to say something with those 12 notes that's way beyond the cerebral."

Rosnes had long since recognized the value of these Brazilian composers and their works.

"Again," Charlap said, "a real composer can recognize a real composer."

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STEVE COLEMAN'S COMPLICATED

BY TED PANKEN | PHOTOS BY DIMITRI LOUIS

PolyTropos/Of Many Turns — the title for Steve Coleman's latest recording on Pi and his 33rd album overall — aptly describes the vertiginous erudition of the music contained therein. It documents two concerts, one in Paris, one in Villon, recorded four days apart during a March 2024 tour by the most recent iteration of Five Elements, his primary unit since 1981.

Each is a virtuoso endeavor, brainy and primal, impeccably tight and alive, extending modern vernaculars with a clear historical scope. Following Coleman's long-standing performance practice, the band assembles the music in real time, aggregating small rhythmic units that whirl through interlocking cycles into cohesive collective declamations.

Coleman and trumpeter Jonathan Finlayson, a bandmate since 2000, evoke the one-sound legacy of Bird and Diz, Ornette and Don Cherry, executing warp-speed unisons on the intervals conjured from Coleman's brain-twisting drum chants, spinning off on a dime into contrapuntal dialogue and lucid solos. Drummer Sean Rickman, whose relationship with Coleman dates to 1996, and bassist Rich Brown,

a bandmember since early 2023, mold the rhythmic shapes into constantly shifting grooves.

The album dropped in November, a few weeks after the end of Five Elements' second 2024 European tour. "I prefer the spontaneous energy and interactivity of recording live," Coleman said from his Allentown, Pennsylvania, home two days after returning as he was seated before a packed, well-organized bookshelf. "I brought in Rich because Anthony Tidd had a baby after the pandemic, and the high expense of child care keeps him from touring. A lot of reactive, in-the-moment things we do aren't written, so he needed time to catch up. By March, he'd gotten into gear. We make multitrack recordings of each concert, and these two came out so well, I decided to put them out."

SOUL





The Five Elements: Coleman, left, with Finlayson, Rich Brown and Sean Rickman.

PolyTropos arrives three years after Pi released *Live At The Village Vanguard Volume II (MDW NTR)*, which snapshotted a week from 2018 in the hallowed basement, with bassist Anthony Tidd, who first contributed to Five Elements in 1992, and Kokayi, the sui generis freestyling “wordsmith” who has toured and recorded with several Coleman configurations since 1994. *Live At The Village Vanguard, Vol. 1 (The Embedded Sets)*, also issued in 2018, captures Five Elements’ 2017 residence there with Coleman, Finlayson, Tidd, Rickman and guitarist Miles Okazaki.

“Every year I take a sabbatical to pursue new information,” said Coleman, who recently turned 68. “I ask myself if I’m internalizing and dealing with something musically I didn’t know two years ago. If the answer is no, I’m not progressing. If you don’t keep learning, your mind slows down. Use it or lose it. That’s why you see all these books — a very small percentage of what I have — behind me. But it does no good unless I find musical analogies. That’s the hard part.”

Coleman’s relentless investigations over the last three decades include field-work-driven encounters with master practitioners from West and North Africa, Cuba and the Caribbean, Brazil and the Indian subcontinent. He refracts the information into a highly personal argot informed by his 1970s experiences on Chicago’s South Side. His albums reference Chinese I Ching hexagrams, Yoruban Ifá patterns and the Hebrew Bible as coded sets of musical symbols. They mimic the procession of interlocking planetary and astral cycles and postulate rhythmic equivalents to the mathematical structure of pi.

On both Vanguard albums, Coleman presents his sonic representations of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, which he first addressed on *The Sonic Language Of Myth* in 1998. The 2018 set springboards from his discovery earlier that year of the hieroglyph for man. “I had an epiphany of a musical shape that resembled the way this figure held his arms,” Coleman said. “I associated it with a figure Woody Shaw played on a location recording of ‘Ginseng People’ and

started developing it in different directions.”

A similar process of visualization informs the pieces on *PolyTropos*, on which Coleman — who aspired to be a comic book illustrator before devoting himself to music — translates the biochemical reactions of amino acids into shapes consisting of pitches and rhythms. The songs manifested as Coleman cogitated during January 2023 and January 2024 sabbaticals at his home in Bahia. On the March tour, he showed the ideas to Finlayson, whose approach in the dialogical flow onstage “fit the music like a glove.” He continued “to push the process” on the October tour.

“I started traveling around the world to places that still had living traditions where music is conversation,” Coleman said. “It was most obvious in the village I went to in Ghana, where every day the drummers got up and beat out the story of their tribe. Since I play mostly non-verbal music, I was looking for hints on how humans have communicated ideas with musical sounds, though of course I wouldn’t do it the same way. I knew how to communicate sensations, like

play a soft song that sounds like love, or play a grating song that sounds angry. But I was interested in much more sophisticated information. When I listened to Von Freeman playing ‘Body And Soul,’ the different passages brought to mind all kinds of images — not just emotions. Why did I perceive these images?”

Coltrane’s musings about “creating a song in the moment and never playing it again” inspired Coleman’s instant composition *modus operandi*. “I was on the road playing trio with Reggie Washington and Gene Lake, and made a different song for us to play each night, using Kabbalah, and calculating astrology charts, where the ascendant was, and so on. Some songs never left our repertoire, like ‘Wheel Of Nature,’ on the second half of *PolyTropos*. Now I’ve internalized all the research, like being in Egypt for six weeks, going into the tombs and looking at the ancient decans, and I do it spontaneously.”

The amino acids project gestated in the early 2000s, when Coleman read *DNA And The I Ching: The Tao Of Life*.

“Although I knew nothing about the science, DNA codes looked very musical to me,” he said. His focus expanded after 2010, when Coleman started meeting frequently with drum shaman Milford Graves, who had exhaustively mapped the cycles of the human heartbeat. Coleman presented these investigations on the Pi albums *Functional Arrhythmias* (2013), inspired by the “rhythmic interaction between the circulatory, nervous, respiratory and other biological systems of the human body,” and *Synovial Joints* (2017), representing the movements of the wrist, elbow, knee, hip, shoulder, ankle and thumb.

“I was riding high from 2014 to 2018,” said Coleman, noting his receipt of a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Doris Duke Artist Award and a MacArthur Fellowship, productive and well-publicized residencies in Detroit and Chicago, and four consecutive annual appearances at the Village Vanguard.

His prestige stemmed not only from the singular music he’d consistently generated since the mid-1980s, when Coleman worked closely with mid-Boomer contemporaries like Geri Allen (his first wife), Cassandra Wilson, Greg Osby, Marvin “Smitty” Smith, Robin Eubanks and James Weidman, but also the well-acknowledged impact of his fieldwork, cross-cultural rhythmic ideas and career advice on next-generation A-listers Vijay Iyer, Tyshawn Sorey, Dafnis Prieto, Marcus Gilmore, Jason Moran, Yosvany Terry, Miguel Zenón, Craig Taborn, David Virelles, Miles Okazaki, Shane Endsley and Jen Shyu.

“Steve most directly impacts people through what can only be called generosity,” Iyer affirmed in a *DownBeat* profile of Coleman in 2011. “He’ll speak with you for hours, sharing information from his omnivorous mind, while also picking your brain, learning from what you have to say. He believes in building a collective body of knowledge, modeling himself on what Bird and Monk and the ancients did. He does the work to connect systems of thought, to connect ideas. His music does that work, too.”

It’s unclear whether Coleman intended the title *PolyTropos* to hint at the turn in his fortunes after October 2018. Eleven months earlier, Maria Grand, another Coleman mentee, who plays tenor saxophone on *Synovial Joints* and *Morphogenesis*, circulated an email to an audience that included Coleman’s colleagues, music journalists and concert promoters, stating that she and Coleman (referenced as “X”) had an off-and-on sexual relationship from 2011 to 2016. She was 35 years his junior and alleged that



"I have my own code of ethics," says Steve Coleman, regarding his personal legal challenges with saxophonist Maria Grand. "It involves truthfulness."

during this time Coleman often extorted sex as a precondition for continued employment and lessons. She concluded with a demand "to make it impossible for predators to exist, period, in the scene." Soon thereafter, she identified Coleman by name in a letter to members of the We Have Voice Collective, a group she'd co-launched with 13 sister musicians inspired by the contemporaneous #MeToo movement to focus on issues of harassment and gender equity.

On May 5, 2018, Coleman, openly polyamorous since the 1980s, mass-emailed an unapologetic denial of Grand's accusation of harassment. He portrayed the relationship as consensual throughout, buttressing his contention with a tranche of texts and emails, some quite racy, that he and Grand had exchanged. In October 2018, Coleman filed a defamation claim against Grand, requesting extensive damages. A month later, Grand filed counterclaims alleging libel and intentional infliction of emotional distress. In 2021, a lower court judge denied the claims of both parties. Coleman immediately appealed, and awaits a decision.

The backlash was immediate. Several musicians left Coleman's band. Friends and strangers denounced him as a predator. He lost work from the get-go. The Jazz Gallery, where he'd performed and held regular public workshops for two decades, preemptori-

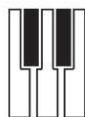
ly terminated the association at the end of 2018. There followed a disastrous 2019, as the Vanguard canceled a scheduled week, the Newport Jazz Festival kiboshed a concert and promoters in Chile reneged on a tour. The drought continued during the COVID year of 2020, as several livestream presenters excluded him from playing. His bands resumed international touring in 2021. However, Coleman said, "I can count our gigs in the United States since 2018 on one hand," with brief hits at a short-lived Brooklyn club and John Zorn's The Stone, and a scheduled appearance at the 2025 Big Ears Festival.

"We had agreements, people backtracked, and musicians suddenly didn't have work," Coleman said. "I showed everyone the evidence, and they chose to ignore it. If I tell musicians I'm going to pay them, and then a promoter stiff me, I pay out of my pocket. I have my own code of ethics. It involves truthfulness. It doesn't involve hurting people; if you do hurt somebody, try to rectify it. It certainly doesn't involve forcing women to have sex."

True to form, Coleman found a musical analogy for his code of ethics. "Coltrane, Bird and Duke Ellington contain certain truths that you can choose to ignore or look at," he said. "Was 'A Love Supreme' just a title Coltrane felt good about, or does something

in the music, structurally and emotionally, pertain to what the words mean? 'Leo' is one note jumping around octaves. What does that note have to do with the constellation in the zodiac? Duke's suites impressed Wynton Marsalis so much that he tried to emulate them with *Blood On The Fields* and things like this. That's what he's supposed to do. Whoever you are, regardless of style, you still have to take care of the music's inner workings — the nuts and bolts. I can throw up some random notes and then tell people it's about DNA and amino acids. How will you refute me? You don't know shit about it. Or I can really do it, and then it's at another level.

"I agree with Wynton, Barry Harris and Lou Donaldson that there needs to be a certain standard of excellence. If you tell people something's great when it isn't, you're not helping them. I'm not just pulling my opinions out of my ass. When I teach, I may mention Bach or Palestrina in passing, or touch on the music of Cuba and Africa and Brazil and the other places I went to, but I can never tell you I'm an expert in any of them. I'm relating it to what I personally know well, which is the music of African-Americans and the tradition that extends from the great cats who preceded us. Of course, I see some similarities between what African-Americans did and Afro-Cubans did. I see similarities in everything." DB



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"I just loved her melodicism," says Mimi Fox of the late guitarist Emily Remler. "I found her playing very lyrical. To me, that's a really great compliment you can give an instrumentalist."



The Essence

of Emily

Women weigh in on guitarist
Emily Remler's Influence

By Bill Milkowski
photos by Brian McMillen

In the April 1982 issue of People magazine, under the heading 'Lookout: A Guide To The Up and Coming,' jazz guitarist Emily Remler famously said: "I may look like a nice Jewish girl from New Jersey, but inside I'm a 50-year-old, heavy-set Black man with a big thumb, like Wes Montgomery."

It was a bold statement for the petite 24-year-old from Englewood Cliffs, but no bolder than the searing single-note lines and assertive sense of swing she had exhibited on her 1981 Concord Records debut, *Firefly*. Remler won acclaim through that decade on the strength of five celebrated albums for Concord, culminating with 1988's *East To Wes*, a tribute to her guitar idol, Wes Montgomery. Her seventh and final album, *This Is Me*, was released posthumously in October of 1990, five months after she had passed from a drug overdose while on tour in Sydney, Australia.

During her relatively brief time in the spotlight, Remler served as a role model for a generation of female jazz guitarists who were on the scene. And now with the release of *Cookin' At The Queens* (Resonance Records) — a series of live recordings from 1984 and 1988 at the French Quarter Room in the Four Queens Hotel of Las Vegas — a new generation of women jazz guitarists are feeling Remler's profound influence, nearly 35 years later.

In a May 1982 *DownBeat* profile, Remler told writer A. James Liska: "My career is moving very quickly, and that whole woman thing has put me out-

front and helped me get noticed. But when I'm playing, I forget if I'm a girl or a boy or a cat. It's when I leave the stage that I remember."

She added that being a woman jazz guitarist worked both for and against her. "Some people like me because of the mere fact that I play. Those are the ones that judge too softly. Then there are those — I've had this happen — who come in and sit right in front of me, cross their arms and say, 'This, I've got to see.' Then there are the people who are prejudiced, and they just sit there and wait for the mistakes. It works to your advantage if you're pretty good, but if you're not good, it works to your disadvantage."

Remler later elaborated to Julie Coryell in a May 1985 *DB* feature about the sexism that she continued to encounter in her career.

Julie Coryell: As a woman, did you have to work harder to be accepted?

Emily Remler: I still do. I didn't conquer it. Are you kidding? Now they know that I can play. But I still have to prove myself every single time. The only thing is that I'm not intimidated anymore. There was



"She said, 'A lot of people are going to try and stop you.'" Sheryl Bailey recalls of the advice she received from Remler. "'They're going to say you slept with somebody, you're a dyke, you're this and that and the other. Don't listen to them, and just keep playing.'"

a time when I came fresh out of Berklee with the competitive frame of mind. I would ask to sit in. 'Oh, please, can I just play one tune? I won't screw things up.' And secretly, I was thinking, 'I'll go up there and burn their asses off.' That's how I felt then. Now I realize that if you're thinking of that stuff, you're not thinking of creativity and all these other things that I'm supposed to be doing in my solos. So I had to can that. I have to rise above it by playing good. You don't get angry, you don't get bitter, you don't get feminist about the thing. You don't try to make a statement for women. You just get so damn good that they'll forget about all that crap."

As drummer Bob Moses, who played on two Remler albums (1983's *Transitions* and 1984's *Catwalk*), stated in his testimony for *Cookin' At The Queens*: "She was smart. Lots of men tried to keep her down, but she did didn't back down. She was strong. Her music was swinging."

Like Mary Osborne decades before her, Remler was a role model. Ten women, all jazz guitarists on the scene today, spoke to her influence for this article: veterans like Leni Stern, Mimi Fox, Margaret Slovak, Mary Halvorson, Sheryl Bailey, Amanda Monaco and Jane Miller, along with rising stars Camila Meza, Jocelyn Gould and Eleonora Strino. They weigh in on the impact that Remler made during her short but potent career, one that continues to this day.

DISCOVERING EMILY REMLER

Camila Meza: Nobody talked about Emily when I was growing up, which is understandable coming from Chile, where even getting to Wes Montgomery was an immense bit of luck. I was searching for more John Scofield material when I came across a video of a Berklee School of Music performance [from 1988] of him playing a duo version of "Stella By Starlight" along-

side a woman so fluent and strong. I was in disbelief since I literally had never seen a woman guitarist playing jazz.

It was such an inspiring moment. When I heard Emily's playing, I was in awe of how much tradition she was embodying. The amount of study really shows on how solid she was as a player. Over the years you see her searching and evolving into a more personal voice but keeping the best from Wes' school: a beautiful tone and language, hyper-intentional melodic storytelling, impeccable time feel, harmonic richness, soul and blues. ... She really had it all.

Mary Halvorson: When I was a teenager, people would say, "Oh, you play jazz guitar? You must love Emily Remler." And this happened to me over and over, which is really interesting because it shows you how few female jazz guitarists there were at that time. When I started playing, I really didn't have a female role model on guitar, so she was probably the only female jazz guitarist that I really knew about that was somewhat current, even though she had died when I was 10. So I thought, "I've got to check her out."

At that point, I started listening to her record *East To Wes*, which was just super cool. Obviously, she's an incredible player with completely fluid, amazing technique and a great feel. She just had such an effortless way of playing. But there's also an intensity and an edge and a real kind of driving energy to her playing on that album, which I really relate to and gravitate towards.

Margaret Slovak: Emily came on my radar during my senior year of high school in 1980. I was living in Denver, and there was a jazz series there put on by this gentleman named Dick Gibson. These were big jazz parties where there'd be like 20 musicians onstage. And I remember seeing in the paper that Emily was going to be playing at the Gibson party that year. So I got a ticket, which was way back in the last row in this big theater in Denver.

I remember seeing her sitting in a chair on stage with her red Gibson ES-335 guitar. She was the only female on the stage, and I was just so inspired by that. I was like, "Oh, my gosh! There's a woman up there playing jazz guitar!" And I recall that on the very first tune of the concert, after they played the head, they pointed to her to take the first solo. And I remember thinking, "Wow, that's a lot of pressure for a young woman to be up there with all those guys and have to take the first solo like that. Are they doing it because they're being courteous? Or are they trying to put her on the spot?" But she played beautifully and just aced it.

Jocelyn Gould: The first time I heard Emily on record was in 2010 when I was 19. She's always been a legendary figure to me.

When I was teaching my guitar classes I found it interesting that so few students had ever heard of her, so I'd introduce them to her through these intensive listening sessions we'd do to open the class. And a number of young women students just couldn't believe it. They came up to me after class and said, "Why did nobody ever tell me about this titan on the instrument?" So I loved to play her music to my students and then just talk about tone and swing and feeling and soulful playing. Emily is a master class in all of those things.

Eleonora Strino: I discovered Emily through

'Her thing about swing and articulation was so spot-on.' —Sheryl Bailey

her record *Firefly*, which was a revelation to me. Sometimes we can imagine women as being more fragile, but she had a big, forceful sound. I really loved her hard-bop playing, and I wanted to develop that same sound. So I began transcribing her solos from *Firefly* as well as some standards she played on her next album, *Take Two*, like "In Your Own Sweet Way" and the Dexter Gordon tune "For Regulars Only." I also transcribed her solo on "Hot House" from her album *East To Wes*.

Of course, you can hear the influences of Wes Montgomery and Pat Martino on those albums. But her album *Catwalk* was full of her own compositions, and some of those tunes reminded me of the Mediterranean/Neopolitan sound that I also have in my own compositions. You can hear that she was searching for her own personality on that album, and this is the job I'm doing now.

Amanda Monaco: I was in high school and very much into Miles and Wayne and Coltrane and Wes when my guitar teacher told me, "Hey, there's this female jazz guitarist named Emily Remler. You should check her out. Here's a cassette." It was her last album, *This Is Me*. And it wasn't like the kind of jazz I was listening to at the time; it was more light fusion-y stuff. But I noticed how amazing her composing was on that album. The songs were more pensive and varied, but she also reminded you all over that record what a badass she was, as far as playing is concerned. She absolutely shredded on that record. When she soloed on those tunes, she would go right back into that Pat Martino-ish kind of vibe that she had on *Firefly*, *Take Two* and *East To Wes*. So there were these seeds that were planted

on *This Is Me*, and that record made me ask more questions than it answered.

REMLER'S TECHNIQUE

Sheryl Bailey: I took a lesson with Emily when I was a student at Berklee. I went back home to Pittsburgh during spring break and a friend of mine, the pianist David Budway, who was my teacher when I was a kid, called me and said, "Ems is in town! Here's her number. Give her a call. Get a lesson." So I did, and I ended up hanging out with her all day. She was in a rehab program in Pittsburgh at the time, and she was clean and just on fire — so focused and just there with

everything. So I came for a lesson and afterwards she's like, "Hey, let's hang out and play!" She just wanted to jam, but the lesson was great.

Emily was a great teacher. She zeroed in on exactly what I needed to work on, and I've taken a lot of stuff she showed me then and sort of expanded on it for my students. Her thing about swing and articulation was so spot-on. It's based on something called the picking dynamic, which is about what swing really is — where the accent is and getting control of that. It's a very technical alternate-picking right-hand study based on something that Pat Martino showed her. That was really eye-opening and it changed my technique. It's something over the years that I go back to and I keep developing. Still to this day, I run through those picking studies just to warm up and get centered.

Jane Miller: The thing that instantly impressed me about Emily's playing? Tone and chops. And pace. To hit that sweet spot of chops with taste is not easy. But Emily really hit that sweet spot for me. She had a signature sound with her Gibson ES-335, but even when she played acoustic guitar or a solidbody, there was still that combination of taste and tone that would always sound like her.

Emily modernized things. She was pretty forward-thinking while honoring those she learned from.

Mimi Fox: I just loved her melodicism. I found her playing very lyrical. To me, that's a really great compliment you can give an instrumentalist. It means more than, "Oh, she can burn. She's got good chops." Because lyrical, to

me, means you're telling a story. It's the whole essence of what jazz is about, which is telling a compelling story.

Amanda Monaco: The thing that always impressed me about Emily was her time feel and her execution on the instrument. I was listening to something yesterday from *Firefly*, and there's this one thing she did at the end of the title track where she's playing double-stops, and I could not for the life of me figure out how she did that. It just didn't sound humanly possible.

Margaret Slovak: Her tone was just like a bell. So clean. And her rhythmic lines were so fluid and lyrical, and she swung so hard. One of the things I really admire about Emily's playing is that even though she had the facility to play a zillion notes, she would leave space, so her lines had even more impact. And there's also a lot of soul in her playing, a lot of warmth. Plus, the way she comps when other players are soloing is so beautiful. It's like she never tried to over-play or show off.

REMLER'S LEGACY

Camila Meza: I think as female players we all feel inadequate in one way or another at a certain point in our careers, sometimes at many points. It's a matter of fact that you never cease having to prove yourself. And on the other hand, personally, even when I'm achieving great things, I question if I deserve the recognition, or if I'm good enough. The way I deal with it is I try to stay close to what moves me to make music, which is very far from having to show anybody that I can do it. It's because I need to, and it heals me. And that's a pretty rooting reason.

I went through the exact same situation as Emily (more than 20 years later) where she says she wasn't called at a jam session because they judged her as not being an actual jazz guitarist, but a songwriter. I remember going to the old Fat Cat and being turned away by the jam session host because, "This is not a singer-songwriter's session." I was a woman holding a guitar, so I didn't fit in. But Emily showed us that you can be a woman and play jazz guitar at the highest level.

She was breaking stereotypes just by being herself, which is not easy to do. I think about how hard it must have been for her to show up at a jam session as a female guitar player in New York in the '80s. The cultural context you develop in completely shapes you as a person and, therefore, as an artist.

Eleonora Strino: I think for a woman to be accepted in this jazz world is, obviously, more difficult. Especially when you are in the early stages and not yet a "professional" musician, the male musicians will at times approach you with this attitude of, "Oh, it's a girl playing guitar!" They don't take you seriously.



My advice for men is to try not to consider women like sexual objects and to treat the women musicians just starting out with respect so they do not have to be “warriors” to become a good musician. Because it’s true, when you are a woman in this jazz world you have to be many times better each time that you play. Emily felt that, and I still feel that today. So I just try to develop a big sound and play aggressively, as Emily did.

So I am indebted to her. I think Emily had it worse than me because she was one of the first women to play a different instrument, not piano or a singer. We had to fight, too, but now we are in a better moment. It’s still difficult for women jazz musicians. Because I sometimes still feel the pressure. You never know if you play good or if you play good “for a woman.” It’s something that stays in your mind. But I think the world will be better for my students [at the Conservatory in Consenza] and other women musicians just coming up now. And we have pioneers like Emily Remler to thank for that.

Sheryl Bailey: When I was hanging out with Emily that day I took a lesson with her, at some point she said to me, “Don’t stop playing. Never stop doing what you’re doing.” She said, “A lot of people are going to try and stop you. They’re going to say you slept with somebody, you’re a dyke, you’re this and that and the other. Don’t listen to them, and just keep playing.” And I cherished that moment.

Now I’m the assistant chair of the guitar department at Berklee, and I have shared that story with several young women who came in who were like, “I’m going to quit the performance major. I’m just so tired of all this sexist bullshit.” And I’ve told them what Emily told me. And you know what? They all hung in. So I feel like that thing that Emily told me has been

one of the biggest things that I can do in mentoring young players.”

Mary Halvorson: Because she was really one of the few women guitarists doing it on that level at the time, I think she really used that as motivation. Like, “OK, if I’m gonna do this, I’m going to work really hard and I have to be the best.” That’s the sense that I get. I think that she felt like she constantly had to prove herself.

Even once people realized she could play, she had to prove herself over and over again. For some people, that can be crushing and make you stop playing entirely. And for other people, it can be motivating. And it sounds like she had that real intensity of personality too to persevere.

Leni Stern: Emily made no apologies for swinging so hard. Her time was flawless and she played better than a lot of the guys that came up with her. I always enjoyed it so much when she would sit in with a bunch of male musicians and then proceed to kick everybody’s ass, because nobody expected it.

Even after it was known how well she played, people still wouldn’t believe it. But she’d come and whoop everybody’s ass again. But I also know the pressure she experienced and know how difficult it was — and to some degree still is — to be a female jazz guitar player. But Emily was the kind of girl that would say, “Fuck it!” and go do it anyway. But that didn’t prevent the hurt from happening.

Mimi Fox: I think to some extent with all jazz musicians there’s always a part of them that has an imposter syndrome, but it’s always harder for women just because of the culture. I think women can have a tendency to try to prove themselves. And if you’re constantly trying to

prove yourself, that gets in the way of the music because you can’t just relax and let the music flow. And I think that can be a tough thing.

I was fortunate to have found some supportive men along the way who really wanted the best for me and gave me an extra oomph because they knew, and they felt in their heart, it was the right thing to do. They knew I was facing a little extra B.S. in my life being a woman playing jazz.

Of course, I have horror stories about guys that were jerks, but I also have men that have been complete menches and really went out of their way to go the extra mile for me, including Steve Vai. So now I tell my students, “If you meet jerks, just lose them.” I think a common mistake young women make is if someone’s a jerk to them, they tend to personalize it and think something’s wrong with them instead of thinking that the guy’s just being a jerk and is probably a jerk to other women, and also to other men.

But women tend to personalize things. Again, it’s a cultural thing, and it takes a long time to overcome some of that stuff. Like the saying goes: Old habits die hard. But the jazz community has moved forward and it’s really heartening to see all the changes that have happened since Emily passed.

Jane Miller: Being a woman guitarist in a so-called men’s arena is something that Emily acknowledged, sometimes even in a lighthearted way. Meaning, she didn’t let it get to her in any kind of way that held her back. It’s more like recognizing something that’s a little weird, and then you just carry on.

You just play. And that other stuff — male versus female players and difficulties in that world — didn’t really affect the music, in her mind. That could be what was simmering underneath, but with Emily it was always about the music. And she just laid it down with such clarity and cleanliness and precision, but also fire.

Amanda Monaco: Today there are many more women playing guitar at Berklee than there ever used to be. I think it’s doubled since Kim Perlak became the chair and Sheryl Bailey became the assistant chair.

So now the guitar department at Berklee is run by two forward-thinking women, which is pretty freakin’ cool. But there still is a prevailing feeling that goes along with being a female jazz guitarist. It’s getting better, but define “better.”

You know, that sexist shit still happens. I still get asked when people see me with my guitar if I’m going to sing, and I’m like, “Trust me, you really don’t want to hear me sing.” So that is still a thing that female guitarists are subjected to, but the jazz musicians themselves now are just more welcoming. ... So things are changing, and Emily was definitely a pioneer in shifting attitudes.

DB



Photo by Tom Ehrlich



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A Note from John Santos.

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A young man with dark hair, glasses, and a beard is playing a saxophone. He is wearing a blue t-shirt under a dark grey blazer. The background is dark, suggesting a stage setting. The lighting is focused on him, highlighting the brass of the instrument and his facial features.

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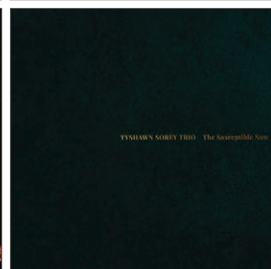
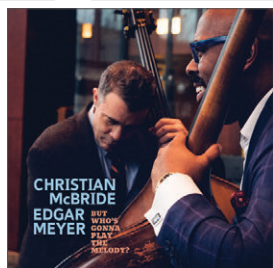
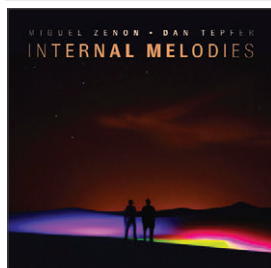
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MASTERPIECES ★★★★★



DAN TEPFER & MIGUEL ZENÓN
Internal Melodies
Main Door Jan.

MARK TURNER QUARTET
Live At The Village Vanguard
Giant Step Arts Jan.

GERI ALLEN/ KURT ROSENWINKEL
A Lovesome Thing
Motéma/Heartcore Feb.

CHRISTIE DASHIELL
Journey In Black
Independent Release Feb.

MIGUEL ATWOOD-FERGUSON
Les Jardins Mystiques, Volume 1
Brainfeeder Feb.

CHRISTIAN MCBRIDE/ EDGAR MEYER
But Who's Gonna Play The Melody?
Mack Avenue May

JAMIE BAUM SEPTET
What Times
Sunnyside May

BRIA SKONBERG
What It Means
Cellar Music Sept.

SARAH HANAHAN
Among Giants
Blue Engine Sept.

BRIAN LANDRUS
Plays Ellington & Strayhorn
Palmetto Oct.

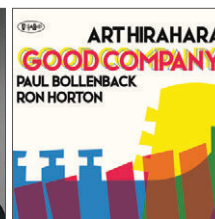
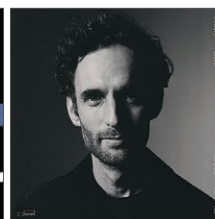
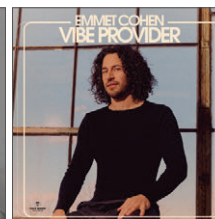
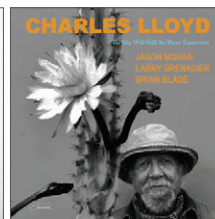
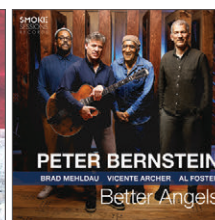
ENRICO PIERANUNZI/MARC JOHNSON/JOEY BARON
Hindsight
CamJazz Oct.

PATRICIA BRENNAN
Breaking Stretch
Pyroclastic Nov.

TYSHAWN SOREY
The Susceptible Now
Pi Dec.

MILTON SUGGS
Pure Intention
Imani Dec.

GEOFFREY KEEZER
Live At Birdland
Markeez Dec.



JEFF COSGROVE/NOAH PREMINGER/KIM CASS
Confusing Motion For Progress
Grizzley Music Jan.

GABRIEL GUERRERO & QUANTUM
Equilibrio
Origin Feb.

RON BLAKE
Mistaken Identity
1733 Productions Feb.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
The Memphis Blues Box
Bear Family March

PAT BIANCHI
Three
21H March

CHARLES LLOYD
The Sky Will Still Be There Tomorrow
Blue Note April

VIJAY IYER TRIO
Compassion
ECM April

DIVR
Is This Water
We Jazz April

JIM SNIDERO
For All We Know
Savant April

JOHN LURIE
Painting With John
Royal Potato Family April

FRANK CARLBERG
Elegy For Thelonious
Sunnyside April

JULIAN LAGE
Speak To Me
Blue Note April

MIKAEL MÁNI
Guitar Poetry
ACT May

EDY FOREY
Culture Today
So Soul May

MAGNUS LINDGREN/JOHN BEASLEY
Butterfly Effect
ACT June

MARTA SÁNCHEZ TRIO
Perpetual Void
Intakt June

STEPHANE WREMBEL
Triptych
Water Is Life June

NICOLE GLOVER
Plays
Savant June

MICHAEL O'NEILL
Arrival
Independent Release July

ZACCAI CURTIS
Cubop Lives
TRR Collective Aug.

ORRIN EVANS AND THE CAPTAIN BLACK BIG BAND

Walk A Mile In My Shoe
Imani Sept.

KIM CASS
Levs
Pi Sept.

ALEXANDER HAWKINS/SOFIA JERNBERG
Musho
Intakt Sept.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
The Middle Of Everywhere—Guitar Solos Vol. 1
AGS Oct.

LINDA SIKHAKHANE
Iladi
Blue Note Oct.

ART HIRAHARA
Good Company
Posi-Tone Oct.

CHRISTINE JENSEN
Harbour
Network/Justin Time Oct.

MONIQUE CHAO
Time Chamber
Da Vinci Oct.

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA WITH WYNTON MARSALIS
Freedom, Justice And Hope
Blue Engine Oct.

JENNY SCHEINMAN
All Species Parade
Royal Potato Family Nov.

DAVID WEISS SEXTET
Auteur
Origin Nov.

ALICE ZAWADZKI/FRED THOMAS/MISHA MULLOV-ABBADO
Za Górami
ECM Nov.

PETER BERNSTEIN
Better Angels
Smoke Sessions Nov.

BEN MONDER
Planetarium
Sunnyside Nov.

MICAH THOMAS
Mountains
Artwork Nov.

BILL FRISELL/KIT DOWNES/ANDREW CYRILLE
Breaking The Shell
Red Hook Nov.

JAZZMEIA HORN
Messages
Empress Legacy Dec.

EMMET COHEN
Vibe Provider
Mack Avenue Dec.

NATE MERCEREAU
Excellent Traveler
Third Man Dec.

RANDY INGRAM
Aries Dance
Sounderscore Dec.



MATANA ROBERTS
COIN COIN Chapter Five: in the garden
Constellation..... Jan.

ETHAN IVERSON
Technically Acceptable
Blue Note..... Jan.

CHIEN CHIEN LU
Built In System (Live From New York)
Giant Step Arts..... Jan.

JOHN CHIN
Sun Of Music
Independent Release..... Jan.

DOM MARTIN
Buried In The Hail
Forty Below..... Jan.

BEX BURCH
There Is Only Love And Fear
International Anthem..... Jan.

ETHAN PHILION
Gnosis
Sunnyside..... Jan.

MYRA MELFORD'S FIRE AND WATER QUINTET
Hear The Light Singing
Rogue Art..... Jan.

LOREN STILLMAN
Time And Again
Sunnyside..... Jan.

J.C. SANFORD
New Past
Shifting Paradigm..... Jan.

SEAN MASON
The Southern Suite
Blue Engine..... Jan.

ARTHUR KELL SPECULATION QUARTET
Live At LunÀtico
Origin..... Jan.

HAROLD DANKO
Trillium
Steeplechase..... Jan.

ABDULLAH IBRAHIM
3
Gearbox..... Feb.

MARY HALVORSON
Cloudward
Nonesuch..... Feb.

YUHAN SU
Liberated Gesture
Sunnyside..... Feb.

TSUYOSHI YAMAMOTO
A Shade Of Blue
Evo Sound..... Feb.

SUNNY KIM/ BEN MONDER/ VARDAN OPSEVIAN
Liminal Silence
Earshift..... Feb.

ANTOINE DRYE
Retreat To Beauty
Cellar Live!..... Feb.

JEREMY UDDEN
Wishing Flower
Sunnyside..... Feb.

MIKKO INNANEN/CÉDRIC PIROMALLI/STEFAN PASSBORG
Can You Hear It?
Clean Feed..... Feb.

TRESPASS TRIO
Live In Oslo
Clean Feed..... Feb.

SULLIVAN FORTNER
Solo Game
Artwork..... March

JOEL ROSS
nublues
Blue Note..... March

AARON PARKS LITTLE BIG
Live In Berlin
Independent Release..... March

LUKE STEWART REMEMBRANCE QUINTET FEATURING DANIEL CARTER
Do You Remember
Sonboy..... March

AMANDA GARDIER
Auteur: Music Inspired By The Films Of Wes Anderson
Independent Release..... March

MICAH THOMAS
Reveal
Artwork..... March

DAVID GIBSON
Fellowship
Imani..... March

JON IRABAGON'S OUTRIGHT!
Recharge The Blade
Irrabagast..... March

ISM
Maua
577..... March

JOHN BUTCHER
Lower Marsh
Ni Vu Ni Connu..... March

EMMELUTH'S AMOEBA
Nonsense
Moserobie..... March

CHARLES CHEN
Charles, Play!
Cellar Music..... March

PETER MARTIN
Generation S
Open Studio..... March

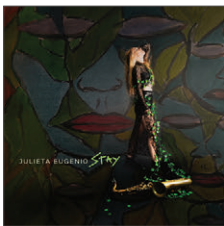
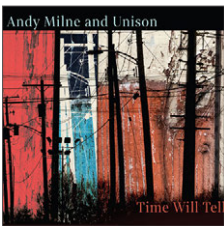
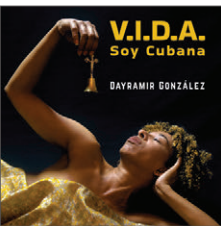
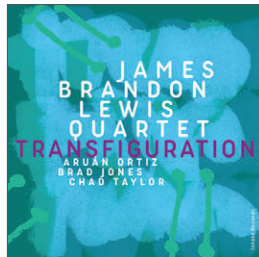
STIRRUP
Picks Up The Thread
Ears & Eyes..... March

ULYSSES OWENS JR. AND GENERATION Y
A New Beat
Cellar Music..... March

TIMA VOLOZH
Jubilee
Shifting Paradigm..... March

GUI DUVIGNAU
Live In Red Hook
Sunnyside..... March

RAFFI GARABEDIAN
The Crazy Dog
Independent Release..... March



ANDREW RICHARDS
The August Session
Independent ReleaseApril

ALAN BRAUFMAN
Infinite Love Infinite Tears
Valley of Search.....April

LAWRENCE FIELDS
To The Surface
Rhythm 'n' Flow.....April

AVALANCHE KAITO
Talitakum
Glitterbeat.....April

RON HORTON
A Prayer For Andrew
NewvelleApril

**ADAM RUDOLPH/
TYSHAWN SOREY**
Archaisms I
Defkaz/Meta/Yeros7April

SUNNY FIVE
Candid
Intakt.....April

BILL ANSHELL
Improbable Solutions
OriginApril

LYNNE ARRIALE
Being Human
ChallengeApril

**MINA CHO'S
GRACE BEAT QUARTET**
Beat Mirage
International Gugak
Jazz InstituteApril

WDR BIG BAND
LifeSongs
Alternate Side.....April

GILI LOPES
Algures
Independent Release.....April

MELISSA ALDANA
*Echoes Of The Inner
Prophet*
Blue NoteMay

CHRIS POTTER
*Eagle's Point
Edition*May

CARY MORIN
Innocent Allies
Independent Release.....May

JIM KWESKIN
Never Too Late
Story-SoundMay

ALLIANCE
Alliance
Shifting ParadigmMay

BRENT BIRCKHEAD
Cacao
Independent Release.....May

YOTAM SILBERSTEIN
Standards
JojoMay

GILAD HEKSELMAN
Life, At The Village Vanguard
La ReserveMay

RANDY NAPOLEON
The Door Is Open
OA2May

**FAY VICTOR/
HERBIE NICHOLS SUNG**
Life Is Funny That Way
TAO Forms.....May

DÁNAE OLANO TRIO
Children's Corner
LulaWorldMay

BOBBY SELVAGGIO 11
*Stories, Dreams, Inspirations:
For My Boy*
Hidden Cinema.....May

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FEATURING
GEORGE COLEMAN**
Big George
Smoke Sessions.....May

HIRUY TIRFE
10,000 Hours
Independent Release.....May

**JAMES BRANDON LEWIS
QUARTET**
Transfiguration
Intakt.....May

**THE MESSTHETICS AND
JAMES BRANDON LEWIS**
*The Messthetics And James
Brandon Lewis*
Impulse!.....May

VARIOUS ARTISTS
A Celebration Of Keith Tippett
PIGMay

FRED HERSCH
Silent, Listening
ECMJune

DAN WEISS
Even Odds
CygnusJune

OMAR SOSA
*Omar Sosa's 88
Well-Tuned Drums*
OTAJune

DAVE DOUGLAS
Gifts
Greenleaf MusicJune

CHRISTOPHER HOFFMAN
Vision Is The Identity
Out of Your Head.....June

MICHAËL ATTIAS
*Quartet Music Vol. 1:
LuMiSong*
Out of Your Head.....June

**PERELMAN/FOWLER/
WORKMAN/CYRILLE**
Embracing The Unknown
Mahakala.....June

ETIENNE CHARLES
Creole Orchestra
Culture Shock.....June

YES! TRIO
Spring Sings
Jazz&People.....June

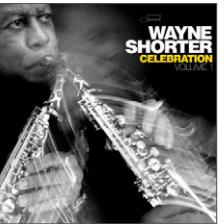
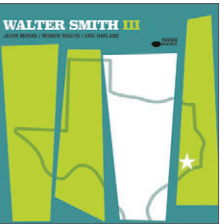
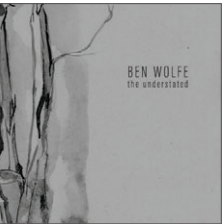
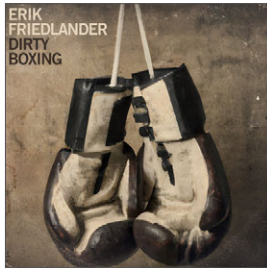
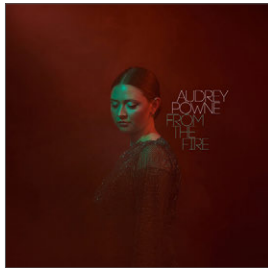
TROY ROBERTS
Green Lights
Toy RobotJune

GHOST TREES
Intercept Method
Independent Release.....June

JULIETA EUGENIO
Stay
Independent Release.....June

OLIVIER LE GOAS
Sunland
Double MoonJune

**REMPIS/KARAYORGIS/
HEINEMANN/HARRIS**
Truss
Aerophonic/Driff.....June



TOMEKA REID QUARTET
3+3
Cuneiform July

TEIKU
Teiku
577 July

ANDY MILNE AND UNISON
Time Will Tell
Sunnyside Aug.

NIR FELDER
III
La Reserve Aug.

**ALEX HARDING/
LUCIAN BAN**
Blutopia
Sunnyside July

BRAD MEHLDAU
After Bach II
Nonesuch July

CONRAD HERWIG
The Latin Side Of McCoy Tyner
Savant Aug.

**MILTON NASCIMENTO
& ESPERANZA SPALDING**
Milton + esperanza
Concord Sept.

DAYRAMIR GONZÁLEZ
V.I.D.A.
Independent Release July

BRAD MEHLDAU
Après Fauré
Nonesuch July

BLACK DIAMOND
Furniture Of The Mind
Rearranging
We Jazz Aug.

**WAYNE
SHORTER**
Celebration Volume 1
Blue Note Sept.

**SHIVER/
MATTHEW BOURNE**
Shiver Meets Matthew Bourne
Volume 2
Discus July

RON MILES
Old Main Chapel
Blue Note July

[AHMED]
Giant Beauty
Fönstret Aug.

**MATTHEW SHIPP
TRIO**
New Concepts
In Piano Trio Jazz
ESP-Disk' Sept.

GREGORY GROOVER JR.
Lovabye
Criss Cross July

**GRÉGOIRE MARET/
ROMAIN COLLIN**
Ennio
ACT July

JULIUS RODRIGUEZ
Evergreen
Verve Aug.

HAPPY APPLE
"New York CD"
Sunnyside Sept.

**RICK ESTRIN
AND THE NIGHTCATS**
The Hits Keep Coming
Alligator July

**DAVID MURRAY
QUARTET**
Francesca
Intakt Aug.

**CORY WEEDS MEETS
CHAMPIAN FULTON**
Every Now And Then
Cellar Music Aug.

**NICOLE MITCHELL
AND BALLAKÉ SISSOKO**
Bamako*Chicago
Sound System
FPE Sept.

CEDRIC BURNSIDE
Hill Country Love
Provogue July

**WADADA LEO SMITH/
AMINA CLAUDINE MYERS**
Central Park's Mosaics
Of Reservoir, Lake, Paths
And Gardens
Red Hook Aug.

**MARIA FAUST JAZZ
CATASTROPHE:3RD MUTATION**
Moth
Bush Flash Aug.

PHILLIP GOLUB
Abiding Memory
Endectomorph Sept.

ERIC BIBB
Live At The Scala Theatre
Repute/Stony Plain July

**NDUDUZO
MAKHATINI**
uNomkhubulwane
Blue Note Aug.

ALEX SIPIAGIN
Horizons
Blue Room Aug.

AUDREY POWNE
From The Fire
BBE Sept.

**ABDALLAH
OUMBADOUGOU**
Amghar—The Godfather of
Tuareg Music, Vol. 1
Petaluma July

STEVE TURRE
Sanyas
Smoke Sessions Aug.

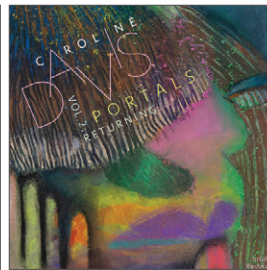
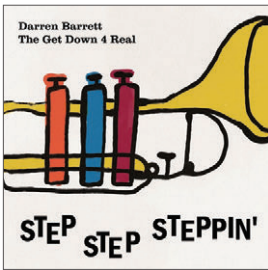
FERGUS MCCREADIE
Stream
Edition Aug.

GILES ROBSON
Seven Blues Classics
Independent Release Sept.

ANTHONY GERACI
Tears In My Eyes
Blue Heart July

JOSH LAWRENCE
Measured Response
Posi-Tone Aug.

EDEN BRENT
Getaway Blues
Yellow Dog Sept.



ERIK FRIEDLANDER
Dirty Boxing
Skipstone..... Sept.

TARBABY
You Think This America
Giant Step Arts Sept.

WAYNE ESCOFFERY
Alone
Smoke Sessions..... Sept.

JOHN CHRISTENSEN
Soft Rock
Shifting Paradigm Sept.

JOHN ESCREET TRIO + MARK TURNER
The Epicenter Of Your Dreams
Blue Room Sept.

NASHEET WAITS
New York Love Letter (Bitter Sweet)
Giant Step Arts Sept.

JEFF "TAIN" WATTS/RICHARD ANDERSSON/CARL WINTHER
WAW!
Hobby Horse..... Sept.

ROBBY AMEEN
Live At The Poster Museum
Origin Sept.

LAUREN HENDERSON
Sombras
Brontosaurus Sept.

WALTER SMITH III
three of us are from Houston and Reuben is not
Blue Note Oct.

KIRK KNUFFKE
Super Blonde
Steeplechase..... Oct.

MELINDA SULLIVAN/LARRY GOLDINGS
Big Foot
Colorfield..... Oct.

GEORGE COLLIGAN
You'll Hear It
La Reserve Oct.

APRIL VARNER
April
Cellar Music Oct.

DARREN BARRETT
The Get Down 4 Real: Step Step Steppin'
DB Studios..... Oct.

MALCOLM JIYANE TREE-O
True Story
New Soil/Mushroom Hour... Oct.

ALEX HAHN
Childhood Melodies
Independent Release..... Oct.

OSCAR HERNANDEZ
Swing Forever
Ovation Oct.

TARDO HAMMER
Right Now!
Jazz Bird..... Oct.

ALEX KAUTZ
Where We Begin
Sunnyside..... Oct.

LOUIS HAYES
Artform Revisited
Savant..... Nov.

AARON PARKS
Little Big III
Blue Note Nov.

K. CURTIS LYLE/GEORGE R. SAMS/RA KALAM BOB MOSES
29 Birds You Never Heard
Balance Point Acoustics... Nov.

JUMAANE SMITH
Come On Home
Zinn Music..... Nov.

CARLOS BICA
11:11
Clean Feed..... Nov.

TOMIN
Flores para Verene/ Cantos para Caramina
International anthem Nov.

KRIS DAVIS TRIO
Run The Gauntlet
Pyroclastic Nov.

JONTAVIOUS WILLIS
West Georgia Blues
Strolling Bones..... Nov.

GUY DAVIS
The Legend Of Sugarbelly
M.C..... Nov.

WARREN WOLF
History Of The Vibraphone
Cellar Music Nov.

ANDREW WILCOX
Dear Mr. Hill
Truth Revolution Nov.

CHRISTIAN SANDS
Embracing Dawn
Mack Avenue Nov.

LUCIANA SOUZA
Twenty-Four Short Musical Episodes (with first lines from poems by Emily Dickinson)
Sunnyside..... Nov.

RAHSAAN BARBER & EVERYDAY MAGIC
Six Words
Jazz Music City Nov.

GEORGE BURTON
White Noise
Porge Nov.

SIMON MOULLIER
Elements Of Light
Candid Nov.

CHUCHO VALDÉS
Cuba And Beyond
Blue Note Dec.

TIGRAN HAMASYAN
The Bird Of A Thousand Voices
Naïve Dec.

GODWIN LOUIS
Psalms And Proverbs
Blue Room Dec.

AVISHAI COHEN
Ashes To Gold
ECM Dec.

GARY SMULYAN-FRANK BASILE QUINTET
Boss Baritones
Steeplechase..... Dec.

KINKAJOUS
Nothing Will Disappear
Running Circle..... Dec.

YAI
Sky Time
AKP..... Dec.

CAROLINE DAVIS
Portals, Vol. 2: Returning
Intakt..... Dec.

BEN WOLFE
The Understated
Resident Arts..... Dec.

JEROME SABBAGH
Heart
Analog Tone Factory..... Dec.

ANNA BUTTERS
Mighty Vertebrate
International Anthem..... Dec.

UNIONEN
Unionen
We Jazz Dec.

PETER EVANS
Extra
We Jazz Dec.

BERKE CAN ÖZCAN AND JONAH PARZEN-JOHNSON
It Was Always Time
We Jazz Dec.

HISTORICAL ★★★★★

ROY HARGROVE

The Love Suite: In Mahogany
Blue EngineJan.

ART PEPPER

Complete Maiden Voyage Recordings
Omnivore.....Jan.

DON BYAS

Classic Don Byas Sessions 1944-1946
Mosaic.....Feb.

BILL EVANS

Tales—Live In Copenhagen (1964)
Elemental March

SONNY ROLLINS

A Night At The Village Vanguard: The Complete Masters
Blue Note July

DUKE ELLINGTON

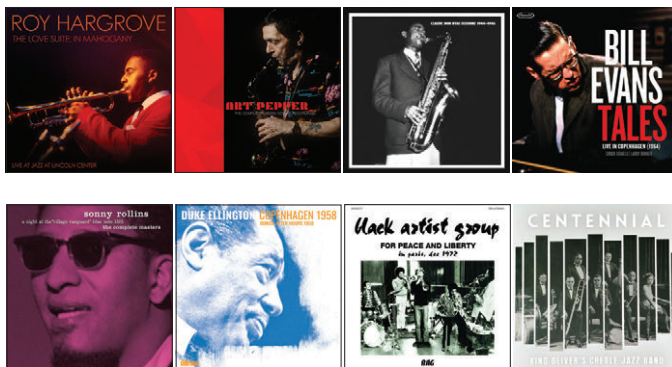
Copenhagen 1958
Storyville..... Aug.

BLACK ARTISTS GROUP (BAG)

For Peace And Liberty: In Paris, Dec. 1972
Wewantsounds Oct.

KING OLIVER'S CREOLE JAZZ BAND

Centennial
Archeophone..... Nov.



HISTORICAL ★★★★★ ½

ALICE COLTRANE

The Carnegie Hall Concert
Impulse!.....June

FUMIO ITABASHI

Watarase
Wewantsounds Aug.

JAMES COTTON/ JUNIOR WELLS/ CAREY BELL/BILLY BRANCH

Harp Attack!
Alligator Nov.

MILES DAVIS

Miles In France 1963 & 1964: The Bootleg Series, Vol. 8
Legacy A&R.....Dec.



HISTORICAL ★★★★★

OSCAR PETERSON

Con Alma: Live in Lugano, 1964
Mack Avenue March

DAVE BRUBECK QUARTET

From The Northwest 1959
Brubeck Editions March

LES MCCANN

Never A Dull Moment: Live From Coast To Coast 1966-1967
ResonanceApril

SUN RA

Inside The Light World: Sun Ra Meets The OVC
StrutJune

4 HORNS & WHAT

The Complete American Recordings
Corner Store Jazz Aug.

JAMES MOODY SEPTET

The Moody Story: James Moody Septet 1951-1955
Fresh SoundSept.

LOUIS MOHOLO MOHOLO

Viva La Black
Cadillac.....Sept.

THE KEEF HARTLEY BAND

Live At Essen Pop & Blues Festival 1969/1970
MiG.....Sept.

PHAROAH SANDERS

Thembi
Verve.....Oct.

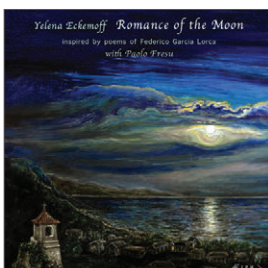
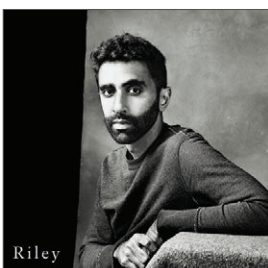
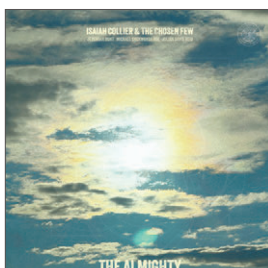
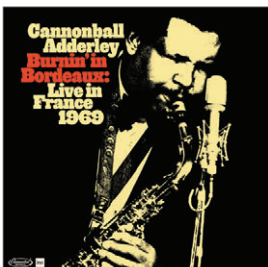
KURT ROSENWINKEL

The Next Step Band (Live At Smalls 1996)
Heartcore Oct.



EDITORS' PICKS

Editor's Note: The following were online exclusive reviews of recordings that DownBeat's editors loved but were not reviewed in the magazine.



★★★★★
ALINA BZHEZHINSKA & TONY KOFI
Altera Vita
 BBE — March

★★★★★
CANNONBALL ADDERLEY
Burnin' In Bordeaux: Live In France 1969
 Elemental — April

★★★★★
IMMANUEL WILKINS
Blues Blood
 Blue Note — Oct.

★★★★½
GERALD CANNON
Live At Dizzy's Club: The Music Of Elvin & McCoy
 Woodneck — Jan.

★★★★★
ADAM SCHROEDER & MARK MASTERS
CT! Celebrate Clark Terry
 Capri — Jan.

★★★★★
AMARO FREITAS
Y'Y
 Psychic Hotline — Feb.

★★★★★
VANISHA GOULD/CHRIS MCCARTHY
Life's A Gig
 Fresh Sound New Talent — Feb.

★★★★★
RILEY MULHERKAR
Riley
 Westerlies — March

★★★★★
MARSHALL GILKES & THE WDR BIG BAND
LifeSongs
 Alternate Side — March

★★★★★
ISAIAH COLLIER & THE CHOSEN FEW
The Almighty
 Duality Suite — April

★★★★★
JEANFRANÇOIS PRINS
Blue Note Mode
 GAM — May

★★★★★
PRISM QUARTET
Heritage/Evolution, Volume 3
 XAS — May

★★★★★
MIKE HOLOBER & THE GOTHAM JAZZ ORCHESTRA
This Rock We're On: Imaginary Letters
 Palmetto — June

★★★★★
JACKY TERRASSON
Moving On
 Earth-Sounds — June

★★★★★
BILL CHARLAP TRIO
And Then Again
 Blue Note — Aug.

★★★★★
LUTHER ALLISON
I Owe It All To You
 Posi-Tone — Sept.

★★★★★
ANDREW HILL
A Beautiful Day, Revisited
 Palmetto — Sept.

★★★★★
LOUIS STEWART & JIM HALL
The Dublin Concert
 Livia — Sept.

★★★★★
DAWN RICHARD & SPENCER ZAHN
Quiet In A World Full Of Noise
 Merge — Oct.

★★★★★
JOHN HOLLENBECK & NDR BIGBAND
Colouring Hockets
 Flexatonic — Nov.

★★★★★
GREGORY LEWIS
Organ Monk Going Home
 Sunnyside — Jan.

★★★★★
GREG OSBY
Mimimalism
 Inner Circle — Jan.

★★★★★
STRYKER TRIO WITH BOB MINTZER
Groove Street
 Strikezone — Jan.

★★★★★
DAVID FRIESEN
This Light has No Darkness, Vol. 1
 Origin — Feb.

★★★★★
BRIAN BROMBERG
LaFaro
 Be Squared Productions — Feb.

★★★★★
WINNIPEG JAZZ ORCHESTRA
Tidal Currents: East Meets West
 Chronograph — March

★★★★★
RUDY LINKA/GEORGE MRAZ
Just Between Us
 Independent Release — April

★★★★★
THREE STORY SANDBOX
Artful Dodgers
 Tall Grass — April

★★★★★
MATT WILSON'S GOOD TROUBLE
Good Trouble
 Palmetto — April

★★★★★
KOPPEL BLADE KOPPEL
Time Again
 Cowbell — May

★★★★★
JIHYE LEE ORCHESTRA
Infinite Connections
 Motéma — June

★★★★★
NICOLA CAMINITI
Vivid Tales Of A Blurry Self-Portrait
 Independent Release — June

★★★★★
YELENA ECKEMOFF
Romance Of The Moon
 L&H Production — July

★★★★★
MAX LIGHT
Chaotic Neutral
 AGS — July

★★★★★
DAFNIS PRIETO SÍ O SÍ QUARTET
3 Sides of the Coin
 Dafnison — Sept.

★★★★★
ED NEUMEISTER QUARTET + 3
Covers
 MeisteroMusic — Oct.

★★★★★
JEFF LEDERER
"Guilty" !!!
 Little (i) — Oct.

★★★★★
T.K. BLUE
Planet Bluu
 JaJa — Nov.

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Corey Christiansen • Howard Paul • Barry Greene • Alton Merrell Trio • UNT Jazz Singers
Javier Nero Jazz Orchestra • Howard U. Afro Blue • Hillgrove HS Jazz Orch.

Reviews

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

COURTESY GEORGE CABLES



George Cables is typically assured on *I Hear Echoes*.

George Cables *I Hear Echoes*

HIGHNOTE

★★★½

Eighty-year-old pianist George Cables has still got it. He's got a good thing going with bassist Essiet Essiet, who has been part of Cables' group for the last 10 years. Drummer Jerome Jennings fits quite well as the newest addition to Cables' usual trio setup, the kind of player who has very much established his own voice and place in the scene at age 44 but still has the required respect to know he's sitting at the feet of Gamaliel.

To that end, however, Cables' latest album

is a rather nice hour that doesn't bore but also doesn't expand the form of the piano trio album, but at this point is his career, expansion of the genre doesn't seem to be Cables' focus anyway: He's a straightahead player, and he's still got it.

I Hear Echoes is an ear pleaser. "Morning Song" moves like a slow, triumphant march that feels over as soon as it starts. "Clockwise" swings nimbly along. The trio plays a light and lovely rendition of Sergio Mendez's "Like a Lover." It's not anything to be mad at an album made up primarily of standards, but it's also not much to write home about. This album isn't running a race, it's going for a morning jog as part of its regular exercise.

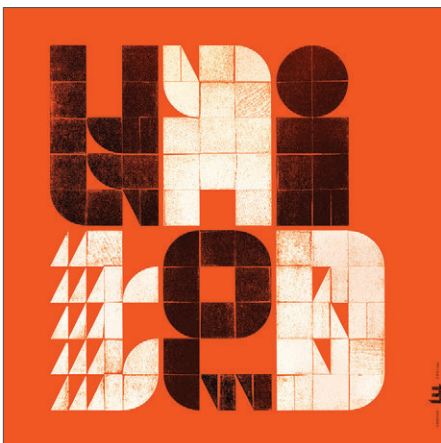
This isn't to say the album isn't an accomplishment; it's a pretty good album, but that asterisk of it being "good for an album led by an octogenarian" will always linger, even if it's still more interesting than some recordings of the same general ilk from other middle-aged musicians' releases. But for a pianist who has excelled at playing workman-like straightahead music for decades, one couldn't expect any less.

—Anthony Dean-Harris

I Hear Echoes: Echo Of A Scream; Echoes; So Near, So Far; Morning Song; Prelude to a Kiss; Clockwise; Like a Lover; You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To; Blue Nights; Journey to Agartha; Peace. (65:19)

Personnel: George Cables, piano; Essiet Essiet, bass; Jerome Jennings, drums.

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com



**Lionel Loueke/
Dave Holland**
United
EDITION
★★★★

The subtleties of speech are paramount when two people try to render a simpatico: accent, emphasis and inflection all play key roles in the music's character. Such nuances certainly aren't foreign to Lionel Loueke and Dave Holland. From Sara Serpa and Ziv Ravitz to Vassar Clements and Sam Rivers, the guitarist and bassist have plenty of superb pairings on their CVs. *United* lives up to its title because its

Out of/Into
Motion I
BLUE NOTE
★★★

Following in the footsteps of *Out of the Blue*, *Superblue*, the *Blue Note 7*, and the *Blue Note All-Stars*, *Out of/Into* is the latest (and least blue) supergroup assembled by Blue Note Records to showcase its most promising young players. But unlike some of its predecessors, *Motion I* doesn't pay tribute to the label's storied history by drawing on its back catalog; instead, it builds from its own ideas to make a more personal statement about the Blue Note legacy.

Although the group describes itself as a collective, pianist Gerald Clayton is perhaps first among equals, contributing four of the album's seven songs and acting as music director. But this is very much a team effort, with a greater emphasis on ensemble and interplay than on hey-look-at-me solos.

The sparse, moody "Second Day," for example, is mostly about instrumental texture and slow-simmering groove, with the band spending more time letting the melody slowly unfurl than on improvising. Likewise, the improv on "Bird's Luck" is so deftly folded into the stately flow of melody that it almost escapes notice. Even when there are obvious solo sections, they remain closely tied to the

creators are pros at sussing out the expressive essentials of duo work.

Their collaborative zest is clear from the start. Both string improvisers are percussive players, so you don't have to wait long to be swooped up by the locomotion of these pieces, especially "Essaouira." Having written all the songs except Wayne Shorter's "United," Benin-born Loueke leads the way with a galloping riff that not only compliments but is driven by Holland's rolling bass line.

Fans of the guitarist know his singing often enhances the propulsion of any given performance, and that happens repeatedly here. "Celebration" is juiced by his whispered chant, its counterpoint adding a rich agitation to the mix. Plenty feisty on its own, "Yaoundé" nonetheless gets a sweet vocal kick-off before the guys unleash some of the album's most fervent bob-and-weave action.

Occasionally, their elevated interplay has a prayer-like atmosphere. "Pure Thought" is a balm of sorts, and the prairie benediction of "Life Goes On" brokers a calming sense of hope. Ultimately, *United* pulls off the neat trick of making a formal intimacy feel like a public celebration.

—Jim Macnie

United: Essaouira; Pure Thought; Transit; Chant; Celebration; Stranger In a Mirror; Yaoundé; Life Goes On; Hideland; Humanism; United. (1:05)

Personnel: Loueke, guitar, vocals; Holland, bass.

Ordering info: editionrecords.com



ensemble feel, as on the assiduously arranged "Ofafrii."

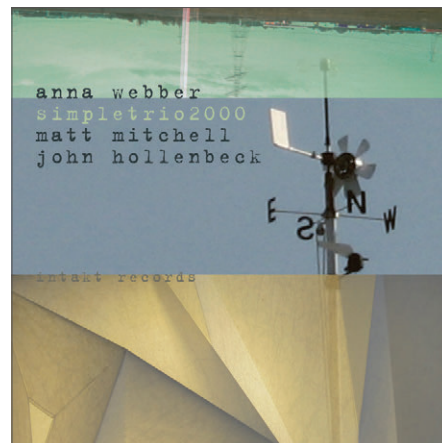
That's not to say there aren't standout moments, like altoist Immanuel Wilkins' incandescent turn on "Aspiring to Normalcy" or Joel Ross' playfully allusive solo on the hard-swinging "Synchrony." But on the whole, Blue Note's latest young lions seem more interested in the strength of the pride than in any individual's roar.

—J.D. Considine

Motion I: Ofafrii; Gabaldon's Glide; Radical; Second Day; Aspiring to Normalcy; Synchrony; Bird's Luck. (46:52)

Personnel: Immanuel Wilkins, alto saxophone; Joel Ross, vibraphone, marimba; Gerald Clayton, piano, electric piano, electronics; Matt Brewer, bass; Kendrick Scott, drums.

Ordering info: bluenote.com



**Anna Webber's
Simple Trio**
simpletrio2000
INTAKT
★★★

Classical rigor meets punk energy and cinematic noir in this latest record by the prolific composer, saxophonist and flutist Anna Webber's Simple Trio. Ten years in the making, Webber's sophomore effort is full of high-octane energy and genre-bending lines.

On *simpletrio2000*, Webber makes compositional concepts like polyrhythm, microtonality and perpetuum mobile feel accessible. "Slingshot" moves with the pulse of a heist film, anchored by a relentless driving dialogue between Webber's sax and Matt Mitchell's piano punctuated by dramatic staccato notes. "Idiom VII" has a sense of narrative woven into the jagged, angular lines of Webber's sax as it wrestles with the urgent, pulsating interplay between Mitchell's piano and drummer John Hollenbeck's backbeat. "miiire" sounds like a deconstructed "Flight of the Bumblebee," with Webber's throaty, effervescent flute locked in a dynamic call-and-response with Hollenbeck's persistent percussion.

"Foray" has an ominous feel to it that slowly builds in heat through Webber's mercurial trills on the flute. Meanwhile, "Five Eateries (in New England)" is a more balanced duet between Webber's saxophone and Mitchell's roving piano. These cinematic overtures are punctuated by three solo interludes, one for each member of the trio. "g=GM/r²" highlights Mitchell's muscular, dizzying piano while "Ch9tter" features Hollenbeck's disciplined-yet-kinetic percussion.

The album shows Webber to be a masterful and imaginative composer. She brings technical rigor to her arrangements, while giving the band wide berth to explore free-jazz lines, extended techniques and joyful exchanges.

—Ivana Ng

simpletrio2000: Slingshot; Idiom VII; Fixed Do; Foray; Five Eateries (in New England); g=GM/r²; miiire; 8va; Ch9tter; Moveable Do (LaLa Bémol). (58:29)

Personnel: Anna Webber, tenor saxophone, flute, bass flute; Matt Mitchell, piano; John Hollenbeck, drums.

Ordering info: annawebber.bandcamp.com

The Hot Box

Critics	Anthony Dean-Harris	Jim Macnie	J.D. Considine	Ivana Ng
George Cables <i>I Hear Echoes</i>	★★★½	★★★	★★★	★★★
Dave Holland/Lionel Loueke <i>United</i>	★★★★	★★★★	★★★½	★★★★
Out Of/Into <i>Motion I</i>	★★★½	★★★★	★★★	★★★½
Anna Webber's Simple Trio <i>simpletrio2000</i>	★★★	★★★½	★★★★	★★★

Critics' Comments

George Cables, *I Hear Echoes*

You expect the grace that shoots from pianist's fingers, but his umpteenth album is also about dazzle. And drive. Rhythmic interplay carries the day, making "You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To" feel like an Indy 500 soundtrack. —*Jim Macnie*

Cables at 80 hasn't lost a step; indeed, his left-hand on "Echo of a Scream" would humble players half his age. "Prelude to a Kiss" is particularly impressive, both for the stunning, unaccompanied intro and the way it breathes new life into an old standard. —*J.D. Considine*

Though frenetic and unfocused at times, the record is buoyed by the trio's fluid rapport and Cables' joyful sprints on the piano. —*Ivana Ng*

Lionel Loueke/Dave Holland, *United*

Loueke has always been able to fill musical space with dense beauty from his guitar and voice alone, but having bassist Holland alongside him packs this album to the brim with elegant grace that can stand the test of time for how much it achieves with so little. —*Anthony Dean-Harris*

A collaboration that brings out the best in both players. Despite the lack of drums, tracks like "Tranxit" and "Hideland" get fantastically funky. —*J.D. Considine*

Fusing modern jazz motifs with West African rhythms and lyricism, this record is both high-octane energy and delicate introspection. Holland's understated yet assertive bass is in perfect harmony with Loueke's warm vocals and kinetic guitar. —*Ivana Ng*

Out Of/Into, *Motion I*

The Blue Note supergroup continues to gel but still can't fight feeling like a matchmaker set everyone up and is insistently nudging the listener with their elbow to say that a group like this *should* work — even when it undeniably does. —*Anthony Dean-Harris*

It's impossible to resist the unfurling lyricism and lithe mechanics feeding this program's introspection. From Clayton's organized jaunts to Wilkins' measured breaths, the music radiates. —*Jim Macnie*

An all-star quintet explores new dimensions of on this debut album of post-bop, sumptuous melodies, muscular improvisation and dynamic musicality. The compositions are tight yet expansive, and the band's synergy is palpable. —*Ivana Ng*

Anna Webber's Simple Trio, *simpletrio2000*

Webber's music is as fun as it is difficult. It's worth it to wrap one's mind around this puzzling music, but one really has to be into puzzles. Pianist Matt Mitchell is well at home in this sound. —*Anthony Dean-Harris*

If the staccato hiccups start to bewilder, the legato waves provide a cool curvature. Meaning the flow is both adventurous and amiable. Also meaning Webber's not only an intrepid composer, but a wise arranger as well. —*Jim Macnie*

The writing here is absolutely brilliant, full of big ideas, sly rhythmic twists and ingenious slivers of melody. But the playing is even better: tight, intuitive and so deeply connected that the three sound sometimes like a single player, and sometimes like an entire orchestra. —*J.D. Considine*



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Samora Pinderhughes *Venus Smiles Not In The House Of Tears*

MACHEL/GOOD CLOUD DAY

★★★★★

On some levels, Samora Pinderhughes' meditative and often melancholic concept album *Venus Smiles Not In The House Of Tears* plays like a breakup album of unusually eloquent dimensions. Yet the larger issue — on such songs as the restlessly simmering “Inertia” and “Storm” — is mental health, healing and self-reconciliation.

Musically, aspects of Pinderhughes' jazz ethos are folded subtly into the textural swirls

and ethereal cushioning by co-producer Jack DeBos, with natural parallels to Radiohead's moody/heady pop aesthetics. Pinderhughes embodies the voices of vulnerable characters, in a voice between a whisper and a soft soul touch. We have to lean into this music to get on Pinderhughes' understated level.

Pinderhughes, like his gifted sister Elena (one of several guests on these tracks), is a multidisciplinary and genre-blurring talent. Variations on themes keep the fabric of the 11-track work in flux and alluring on the ear, as when the brooding initial four-song section yields to “Slow Tune,” a tougher, non-slow tune about inner demons.

Venus' song cycle/structural puzzle leads to a cathartic climax on “WCID,” building to a crescendo and an emotional release over the lyric “remember me, when everything falls apart.” The closing “Forgive Yourself” could seem like a sophisticated variation on a self-help adage, with its refrain “Forgive yourself, learn to live with yourself, don't hurt yourself...” But its message is a well-earned closing statement to a musically and emotionally moving narrative about healing and dealing.

—Josef Woodard

Venus Smiles Not in the House of Tears: Better; Inertia; Gatsby; Hands; Slow Time; Venus; Storm; Drown; Erased; WCID; Forgive Yourself. (41:51)

Personnel: Samora Pinderhughes, keyboards, vocals; Elena Pinderhughes, flute; Joshua Crumbly, Kyle Miles, Burniss Earl Travis, electric bass; Brad Allen Williams, Gabe Schneider, electric guitar; Riley Mulherkar, trumpet; Andy Clausen, trombone; Jehbreal Muhammad Jackson, Elliott Skinner, vocals.

Ordering info: samorapinderhughes.bandcamp.com

Vanisha Gould *She's Not Shiny, She's Not Smooth*

CELLAR MUSIC

★★★★½

On her debut recording as a bandleader, singer and composer, Vanisha Gould leads her trio through 11 songs that describe relationships with compassion and a bit of dark humor.

Shortly before composing these tunes, she was struggling with writer's block. When the Jazz Gallery in New York asked her to compose a set for a performance, inspiration returned and she put these tunes together. Shortly thereafter, she went into the studio with her trio — drummer Jongkuk Kim, pianist Chris McCarthy and bass player John Sims — and cut this album. Gould has an impressive vocal range and a free-flowing style, combining scattered melismas, spoken word, vocalese and elements of pop singing. “Real Estate Agent Love Song” describes an ideal relationship taking place in a perfect home. Gould sings in a playful tone, dropping a quote from “My Blue Heaven” into the coda. Gould dances around the beat of “Don't Worry 'Bout Me,” a swinging kiss-off to an unkind partner, hoping that karma will deliver the comeuppance he deserves. The most moving piece is “Donovan.” Sims plays a bowed



bass line that sets a solemn tone, as Gould describes a mother mourning for the child that was taken away from her, when she was young and irresponsible.

As you listen to the way these tunes flow between styles, and to the smooth interaction between Gould and her trio as they improvise and play off each other, it's hard to imagine they had their roots in a bout of writer's block. —j. poet

She's Not Shiny, She's Not Smooth: She's Not Shiny, She's Not Smooth; Demure; Real Estate Agent Love Song; Cute Boy; Get Out Of My Way; Just A Man; Oh My Dear Friends; Now That You're Here; Donovan; Don't Worry 'Bout Me; New Dance. (48:31)

Personnel: Vanisha Gould, vocals; Chris McCarthy, piano; John Sims, bass; Jongkuk Kim, drums.

Ordering info: cellarlive.com



Atlanticus *Oceanic*

INDEPENDENT RELEASE

★★★★

Atlanticus, a transatlantic quartet composed both of American and British musicians, came together in 2016 when Washington, D.C.-based tenor saxophonist Peter Fraize traveled to the U.K., subsequently meeting Brighton-based keys player Terry Seabrook, trumpeter Jack Kendon and drummer Milo Fell. So, it feels only natural that *Oceanic* the “big pond” that both separates the quartet and brings them together.

Oceanic is an eight-track album anchored by *The Oceanic Suite*, five interconnected originals that contemplate humanity's relationship to the ocean. Created in support of UNESCO's Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, each poignant movement explores a different angle of this natural wonder and our responsibility to it, driven forward by the band's palpable environmental advocacy.

Musically, the record highlights Fraize's lush, warm tone and inventive improvisations, as well as his blend with Kendon, who plays with command and lyricism throughout. Fell and Seabrook shine, too, particularly during unscripted, improvisational moments when the quartet can step away from the intricate compositions and dive deep into their interaction.

Like its muse, *Oceanic* ebbs, flows and crests. *The Oceanic Suite's* third movement, “Choices” is a high point, with its deliciously angular melody and Seabrook's adventurous organ stylings, as is the culmination of the suite, “Finale/How Deep is the Ocean,” which relevantly combines an intricate original with the sublime Irving Berlin jazz classic. Another highlight is “Uneven Shores,” a Kendon original that rings both familiar and unexpected, much like *Oceanic* overall. —Alexa Peters

Oceanic: Oceanic Part I—Oceans; Oceanic Part II—Diversity; Oceanic Part II—Choices; Oceanic Part IV—Impact; Oceanic Part V—Finale/How Deep Is the Ocean?; Uneven Shores; Skypiece; Mandy. (66:42)

Personnel: Peter Fraize, tenor saxophone; Milo Fell, drums; Jack Kendon, trumpet; Terry Seabrook, organ.

Ordering info: atlanticusjazz.bandcamp.com

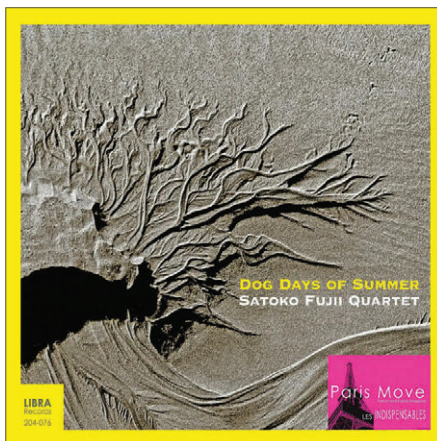


Joe Fonda
Eyes On The Horizon
 LONG SONG
 ★★★★★

Satoko Fujii
Dog Days Of Summer
 LIBRA
 ★★★★★½

Along with Japanese pianist Satoko Fujii, both these albums share a “thinking out loud” quality. While they both follow roads less traveled, there are differences in their respective “thoughts.”

A key alliance comes with bassist Joe Fonda



and trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith on Fonda’s *Eyes On The Horizon*, their first collaboration since the mid-’80s. Smith’s sound and influence are all over this album. Yet this is definitely Fonda’s music: seven tracks that span the gamut of free expression. They’re joined by Fujii and Italian drummer Tiziano Tononi. Composed music that feels and becomes improvised, as on “Eyes on the Horizon opus #3,” showcases the band’s collective ability to blend its voices even as they move in and out of solos. “Inspiration opus #1” finds each player poking and laying back, venturing forth sans tempo, a template for expression amidst the deep listening Fonda’s arrangements require.

Fujii’s reflective, sometimes punchy piano

playing has ample display on Fonda’s album; she, too, gives space to everyone on her own *Dog Days Of Summer*. It’s been almost two decades since this band recorded together. Another trumpeter, Natsuki Tamura, joins her, along with bassist Takeharu Hayakawa and drummer Tatsuya Yoshida, for another quartet outing that sports an even more unbridled series of excursions, perhaps reflecting this ensemble’s high integration. Alternating the occasional choppy arrangement with hints of an avant rhapsody that digresses into more “thinking out loud” conversation, “Not Together” is wild, anchored by Fujii’s thick chords as everyone ironically plays “together.” The pianist’s rhapsodic/angular lead-in to “Haru wo Matsu” commingles with Tamura’s stately playing, offering more contrast to what remains a free-wheeling enterprise. Arrangements once again mingle with spontaneous expression.

—John Ephland

Eyes On The Horizon: Inspiration opus #1 (for Wadada Leo Smith); My song opus #2; We need members opus #4 (for Wadada Leo Smith); Like no other (for Bobby Naughton); Listen To Dr. Cornel West; Bright light opus #5 (for Wadada Leo Smith); Eyes on the horizon opus #3 (for Wadada Leo Smith). (63:12)

Personnel: Joe Fonda, bass; Wadada Leo Smith, trumpet; Satoko Fujii, piano; Tiziano Tononi, drums.

Ordering info: longsongrecords.bandcamp.com

Dog Days Of Summer: Not Together; Haru wo Matsu; Metropolitan Expressway; A Parcel For You; Circle Dance; Low; Dog Days Of Summer. (54:51)

Personnel: Natsuki Tamura, trumpet; Satoko Fujii, piano; Hayakawa Takeharu, bass; Tatsuya Yoshida, drums.

Ordering info: librarerecords.com

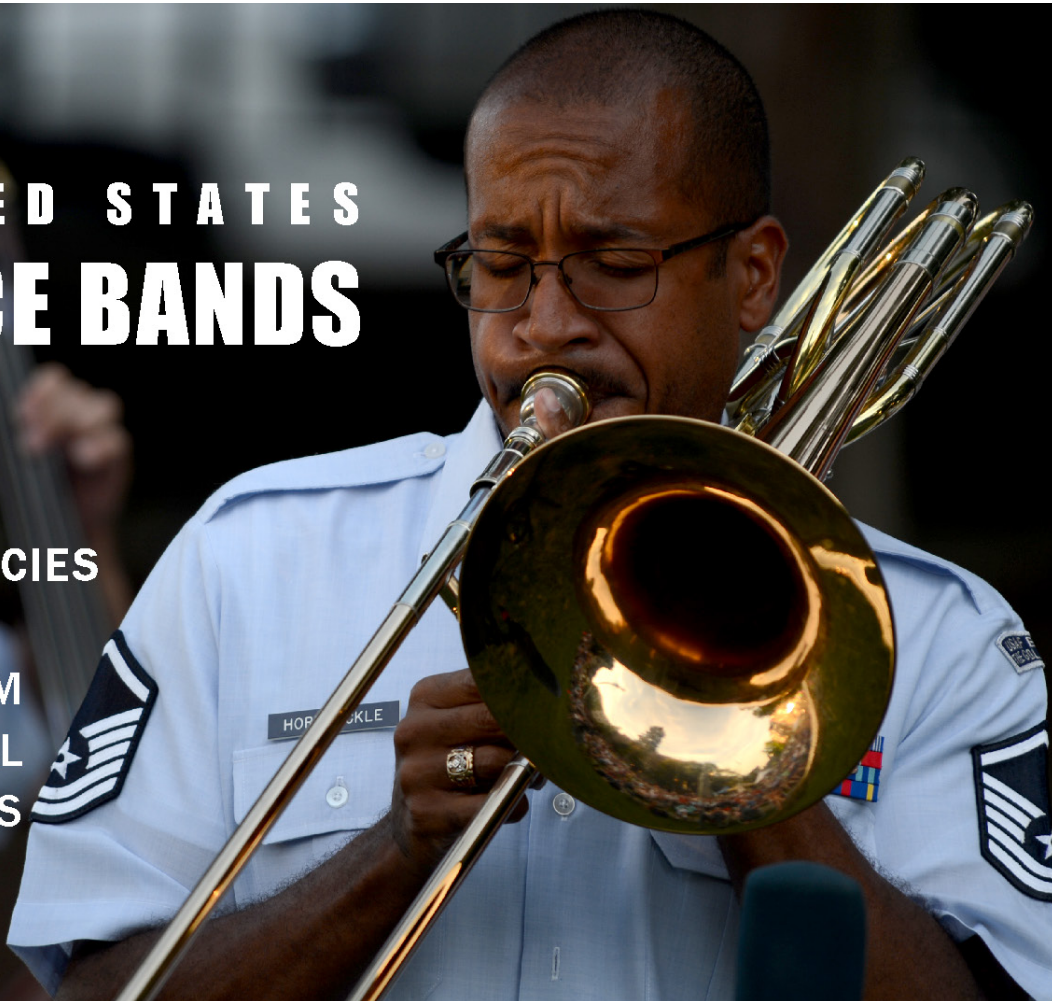


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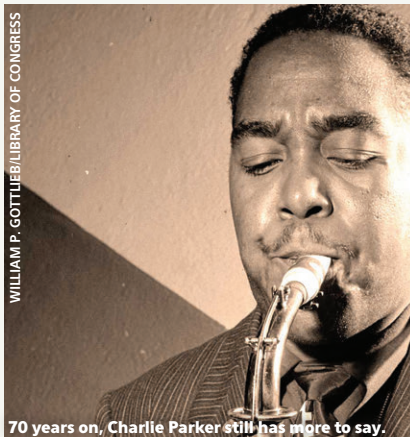
New Old Secrets Still Surfacing

During the first three decades after **Charlie Parker's** 1955 death, there were countless posthumous releases. Many were recorded by fans; some were barely listenable; only a handful added to the altoist's legacy. Now, 70 years since Parker's passing, suddenly some well-recorded and valuable "new" recordings appear on *Bird In Kansas City* (Verve; ★★★★★ 45:29). The music is from three periods. The first seven numbers, comprising four standards, a medium-tempo blues and two jams based on "Rhythm" changes, has Parker in July 1951 accompanied by an unidentified walking bassist. The 23 minutes feature Bird at the peak of his powers, playing chorus after chorus of mostly fresh ideas; even the occasional clichés were originally his. "Bird #3" and "Cherokee" in particular are filled with blazing double-time runs that still sound modern today. Five other selections from June 1944 are even more valuable, showcasing Parker with metronomic backup by rhythm guitarist Effergie Ware and quiet accompaniment from drummer Edward "Little Phil" Phillips.

On such numbers as the ballad "My Heart Tells Me," and "I Found A New Baby," the altoist shows that he had his style together three months prior to his "Red Cross" recording session with Tiny Grimes. Also on this CD are two numbers from Feb. 6, 1941, with the Jay McShann Orchestra, two months before their first session for the Decca label. Parker's chorus on "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You" is filled with new ideas not previously played on record by anyone else.

Ordering info: store.vervarecords.com

When casual fans are asked what they like about jazz, some respond that they find it relaxing and soothing. Those listeners are advised not to acquire **McCoy Tyner & Joe Henderson's** *Forces Of Nature: Live At Slugs'* (Blue Note; ★★★★★½ 82:04) or **Charles Tolliver & Music Inc.'s** *Live At The Captain's Cabin (Reel To Reel)*, (★★★★½ 79:04), for those two-CD sets are quite intense, explorative and fiery. For 1966's *Forces Of Nature*, one should not think of tenor-saxophonist Henderson's Jobim and Strayhorn tribute albums or pianist Tyner's later relatively relaxed recordings. They perform five lengthy selections with bassist Henry Grimes and drummer Jack DeJohnette that are often explosive. "In 'N Out" is stormy from the start, Henderson taking a 14-minute solo and Tyner wailing for 10. While "We'll Be Together Again" starts out gently before building up, the 28-minute "Taking Off" gets rid of its rapid theme quickly and features Henderson at his most passionate. "The Believer" is a jazz waltz that features the pianist while the concluding "Isotope" has Henderson and



WILLIAM P. GOTTLEIB/LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

70 years on, Charlie Parker still has more to say.

Tyner at their most boppish and lighthearted.

Ordering info: bluenote.com

Charles Tolliver, one of the top trumpeters of the 1970s (he deserves to be mentioned in the same sentence as Freddie Hubbard and Woody Shaw), began collaborating with pianist Stanley Cowell in 1968 when they both played with Gary Bartz and Max Roach. They formed their Music Inc. quartet in 1969 and their Strata-East label in 1970. Music Inc. recorded five albums during 1969–73, with the new *Reel to Reel* release being their fourth. Taken from a June 24, 1973, concert in Edmonton, Canada, the quartet with bassist Clint Houston and the lesser-known but excellent drummer Cliff Barbaro performs seven selections. The music (five Tolliver originals, one by Houston, and Neal Hefti's "Repetition") is consistently high-powered other than the lone ballad "Truth." Highlights include the rhythmic "Earl's World," the simple but assertive patterns of "Impact," an uptempo version of "Repetition" and Houston's catchy "Stretch."

Ordering info: cellarlive.com

Keith Jarrett's *The Old Country* (ECM; ★★★★★ 67:29) is taken from the same Sept. 16, 1992, engagement as the 1994 CD *At The Deer Head Inn*. For the only time in his career, the pianist leads a trio that has both bassist Gary Peacock (from his Standards Trio) and drummer Paul Motian, who was with Jarrett's classic American quartet of the 1970s. The eight well-known songs receive subtle and inventive treatments similar to what one heard with the Standards Trio. Peacock (who has occasional solos) and Motian worked together many times through the years and they form a tight foundation for Jarrett's thoughtful solos. The results, which include an uptempo "Everything I Love," a sensitive "I Fall In Love Too Easily" and an extensive version of Nat Adderley's "The Old Country," are as rewarding as one would expect. **DB**

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

OHAD TALMOR BACK TO THE LAND CHRIS TORDINI-ERIC McPHERSON



Ohad Talmor *Back To The Land*

INTAKT

★★★★

Though unmentioned in the liner notes or anywhere else in the CD package, the core of the repertoire on this album from tenor saxophonist Ohad Talmor comes from his transcriptions of a 1998 Ornette Coleman rehearsal tape with his long-time colleagues Charlie Haden and Billy Higgins, along with fellow altoist Lee Konitz, as they prepared for a single performance later that year at the Umbria Jazz Festival. While the release contains some well-known themes from Coleman and sometime frontline partner Dewey Redman, the bulk of these 24 pieces are variations Talmor created on the tunes on the tape.

Working primarily with bassist Chris Tordini and drummer Eric McPherson, the saxophonist also enlisted a variety of guests bringing different perspectives and approaches to some of the Coleman pieces, including "Quartet Variations on Tune 8," a glorious polyphonic trio of Talmor and trumpeters Russ Johnson and Shane Endsley, all improvising simultaneously, prodded only by McPherson. The first disc sticks with acoustic arrangements, the trio handling seven of 10 pieces on its own, the agile rhythm section giving Talmor fleet support as he works his way through previously unheard nuggets and vintage gems like "Kathlyn Grey." The second disc is expansive yet introspective, with electronics and effects entering the fold. These fragments ultimately serve as the lens through which Talmor reveals the current diapason of his practice more than Ornette arcana. —Peter Margasak

Back to the Land: Seeds; Trio Variations on Tune 11; Accords—Quintet Variations on Tune 12; Kathlyn Grey; Dewey's Tune; Trio Variations on Tune 6; Quartet Variations on Tune 8; Trio Variations (fast) on Tune 7; New York; Mushi Mushi; Accords for Two; Trio Variations on Tune 1; Accords for Five; Trio Variations on Tune 2; Electric Sunglasses; Back to the Land; Quartet Variations on Tune 4—Peace Warriors; Four Sextet Variations on Tune 4; Accords for Four; Astonishment; Quartet Variations on Tune 3; A Good Question; Quintet Variations on Tune 10. (81:10)

Personnel: Ohad Talmor, tenor saxophone, MiniMoog, Prophet 10, programming; Chris Tordini, basses; Eric McPherson, drums; Joel Ross, vibraphone; David Virelles, Leo Genovese, piano; Shane Endsley, Russ Johnson, Adam O'Farrill, trumpet; Denis Lee, bass clarinet; Grégoire Maret, harmonica.

Ordering info: intaktrec.ch



MTB Solid Jackson

CRISS CROSS JAZZ

★★★★½

There's something the great drummer Billy Higgins once said about ego and stardom. As cited in James Gordon Williams's excellent *Crossing Bar Lines*, he believed that ego "blocked the Creator from working through" the performer. Stars often lose themselves. In a society where stardom is everything, it is always refreshing to hear those who could take center stage choose instead to work together. Brad Mehldau, Mark Turner, Peter Bernstein

Scott Colley/Edward Simon/Brian Blade Three Visitors

GROUNDUP

★★★★★

On *Three Visitors*, the concept of time traveling is manifested through poetic melodies and celestial rhythms. The many improvisational exchanges are at times hard to follow, but the core beauty of this offering is the trio's rapport.

Bassist Scott Colley, pianist Edward Simon and drummer Brian Blade have been linked in quartets with David Binney and Adam Rogers. Yet each are veteran band and session leaders and their genius is reflected in these eight original compositions. For those with an affinity for classical arrangements intertwined with jazz, the opening track, "Nostalgia," is packed with those elements.

Blade continues the lighter mood with the momentous ballad "Kintsukuroi," which refers to the Japanese art of restoring broken pottery. Blade approaches the melody with sheer tenderness, barely brushing the snares with his sticks.

Colley's compositions are also standouts. On the folk inspired "The Thicket," Colley and Blade show similar virtuosity. On "Ellipsis," and "Far Rockaway" Simon employs some of the late Andrew Hill's distinctive techniques (as heard in some of Hill's trio recordings).

The inclusion of saxophonist Chris Potter

— names who need little introduction, if any — have done just that on *Solid Jackson*, a follow-up to 2000's *Consenting Adults*.

Recorded almost 30 years apart, the decision to bring this band back together (with Larry Grenadier returning on bass, but Bill Stewart taking over the drummer's chair) has produced compelling listening. Mehldau, who can be heard on several records with the aforementioned Higgins, is always compelling. On several tunes, his solos offer something profound for us to grab hold to. But it works without devolving into ego-trippin', because this is a band that has a deep reverence for what this music can be, and not simply how it can be performed.

Reverence ought not produce any nostalgic wandering. Mehldau and Bernstein contribute two newer originals each, while Turner's solo contribution "1946" is a driving and swinging tune with a resounding theme that does brilliant things with rhythm. These originals are buttressed with tunes by saxophonists Wayne Shorter, Hank Mobley, and Harold Land, each working less as homage and more as re-exploration. This is what homage should do anyway.

—Joshua Myers

Solid Jackson: Solid Jackson; The Things That Fall Away; Angola; Soft Impression; 1946; Maury's Grey Wig; Ditty for Dewey; Ode to Angela. (53:56)

Personnel: Brad Mehldau, piano; Mark Turner, tenor saxophone; Peter Bernstein, guitar; Larry Grenadier, bass; Bill Stewart, drums

Ordering info: crisscrossjazz.com



heightens the band's collective telepathy. On the blazer "You Are," Potter delivers a powerful solo, and the song concludes with an intense orchestral gem led by Simons and Colley. Vocalist Becca Stevens adds to the record's vibrancy with "I Wanna Be with You," a fusion of R&B, folk and Caribbean music.

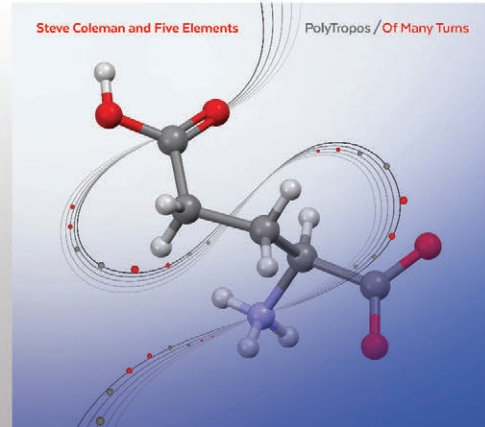
The stars aligned for this special gathering and hopefully, Simons, Colley and Blade will continue time traveling and swinging together.

—Veronica Johnson

Three Visitors: Nostalgia; Kintsukuroi; Ellipsis; The Thicket; Three Visitors; You Are; I Wanna Be With You; Far Rockaway. (48:29)

Personnel: Edward Simon, piano; Scott Colley, bass; Brian Blade, drums; Chris Potter, tenor saxophone (6); Becca Stevens, vocals (7).

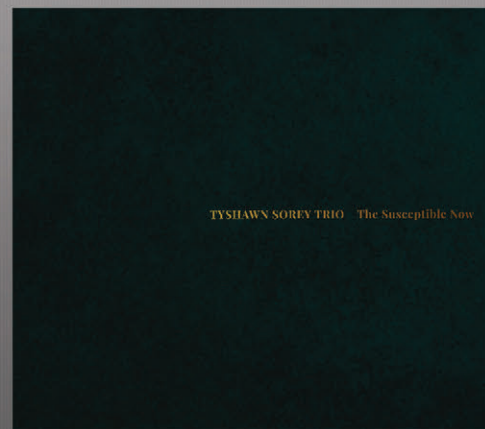
Ordering info: groundupmusic.net



Steve Coleman | PolyTropos / Of Many Turns

"Coleman's research has broadened my perception as to what's happening within the structures mapped out by the masters and shown the connection of these structures to ancient African ontological modes of thought. He's made links between various diasporic improvisational practices that have been enlightening and necessary for the story of black music and its trajectory across ages. This album shows a master at the top of his game, sharing information with a coherence, groove and intellect that I find staggeringly inspiring."

—Shabaka Hutchings



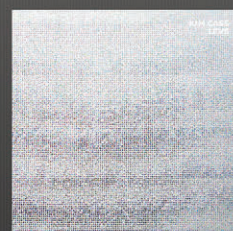
Tyshawn Sorey Trio | The Susceptible Now

Tyshawn Sorey | The Susceptible Now

★★★★★

"...Brimming with contemplative splendor... the trio conjures a spell that enchants throughout the entire album... seduces with the power of sauntering dance, flickering melodicism and emotional immediacy."

—DownBeat



Kim Cass | Levs

★★★★★

"Complex, dark and eerie, played with great force and intensity, and they start, mutate and stop with a logic that will not reveal itself unless and until you're paying close attention... Let this music flow over you, again and again. Eventually, it will blossom like a garden of flowers."

—DownBeat



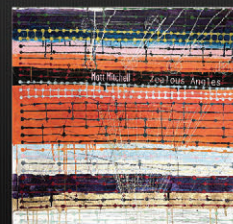
Luke Stewart | Unknown Rivers

"Intentional, engaging and fresh... Ambitious improvisation, opening minds and stretching ears."

—DownBeat

"Soulful, introspective, and passionate."

—Stereogum



Matt Mitchell | Zealous Angles

"With each new Matt Mitchell release comes an ingenious compositional gambit... And yet as intricate as the music is, it genuinely swings, a testament to the sensitivity and flair with which the trio handles Mitchell's concepts."

—The Wire

Bring Your Fine Self Home

B. B. King: *In France* (Deep Digs/Elemental; ★★★★★ 79:12) Over 50 years and as many albums, His Excellency B. B. King bestowed us with at least 15 live recordings. *Live At The Regal* (1965) and *Blues Is King* (1967), both driven in excitement by Black audiences, are the standouts. *In France*, a previously unavailable accounting of King's appearance at the 1977 Nancy Jazz Pulsations Festival, may not be in their league but it's well worth investigating. Hard-working King sings from the core of his being, and Lucille evidences his personal style of guitar brilliance through immaculate, poetic improvisation in staples like "Sweet Sixteen" and newer material such as Stevie Wonder and Syretta Wright's "To Know You Is To Love You." Ah, bent notes melt together like chocolate in a double boiler. He's so beautifully poised and so revealing of spirit that the Gallic audience is putty in his hands. The show seems scripted and formal, but that's how the global entertainment industry operates.

Ordering info: elemental-music.com

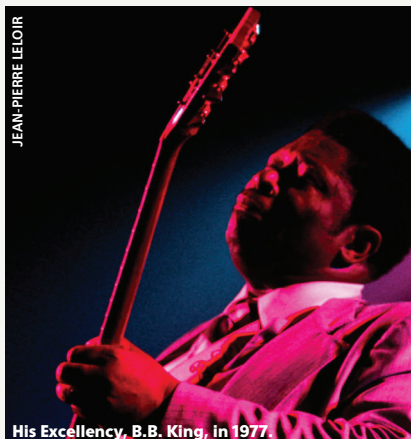
Collins, Cray & Copeland: *Showdown!* (Alligator; ★★★★★½ 43:18) Alligator boss Bruce Iglauer's grouping of friends Albert Collins, Robert Cray and Johnny Copeland, plus Collins's Icebreakers band, in a Chicago recording studio in 1985 was a real event. The unrehearsed threesome, either together or splintered into pairs, transcend what might have been an Albert Collins album with wailing guitar work that has all of them in their glory. Copeland and Cray's singing is also glorious. Collins isn't in his best form, though. Cray, then 30 and on the brink of stardom, doesn't have the Texas blues lineage of the other two, who are celebrating their Lone Star State roots, but he's game all the same. Alligator's best-selling album.

Ordering info: alligator.com

Ollee Owens: *Nowhere To Hide* (Ollee Owens Music; ★★★★★½ 46:31) A decade ago, Ollee Owens reappeared on the Western Canada blues scene after a long absence raising a family. Her second "comeback" album, made in Nashville with alert-minded if over-efficient studio players, asserts her good sense about putting just enough of herself into what's singing about — everyday stress, love gone south, etc. — in thoughtful original songs. Yet it's a gospel cover of Bob Dylan's "Lord Protect My Child" that takes top honors. With her voice a conduit of emotion, she reveals a special gift of understanding about parenthood and life.

Ordering info: olleewovens.com

Jovin Webb: *Drifter* (Blind Pig; ★★★★★½ 43:53) The triumph of Jovin Webb's first release hinges on the expressive strength of his singing. The 33-year-old, who once had a few minutes of fame on *American Idol*, comes up aces. With an utterly convincing



His Excellency, B.B. King, in 1977

deep-blues voice that seems to be stained by nicotine and marinated in rye whiskey, the lifelong Louisianian pushes to make sense of conflicted life (the sacred vs. the profane, the vagaries of love) in the truthful words and music of songs mostly composed by Webb and drummer-producer Tom Hambridge. First-call studio players smooth any rough edges as they dutifully lean into Chicago blues, Memphis soul, Chuck Berry R&B, blues-rock.

Ordering info: blindpigrecords.com

Bex Marshall: *Fortuna* (Independent Release; ★★★★★ 41:03) When in the mood for superior modern blues, give your attention to the new album by Bex Marshall, her first for 11 years and fourth overall. The Londoner, a fast-burning fuse of a vocalist and guitarist, has the tone of soul-baring honesty to what she has to relate about relationships in substantial original songs. The lone instrumental, "Fortuna," is a roots-rock marvel thanks to Marshall's firm control of her resonator guitar. Cinematic equivalent: Steve McQueen speeding his Mustang up and down the hills of San Francisco in *Bullitt*.

Ordering info: bexmarshall.com

Blind Gary Davis: *Harlem Street Singer* (Craft/Bluesville; ★★★★★½ 43:08) Gary Davis brought high emotional temperature to his solo performances of "holy blues"— religious lyrics grafted onto blues — on this now-reissued album from 1960 that heightened his stature in the 1960s folk revival. The 64-year-old preacher's voice is Goliath-strong, guttural and moved by the Holy Spirit, having developed over decades of busking in New York or North Carolina. Just as wonderful is his thumb-and-forefinger guitar picking, so intricate and so wisely deliberate. Of a dozen selections, "Samson And Deliah" and "Twelve Gates To The City" are far and away the most famous.

DB

Ordering info: craftrecordings.com



Thumbscrew *Wingbeats*

CUNEIFORM

★★★★

For almost a decade, the members of Thumbscrew have been rolling into Pittsburgh for a two-week residency at City of Asylum, a program founded to help writers in exile. Seven of their eight albums — 2016's *Convallaria*, 2018's fraternal twins *Ours* and *Theirs*, 2020's *The Anthony Braxton Project*, 2021's *Never Is Enough*, 2022's *Multicolored Midnight* and this one — have been workshoped and usually recorded there. Typically, each member of the group brings in three compositions (on *Convallaria*, Formanek offered five), and there may be an outside piece to finish things off; here, it's Charles Mingus' "Orange Was the Color of Her Dress, Then Blue Silk." Imposing structure on themselves has strengthened their music, because it's approached as work, and played with force and conviction.

On this album, as on *Multicolored Midnight*, Fujiwara switches between drums and vibraphone depending on the track. When he's behind the kit, he's often in a martial spirit, whipping the trio into shape and keeping them moving anytime there seems to be a risk of slipping sideways. Halvorson's carefully picked notes and trademark squiggles are present, but even more than usual they seem balanced by Formanek's massive, tree-trunk bass; his opening solo on "How May I Inconvenience You Today?" is like someone conducting an earthquake.

When Fujiwara is on vibes, the music is no less driven. He doesn't offer shimmering, cloudlike chords — he taps out melodies, and occasionally ("Greenish Tents") gets hung up on a single note, tapping it into the listener's skull like a nail.

—Phil Freeman

Wingbeats: Wingbeats; Greenish Tents; How May I Inconvenience You Today?; Irreverent Grace; Pyrrhic; Wayward; Knots; Singlet; Somewhat Agree; Orange Was The Color Of Her Dress, Then Blue Silk. (61:18)

Personnel: Mary Halvorson, guitar; Michael Formanek, bass; Tomas Fujiwara, drums and vibraphone.

Ordering info: cuneiformrecords.com



Ben Wendel
Understory: Live at the Village Vanguard
 EDITION

★★★★½

On 2023's *All One*, saxophonist-composer Wendel created chorales of multilayered woodwinds in support of a list of guest soloists. It was a dreamy concoction, though strictly a product of the studio. An antidote to that orderly approach, Wendel lets loose and wails with abandon on this live outing while also letting the music simmer and breathe as each piece evolves.

One of the most formidable post-Michael Brecker tenor saxophonists on the scene today,

Ritenour/Grusin
Brasil

CANDID
 ★★★

Brazilian music has left its influence and imprint on many corners of the jazz world, including smooth jazz. In that scene, Brazilian traditions have largely been diluted and made palatable to a more casual listenership. On this album, though, smooth jazz architects Lee Ritenour and Dave Grusin have gamely and affectionally gone back to the source of inspiration and DNA in their musical being, fittingly recorded both in Sao Paulo and Santa Monica.

Brasil features many glowing moments and respectful treatments of classic Brazilian songwriters Milton Nascimento ("Catavento"), Ivan Lins ("Vitoriosa"), Celso Fonseca ("Meu Samba Torto") and a lesser-traveled Jobim tune ("Stone Flower"). Yet we also sometimes sense something cushy in approach, where we might yearn for a bit more of the edge or harmonic complexity key to the Brazilian musical aesthetic.

Part of the project's charm and variety is due to the guest company — and indigenous rhythm section — the leaders keep, especially the great chromatic harmonica master Gregoire Maret who lends his melodically charged virtuosity to three tracks.

Wendel distinguishes himself from the opening track, "Lu," as a being in command of the full range of his horn. And the percolating rhythm tandem of bassist Linda May Han Oh and drummer Obed Calvaire pushes him to some exhilarating heights on these seven tracks.

The herky-jerky head on "Proof," Wendel's clever contrafact of Thelonious Monk's "Evidence," presents pianist Gerald Clayton with some rhythmic challenges before he breaks free to burn on the uptempo swing section. And Wendel responds in kind with a heated Brecker-ian solo of his own. The quartet reinvents Ferde Grofé's "On the Trail," which had its first public performance in 1931 by the Paul Whiteman Orchestra, by incorporating hip counterpoint phases and an overall vibe of cool. The laid back second line groover "Scosh," an obvious nod to John Scofield, finds Calvaire incorporating Bill Stewart's trademark flam fills, while the tender ballad "Jean & Renata" has Wendel creating a mellow ambience with echo effects on his sax (a la '70s John Klemmer). Thoughtful compositions, sparkling interplay, with killer solos from the leader.

—Bill Milkowski

Understory: Live at the Village Vanguard; Lu; Proof; On the Trail; Scosh; Jean & Renata; I Saw You Say; Tao. (65:04)
Personnel: Ben Wendel, tenor saxophone; Gerald Clayton, piano; Linda May Han Oh; Obed Calvaire.
Ordering info: editionrecords.com



For the last two tunes on the album — Ritenour's "Lil' Rock Way" and Grusin's "Canto Invierno (Winter Song)," the feel and spirit leans more into their comfortable happy place of smooth jazz manners. Suddenly, we detect a quality of "LA calling," with Brazil in the margins, whereas it had been more in the spotlight previously.

—Josef Woodard

Brasil Calling: Cravo e Canela (Cloves & Cinnamon); For the Palms; Catavento; Vitoriosa (Victorious); Meu Samba Torto (My Crooked Samba); Stone Flower feat. Chico Pinheiro; Boca De Siri (Keep It Quiet); Lil' Rock Way; Canto Invierno (Winter Song). (41:51)
Personnel: Lee Ritenour, guitar; Dave Grusin, piano and keyboards; Edu Ribeiro, drums; Bruno Migotto, bass; Marcelo Costa, percussion; Gregoire Maret, chromatic harmonica; Tatiana Parra, vocals; Ivan Lins, vocal; Chico Pinheiro, guitar; Celso Fonseca, guitar.

Ordering info: candidrecords.com



Neta Raanan
Unforeseen Blossom
 GIANT STEP ARTS

★★★★½

Perhaps fittingly, Neta Raanan's bandleader debut, *Unforeseen Blossom*, opens with intentional dissonance (like a garden variety birth) by way of Joel Ross on vibes. This discord resolve quickly though, and we are left with a fairly standard post-bop styled number.

Recorded live at a bar in Brooklyn, New York, this album serves as an introduction to Neta's voice, which was, in part, shaped by classic live albums by artists like Charlie Parker, Charles Mingus, Joe Henderson and Charlie Haden. Those influences are very clear on this recording. On the subject of live albums, this is a very tastefully mixed version. The judicious amount of room affords listeners a true sense of space that still feels intimate.

Though the album begins in a post-bop space, the overall sound is more varied. For instance, the dabbling in earthy unplugged psychedelic fusion on tracks such as the title cut is particularly satisfying. "Late Fire Colors" is a rollicking groovy number with a shifting center of gravity bound by Ross's interplay with drummer Kayvon Gordon. At times, Neta playing in intricate unison with Ross serves as a parlor trick, drawing the ear to both players' respective senses of precision. The album closes with "CY," a slightly psychedelic bop fusion that plays out as a far-out version of a Curtis Amy recording (from back when his band featured a young sideman by the name of Roy Ayers).

Overall, each member of this band shines, but it remains to be seen how this blossom will grow into its first flowering.

—Ayana Contreras

Unforeseen Blossom: Violet, Blue Jay, Unforeseen Blossom, Mountain Voice, Late Fire Colors, Melt, CY. (73:14)
Personnel: Neta Raanan, tenor saxophone; Joel Ross, vibes; Simon Willson, bass; Kayvon Gordon, drums.

Ordering info: giantsteparts.org



Steve Smith Vital Information
New Perspective
 DRUM LEGACY
 ★★★

You could argue that a new perspective isn't the same thing as a new direction and that Smith, who always seemed to be holidaying from jazz in the prog band-cum-saga that was Journey, is doing no more here than revisiting his own repertory.

This new incarnation of Vital Information was apparently sparked when Smith heard keyboardist Manuel Valera's jazz-fusion

Jeff Parker ETA IVtet
The Way Out of Easy
 INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM
 ★★★★★½

Throughout his career guitarist Jeff Parker has participated in open-ended partnerships that transform improvising formations into bona fide bands marked by astonishing rapport and response. A few years after moving to Los Angeles from Chicago he fell into a groove with alto saxophonist Josh Johnson, bassist Anna Butters and veteran roots-rock drummer Jay Bellerose, launching a weekly session at a small Highland Park bar called ETA. The group first surfaced on 2022's remarkable *Mondays at The Enfield Tennis Academy* (Eremita), but *The Way Out of Easy*, recorded live at the same venue in January of 2023 — it closed down last December — captures the group's intense, intuitive focus, chronicled by a single evening of music beautifully recorded by Bryce Gonzales.

The group has developed a vocabulary that almost makes the use of tunes unnecessary, but the album opens with "Freakadelic," a chill funk burner previously recorded by the guitarist's old trio with greater tension and pace. The transformation is indicative of what ETA IVtet brings to the table, mastering a kind of narcotic funk-groove music that subtly demolishes

interpretation of "Don't Stop Believin'": Yes, the largest-selling song ever on iTunes turns out to have been an undercover jazz tune all the time.

Valera's arrangement of Michael Brecker's "Sumo," which Steve had played with Steps Ahead, confirms that this isn't a nostalgia band just running through old favourites, but a fresh creative twist on what always threaten to become fusion clichés.

The real jaw-dropper, though, is what Janek Gwizdala has done with — or to — "Who's Crying Now." Some fans will consider this version equivalent to putting Joker make-up on Thomas Jefferson's Mount Rushmore visage, but as reinvented rock classics goes, this one is simply too astonishing to offend even strict constructionists.

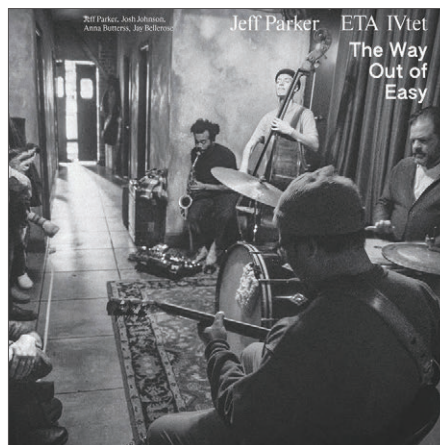
"Josef The Alchemist" is a nod to the great Zawinul, and Vital Information can place themselves very proudly in the line of Joe's most famous band. Smith himself plays with tight authority and innate musicality and this one is definitely not just for completists.

—Brian Morton

New Perspective: Don't Stop Believin'; The Perfect Date; Charukeshi Express; Open Arms; Sumo; Eight + Five; Who's Crying Now; Three Of A Kind; Josef The Alchemist. (50:04)

Personnel: Steve Smith, drums, konnakol; Manuel Valera, piano, Fender Rhodes, synthesizers; Janek Gwizdala, electric bass.

Ordering info: stevesmithdrumart.com



any jam band assumptions. Time feels limitless and a collective quicksilver alacrity lends the group endless mobility, as we witness the sleight-of-hand transformation of "Chrome Dome" from slinky groovy soul into spacious dub reggae. But the real achievement is the sophistication, patience and generosity of the players, translating off-the-charts empathy into unalloyed feeling with the most conversational tone imaginable.

—Peter Margasak

The Way Out of Easy: Freakadelic; Late Autumn; Easy Way Out; Chrome Dome. (79:58)

Personnel: Jeff Parker, electric guitar, electronics, sampler; Josh Johnson, alto saxophone, electronics; Anna Butters, amplified double bass; Jay Bellerose, drums, percussion.

Ordering info: intlanthem.com



Joel Frahm Trio
Lumination
 ANZIC
 ★★★★★

Saxophone-bass-drums is a format that has long tested creative jazz improvisors; just think Sonny Rollins, Lee Konitz, Joe Henderson, Air et al. With no chordal accompaniment trimming their sails, they are free to explore their collective imaginations.

Depending on how you count them, *Lumination* is Frahm's seventh release as leader. He's Wisconsin-born, though he spent nearly three decades in New York before relocating to Nashville. On his new disc, he's joined by his longtime trio-mates, bassist Dan Loomis and Canadian drummer Ernesto Cervini in a program of blues, ballads and originals — and a contrafact: "Kern You Dig It," based on "All The Things You Are" (though they make it a sprawling tableau while Cervini makes with the brushes).

"Catch 22" begins with a sprightly tenor-drum duet before Loomis joins in; would be so nice to hear them stretch out on this one at the end of the night. Everyone digs in on the blues "Loo-Lee," and "Disco Nern" has both a backbeat and handclaps, in case you need them. Quotes crop up as well, including cute, spontaneous reminders of "Frosty The Snowman" and "My Little Suede Shoes on "Loo-Lee."

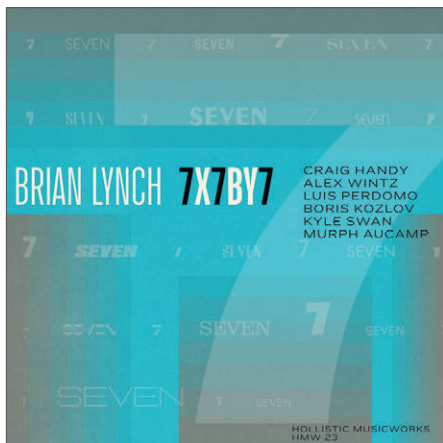
While John Coltrane never made a trio recording, his spirit and sound hover over the shifting time of "Vesper Flights." Conversely, "The Nurse Is In" comes close to Rollins' trio energy; its edgy, compact tenor solo is a heady exercise in theme-and-variation. It is the catchiest of melodies and may stay with you long after the disc ends.

—Larry Appelbaum

Lumination: The Nurse Is In; Disco Nern; Loomie Nation; Moonface Lament; Loo-Lee; False Spring; Kern You Dig It?; No Estrada; Vesper Flights; Catch 22. (49:36)

Personnel: Joel Frahm, tenor saxophone; Dan Loomis, bass; Ernesto Cervini, drums.

Ordering info: anzicrecords.com



Brian Lynch
7X7BY7
 HOLLISTIC MUSICWORKS
 ★★ ★

This accomplished recording consists of seven tracks, seven minutes each, rendered by seven musicians. *7X7BY7* also takes cues from the seven days of the week and the seven notes in the scale. But even though its format is modeled on regularity, these tracks pack drama and surprise.

Trumpeter Brian Lynch wrote these taut tunes during the pandemic. They include the urgent "High Point Of The Hang," the bluesy "Greeting On 87th St." and "Sympathetic

Vibrations," a curious, experimental tune spotlighting Luis Perdomo's elegant piano. "High Point" may be the most exciting, with "Finnegan's Garden" a close second. Other tracks boast standout solos, such as Alex Wintz's guitar turn in "On The Silk Road," Craig Handy's tenor saxophone on "Greetings On 87th St." and Lynch's heated assertions on "Sympathetic Vibrations."

"High Point" starts with forked trumpet-sax unisons that serve as the basis of an increasingly rich fabric. This is easy to visualize on a bandstand, each player goading the next. Wintz keeps the pot boiling with single-note cascades, and Handy's impassioned solo returns the tune to Kozlov, who rides Swan's drums and Murph Aucamp's tough percussion to the close.

Kozlov launches "Finnegan's Garden," seeding a tart melody spurred by Swan's enveloping drums. This feels more experimental and daring than the other tunes. The rhythm section, with Perdomo driving, is particularly kinetic here, and Swan's solo, augmented by Aucamp's percussion, is brief and stirring. It's a good way to end such a sharp album.

—Carlo Wolff

7X7BY7: In the Riv; High Point Of The Hang; Sympathetic Vibrations; On The Silver Road; Academy Blues; Greeting on 87th St.; Finnegan's Garden. (49:42)

Personnel: Murph Aucamp, percussion; Craig Handy, tenor saxophone; Boris Kozlov, bass; Brian Lynch, trumpet; Luis Perdomo, piano; Kyle Swan, drums; Alex Wintz, guitar.

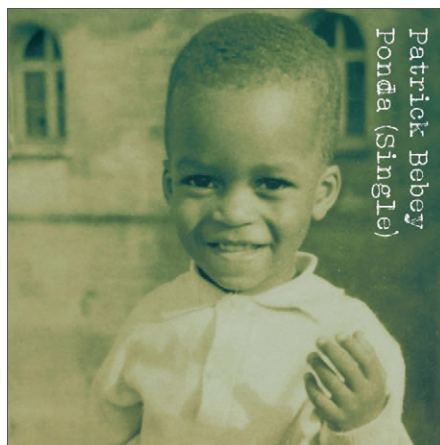
Ordering info: hollisticmusicworks.com

Patrick Bebey
Ponda
 AFRICA SEVEN
 ★★ ★

Two things are inescapable and immutable listening to Patrick Bebey: the influence of his father's musical versatility and the lilting sound of Cameroonian makossa, or as Patrick describes it "AMAYA" (African Modern And Yet Authentic). Patrick notes that *Ponda* means time, and that can be interpreted in both a musical sense and a moment for him to pay tribute to his father and several other global influences.

At first "Descente" had rhythmic connotations of the hambone, a traditional African American style of slapping the hands alternately and rapidly against the thighs and other body parts. But the track slowly settles into a smooth, even peppy upbeat pattern that typifies most of the tunes. On "Keba" the clever exchanges between the drums of Luiz Augusto Cavani and bassist Philippe Gonnand commands attention.

Bebey's prowess on the transverse and the one-note pygmy flute has been demonstrated at several performances; it has an ample showcase on "Teme," where the modulations are a combined emission of wind and quick tonguing. Many Bebey fans—of father and son—get a retrospective treat on "The Coffee Cola Song," composed by father and famously recorded with son



on the flute. Like most of the tracks, a musical-logical background, and certainly a grounding in the Bebey discography will provide a deeper understanding of the music and how it is exemplary of the designated cultural expressions.

With each recording Patrick finds new and exciting ways to continue to embellish his father's extraordinary legacy, and to establish his own.

—Herb Boyd

Ponda: Timba, Ponda, Beware, Bana, The Coffee Cola Song, Descente, Stabat Mater Dolorosa, Malea, Berceuse Bantoue, Keba, Teme, Jungle Ndehoo. (45:36)

Personnel: Patrick Bebey, (piano, senza, flute); Mathias Cavani (guitar); Luiz Augusto Cavani (drums); Line Kruse (violin); Abraham Mansfarroll (percussion); Sylvain Luc (guitar); Clément Janinet (electric mandolin); and Philippe Gonnand (electric bass).

Ordering info: africaseven.com



Jesse Davis - Yardbird Hard Rubber Alto



Immanuel Wilkins - New York Model Alto



Seamus Blake - Tonamax Hard Rubber



Mark Turner - Florida Model Hard Rubber



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Jazz From Across the Pond

After becoming the first jazz act to win a coveted Mercury Music Prize for their 2022 album, *Where I'm Meant To Be*, London-based quintet **Ezra Collective** have cemented their place as one of the UK's most acclaimed improvisatory groups. On their latest, fourth album, ***Dance, No One's Watching*** (Partisan; ★★★ 57:52), the group push their Afrobeat-inflected, uptempo sound to its loudest limits, giving their innate kineticism its fullest expression.

Sibling rhythm section Femi and TJ Koleoso put in a mighty shift throughout the album's overlong 19 tracks, thumping through fast-paced Afrobeat syncopations on "The Herald" and "Ajala," intricate high-life grooves on "Palm Wine" and Latin clave on "Shaking Body." The "dance" of the record's title is well covered on the majority of its compositions, with horn players James Mollison and Ife Ogunjobi soaring over the backbeats, yet it is on the quieter moments of the album that Ezra Collective display a different sense of musicality. It's a fresh side that could give them longevity beyond the immediate energy of their live experience.

Ordering info: ezracollective.bandcamp.com

Saxophone elder **Paul Dunmall** presents a hard-swinging, expansive big band take on his typically punchy and powerful sound with his latest release, ***Red Hot Ice*** (Discus; ★★★½ 55:36). Assembling a nine-person group featuring electronics, synthesiser, double keyboards and thumping drums courtesy of Jim Bashford, the record's five compositions touch on the breadth of the 71-year-old's influences.

It's on the longer tracks of the album, like the 15-minute "Say Hi To Your Evil/Get Comfortable" and 21-minute title track, that Dunmall and his expanded group are at their most engaging. While the downtempo electronic ambience of "The Past" and the guitar-led balladry of "Dearly Departed" show glimpses of individual virtuosity in moments like trumpeter Percy Pursglove's keening solo on the latter, the extended numbers allow the entire group to push forward with a startling, unified energy. Bebop bass lines and punctuating horn fanfares grip the listener on "Say Hi To Your Evil/Get Comfortable" while the title track develops from eerie ambience into an unsettling cacophony of full-throated expression, proving that there's still much more exciting music left to be written and performed by Dunmall.

Ordering info: discusmusic.bandcamp.com

London-based six-piece **Tanhai Collective** exemplify the city's tendency towards improvisatory fusions with their debut album ***In Lane*** (Independent Release; ★★★ 26:56). Developing their sound through grassroots training programs like Tomorrow's Warriors



COURTESY MYRA BROWNBRIDGE

Bassist Myra Brownbridge makes her debut.

and post-punk venue The Windmill, across six confident compositions the group traverses everything from medium-tempo funk and reverb-washed melodies to downbeat guitar-led introspection, soulful harmony and intricate backbeats. The ensemble's strengths lie in writing joyously expansive and memorable melodies, encompassing the ascending group horn lines of "Frame by Frame," yearning lead trumpet of "Railway" and harshly distorted electric guitar of "Blue Note." The young sextet clearly boast a tight improvisatory connection, one perfect for producing warmly satisfying tunes, but throughout *In Lane* they never break out of their comfortable range to push at the bounds of their musicianship. It's an encouraging debut but one that could do with the bravery to reach for the rougher edges.

Ordering info: tanhaicollective.bandcamp.com

Bassist **Myra Brownbridge's** debut album ***The Voyage Out*** (Independent Release; ★★★½ 36:35) eschews the trend for mixing genre influences and musical traditions among younger London players to instead produce a slight and straightforward record that is no less satisfying for its focus. The bandleader commands her quartet with a light touch, producing a masterfully restrained and groove-laden bossa nova number on "Weathering the Storm," moving, expressive balladry on "Sweeter Than Honey" and a propulsive swing, anchored in languorous bass rhythm, on "The Joy Of Being." Saxophonist George Garford interweaves sinuous lines with guitarist Tom Ollendorff throughout, while a featured appearance from saxophonist Tony Kofi on "As Dreams Are Made" lends a lyrical yearning to the composition's otherwise wistful sense of romance. Brownbridge ultimately produces a promising first album, one laden with subtlety and depth playing.

DB

Ordering info: myrabrownbridge.bandcamp.com



Igmarr Thomas' Revive Big Band Like A Tree It Grows

SOULSPAZM

★★★½

The Revive Big Band debuts on record after some 15 years of operation. Founded by brassman Igmarr Thomas and the late impresario Meghan Stable initially to "revive da live" — draw intergenerational fans of jazz, pop, soul and hip-hop into local performance venues by refuting artificial genre distinctions — the RBB revels in bluesy, broad-stroke, propulsive charts designed to let individuals shine.

The album begins with a tightly written hoe-down that develops into a bold movie soundtrack with synchronized sectional counterpoint, for a few measures dosing a marching band vibe with funk guitar. Such a throw-it-all-in, shake-it-up approach dominates. The ensemble creates reverberant beds for crooner Bilal and Jean Baylor's lush version of Wayne Shorter's "Angel Eyes," adorned by Marcus Strickland obligati. It evokes "Night in Tunisia" for deejay Raydar Ellis's "Words I Manifest" and snaps fingers to launch the faster-than-usual "Speak No Evil."

Bright moments abound: Mark Whitfield's picky intro to "Fortress"; Dr. Lonnie Smith's moody lead on "Play It Back" into an orchestra with unexpected irresistible back beat, electric bass line, Marè's chromatic harp, Francies' electro-burbling. Will melodies voiced like anthems, with standout solos over powerful drummer revive (wake up!) the audience for big bands? It's worked before. —Howard Mandel

Like A Tree It Grows: R&P; Levels; Speak No Evil; Words I Manifest; One of a Kind; The Coming; Infant Eyes; Thelonious; Thelonious; Loniou; Mark's Hope; Fortress of Hope; Angst; To Kinda Lounge Around; Runnin Outa Time; Play It Back.

Personnel: Thomas, trumpet; Andrew Gould, Brent Birkhead, Brian Landrus, Myron Walden, Anthony Ware, Marcus Strickland, saxophones; Marshall Gilkes, Frank Lacy, Alan Ferber, Jimmy O'Connell, Matt McDonald, Jerrick Matthews, James Rogers, trombones; Marquis Hill, Sean Jones, Nicholas Payton, Theo Croker, Jumaane Smith, Philip Dizack, Ryan Resky, Jonathan Powell, Shareef Clayton, James Cage, trumpets; John Davis, drums; Ben Williams, Burniss Earl Travis II, basses; Mark Whitfield, guitar; James Francies, Marc Cary, Cory Henry, piano; Gregoire Maret, harmonica; Dr. Lonnie Smith, organ; Raydar Ellis, Jean Baylor, Terrace Martin, Bilal, Talib Kwell, vocals.

Ordering info: soulspazm.bandcamp.com



Jakob Bro *Taking Turns*

ECM

★★★½

In a conversation two years ago, Danish guitar virtuoso Jakob Bro observed that in 2014, when he began his still-ongoing ECM tenure with the trio recital Gefion and the collectively-oriented encounter reviewed herein, he felt more comfortable “coming in to a session with sparse sketches and giving freedom to the people who I asked to be there as my way of creating a piece of music” than “doing something specific with my instrument.” That stated aesthetic applies to

this intriguing but lackluster album, for which Bro — who’d apprenticed over the previous decade with Paul Motian and Tomasz Stanko — convened a sextet of top-of-the-pyramid improvisers to interpret his Motian-esque simple pieces, which he jokingly described at the time as “The Great Danish Songbook.”

The musicianship is exemplary, the mood tamped-down and indecisive. Octogenarian alto saxophone hero Lee Konitz, whose unfailingly luminous solos over ocean-of-strings two-guitar textures from Bro and Bill Frisell highlighted Bro’s three prior albums for a Danish label, is just as inspired but less willing to claim his space. Thomas Morgan’s deliberate basslines and Andrew Cyrille’s array of apropos, immaculately executed rhythm timbre don’t inspire either guitarist to emerge from the mix, while even Jason Moran — the only band-member who hadn’t previously interacted with Bro — plays without his customary surefooted swagger. A little more direction and structure — as on *Once Around The Room*, Bro’s excellent 2022 septet collaboration with Joe Lovano — and a touch less politeness would have gone far.

—Ted Panken

Taking Turns: Black Is All Colors At Once; Haiti; Milford Sound; Aarhus; Pearl River; Peninsula; Mar Del Plata. (40:05)

Personnel: Jakob Bro, Bill Frisell: guitars; Lee Konitz: alto and soprano saxophones; Jason Moran: piano; Thomas Morgan: double bass; Andrew Cyrille: drums.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis *The Music of Max Roach*

BLUE ENGINE

★★★★½

Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra drummer Obed Calvaire takes a deep dive here into the work of Max Roach, recorded live in New York in January 2024. Appropriately, the album focuses on the drum kit as a storytelling instrument and embraces Roach’s fondness for 3/4 time, African polyrhythms and partner Abbey Lincoln’s vocals.

Marcus Printup’s finger-popping arrangement of “Blues Waltz” sets the tone. Calvaire dips into two tracks from Roach’s still-timely protest album *We Insist: Freedom Now Suite* (1960). “Freedom Day” features a theatrical vocal, quietly dramatic brushes and a kaleidoscopic swirl of simultaneous solos. On the field holler “Driva Man,” Johns communicates the bitterness and fatigue of enslaved humans.

Calvaire puts a heartbeat stamp on one solo drum piece, “The Drum Also Waltzes,” and showcases shimmering ride cymbal on the other, “Conversation.”

Carlos Enriquez’s arrangement of the Afro-Cuban “Garvey’s Ghost” features striking reed/brass sonorities but doesn’t flow well. By con-



trast, “Between Max and Ti Roro,” a celebration of Roach’s Haitian mentor, gels perfectly as a closer, with all the trimmings, from trumpet fanfare to chanted choruses and, underneath it all, the spirit of the drum. —Paul de Barros

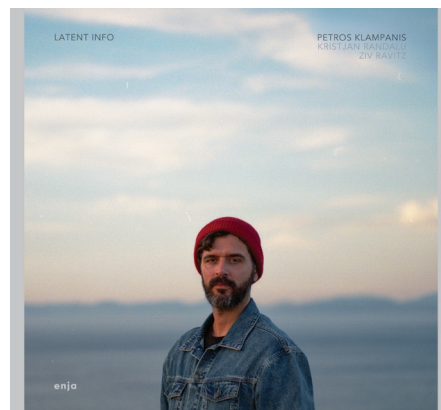
The Music of Max Roach: Blues Waltz; Garvey’s Ghost; The Drum Also Waltzes; Lonesome Lover; Freedom Day; Conversation; Driva Man; Between Max and Ti Roro. (56:35)

Personnel: Ryan Kisor, Geoff Gallante, Marcus Printup, Wynton Marsalis, trumpet; Sherman Irby, Alexa Tarantino, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone, flute, clarinet; Abdias Armenteros, Chris Lewis, tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone, clarinet; Chris Lewis, bass clarinet; Paul Nedzela, baritone saxophone, soprano saxophone, clarinet, bass clarinet; Vincent Gardner, Chris Crenshaw, Elliot Mason, trombone; Dan Nimmer, piano; Carlos Enriquez, bass; Obed Calvaire, drums, music director; Shenel Johns, Chorale Le Chateau (Damien Sneed, Chenee Campbell, Nia Drummond, Sean Holland II, Markita Knight, Djore Nance, Jillian Willis), vocals.

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JALC's Todd Stoll



Judges for the 2023 EE, from left, Francisco Torres, Alexa Tarantino, Carlos Enriquez, Wynton Marsalis and Jeff Hamilton.

ESSENTIALLY ELLINGTON MORE ESSENTIAL @ 30

BY TERRY PERKINS | PHOTOS BY GILBERTO TADDAY & AYANO HISA

In 1995, Jazz at Lincoln Center debuted the first Essentially Ellington High School Jazz Band Competition and Festival. Competing schools were provided free big band charts of selected compositions by Duke Ellington and sent in recordings of those charts in hopes of being selected for the final competition at JALC's Rose Hall in 1996.

That first Ellington competition was only open to bands in New York City, but over the years, it has expanded the finals to include 15 regional big bands from across the U.S. As Essentially Ellington prepares to celebrate its 30th anniversary event in May, the competition and festival will expand to include 30 bands.

According to Todd Stoll, vice president of education at Jazz at Lincoln Center, there are several other major changes to the Essentially Ellington band selection process set to debut at the 30th anniversary event.

"We originally were planning some of these changes for the 25th Anniversary of EE in 2020, but COVID prevented that from happening," Stoll explained. "We couldn't hold the festival in person in 2020 or 2021, so we made the commitment to get the new format in place for the 30th

anniversary in 2025. In addition to doubling the number of participating bands that will compete, we're also going to expand the festival from three days to five days. In 2025, EE will run from May 7 through May 11. That will assure that the students in all 30 bands have enough time to participate in the competition as well as the other important elements of EE: teaching opportunities, mentorships with the musicians of the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, interacting with students from other bands in jam sessions and attending dinners and events where we divide them up according to the instruments they play. They also share meals those with LCJO musicians. For example, the saxophone players will eat dinner with LCJO sax players such as Sherman Irby and Ted Nash."

Stoll also emphasized that going forward, there will be an open competition for all bands

to reach the Essentially Ellington finals rather than the regional system previously in place. Instead of only the top three bands from each of the five regions being selected for the finals, the top 30 bands will make it to New York City.

In addition, the 2025 finals of EE will take place at the Metropolitan Opera House at Lincoln Center in order to accommodate larger audiences. Stoll and the JALC staff are also working on other possibilities for the 30th anniversary.

"Now that we're expanding EE to five days, we're hoping to arrange performance by the bands while they're here," said Stoll. "We had an international band from Cuba attend a few years ago, and it would be great to expand that concept. We have about 400 bands registered with EE in Australia and about 75 in Japan."

Doubling the number of bands competing will increase the work of the jazz musicians who



adjudicate the student big band performances. But that's not an issue for acclaimed jazz drummer Jeff Hamilton, who has been an Essentially Ellington adjudicator since 2010.

"Adjudicating at Essentially Ellington has given me a great perspective," Hamilton said. "I've been asked by older jazz fans, 'Where is the music going? Young people don't know what it's all about.' But all you need to do is go to Essentially Ellington and hear these 15- and 16-year-olds playing their butts off. Wynton Marsalis and I look at each other with tears in our eyes because it's just so good. And they're so passionate about what they're playing. The future of jazz is in good hands."

There's another bonus for Hamilton in his years adjudicating EE.

"Wynton and I have become really good friends, and we make it a point to sit next to each other while we're adjudicating the bands," he explained. "We have great fun together. But I'm always worried that the bands are thinking we're laughing about them, but it's Wynton and I giving each other a hard time!"

Although the bands are competing against each other to make the finals, Hamilton sees more camaraderie than competitiveness.

"For me, the moments that matter are when you see lightbulbs going off all the time as these kids listen to each other and support each other," he said. "If they hear a great solo or someone really hit a high note, they're all for that kid. 'They can play! We gotta give it up for them!' Seeing how EE students flourish in the moment is really rewarding for them — and for us too. I wish that something like this was going on when I was coming up."

Stoll also emphasized the camaraderie that develops among the young musicians attending EE. "One of the things we've noted is the amount of love all the kids have for each other," he said. "We work hard to make sure the students interact in non-competitive ways. At the end of every band's performance, the other kids always give that band a standing ovation. The room is full of love and the competition part of it is less important than an awesome feeling of shared community."

High school band directors who have been part of EE over the years emphasize the positive impact the competition has had on their students and music programs.

"As a participant nearly every year of Essentially Ellington since 1999, I can tell you unequivocally that EE and the JLCO with Wynton Marsalis have had a tremendously positive and inspiring impact upon myself, my students and our entire school community," said Scott Brown, retired band director at Roosevelt High School in Seattle. "The depth of the music, the process of preparing for the competition and the experience of hearing and communing with other fantastic bands in The House of Swing is truly as good as it gets."

"Participating in Essentially Ellington changed our program in a profound way, and each time we attended the effects were felt for years," added Lisa Linde, band director at Newtown South High School in Newton, Massachusetts. "It made my students reach for their highest potential while feeling a connection to all the other musicians who love this music — past, present and future — spanning all generations. Essentially Ellington is the finest example I have seen of the way

music can transcend time, age, background and bring people together."

"In the first years, the mechanics were put into place so young people could learn the music," recalled Wynton Marsalis, managing and artistic director of Jazz at Lincoln Center. "The main thing was to insist on the integrity of the playing. It was a struggle in the beginning years. Now it's much easier. Since then, EE has expanded from the small things we did in the early years. The numbers speak for themselves. It's best to let them speak."

"As we approach the 30th anniversary of Essentially Ellington, the program continues to spread the message of Duke Ellington's music, leadership and collective orientation, providing high school ensembles with free transcriptions of original Duke Ellington recordings — accompanied by rehearsal guides, original recordings, professional instruction and more — to thousands of schools and community bands in 58 countries. More than 7,000 high school bands have benefitted from free charts and resources.

"Marcus Printup, JLCO trumpet, was talking about how there were four musicians in the band who came from Essentially Ellington: Carlos Henriquez, Obed Calvaire, Alexa Tarantino and Abdias Armenteros," Marsalis said. "I've also been impacted by former EE student musicians and the interactions I've had with them since then — from Summer Camargo to Philip Norris, Riley Mulherkar, Aaron Diehl, Matt Wong and Joe Block. The list goes on and on. I've been greatly impacted by all of them."

For more information, go to jazz.org/education/school-programs/essentially-ellington. **DB**



A group shot from IASJ's 2023 gathering in Helsinki. Inset: Ed Partyka, incoming IASJ executive director.

IASJ CELEBRATES ITS NEXT DIRECTION

BY YOSHI KATO | PHOTOS COURTESY IASJ

As it celebrates its 35th anniversary, the International Association of Schools of Jazz (IASJ) is growing with a new generation of leadership. And one would be hard pressed to find a more appropriate executive director than Ed Partyka.

“I’ve known Ed since when he was a student who came over to perform in Europe with Maria Schneider’s Orchestra and then as an educator and professional musician,” said departing executive director Wouter Turkenburg. “He then became an IASJ board member, so it’s very natural that he now becomes the executive director.”

Founded in 1989 by saxophonist/composer/educator Dave Liebman, the IASJ is a mostly European and North American network of universities, colleges and conservatories founded to promote “freedom of expression, group interaction (and) shared and individual responsibility,” according

to its mission statement.

“Ed’s an American, but also very European,” Turkenburg said, in a video interview from the French countryside. “He speaks German fluently and English, of course. And he understands French and has been all over Europe many times.”

A Chicago native and bass trombonist, Partyka earned a bachelor’s degree from Northern Illinois University before becoming fully continental. “I moved to Germany in 1990 to continue my studies, with Jiggs Wigham in Cologne, and then I’ve been in Europe ever since,” he said during a video interview from a tour stop in Finland.


In addition to holding positions as

artistic director and chief conductor of the UMO Helsinki Jazz Orchestra and musical director of the Zürich Jazz Orchestra, Partyka is a tenured educator at University of Music and Performing Arts Graz in Austria, where he’s taught since 2006.

“The rest of my freelance work,” which included a gig conducting the Finnish Air Force Big Band right after this interview, “is done all throughout Europe.”

“With his background and experience, Ed was a natural choice to take over,” Turkenburg said. “He’s a very open-minded thinker and also very down-to-earth, so I think it’s a great combination.”

The IASJ’s calling card is its annual



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meeting, which is hosted on a member's campus in a different country each year.

"They seemed to want to form an organization where there could be wonderful networking opportunities bringing people together that was maybe more performance-based and less commercial in nature than what was already established," Partyka said.

Each participating school sends one educator and one or two students, "and the students are put together in combos," he explained. "Usually an IASJ meeting has about 100 to 150 people who attend.

"The idea behind it is no students from the same school are put in the same group and generally no students from the same country, either," he added. "So there are usually about six combos. Each one is made up of people who have never met and never played music together before."

"You might have a drummer from Germany, a bass player from Poland, a trumpet player from the United States and a great saxophonist from Brazil," Turkenburg said.

"The student groups are mentored by faculty and visiting artists and come up with a program, usually made up with their own compositions, that they rehearse and perform at the end of the week," Partyka said. "There are also events like workshops and lectures for the faculty and ongoing dialogues about certain subjects that are relevant at the moment. And because it's a lot of people from different countries, you get a wide variety of perspectives about jazz education trying to find solutions to problems that we come up against in our daily teaching lives.

"There's also a research track and a research journal. That's a growing area due to the fact that we now have enough jazz history behind us that there are things to research."

The IASJ meetings provide inaugural opportunities for many of the students — particularly non-European attendees — to travel outside of their home countries. Some of the relationships established at IASJ meetings have extended to various bandstands some 15 years later.

"Whether it's Mongolia or Iowa, sometimes you grow up in a place where maybe you feel alone," Partyka said. "You may be the only person who likes plays the saxophone or even likes jazz in your entire circle of friends and acquaintances and family. So it's often a life-changing experience when you go someplace and all of a sudden you're with 150 other people from all over the world who have the same passion and the same love of jazz."

IASJ annual meeting alumni include keyboardist James Francies, vocalist/flutist Melanie Charles and vibraphonist Joel Ross from the U.S.; saxophonist Nicole Johännngen and drummer Mareike Weining from Germany; and vocalist Sivan Arbel and pianists Tom Oren and Gadi Lehavi from Israel.

"There's an invisible network of not only students but also teachers and staff that have kept in touch over the years," Turkenberg noted.

IASJ began as the brainchild of saxophonist Dave Liebman. "I wanted to do something that would have a real impact on the world. So I started to think about this with education," Liebman said, in an interview with journalist Dan Bilawsky for JAZZed Magazine that was published in 2021. "I was looking for something that would have an impact on people in other parts of the world. So I decided on a United Nations of jazz.

"I called a meeting in 1989 at my publisher's office in Germany, and 13 schools from 10 countries showed up. It was unbelievable," he continued. "It's been a long road for 30 years, in a different place each year for the annual meeting. When people ask me what's the most important thing I've done besides my family, I say it's starting the IASJ."

With many of IASJ's founding leaders either reaching retirement age or shifting career priorities, the time was right for a leadership change. The switch-over is official as of Jan. 1, 2025, and both Turkenberg and Partyka said they are excited about the future.

"It's a generational change," Partyka said. "Our plan is to bring in new impulses, new ideas, and to expand our focus while keeping while keeping true to Dave's original idea and vision.

"We did have a bit of a crisis a few years ago where we asked ourselves, 'Is the organization still relevant in this day and age of social media, when everyone's connected anyway?'" he reflected. "But we have seen it is vitally important. After the global pandemic, we realized that everybody needs human connection. It's maybe more important in this day of social media with these very shallow human interactions that we have a lot of times."

Another goal is to connect student musicians with industry entities such as record labels, clubs and festivals. While the initial IASJ emphasis was on performance and craft, Partyka hopes that the organization will help students navigate life beyond the classroom.

"I'm mainly a composer, arranger and big band leader. So one of the things that I'm really trying to bring into our yearly meetings, into our research journals and research activities, is more emphasis on writing music and composing," he said. "For many years, it was not really a focus of the IASJ. But what we've seen over the decades, almost every jazz musician composes."

Jazz education has become much more formalized and advanced since Liebman's first proto-IASJ meeting. Partyka said that when he came over, there were a quartet of institutions where one could study jazz in Europe in four different countries — Germany (in Cologne), the Netherlands (in Hilversum), Switzerland (in Berne) and Austria (Graz).

"In the mid-'90s, there was sort of an explosion," he noted. "In Germany now, there are 17 schools where you can study jazz and in Switzerland seven, I think. Austria also has seven or eight."

With about 70 member schools, he hopes to expand the countries represented in IASJ, including in Asia and South America.

Mongolia may be the site of the 2026 or 2027 IASJ meeting following the 2025 event in Klagenfurt, Austria.

"There's a lot of room for expansion, and the quality of jazz education and

jazz schools has just gotten so much better in the last 30 years," Partyka said. "In the early years of our organization, membership was fairly selective because a certain standard was required. But now what we're seeing is worldwide, there are so many great schools and so many great students that there's no need to limit things in any way."

Another constant goal is gender equity. Partyka said it's been an issue that's been discussed since his own undergrad-

uate years, and Turkenberg cites some of the female student musicians who have participated in IASJ meetings and gone on to establish themselves professionally as positive examples.

"Every once in a while, you have this explosion," Turkenberg said. "Often with an organization growth is steady, and it either falls down or there's a new fire, a new spirit. With Ed and also the new board, I really think the ISAJ is making a big leap forward." **DB**



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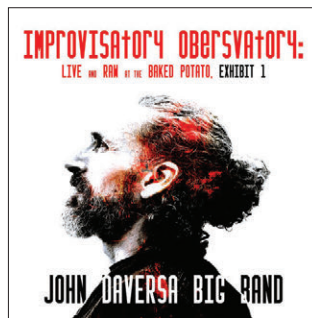
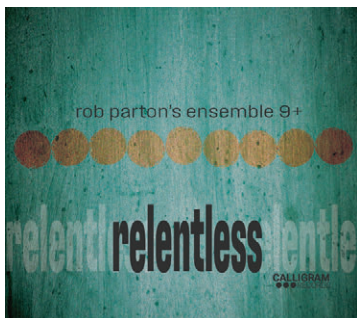
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EDUCATORS AFTER CLASS

New music by jazz artists who are also fine jazz educators **By John McDonough**

As the landscape for jazz clubs continues to shift, the classroom now may be the music's most natural habitat — a place where the protocols of performance are practiced and perfected by professors whose best playing often begins after the final bell rings. Herewith, the work of five prominent educators, each rehearsing with their own ensembles after class, and perhaps still learning a few things outside of class and on the job.

After a 30-year career in Chicago, Rob Parton now pilots the acclaimed Two O'Clock Lab Band at the University of North Texas. But he also leads his own Ensemble 9+ unit on **Relentless** (Calligram Records; ★★★★★ 63:07), which reaches into the fertile Dallas-Fort Worth area for its lineup. I'm not sure the difference is all that apparent, since the UNT Lab bands have always been crack outfits, and this band certainly is, too. The charts emphasize the ensemble's well-anchored precision and lean toward a brassy, tightly knit swagger, not a loosely relaxed flow. One exception is Parton's "No Response," a boppish "Rhythm" changes contrafact that moves like the wind in a balance of small- and big-band elements. More adventurous, but less invigorating, is "Relentless," in which section lines weave, converge and drift into some pretty Parton reflections and a wordless vocal improv by Rosana Eckert.

Western Jazz Collective: Dark Journey (Origin Records; ★★★ 75:09) brings us nine compositions arranged and conducted by Andrew Rathbun, who resides at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, as professor of saxophone. The Collective is a septet of Rathbun's faculty companions. With only two horns, however — Rathbun on saxophones and Scott Cowan, trumpet — the pallet of possible voicings is limited when it comes to sustaining an unfamiliar repertoire without particularly clear melodic motifs. Rathbun and Cowan are both excellent players whose

solos ascend, circle and plummet on the shifting tides of a variable rhythmic footing. But the absence of a swinging symmetry lets the focus of the music roam and one's concentration wander, despite some infrequent infusions of cleverness here and there.

Tenor Madness (Ear Up Records; ★★★ 36:32) is an agreeable but abridged toast to the saxophone strength of Nashville from baritone saxophonist Ryan Middagh, who also serves as director of jazz studies at Vanderbilt University in Nashville. At less than 37 minutes, it can be summed up quickly. "Wiley Roots" is a hard-swinging, fast blues on which Jeff Coffin and Don Aliquo converse with conviction. Coffin and Joel Frahm pair up for "Tenor Madness" in the spirit of the original, though Middagh misses an opportunity to project it to full-section strength in a more expansive arrangement. "This Time The Dream's On Me" features an exceptionally sinuous trombone turn by Roy Agee. It ends with "Wired," which pops like a eager genie out of a simple scale voiced by Middagh's bari. And that's about it. Two other tracks are given over to pleasant vocals. A good band curiously underused on its own CD.

As decade-long chair of Studio Music and Jazz at the University of Miami's Frost School of Music, trumpeter-arranger-composer John Daversa has had a long and lively career outside the academic bubble. These two CDs bookend his recorded work. **Live At Catalina's Vol. 1** (Blue Canoe Records; ★★★ 76:46) was made 25 years ago, originally issued privately, and is now reissued on Blue Canoe. **Improvisatory Observatory: Live And Raw At The Baked Potato, Exhibit 1** (Blue Canoe Records; ★★★ 38:25) is his latest. Both showcase his virtuosity and writing. The Catalina's CD is a super-band of six reeds, nine brass and a crew of elite L.A. insiders from the period (Bill Perkins, Ron King, etc.). But it shows no age. Daversa's charts are con-

sistently supportive of his soloists, sustaining a balance between the individual and ensemble. His riffs are often simple and repeated, giving the listener a more accessible path into the music. It cuts a wide swath of modes. The trumpet-alto interlude on "Stick" is wildly on the edge, while "Think You're Funny" delivers a silky and civil reed soli. In the Baked Potato set, Daversa leans toward more space and less ensemble for his soloists. "Observatory" loses and finds its way more than once, as Daversa stirs more mischief than music on his EVI, a trumpet-based synth controller. "Old Timer," a tribute to Snooky Young, is a witty, laid-back parody of "Li'l Darlin'" decelerated almost to a still-life. One can appreciate its slow-burn appeal in person, but on CD one gets a little impatient. "Swamp Thing" is intentionally lumbering, ungainly and colorless, as befits the nasty stereotype of your average swamp thing. Alas, the chart's sudden display of life at midpoint is a welcome but passing non-sequitur. Finally, a rarity: Both then and now, Daversa uses no piano.

Also from the Frost School of Music comes Shelly Berg, professor in the school's Experiential Music Curriculum. But **Alegria** (ArtistShare; ★★★½ 61:07) is not what one would expect from an academic with such a challenging credential. Berg leaves the experiments in the classroom along with any wish to change the world. Alegria is a low-key, lightly Latin and listener-friendly piano trio offering nine originals (it's his "At Last," not Harry Warren's) and a couple of post-1960 standards. Fellow Frost faculty colleague Melvin Butler guests on tenor on two tracks ("Meatballs" and "Red Rocks"). The music inhabits a thoroughly mainstream sensibility and swings easily in the most classic sense. Bassist Carlitos Del Puerto offers impeccable support, elegantly articulated solos, and is the lead voice on Bernstein's "Somewhere." Modest goals done with class and craft.

DB

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"Consistently re-listen and evaluate yourself over the years as objectively as possible," says Phil Haynes.

10 Paths to Developing Personal Sound & Style

Decades ago, when first performing at the Vancouver, BC, International Jazz Festival, producer Ken Pickering asked me upon arrival to cover a drum clinic, as Joey Baron's travel had been delayed. Having never given a master class to such a group of diverse learners, from about ages 10 through 80, I had just enough time to become nervous while being rushed to the venue — without even time for my hotel check-in.

I emerged on stage to an audience of dozens (and dozens) of percussionists eager to greet and listen to Joey's more famous experiences, approaches and insights. Ha! After an MC outlined the coming week's many concerts I would be featured on, I hastily greeted the audience — and feeling uninspired to play anything for them as an introduction, instead simply inquired if there were

questions anyone would like to begin with. A hand immediately grabbed my attention as an older gentleman took me by surprise, asking, "Mr. Haynes, how did you develop such a unique sound and style so early in your career?" Perhaps I should have anticipated that clinic attendees interested in Joey would be apt to already have checked out others up-and-coming in New York? No matter, as his leading question centered me, and I immediately began improvising, asking for four volunteers of diverse ages to come up and play a bit.

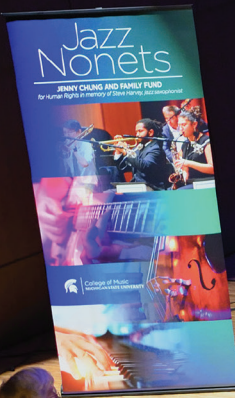
As my percussive kin lined up next to me onstage, I sat down and played a short phrase of what I described as "Rock Beat 1A," in a straightforward moderate tempo, cycling: boom chick, boom boom-chick, with eighth notes flowing from the ride cymbal. I handed my sticks to the first volunteer and had

them perform the same familiar pattern, then the next, the next in turn, as well as our final participant. I then asked our audience what they noticed when comparing the five of us. Surprising to many, it was apparent that not one of us sounded much at all like any of the others. United by this simple observation, I began with the premise that *all of us already sound like ourselves* and potentially remain somewhat distinct throughout our lives, no matter our age or experience. I now relaxed and gained momentum, beginning to describe my journey and tactics to develop a notable personal voice and style. Or, as the great bassist Mark Dresser later pointed out, "You got down to talking about your favorite subject: You!" *Hello?*

The following is much of what I would cover in such a workshop today, having time to reflect and prepare appropriately. Simply put, one's attitude and mindset are crucial (always), as seemingly small things "not quite like the others" can add up within a matter of years toward revealing any budding artist's originality.

1. We always teach ourselves, as everyone (and everything) else can be no more than an inspiring guide. My earliest experiences with music, at just age 2, were via collecting found instruments (pots, pans, coffee cans, oatmeal boxes — most anything I could find that resembled a drum or cymbal), arraying and organizing them in front of me, then experimenting with soloing while wielding my fingertips, Lincoln Logs and knitting needles, soon to accompany radio or other commercial recording sources, as I evidently *needed* such serious play. While at such a young age I certainly couldn't play what was on the record, yet I could add a fresh personal part to the orchestration — as well as eventually craft simplified "skeleton patterns" (the DNA rhythms) from the original percussionist to learn from.

2. Consistently re-listen and evaluate yourself over the years as objectively as possible, including with trusted, experienced colleagues. If you can't learn to please yourself, you are unlikely to please others in any lasting way. I developed a related practice habit of repeating any idea that didn't come out quite right, repeating it in-the-moment three or more times acceptably, before continuing on with my stream-of-consciousness efforts. I was heartened decades later by reading an interview with bass innovator Scott LaFaro (Bill Evans' groundbreaking early 1960s



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Announcing the addition of jazz vocalist **Carmen Bradford** to our faculty. A recipient of the Los Angeles Jazz Society's Jazz Vocalist Award and 2024 Grammy Award, Bradford brings more than 40 years of career success.

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bassist), who described one of his own practice-performance methods all but identically.

3. Typically dissatisfied with my early performances when confronted by their recordings — instead of only dwelling on my perceived shortcomings, I began a habit of transcribing the few fills or phrases from each concert that I actually did find distinctive (fresh from my subconscious), then taking them to the woodshed and getting out my “musician’s microscope” to fully incorporate and eventually master such patterns. After all, we don’t

listen to the masters desperate to hear them copying an earlier luminary’s language, so why should we ultimately compare and criticize ourselves any differently?

4. In 1981, I first met Ornette Coleman’s legendary percussionist Edward Blackwell. My first question to him was, “What does an aspiring drummer need to prepare for the international stage?” Without hesitation, he responded matter-of-factly: “Max Roach and the rudiments.” Later in Blackwell’s drumming master class, he wrote on the board a

two-measure phrase, clearly in his own signature style, asking each of his participants to memorize it. Then he directed us in turn to perform his phrase accurately. When satisfied, Blackwell continued (paraphrased), “Now, play my sequence and follow it with a similar-sounding two-bar variation of your own, and keep repeating and honing the complete new phrase until you really dig it.” Eventually, he instructed, “OK, now never repeat my pattern but improvise similarly, in the same style, your own ideas, only still maintaining the groove spirit I supplied, while performing so as not to repeat yourself for more than for a beat or three.” Eureka!

youtube.com/watch?v=46_BCQl0wxg

5. Once a desired influence has been readily imitated, such as, say, Jon Christiansen’s late-’70s and ’80s cymbal feels for various ECM artists, next ask, “How can I personalize this approach — can I actually add or subtract to/from it without losing its essence, the genius of the stylistic contribution?” This, of course, is the concrete succeeding step in evolving toward true *artistry* (versus as only a skilled *stylist*) wielding a personal voice with a notable point-of-view, crafting and contributing one’s individual conception and content.

philhaynesmusic.bandcamp.com/track/beloved-refracted-2

6. Whenever selecting instruments, implements, heads, etc., I weighed the musical applications intended for them, gauged the sonic and touch characteristics I hoped to create, as well as considered what any budgetary reality might actually afford — always trusting my own ears and taste — never taking another’s opinion “as gospel” unless I had first confirmed it for myself.

For instance, while small Gretsch kits continue to be the gold standard in jazz, I shied away from them, searching for other makers with a contrasting sound profile I deemed just as good, yet distinct. I first discovered that the midline Tour Series by Yamaha, with laminated birch and mahogany shells of the period, always grabbed my attention. Tuned in a singing, wide-open and rather classical music aesthetic, they sounded terrific and yielded the fresh tonal palette I was searching for — especially when using iconic styles innovated by Elvin Jones or Tony Williams in the 1960s (via Gretsch drums), or those of Jack DeJohnette in the 1970s and ’80s (using Sonor kits). A decade later I was honored to endorse Ray Ayotte’s wooden hoop instruments, out of Vancouver, Canada, now fully realizing the personal drum sound I’d pursued for years.

philhaynesmusic.bandcamp.com/track/fanfare-for-the-common-man

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7. Identify techniques in one's playing you enjoy, which appear to be underrepresented among contemporaries and the masters, as this can become another effective separator. After my first couple of years in college, and then once I arrived in New York, I recall consciously resolving to feature more expressive brush, mallet and hand/finger work than most others. I also developed cymbal overtone harmonies that were more than mere sound effects, working instead to suggest graceful harmonic developments and/or brief melodic motifs. Regularly, too, I explored incorporating techniques or sounds generally associated with the European classical "new music," integrating them into more traditional ensembles, for freshness' sake.

philhaynesmusic.bandcamp.com/track/african-flower

8. Build one's groups by selecting favorite available performers you have chemistry with (not by filling out some predetermined stock instrumentation), and then don't shy away from atypical groupings if the sound and approach of the consort shows promise, as distinctive collections of notable "musician voices" generally lead to fresh ensemble expression expeditiously. Duke Ellington often referred to his orchestra akin to a collection of personalities, "voices" to compose

for, rather than merely writing for a stock big band instrumentation. Genius.

philhaynesmusic.bandcamp.com/track/adriennes-jazzmarchrag-2

9. Create set sequences for one's concerts similarly to what you would want to present in a through-composed "concept album," such as John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* or Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On*, such that every composition is framed to greatest advantage by those around it (noting especially the anticipated momentum of your tune order), developed convincingly and hopefully memorably from beginning through to its end (resulting in growing depth with successive listenings).

10. Begin to arrange and compose just as soon as opportunity or inspiration occurs. This is central to developing one's authoritative voice, so do not delay. Perhaps instead of procrastinating, begin reharmonizing a favorite compact standard, such as George Gershwin's "Summertime," from just some fresh roots initially (slash-chord style, such as E-/? to A-/? , etc.) for each of the original tune's harmonies, and then once satisfied, craft a new melody over your adaptation while also weighing changes to the sequence's meter, tempo, feel and harmonic

spacing — potentially even adding other complementary sections to your evolving form.

Or, get started with another tactic entirely: Notate a sequence of catchy, connecting rhythmic phrases that cycle nicely, then select corresponding melodic notes of compelling character, in an appropriate instrumental range, to produce an original theme. Next, either write an interconnected yet clearly contrasting bass part (root progression), then derive an effective set of harmonic changes from your drafted outer voices, *crafted by ear* — such that you actually get a bit of a thrill from their sound — then finish editing and polishing your complete original effort. You can (and should) always analyze one's efforts later, well after your ears have approved.

youtube.com/watch?v=spfSih05q4g

DB

Veteran drummer/composer Phil Haynes is featured on nearly 90 releases from various American and European record labels. His collaborations include saxophonists Anthony Braxton, Ellery Eskelin and David Liebman; trumpeters Thomas Heberer, Herb Robertson and Paul Smoker; bassists Mark Dresser, Ken Filiano and Drew Gress; keyboard artists David Kikoski, Denman Maroney and Michelle Rosewoman; vocalists Theo Bleckmann, Nicholas Horner and Hank Roberts; violinist Mark Feldman; and the composers collective Joint Venture. His outlets include the "jazz-grass" Americana string band Free Country; signature saxophone trio No Fast Food; piano trio Day Dream with pianist Steve Rudolph; and Haynes' solo project, Sanctuary. Haynes recently launched an ambitious five-year schedule of releases with *Coda(s)*, the third album from his trio No Fast Food featuring saxophonist David Liebman and bassist Drew Gress, followed with his memoir *Chasing the Masters* (chasingthemasters.com) accompanied by an audio compilation, *A Life Improvised*. Visit him online at philhaynes.com.

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FRANCIS WOLFF/MOSAIC IMAGES

Wayne Shorter's "Fall" serves as an intersection of old-school and groundbreaking concepts.

Improvising over Wayne Shorter's 'Fall' Using Modes & Key Centers

What divides us is often not as important as what we share in common, and that can lead to greater successes. The same can be true regarding chord progressions, especially the contemporary harmonic colors that don't follow expected patterns. Here I'll illustrate some practical paths towards lyrical improvisations over Wayne Shorter's composition "Fall."

Iconic Composition

I encourage you to review a number of superb performances of this composition, including its debut on the 1968 Miles Davis album *Nefertiti* (Columbia Records). Hearing the piece, it is striking how the initially orthodox root-movement can result in such contemporary sounds. We can see on most lead sheets of this tune a lot of chord-roots descending by fifths as in so many jazz and classical compositions, yet the colors above them are profound. And, in this tune titled "Fall," we can observe the thirds and sevenths within those chords

descending from bar to bar as in so many tunes; and yet they sound more exotic because of their surroundings.

We can attribute that exoticism in large part to the bass line (not shown here), played very freely by Ron Carter. In some notated lead sheets, it rhythmically rhymes itself in a parallel shape within the first two measures of every four bars, injecting thematic lyricism as 13ths, 11ths and 7ths sustain over the harmonic landscape. But Carter's performances refrain from the notated expectations, instead at times excluding even the notated chord root in favor of lyrical lines that can imply new harmonies.

In the melody (also not shown) and in many backgrounds on the recording we hear call-and-response: The melody is echoed the first three of every four measures, with every third and fourth bar answering what precedes it. How many contemporary-harmony tunes are call-and-response? This tune is an impressive intersection of old-school and groundbreaking concepts.

Original Harmony

Our focus here is the harmony, which can pose a challenge for a soloist to navigate in a lyrical manner. Below each staff of Example A (see page 80) is a capturing of Shorter's apparent original chord progression within his copyrighted lead-sheet. You might analyze that initial line as a V7-V7-V7 series of secondary dominants (V7/V7), the last becoming a \flat II7 that resolves as a tritone substitution to the I, $E\flat$ maj7(\flat 5). Some of the dominant structures are suspended chords; one is a cryptic "sus add 3," suggesting that both the third and fourth are present in the chord. Measures 5-8 are a repeat of bars 1-4.

Bar 8's $E\flat$ maj7(\flat 5) planes down a half-step to bar 9's D maj7, which becomes a dominant $D13(\flat$ 9) that acts as a V7 to the $Gm11$ that follows. The $Gm11$ to $Bm9$ movement in measures 11-12 might seem more adjacent if viewed as $B\flat$ maj9/G bass to $Bm9$. And the $Bm9$ to $A\flat$ maj7(\flat 5) in bar 12 might seem more navigable as $Bm9$ to $Cm9/A\flat$ (if one accepts the potential for an $E\flat$ along with the \flat 5, D). But perhaps Shorter's motivation was simply to find chords that resulted in the melody's 11ths, 9ths and 7ths at these points.

The chord progression in measures 13-14, having been heard twice earlier, now offers a surprise resolution to an $Em11$ (i) rather than the expected $E9$ sus. The $Am11/B$ in bar 15 might be viewed as a variation of a suspended-chord sound, as if a $B7$ sus(\sharp 9 \flat 9 \sharp 5) or $B7$ sus altered. But rather than function as a V7 to an E chord, the $Am11/B$ instead returns to the $F\sharp$ 7sus(add3) chord that starts the 16-bar form.

How might a soloist weave lyrical phrases through these chordal movements? And do the chord symbols really tell the story of Wayne Shorter's harmonic intent?

Common Ground

A recurring theme in my analyses is that so often accurate chord symbols mask the very truth within them: that their sonic palettes share so much with their surroundings. Rather than approach each chord as wholly different material from a new root, see what's possible when you view each chord as a variation from just one center: often the tonic (home) scale or note of the piece or at least of the melodic phrase.

In "Fall" I hear the first four bars cadencing on the $E\flat$ maj7(\flat 5) in the fourth bar. Therefore, is it possible to view the first four bars as all approaching that fourth measure? If so, my recommended modes and scales atop the first four bars are one possible result, repeated in the second four bars.

What does the initial chord, $F\sharp$ 7sus(add3), mean to you: perhaps a sus-chord with a third?

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I instead hear chord extensions. For example: above a G \flat root, tack a D \flat m7 chord for an F \sharp 9sus sound, and above that an E \flat m triad to get extensions of the D \flat m7 chord. By doing so, you gain the wash of color evident on the Miles/Wayne recordings of the tune; and the B \flat s present *aren't* functioning as the third of an F \sharp (or G \flat) chord: they're functioning as a stacked 13th extension of the D \flat m7 chord.

With the tone E \flat as my focus, my goal of Example A's 16 bars is to view what may seem like vastly different chord symbols in as identical terms as possible. So my top-line view captures an approach using only the scalar roots E \flat and its surrounding D and E. Viewed through those roots, the tune captures all seven modes, plus the whole-half and half-whole diminished scales: fairly accessible as long as the musician knows modes. And the same diminished scale applies to bars 2, 6, 10 and 14 (noting the faint arrow drawn from bar 2 down through bar 14).

Measure 9 screams Dmaj7 as a new tonal center, which prompts my search to see how I might view the next several bars as variations of D. And it turns out, all four bars can indeed be so (with bar 10's E \flat whole-half diminished being identical to a D half-whole diminished). Bars 13–14 reprise earlier sounds. Measure 15 is a new flavor of E, dorian; and I can hear the final chord's color as D mixolydian (or perhaps E aeolian).

A true benefit of this approach is that these inflections of harmonic color provide a longer span of context for the soloist than solely a one-chord-per-bar view: Now there are four-bar tonal "flexings" that can prompt lyricism crafted especially from a soloist's ability to improvise theme and variations over the longer span. Might these modes and scales, focused on tonal centers that unite four bars rather than divide them, reveal more about Shorter's harmonic intent than the chord symbols alone do? To my ear, this approach is evident in Herbie's and

Example A

A VIEWED AS VARIATIONS OFF THREE ROOTS: ALL 7 MODES OF MAJOR, PLUS W-H AND H-W DIMINISHED:

SCALES: E \flat PHEGYIAN E \flat W-H DIMINISHED E MIXOLYDIAN E \flat LYDIAN

CHORDS: F \sharp 7sus (ADD 9) B \flat 13(b9) (OR D H-W DIMINISHED) E \flat 9sus E \flat bu7(b5)

E \flat PHEGYIAN E \flat W-H DIMINISHED E MIXOLYDIAN E \flat LYDIAN

F \sharp 7sus (ADD 9) B \flat 13(b9) (OR D H-W DIMINISHED) E \flat 9sus E \flat bu7(b5)

D IONIAN OR LYDIAN E \flat W-H DIMINISHED D AEOLIAN D IONIAN D LOCRIAN

Dm7 D \flat 13(b9) (OR D H-W DIMINISHED) Gmi11 Bmi9 Abm7(b5)

E \flat PHEGYIAN E \flat W-H DIMINISHED E DORIAN D MIXOLYDIAN

F \sharp 7sus (ADD 9) B \flat 13(b9) (OR D H-W DIMINISHED) Emi11 Ami11/B

Example B

B VIEWED AS 7 MAJOR KEY CENTERS, PLUS DIMINISHED SCALES (ALSO SHOWING IMPORTANT GUIDETONES):

KEYS: C \flat E \flat W-H DIMINISHED A B \flat

F \sharp 7sus (ADD 9) B \flat 13(b9) (OR D H-W DIMINISHED) E \flat 9sus E \flat bu7(b5)

C \flat E \flat W-H DIMINISHED A B \flat

F \sharp 7sus (ADD 9) B \flat 13(b9) (OR D H-W DIMINISHED) E \flat 9sus E \flat bu7(b5)

D OR G E \flat W-H DIMINISHED F D E \flat

Dm7 D \flat 13(b9) (OR D H-W DIMINISHED) Gmi11 Bmi9 Abm7(b5)

C \flat E \flat W-H DIMINISHED D G

F \sharp 7sus (ADD 9) B \flat 13(b9) (OR D H-W DIMINISHED) Emi11 Ami11/B

Wayne's opening sequences and more when they solo on the tune.

I've detailed the selected modal scales in the staff of Example A. Try taking a chorus focusing on the original chord changes (below the staff), then a chorus instead with this modal approach in mind, and see how your melodic approach and results differ between the two. I'm betting you'll come up with new ideas that show more relationships across the bar lines.

As Major Key Centers

I like to examine harmonies in the context of major scales as much as possible. What would it tell us in this instance? Above the staves of Example B, you'll find my results. In addition to the necessary diminished scale, there are seven major keys involved (not outrageous for a contemporary tune with 17 chord changes).

While some musicians are hard-wired to think in modes most easily, others think in key-centers most easily — and some musicians might think most freely in modes when in certain keys, yet most freely in key-centers in other keys. Our goal is to be as conversant in both as possible so that our solo-lines aren't held back by limited perspective.

If you know your major scales, try taking a chorus focusing on the original chord changes, then a chorus with this key-center approach in mind instead, and compare your results.

Another advantage of thinking either modally or key-center is that instantly your solo arrives on interesting colors and tensions that you won't find as quickly if your reflex when seeing a chord symbol is to play the root-3rd-7th, or to play the root and ascend or descend. The approaches above these staves quickly plant you in interesting tonal territory and invite you to resolve the tensions.

As a Bebop Approach

Our final exploration is shown within the *inner* staves of Example B, where I've written the thirds and sevenths — a typical bebop approach — plus the occasional #11. You or colleagues or students can play these as backgrounds behind others' solos, as the gravity of these tones' movements plays another essential role in the tune and solos. Yet on a composition such as this, my knowing the thirds and sevenths yields less-satisfying lyricism versus the context of being conversant in modes or key-centers.

Only the Beginning

These are of course only paths to the improvisatory colors that are most consonant with these chords. There are infinite soloing possibilities to add with dissonances, chromaticisms, blues-scale elements and more. Try them all yourself, using the downloadable six-chorus accompaniment audio track I've created that is housed with the digital form of this article, along

with these notated musical examples downloadable in keys of C Treble, C Bass, B \flat and E \flat at garciamusic.com/educator/articles/articles.html. There, each chorus that includes a Carter-like bass line alternates with a chorus of a more literal bass line to provide you with two harmonic underpinnings to prompt your explorations.

You'll likely find the recommended modes and scales to be more dissonant with the freer bass line and more consonant with the literal bass. **DB**

Antonio J. García is a performer, composer/arranger, producer, clinician, educator and author in both instrumental and vocal genres. Visit him online at garciamusic.com.



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"Acts Of Exclusion" has a "face-melting" solo from Miguel Zenón, says Jimi Durso.

Miguel Zenón's Alto Saxophone Solo on 'Acts Of Exclusion'

The composition "Acts Of Exclusion" comes from saxophonist Miguel Zenón's 2024 album *Golden City* (Miel Music), an impressive work with its instrumentation (alto, trumpet, trombone, guitar, piano, bass, drums, percussion) and varying structures (this isn't a head-solos-head album). It's quite ambitious. But for all the compositional elements, there's also some fantastic improvisation. "Acts Of Exclusion," the third track, has a face-melt-

ing alto solo from Zenón. It's only two chords (I know, there's no "only" when it comes to harmonies), but with the bass pumping out root notes, and both chords being altered dominants, it gives the soloist, and the rest of the rhythm section, a lot of freedom.

The first means Zenon employs to exercise this freedom is playing various triads, and in very creative ways. Beat two of the second bar we hear a G major triad.

The argument could be made that it's the #9, root, and $\flat 6$ of the B chord, but it still comes off as a G triad to my ear. Followed up in the subsequent measure with an F triad on beat four, then an Em, Dm and a C major after that. Zenon is leading us down the C major chord scale from its fifth, and we could sort out how these tones relate to B7, but I don't think that's how we hear this line.

Though, in the next bar (measure 5)

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when the chord changes we hear a Cm triad (2nd inversion this time). Trading out the E for the E \flat sort of makes sense, as it's the fifth of the A \flat , but there's a G (a major sev-

(on the B7 chord, no less) and then in the next bar he starts off with a Cm triad, though he does play an A natural after, so this could be an Am7(b5). For this second

where a string of triads again: D major, E, D and E again at the end of the bar. This is intriguing since earlier he played a row of different triads, but here he is repeating the same pair, and neither D nor E has much to do with an A \flat 7. We could do the same examination we've done before (D, F \sharp , A are the #4, b7 and b9; E, G \sharp , B are the #5, root and #9), but when presented as triads, the ear doesn't necessarily hear them as an arpeggio of the underlying chord. So what Zenon appears to be doing is taking notes that fit the chords but finding other chords within those and playing those, kind of tricking the ear into hearing something that's not there.

Especially since in the next bar he goes further, playing a Cmaj9+ arpeggio (C, E, G \sharp , B, D). Again, all these notes do have a relationship to A \flat 7alt, but playing them in this way makes them sound more like a Cmaj9+. You'll notice these sort of ideas occur throughout the remainder of this improvisation, but take a look at measures 41-44. It's the same idea applied to a scale: We hear a C melodic minor scale (which dissolves into a chromatic scale in the end). The notes do make a sort of B altered scale (b9, #9, 3, b5/#4, #5/b6, b7, root), but playing

Both chords being altered dominants gives the soloist and the rhythm section a lot of freedom.

enth) on the bottom. That makes no sense, does it? After this Zenon dispenses with triads but does play a couple of thirds, and then we get scalar and chromatic motion. So he leads us from triads to seconds with a step in between.

But Zenon isn't done with triads. At the end of bar 11 we hear a descending B \flat triad

chord the notes (A, C, E \flat , G) are the seventh, flat ninth, third (E \flat = D \sharp), and sharp fifth of B, so it does provide much of the color of the B7alt. So perhaps the B \flat was just a way to lead our ears to the Am7(b5)?

Bar 13 starts with a Bm triad (after a low E natural) and then we have a string of chromaticism until the end of measure 14



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it as a scale and starting on the C can obscure that.

And don't forget those thirds he used as a transition. They come back in measures 28–30, only in this instance Zenon plays a string of them ascending chromatically. He also plays the majority of them in a triplet rhythm, which also sets them apart as the majority of his improvisation has been 16th-note based. Notice that starting at the end of bar 30 he ascends through a basic $A\flat 7$ chord. This is one of the most inside sounds he's played, coming off some very chromatic motion. We also hear an $A\flat 7$ arpeggio in bar 37 and an $A\flat$ triad in bar 45. So amid the chromatics we also have instances of Zenon playing stuff that is more “in the changes.” Maybe not as much as the “outside” stuff, but it does provide somewhat of an anchor to what is a very frenetic piece in this musical journey.

DB

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 bass, titled *Border Of Hiranyaloka*. Find out more at jimidurso.bandcamp.com. Jimi can often be witnessed performing/rehearsing/teaching/pontificating online at twitch.tv/CoincidenceMachine.

♩ = 120
B[♭]alt.

5 A[♭]7alt.

8 B[♭]alt.

12 A[♭]7alt.

15 B[♭]alt.

18

21 A[♭]7alt.

25 B[♭]alt.

29 A[♭]7alt.

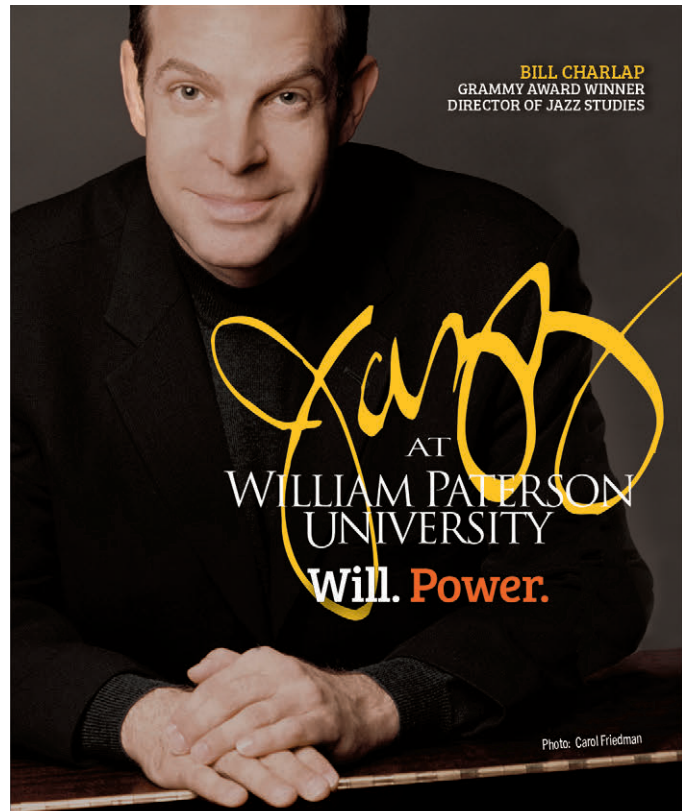
33 B[♭]alt.

37 A[♭]7alt.

40 B[♭]alt.

43 A[♭]7alt.

47 B[♭]alt.



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**WILLIAM PATERSON
UNIVERSITY**

WPUNJ.EDU/JAZZ • WAYNE, NJ

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Nord Grand 2

Additional Independent Layers, Expanded Piano & Synth Sound Libraries

The Nord Grand 2 is a super-smart, highly practical update of the brand's flagship grand-piano-emulating instrument, originally released in 2019 as the Nord Grand.

With this second-generation version, Nord aimed to further refine the piano-playing experience in terms of keyboard response

and provide new/updated features for sound design applications and real-time control.

Like its predecessor, the Nord Grand 2 has a premium Kawai Responsive Hammer Action with triple sensors to detect how hard you strike each key — a feature that provides highly accurate velocity sensi-



tivity and results in an appropriate volume and tone for each note you play. The result is an ultra-responsive feel that's just like an acoustic grand piano. In the new version, Nord has tweaked the damping in order to reduce mechanical noises and improve the uber-realistic "touch" of the keyboard. The Nord 2's chassis also features improved damping and increased overall stability.

The Nord Grand 2's Piano and Sample Synth sections have been expanded to feature two independent layers, each with a dedicated LED level fader and on/off/focus button, so you can control of the entire program at all times. Tasks such as creating layers and splits (you can easily combine the dual Piano and Synth engines in a layer or split across the keyboard), adding effects or transposing the instrument can be performed instantly. Each layer on the Nord Grand 2 also has its own independent effects chain — which means you don't need to make any compromises when you're choosing which effects to use for a particular sound source. (One exception is the Reverb, which is shared by all sound sources — although the dry-wet balance can be set per layer when the "layer send" option is selected.)

Maintaining the ease of use of the original Nord Grand while adding dual layers of Piano and Synth gives the Nord Grand 2 even more flexibility, an improvement that became immediately apparent during a long and, at times, exhilarating test-drive of the instrument.

The Nord Grand 2 comes with an huge collection of Grands, Uprights and Electric Pianos from the vast Nord Piano Library combined with new features such as Dynamic Compression (useful for an even and audible performance) and Unison (which boosts vibrancy by adding voices from neighboring notes). Its two independent Sample Synths, with newly expanded memory, include a wide range of updated sounds: woodwinds, brass, strings, basses, guitars, classic analog leads and basses. A selection of samples from the Symphobia and Swing libraries by ProjectSAM is

also onboard. The Sample Synth section is equipped with intuitive controls for attack, decay/release and dynamic velocity response, with soft and bright settings to provide a quick way to shape each tone you select.

The Nord Grand 2 has a powerful new Effects section for each layer. The extensive range of effects includes brand-new types of reverb, delay, amps and modulation effects. Many of these are based on effects that are also found on the Nord Stage 4.

The Nord Triple Pedal 2, which closely resembles the three-pedal setup of a traditional grand piano, is included with the instrument. I was able to make full use of the sustain, sostenuto and una corda (soft) functions to increase resonance and, when playing piano pieces by Beethoven and Schumann, achieve more exaggerated dynamics (as called for). I found I could also adjust the pedal noise settings and get half-damping effects when exploring more subtle piano dynamics. The left and middle pedals of the Triple Pedal 2 have another cool use, as well: They can be assigned to control settings like pump effect, layer scenes, program changes and rotor speed, among others.

For the ultimate nearfield listening experience, I recommend purchasing Nord's Piano Monitor speakers, which can be mounted to the Nord Grand 2 using the included monitor brackets. (They can also be attached to standard microphone stands.) Optimized for use with the Nord Piano Library, the monitor speakers go a long way in revealing the true character of Nord's renowned piano and electric piano sounds.

I also would suggest getting the Nord Soft Case with wheels for easy transport and large-sized pocket for cables, stand and pedals. It has an alternate carrying handle on the side.

To complete your setup at home, on stage or in the studio, the Nord Wood Music Stand attaches easily to the Nord Grand 2 and can accommodate up to four sheets of music.

—Ed Enright

nordkeyboards.com



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1. Serious Flexibility

The Nitro Pro, the latest addition to Alesis Drums' Nitro series, is designed to provide drummers of all skill levels with a natural and intuitive playing experience for practice, recording and performance. With its expanded size and robust design, the Nitro Pro provides serious flexibility and features at an accessible price point.

More info: alesis.com

2. True-to-Life Tone

The Dexibell VIVO H10V console is the compact vertical upright version of Dexibell's VIVO Premium digital piano. It features a hybrid wood-and-ebony/ivory feel keyboard with escapement, Dexibell's select Platinum sound library and unique Italian design. All aspects of acoustic piano tone are reproduced thanks to Dexibell's onboard True To Life (T2L) suite of technologies, including staccato resonances, sympathetic resonances, hammer noise, soundboard resonance, dynamic string resonances and damper pedal overtones.

More info: proelnorthamerica.com

3. 'Forgotten Scale' Fluency

Sher Music has published *Major is Harmonic (And Other Essays)* by guitarist Randy Vincent. Intended for advanced musicians on all instruments, this high-level resource dives into the uses of the Harmonic Major Scale, as well as new takes on bebop scales and cellular improvisation. The book contains exercises to develop fluency on this "forgotten scale" and includes examples from well-known jazz recordings written out to show the Harmonic Major's usefulness in real-life playing.

More info: shermusic.com

4. Controlled Dispersion

The LRC series expands Electro-Voice's installed sound portfolio with three passive column loudspeaker models: the LRC-1060, LRC-1100 and LRC-2100. Based around purpose-built 2.5-inch drivers and proprietary PaSS technology, all LRC models provide carefully controlled vertical dispersion and smooth frequency response for environments where high-quality audio and clean aesthetics are required.

More info: electrovoice.com

5. Reliable MIDI Controller

Arturia's KeyLab Mk3 is now available in 49-key and 61-key versions. The KeyLab Mk3 is an advanced MIDI controller designed to integrate seamlessly with software and hardware instruments. Both versions include a semi-weighted keybed, touch-sensitive controls and creative features encased in a durable housing.

More info: arturia.com

6. Basses on Parade

Spector has added the Euro CST, Euro LX and Euro LX Bolt-On basses. The Euro CST introduces all-new tonewoods, electronics and finish combinations. Spector's Euro LX basses feature fully carved and contoured bodies, high-grade tonewoods and professional-grade electronics and hardware.

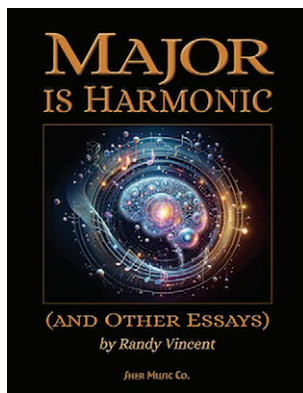
More info: spectorbass.com



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Alfredo Rodriguez

“I’ve looked to be global for a long time,” Alfredo Rodriguez told *DownBeat* in 2020. “I like to explore music from every part of the world.” The namesake son of, and pianist-arranger for, one of Cuba’s most popular singers, the Miami-based pianist-composer, at 38, has presented his special mixture of studio precision and improvisational intuition on five Mack Avenue albums featuring primarily his original music. His most recent release is *Coral Way*. This is his first Blindfold Test.

Keith Jarrett

“Answer Me” (*Budapest Concert 2016*, ECM, 2020) Jarrett, piano.

It sounds similar to nostalgic music for a Cuban film, like *Strawberry and Chocolate*, where Jose Maria Vitier played beautiful melodies with some influence from classical music and jazz. The harmonic progression sounds a bit like how Pablo Milanés arranged his music. It’s good; I am not delighted about it. Also the piano is a little out of tune. [afterwards] Keith has a lot of cinematic visions and images. At the end of a concert, after he’s played all these storms on piano, he plays something beautiful and mellow — so it makes total sense that it’s out of tune. It happens to me all the time. Keith knows how to play complex and traditional jazz, but can also play so simple. He’s one of my main influences since I heard *Köln Concert*, which introduced me to piano improvisation. It’s the main reason I discovered the great jazz pianists, like Thelonious Monk or Bud Powell or Lennie Tristano or Bill Evans.

Gonzalo Rubalcaba/Aimee Nuviola

“Besame Mucho” (*Live in Marciac*, 5Pasion, 2022) Rubalcaba, piano; Nuviola, voice.

Is this Gonzalo and Aimee at Marciac? I haven’t listened to this before, but I was playing in my band with Richard Bona after their show the same night. Gonzalo is my main influence from Cuban piano. This is very rhythmically and harmonically adventurous. Not many people are willing to keep taking risks in today’s music world where everything has become so simple. In Aimee, I hear the influence of Omara Portuondo. Some people like to hear songs exactly as the composer wrote it. It’s completely different to deconstruct the melody and make your own song with the same lyrics.

Sullivan Fortner

“Congoese Children” (*Solo Game*, Artwork, 2023) Fortner, piano, Randy Weston, composer.

The pianist took lots of risks, with a lot of influence from contemporary classical music. I like the minimalism, starting with all those repetitive notes, and then the counterpoint on top, as though another person is there. It’s something like Bach, where you combine different states of mind that all come together at some point. Some dissonance midway in the improvisation made me think of Thelonious Monk. They maintained the groove from beginning to end, even while moving through different abstract or dissonant ideas. I don’t know who it is. [afterwards] Sullivan is one of my favorite pianists. I’ve been listening to this album, but hadn’t heard that track. He’s extremely creative and has so many influences, from American jazz and pop to classical music and African music. Coming from Cuba, that’s something I try to combine in my music.

Justin Kauflin/Thomas Fønnesbæk

“Cakewalk” (*Danish Rain*, Storyville, 2023) Kauflin, piano; Fønnesbæk, bass; Oscar Peterson, composer.

I love bebop. The pianist has a really good touch, and both are really good



“I love the touch, the sound, the harmonic progressions, the groove from beginning to end,” Alfredo Rodriguez says of Hank Jones.

improvisers — virtuoso musicians with good taste. The bassist kills me with the soul and sound and grooving and swinging and improvisation. I don’t recognize them. It’s music I’ve listened to for many years, with a fresh sound, not very adventurous or something I’m not used to. [afterwards] Justin and I are friends from both working with Quincy Jones’ company and playing in the same places. He’s a wonderful person and a great musician.

Hank Jones

“What Did I Do To Be So Black And Blue” (*Handful Of Keys*, Verve, 1992) Jones, piano; Fats Waller, composer.

I love the touch, the sound, the harmonic progressions, the groove from beginning to end. I can feel the pianist’s powerful technique, the possibilities of what they can do, and also their restraint. Calm inside, and many insights. I’ve heard and played this song, but I don’t remember the title. [afterwards] Hank Jones? I appreciate someone who can adjust to different situations, different feelings, different moments in life. As humans, we tend to get nervous and accelerate: it’s extremely difficult to keep the groove in that calm tempo, playing beautiful melodies and all the harmony, not trying to impress anyone. Incredible.

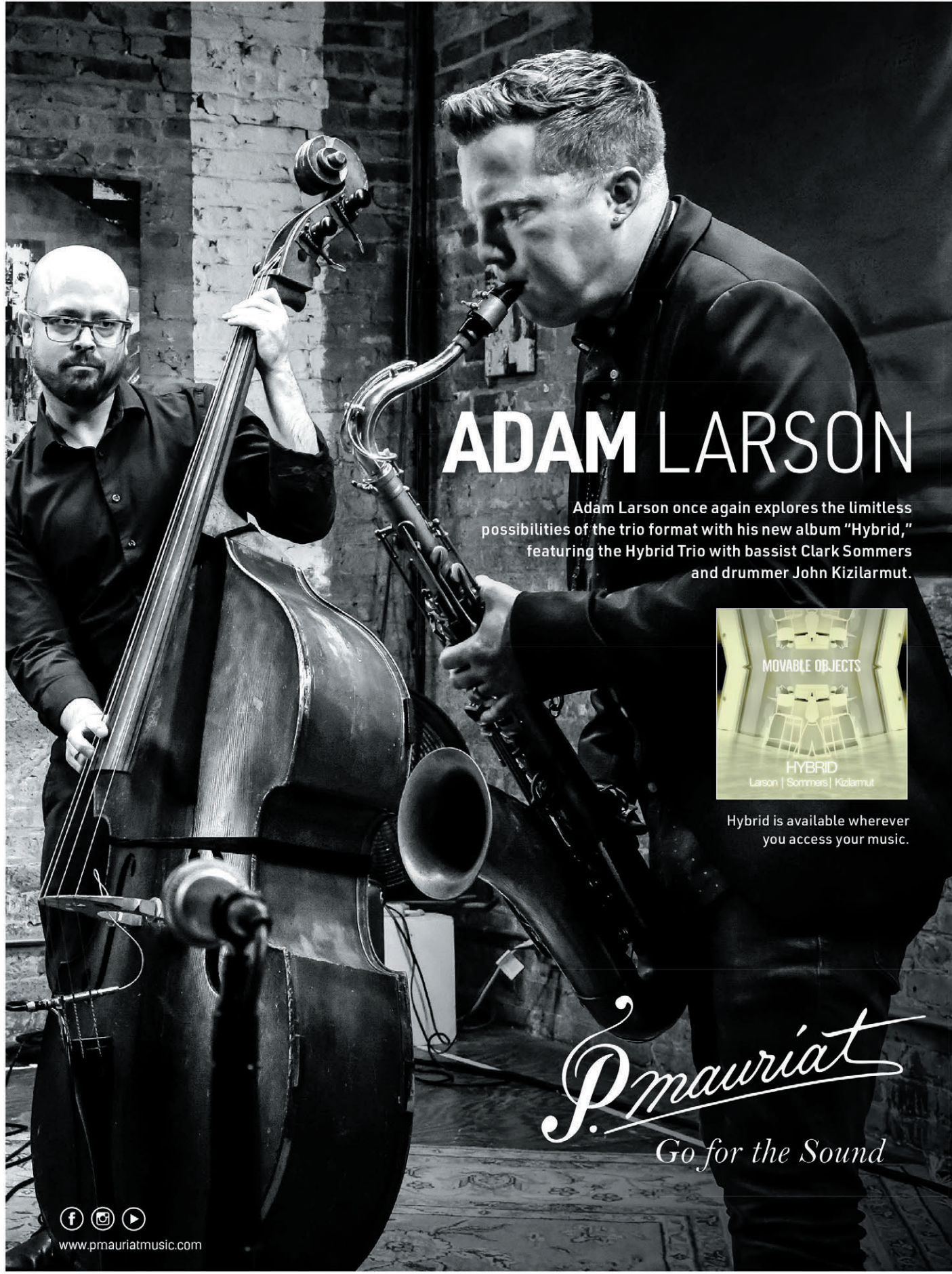
Robert Glasper/Q-Tip/esperanza spalding

“Why We Speak” (*Black Radio III*, Loma Vista, 2022) Glasper, keyboards; Q-Tip, esperanza spalding, vocals.

That’s Esperanza. Very creative. I guess the other person is a rapper from the States, while she’s singing in French and doing the vocals. Esperanza is spectacular. I remember hearing her before she blew up, doing all those beautiful things with her voice and playing the acoustic bass. Her approach is very personal, and she’s evolved through the years, exploring different sounds and rhythms. I love hearing someone from this new wave of great musicians being brought into the mainstream with — I feel that anyone, anywhere, will dance and groove to this from beginning to end. There are people who want to monetize hip-hop (or Reggaeton in the Latin world) by going the easy, negative way. But Robert Glasper lets you groove and feel and also pays attention to many details. That’s why his career has been so successful.

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.



ADAM LARSON

Adam Larson once again explores the limitless possibilities of the trio format with his new album "Hybrid," featuring the Hybrid Trio with bassist Clark Sommers and drummer John Kizilarmut.



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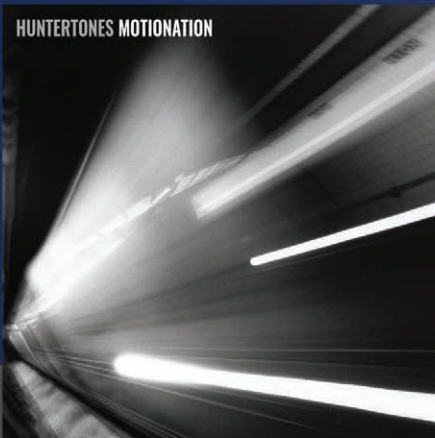
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