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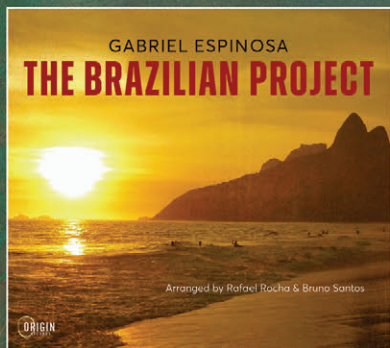
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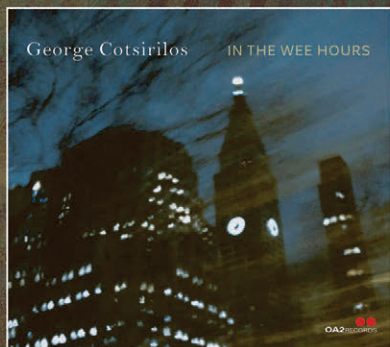
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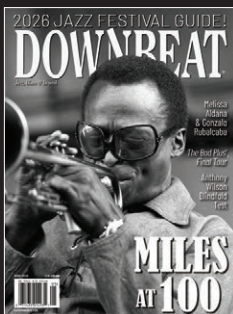
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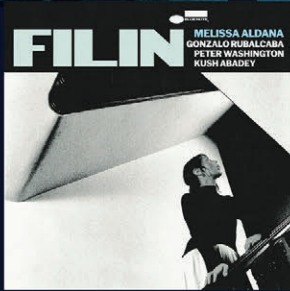
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JULY 2026

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#### *Messenger of Joy*

BY ALLEN MORRISON

The first thing people notice about Emmet Cohen, the thing his legions of fans cite most frequently, is his smile: broad, uninhibited, genuine. He flashes it frequently when he plays. "There are enough examples of the masters of this art form smiling," he says, "from Louis Armstrong and Fats Waller to Dizzy Gillespie and 'Smiling' Billy Higgins, that anyone who wants to express joy should feel comfortable doing so."



MICHAEL JACKSON

Big-hearted tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano has been mentored by the best and has paid that forward to young artists like Esperanza Spalding, Lawrence Fields, Leo Genovese, Kendrick Scott, Walter Smith III. Prior to that, I was faculty, when Rufus Reid was in charge in the '80s, at William Paterson. I had folks like Eric Alexander and Tony Malaby," and many more, he says.

Cover photo by Kevin Alexander

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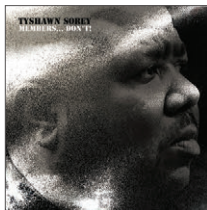
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ANNA YAYSKEVICH

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Sonny Rollins: 1930–2026

# Thank You, Sonny: Rest in Peace

**AT PRESS TIME, WE LEARNED OF THE PASSING** of Sonny Rollins at the age of 95. The great saxophonist and composer passed away on May 25 at his home in Woodstock, New York, after suffering from respiratory illness that, in part, forced his retirement from playing back in 2012.

The August issue will offer a more complete tribute to the immense legacy Mr. Rollins left for us. In the meantime, readers can enjoy the online obituary posted at [downbeat.com](http://downbeat.com) as well as read a classic interview from the December 1992 issue of *DownBeat*.

With more than 30 major features published in the magazine about Rollins over the span of his career, why did we choose to highlight that one? Well, it was the first feature with Rollins after this scribe joined *DownBeat*, and Mr. Rollins was a bit angry with us.

“Is this going to be another negative, punch-Sonny-Rollins-in-the-eye article for *DownBeat*?” he asked at the front of the article. When writer John McDonough filed the piece, he warned the editors that Mr. Rollins had a beef with the way he was reviewed in the magazine. Understood. I’ve never seen a bad review of a Sonny Rollins performance, but there have certainly been critics who have taken some of his recordings to task.

Even so, it hurt to think that one of the true icons of this music had a beef with *DownBeat*. Over the years this editorial staff did its best to repair that and put him on the pedestal he so richly deserved, with half of his major features coming after that 1992 article.

In the July 2004 issue, *DownBeat* asked dozens of artists to name their biggest influence. For Sonny Rollins, that was easy.

“My first idol/inspiration was Louis Jordan. But after I heard Coleman Hawkins, I realized that the instrument had a potential beyond the elemental stuff that Louis Jordan was playing. The intellectual element and grandeur of Coleman’s playing revealed another dimension in saxophone playing that I hadn’t realized.”

For the September 2005 issue, we asked Sonny to go back to the Williamsburg Bridge in New York City for a photo shoot with Jimmy Katz. As Sonny fans know, it was the exact spot he went to woodshed in seclusion more than 40 years prior and the theme of one of his most famous recordings. The shots are glorious.

“*The Bridge* was my first album after I had retreated from public performance for awhile,” Mr. Rollins said about the 1962 release on RCA Victor. “It was a natural concept. But as a concept, it was broad enough for me to work with without feeling restricted.”

But a personal favorite has to be the December 2008 Readers Poll, where Sonny was voted Jazz Artist and Tenor Saxophonist of the year. We celebrated by having then-editor Jason Koransky invite the late, great saxophonist Benny Golson to write a tribute to Mr. Rollins. Golson was a magnificent writer, the piece beautiful and Benny’s coda spot on:

“Though the world intuitively wishes there were more Sonny Rollinses, time and reality say, “There will only ever be one Sonny Rollins.” **DB**

SIRIL MALMEDAL HAUGE & KJETIL MULELID  
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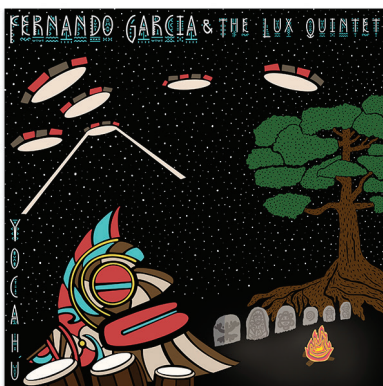
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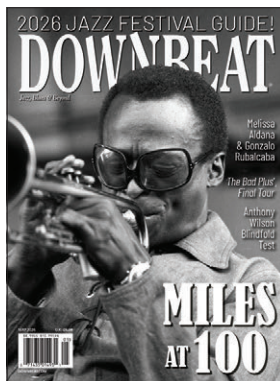
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### Miles Is Good!

Thank you and Ashley Kahn for providing the personal experiences of musicians and historians with Miles Davis. It would be great to bring his story to the screen, warts and all. Preferably a series to capture the musical shifts.

The interactions between Miles Davis and Gil Evans and Teo Macero would be fascinating to explore. By going electric, in an odd parallel with another icon, both Miles Davis and Bob Dylan are still blamed to this day for partially derailing the trajectories of two original American art forms; folk and traditional jazz. Props to Don Cheadle for his 2015 [film] exploration [*Miles Ahead*], but maybe someone can please check Damson Idris' schedule.

ROBERT JONES  
VIA EMAIL



but it significantly diminishes the scope and impact of my contributions during one of the most important periods of Miles' late career.

For over five-and-a-half years, I worked closely with Miles Davis as a synthesizer programmer, and sonic architect, helping to shape the sound of his final three studio albums: *Tutu*, *Amandla* and *Siesta*. Alongside Marcus Miller, who composed much of the music, I was responsible for creating the sonic landscape that brought Miles into a new musical era. *Tutu* in particular was a groundbreaking recording, widely recognized for redefining Miles' sound and influencing the direction of modern jazz and contemporary production. In his autobiography, he is quoted as saying that I was a synthesizer genius.

My upcoming album, *100 Miles for Miles Davis*, is not simply a tribute — it is a deeply personal and artistic reflection of my experiences working with Miles. It features all original material and collaborations with extraordinary artists, intended to honor both his legacy and the creative journey we shared.

It is also important to note that the project is already receiving significant international recognition. It was recently awarded the "Croc" by Jazz Magazine France — an honor reserved for recordings considered essential listening — and has been the subject of a major feature in Jazzwise U.K.'s May issue, where I am included on the cover alongside the Miles Davis centennial. In addition, the album is being met with strong critical response from respected jazz journalists and reviewers worldwide.

To see this body of work reduced to a brief and inaccurate mention, without context or acknowledgment of its intent and reception, was both disheartening and surprising given your publication's standing. Accuracy matters — especially when documenting the legacy of an artist as important as Miles Davis. I would have expected a publication of your stature to approach this milestone with greater care, depth and respect for the individuals who contributed meaningfully to his work.

I hope you will consider issuing a correction and, ideally, taking a more thoughtful look at both my role in Miles' music and the project I have created in his honor.

JASON MILES  
VIA EMAIL

### Miles Is Bad!

I will not be renewing my subscription this December and if you want to know why it's simple — your continued obsession with Miles Davis.

This emphasis does absolutely nothing to highlight what's happening in jazz today. NOTHING! There is a variety of jazz happening ALL across this country and your continued focus seems to be Miles Davis. I am a New Orleans native, and I know better.

I now live in California, which has two jazz festivals — one in Healdsburg and one in Monterey. Why don't you check them out. Current and upcoming artists deserve more of your attention.

KAY SCHENK  
VIA EMAIL

### Miles is Good! We're Bad!

I am grossly underwhelmed at your coverage of Miles' centennial. 5 pages? A lame panel discussion? It's embarrassing considering he changed jazz five times.

Can't wait to see what tripe you have planned for Coltrane in July.

TOM GUILFOYLE  
VIA EMAIL

### Miles from Right

I am writing to express my deep disappointment with the recent mention of my work in your coverage surrounding Miles Davis' 100th birthday.

In the article, I was described simply as "a keyboard player with Miles Davis" who made an album titled *100 Miles for Miles Davis*. This characterization is not only inaccurate,

**Editor's Note:** Sorry, Jason. There have been so many projects surrounding the centennial, and so little space! Thank you for your many contributions to this music. We appreciate you and your art.

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A photograph of Joe Lovano, a man with a grey beard and mustache, wearing a straw hat and sunglasses. He is holding a saxophone and looking towards the camera. The background is dark and out of focus.

# JOE LOVANO

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"The first time I was with him, I felt, 'You must be on the right track to have people like this endorse you,'" Bobby Broom said of his mentor, the late Sonny Rollins.

## Bobby Broom Pays Homage to Sonny

As guitarist Bobby Broom spoke from his Chicago home office in April, promoting jazz's legacy was on his mind for two big reasons. In a week, he would perform onstage as part of the globally streamed all-star UNESCO International Jazz Day event at the city's Lyric Opera House. At the same time, he was eagerly awaiting the finished copies of his new album, one that celebrates the saxophonist who shaped this music's trajectory and was also a personal mentor.

Broom's *Notes Of Thanks* (Steele Records) is

an homage to Sonny Rollins, who died May 25 at age 95, a few weeks after the album's release and the interview for this article. Most of the tracks are Rollins compositions, and many of them are not as familiar as they should be — even to the saxophonist's ardent fans. Broom's playing, with inventive lyrical flights and imaginative quotations, sometimes echoes the saxophonist's approach. This recording also made Broom look far back into his own life, back to when he first performed with Rollins at New York's Carnegie Hall in 1978. At that time,

Broom was in high school.

"It was a wondrous thing," Broom said about that concert. "On some level, I understood the gravity of it. But I wasn't looking at that experience in any kind of historical way. How can you when you're 17?"

Since that experience, Broom went on to record with numerous prominent musicians (ranging from Kenny Burrell to Dr. John) and lead his own acclaimed groups, including the longstanding trio — with drummer Kobie Watkins and bassist Dennis Carroll — that appears on *Notes Of Thanks*. Through it all, Rollins has remained an overarching presence. Broom joined his band in 1981 and stayed until 1987; then rejoined from 2005 to 2010, a period that ended about a year before the saxophonist's retirement. Broom contends that Rollins' repertoire made as much of an impact as his improvisational brilliance.

"I can get emotional about how close I feel to these songs," Broom said. "They are so meaningful to me, much like I know they are to Sonny. Even if it's subconscious, just the feeling I get from the song — that makes me want to interpret it."

For this album, those interpretations combine Rollins' studied pieces from the 1950s and 1960s ("Alfie's Theme" and "Valse Hot") along with his overlooked works from the 1980s ("Allison" and "Kim"). Broom's thoughtful selection from this catalog shows how much beauty can be found within its extensive range.

"Sonny has a vast body of work that I don't know if people have really investigated," Broom said. "I attribute that to how history works. Someone becomes popular for something they did 50 years ago, time stopped, it gets frozen and the artist is recognized for that and some of their fan base is stuck on that period but time keeps going."

One of Rollins' innovations was using the saxophone trio format on such albums as *Way Out West* and *Freedom Suite* in the late 1950s. While Broom also leads a trio here, that instrumental configuration was not central for this album. He was more focused on how best to serve the songs while allowing Watkins and Carroll to play their parts as they envisioned them. The group's original ideas include a funk rhythm on "Doxy." He also sought how to interpret the sound of Rollins' single-note instrument to his own chordal one.

"The way that I approach it is when I feel the

need for harmonic support, then I try to provide that,” Broom said. “For instance, ‘Kim.’ That’s not a melody that I would necessarily want to play without the support of some harmony. So if there was a piano or another chordal instrument, then I could play the melody single-line and feel OK about that. But in the context of the trio, I felt that I wanted to provide some support for it. But then, maybe on ‘Freedom Suite Part 1,’ I was subconsciously referencing what I remember from the original recording. And the original presentation of that composition is what it is: the melody line, the rhythmic support of bass and drums. So I didn’t need to make chords on each one of those notes. On ‘Paul’s Pal,’ no one said, ‘Kobe, play a calypso beat.’ At the recording he was just playing this calypso beat and we thought, ‘Oh, cool. That’s what this is.’ The song sounds like it could be a calypso song, so it’s nature.”

Carroll wrote the only piece on the album that is not a Rollins composition, “Me Time.” Broom said he included it because of its distinctive character and because he enjoys throwing in an outlier, like with his 2009 Thelonious Monk tribute, *Bobby Broom Plays For Monk*.

“Monk didn’t write ‘Lulu’s Back In Town,’ but he played the heck out of it,” Broom said. “When I heard ‘Me Time,’ we both said it has

a quality, mysterious or something that is reminiscent of something we may associate with Sonny. It’s a great tune, and I want to record it.”

Luthier Dan Koentopp also had a role in making *Notes Of Thanks* sound so vivid. For the past few years, Broom has been playing a Koentopp Chicagoan guitar, and along with its exquisite tone, Broom said it has enhanced his perspective on what Rollins played.

“Koentopp is handmade, like a Stradivarius-level instrument — it has such nuance for me as I hear it,” Broom said. “It has so much depth it makes me want to accentuate certain things, too — certain finger things with pull-offs, when you hear the finger and the string, you get that tactile sensation much like keys on the saxophone. It’s the physical aspects of the instrument that I love hearing.”

Along with Broom’s active performance schedule, he is also associate professor of jazz guitar and jazz studies at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Illinois. As one who worked with giants like Rollins and Jackie McLean, he is in an ideal position to transmit their lessons to his classrooms. But during his different times with Rollins, the legend’s mentorship was more about affirmation rather than transmitting traditional lessons.

“Day to day, I wasn’t checking in if this is

right, but in conversation Sonny would say something and I would go, ‘Right, that’s what I know,’” Broom said. “That was another kind of validation: ‘You’re on the right track, keep on doing what you’re doing.’ The first time I was with him, I felt, ‘You must be on the right track to have people like this endorse you.’ So then the next tenure with him was something similar, but after I had established some things. We all at the core have some of the same ideas about certain things, and this is what we impart to students.”

While Broom was preparing *Notes Of Thanks*, he was also reading Aidan Levy’s definitive Rollins biography, *Saxophone Colossus*, which made him think more about how Rollins entered his life. The book reveals the probability that pianist Al Haig suggested Rollins check out the teenage Broom. Shared geography was another connection. Like Rollins, Broom spent his earliest years in Harlem before moving to Manhattan’s Upper West Side. All of which makes this album another closing of the circle.

“Sonny knew I was from Harlem, so did Jackie,” Broom said. “I think there was something to that. I’ve thought that for a little while: ‘Here’s this little homeboy who loves the music, sounds like he’s been practicing some of the right things, so, good!’” —Aaron Cohen



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Viola artist Mat Maneri says DoYeon Kim's approach to music is "at once delicate, and then punk rock — no fear."

## DoYeon Kim & Avant-Garde Dreams

**EVERY COUNTRY HAS ITS OWN MUSICAL** culture, and every musical culture has a different approach to the question of improvisation. Some forms don't allow for it at all; Western classical music is entirely score-dependent, and it's up to the performer to find a way to inject their own personality into a performance while still playing every note as written.

DoYeon Kim grew up learning Korean court music, which is rigorously structured to the point of ritual. "Before I moved to America, when I was in Korea, I normally heard that I need to mimic my teacher. And when I was mimicking, I felt like, but there's something else, you know, thinking about ... our tradition. My instrument was made in 6 B.C., so 2,000 years ago, and some of the music I play is from 200, 300 years ago. So there, I felt a little disconnected, but still like, this is our legacy. We need to keep this tradition. It's really hard to make my own way. It's more [about preserving] this music."

Kim's instrument is the gayageum (pronounced "kayak-um"). It's a Korean zither, traditionally featuring 12 strings, though it can have as many as 25. The player plucks the strings with the right hand, while pressing, shaking and vibrating the strings with the left — her term for this is "cooking" the notes.

"Everything's direct from my hand," she says. "Of course I use a bow, but I'm plucking and flicking the strings directly from my hand. I'm push-

ing directly. So I feel really connected and very close [to the instrument]. So I think that's what's really attractive about this. When I felt that, I felt so attracted when I was first learning."

In 2013, Kim arrived from Seoul to attend New England Conservatory in Boston. It was the only institution that would allow her to study as a player: "They all recommended me to become a musicologist or ethnomusicologist, like a scholar. But I wanted to be a performer ... only NEC allowed me to audition with my instrument."

The sound of the gayageum, particularly how Kim plays it, is immediately intriguing to a Western ear. It doesn't have the metallic twang of a Japanese koto; its silk strings allow for a greater sonic roundness. It's like a harp strung with iridescent ribbons. But Kim plays the instrument with great percussive force, not only using her hands, but also bows and mallets. She makes the gayageum boom and roar.

This was inspired in part by her attempts to make the instrument fit into Western musical concepts; at New England Conservatory, she would listen to horn players, or electric instruments, and attempt to imitate them on gayageum. "I wasn't used to using a bow. But I tried so many different types of bow and even tuning systems. So while doing that ... I was able to extend my expression. Oh, and then actually, it's not sometimes some technique — like, how I bang into my gayageum, it's really not good for my

instrument. But I always talk to the gayageum, [saying], 'I'm sorry, in this life, you are like this. So in the next life, you will become me, and I will be your gayageum.'"

At NEC, Kim studied with guitarist/bassist Joe Morris, who brought her into the worlds of avant-garde jazz composition and improvisation, giving her scores by Ornette Coleman and Anthony Braxton to study and telling her that her urge to stretch beyond the limitations of the score — which was impermissible in the music she'd grown up playing — was a valid one. "He was the first person who told me that it is OK. Like, this is also music. I think I always thought I needed to fix something wrong. But he showed me, and let me extend the concept of the music."

Her debut album as a leader, *Wellspring* (Tao Forms), features viola player Mat Maneri, bassist Henry Fraser and drummer Tyshawn Sorey, each of them well-versed in stretching musical boundaries. Maneri, a longtime associate of Joe Morris and no stranger himself to presenting jazz listeners with unexpected tones and harmonies, says, "I very much enjoyed our first time playing together in her apartment in Brooklyn. She had the enthusiasm and joy that I sorely miss. It caught me off guard, and it informed the direction we were to take."

He describes her approach as "at once delicate, and then punk rock — no fear," and says the group came together quickly in the studio. "I followed the written music, and then it was a matter of finding a unified breath. I think we found that, through the subtle intonations and fierce percussive eruptions. It was an improviser's perfect playground. Nothing off bounds, yet serious and full of empathy."

"Mat Maneri, his relationship with the note is so special," Kim says. "It's very close to — for me, it's so familiar how he's also cooking the note. He's definitely cooking the note. He has some special sound. And during the recording, I asked Mat Maneri, can you make me cry? And then right away he played something that made me cry."

Kim and Sorey played a duo when he appeared at NEC as a guest artist, and during the *Wellspring* session, she was fascinated by his ability to envision the entire piece while staying alive in the moment. "Like, we [would] play [the] 'A' section, and people normally focus on the 'A' section. But he's thinking about big picture ... not the tree, but the forest. So he's kind of already expecting how this is going to build out, where he wants to reach out."

The ferocity of Kim's playing, and her impassioned vocals on "Walking In The Dream," "Linear System" and "Calculus Of Our Souls" (the latter two a single 22-minute work in two parts), make it impossible to dismiss her music as kitsch or exotica. She is an avant-gardist in the truest sense, a pioneer bringing her instrument into entirely new sonic worlds. —Phil Freeman



Sullivan Fortner performs at the Gilmore International Piano Festival in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

## Gilmore Festival Delivers the Extraordinary

**HIS STRIDE GAVE HIM AWAY. IT WAS CLOSING NIGHT, MAY 10, AT** the 2026 Gilmore International Piano Festival, and Sullivan Fortner was spotted in the lobby, bouncing about just minutes before he was scheduled to play. Amid a busy yet unaware crowd working their various ways toward seats inside Kalamazoo's Chenery Auditorium, this reviewer called out, "Hey, Sullivan! What are you doing here?" His answer? "I'm looking for the bathroom!" Well, he found it, all right, only moments later magically crossing the stage with his trio, which included bassist Tyrone Allen II and drummer Kayvon Gordon. The bill would eventually also feature trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire and singer Cécile McLorin Salvant.

Little did we know how this past and prologue would play a central role with Fortner's two appearances in Kalamazoo. But we're getting ahead of ourselves.

Backtrack to April 30. Supplanted by not only a Steinway, Fortner — dressed in all black as he emerged from behind the stage — gave the appearance of someone in a playground of sorts, moving between the piano, Fender Rhodes, Mini Moog and organ. Indeed, the concert was billed a "Solo Game," emphasis on the playful. He began his solo set with an experimental take on Stevie Wonder's "Don't You Worry About A Thing." It felt impromptu, spontaneous, but Sullivan Fortner knew what he was doing. A kind of sit-down comedian (behind the keys), one might say he had the audience in the palm of his hand.

It was, barring the previous week's Joshua Bell concert, opening night of the festival at the intimate Parish Theatre. Since the late '80s, a biannual event, Fortner's presence marked yet another first: his being the inaugural Larry J. Bell Jazz Artist Award recipient. Highlight: Fortner taking encore requests, which settled on an impressionable, imaginative "medley" of Monk tunes, starting off with "Crepuscle With Nellie."

Cyrus Chestnut had two full-house shows at Bell's Eccentric Cafe on Saturday night. With bassist Laura-Simone and drummer Sean Dobbins, the spirit of Monk reemerged with the trio's calm and soothing take on "Ask Me Now," the song working its way into a double-time swing ending with a soft treatment of "Autumn Leaves" in 5/4. A natural blend of jazz and classical (the putative zeitgeist of the festival) was on display a few nights later at the Dalton Recital Hall on Western Michigan University's campus as a sold-out audience was treated to the respective complexities of Brad Mehldau and Kirin Gerstein "In Dialogue." Between groove, improv and friendly volleys, a classical vibe predominated.

As with past Gilmore festivals, there were a series of noon shows at the downtown Civic Theater; four to be exact (mirrored by an equal number by all four groups at Battle Creek's Kool Center). Beginning with 2026 Larry Bell Young Artist Esteban Castro's trio and continuing with 2026 Bell Young Artist Tyler Bullock's trio, singer Nicole Zuraitis, and concluding on

Friday with the Yes! Trio featuring drummer Ali Jackson, pianist Aaron Goldberg and bassist Omer Avital, the idea of jazz at midday seems to have staying power even as it seems counterintuitive.

Pianists Bill Charlap and Renee Rosnes made two appearances this year, first with a free afternoon jazz master class on campus, the second the following night with two sets at the Williams Theatre, also on campus. On both occasions, the obvious warmth and congeniality of this married pair permeated their supportive comments to young piano aspirants and, later, performances of mostly standards, including touching treatments of "In Your Own Sweet Way," "My Funny Valentine" and "Spring Is Here" next to swingers like "Just In Time" and an infectious take on Chick Corea's "Tones For Joan's Bones." Rosnes made a third appearance the next night at Dalton, this time with her group Artemis. The group's fierce, swinging swagger — also spearheaded by drummer Allison Miller, trumpeter Ingrid Jensen, saxophonist Nicole Glover and bassist Noriko Ueda — included covers and standards, including more Monk ("Hackensack"), and was tempered by sweet-nothings like "What The World Needs Now." The group left the crowd with a sensitive rendering of Miles Davis' "Flamenco Sketches."

By closing time, May 10, Fortner and friends were ending the festival with yet another spirit of spontaneity. "Don't know what we're gonna do," Sullivan shared with the eager crowd at the start. And so the trio headed into a 20-plus-minute series of moods, organized improvisation, slow, melodic, swinging. Akinmusire came out to join the trio with some of his own music, followed by Salvant in a moving theatrical piece of Greek tragedy.

Getting in a plug for Kalamazoo Central graduate Abbey Lincoln, the quintet performed a moving rendition of her "Down Here Below." Two standing ovations later, Sullivan was back, alone. Again, taking requests — echoing opening night — someone was heard shouting "Round Midnight!" Sure enough, he took the bait, in a kind of reprise medley of Monk tunes.

At song's end, we could all see him wandering off the stage, replete with that bouncing, confident stride.

—John Ephland

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"I really wanted to make a record that's something you can like, put in your car and drive and have a story," Dida Pelled says of her new blues recording, *I Wish I Would*.

## Dida Pelled Channels the Blues Muse

**IT IS NOT ALWAYS DEFINITIVE OR ELIMINATING** to judge an artist by their discography. In the case of the multidirectional Dida Pelled, the guitarist-singer (not singer-guitarist) has released a set of five albums over the past 15 years, revealing a naturally wandering yet clearly talented creative soul at work.

On her latest album, *I Wish You Would*, Pelled presents an alluring personal way with the blues. But on her previous album, 2022's thrilling and surprising *Love Of The Tiger*, she cuts the image of a singer-songwriter with a fresh edge. That persona is seemingly a world away from her strongly jazz-driven debut *Dida Sings And Plays*, from 2011.

No, Pelled's recording career is not a case study in multi-personality syndrome, but the natural moves of a modern artist whose taste antenna channels a diversity of influences and interests.

Asked about her adventure into the blues orbit, in a recent Zoom interview from Los Angeles, Pelled replied, "Honestly, everything I play is very bluesy," clarifying that "this is the first one where I sing and play blues."

Recalling the salad days of her recording

life, she notes, "I made two jazz records earlier in my career when I'd just arrived in New York. Fabio Morgera, a great Italian trumpet player and producer, found me at a gig in West Village — my first gig in New York. He came three times in a row, sat in and offered me this record deal. I was very lucky. I had Roy Hargrove and Gregory Hutchinson on it. It kind of happened by chance. I didn't even know what it means to make a record.

"I was in the first semester at the New School. I only cared about, 'What's my next solo gonna sound like?' It was very much just thinking about your playing, in a way, not thinking about a concept for an album. I just played tunes I liked to play. He told me, 'You're gonna go in different directions. You should record how you sound playing straightahead jazz now, because you do it so well. People will always wanna go back to that. And it will be nice for you to document that.'"

Jumping to the now, she says, "So this is my first singing and playing, basically the way I sound on gigs or these days. Many of these songs are things I've been playing for many years, which for some reason I never recorded. Finding songs is very special: It's kind of like writing a

song. It comes to you and you think, 'My God, I wanna do this song.' I feel like I have this connection with it. When I thought about the record, it made sense to me to bring them together. It feels like a coherent whole to me. I have to give some credit to [producer] Matt [Pierson]. I think he's very good at big picture and that's one of the reasons I was excited to work with him.

"I really wanted to make a record that's something you can like, put in your car and drive and have a story. And that's Matt's expertise. So many records are kind of all over the place. I love those, and feel like they find a way to make it work. But I was excited to make a record that really takes you on one ride."

She is in good company on the album, with the dream (and sometimes dreamy) team of bassist Tony Scherr and drummer Kenny Wolleson for a rhythm section, and current go-to pianist (and occasionally Rhodes player) Sullivan Fortner on some tracks. "Sullivan is so good," Pelled says. "I go to hear him every possible chance I have. He is definitely one of my favorites. And then there were Tony and Kenny. I was a fan of Tony for years.

"After I moved to New York, I was a jazz girl,

coming to the New School, and I quickly I found this scene of jazz musicians that are — I think you can call them jazz dropouts, who play other things, too. They play songs with singer-songwriters and play folksy, rocky, bluesy things, but definitely coming from jazz.”

Such a broad-spirited approach to music is evident in her *I Wish You Would*, a “blues” record in a general and eclectic way, with shadings based on her personal musical proclivities. Her musical voice ranges from a jazz-inflected treatment of “Since I Fell For You” to a lanky-grooving, Billie Holiday-flavored touch on the Hot Tuna-associated “Hesitation Blues” (with Fortner’s piano savvy) and nods to John Lee Hooker and Billy Boy Arnold. The song set closes on an intimate note, with just voice and guitar on “Trouble,” a tune written by Gladys Shelley and recorded by Dakota Station. Scherr, who had played the song with Station, turned Pelled on to it, and that’s actually Scherr on the jazz-guitar-through-vibrato-toned amp on the track.

Pelled also includes a version of a song by famed jazz pianist Mary Lou Williams, “The Rosa,” connected to an ambitious ongoing project of Pelled’s, “The Lost Women of Song,” which she has performed at Barbes in Brooklyn and elsewhere, and plans to one day commit to record. Among the women in the spotlight are Connie Converse, Elizabeth Cotten, Vashti Bunyan, Tia Blake, Molly Drake (Nick Drake’s mother) and Norma Tanega. Williams, Pelled pointed out, “is not unknown at all, but I wanted to play her song and it made sense in the project. You can find her doing it, here and there, but it feels like it’s under the category of ‘Lost Things.’”

Another “Lost Things” qualifier is “I Wish I Was A Single Girl Again,” which will be the title of her forthcoming “Americana” album, recorded with the same collaborators at the same time as her recently released project.

The “Lost Women of Song” project, she explains, “is about women that wrote gorgeous music. They’re kind of iconic, but never made a record, only had demos of their songs released after they passed. I found more women that either had one record or never did a record and had really interesting stories.”

Growing up in Tel Aviv, before following her heart and fate to New York, Pelled admits, “I was definitely a guitar nerd first. I started playing at 11 years old and only played guitar. At that age, I wasn’t a serious musician. I was playing Nirvana’s [live album] *MTV Unplugged In New York*. I would sing along, but wasn’t thinking of myself as a singer.

“At 15, I got into this really amazing high school with a great jazz program, and there I got very nerdy and quickly was obsessed with bebop and hard-bop. I was transcribing Wes Montgomery and Grant Green all day long. From 15 to 18, I was becoming a bebop and hard-bop player. That was very important, because I felt I

needed that focus in order to get the language and to understand this music. You have to kind of be obsessed for a while to really get it.

“After 18 or 19, I started wanting to sing, which came with the love of other styles, not thinking I wanted to sing standards, but to sing whatever. I was very passionate about wanting to sing.” Eventually, after studying voice and mustering courage, she began to sing in public, and “it really was like coming out of the closet.”

In effect, ironically, she was able to reinvent herself once landing in New York, “which sounds crazy because the craziest musicians are here, and I was able to say, ‘Hey, I’m Dida. I play guitar and sing.’”

Since 2020, Pelled has channeled her music community-connecting instincts into radio, with *The Dida Show*, every Friday afternoon on Radio Free Brooklyn, and broadcast to the world via YouTube. Guests, to date, include Cécile McLorin Salvant, Ben Monder and Arooj Aftab, as well as upcoming names of note: One tasty show finds her conversing and jamming with one of her favorite young guitarists, Emmanuel Michael.

Pelled, never one to sit still, or in one place, has other projects in the hopper, including what involves “crazy avant-garde stuff — I went all the way with it,” she comments. “I have to release it, also, I dunno, before I’m 40, because it’s super experimental and wild. And I feel like it’ll be weird to release it when I’m like too old.” She laughs.

She is also nearly finished with a vaguely rock-themed album called *Teen Model*, in collaboration with singer (and former teen model) Jenna Danneberger, which she describes as “a coming-of-age record about both of us in our 20s in New York, and addiction and love and everything you can imagine. That’s a very special record to me, and I’m excited to release it.”

As for the pesky gender question, regarding the slow but sure acceptance of women artists in a once male-dominated jazz world, Pelled, 37, is a female jazz-veteran-in-training. As one on the scene for 15 years, she has witnessed — and benefited from — the gradual thawing of old gender-based strictures in jazz.

“I’m always happy when more women get to do their thing. Women are the best,” she laughs. “I don’t like to separate too much. I love men playing music and women, and whatever is good is good. But there’s something about women playing and singing that’s very delicate and speaks to me. But I can say the same thing about men whose music I love. There is like a bro-ey kind of playing that really doesn’t do anything too much for me. But everyone should get an opportunity to do it.

“Again, I don’t like to separate so much, but I do have an obsession with ‘The Lost Women of Song’ stuff, where I’m really connected to women’s voices and storytelling and the way they write songs and play them.” —Josef Woodard

## Final Bar >

### Kiyoshi Kitagawa, 1958–2026

Bassist Kiyoshi Kitagawa passed away on April 28, after being diagnosed with cholangiocarcinoma, an aggressive and devastating form of cancer. From Osaka, Japan, Kitagawa arrived in the United States in 1988. Drummer Ben Riley introduced Kitagawa to piano legend Kenny Barron more than 30 years ago, and the bassist became a key member of Barron’s trio. He also worked with many other greats including Kenny Garrett, Jimmy Heath and Jon Faddis.

—Frank Alkyer



### Don Schlitten, 1932–2026

The producer, photographer and designer passed away on Feb. 9 at the age of 93. Born in the Bronx, Schlitten, at 23, co-founded Signal Records. He later worked as a producer for Prestige and became the art director. In the early 1970s, Schlitten teamed with Joe Fields on the Cobblestone, Muse and Onyx labels. In 1975, he created Xanadu Records with his wife, Nina. His photos grace over 400 album covers, including those by Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk and John Coltrane. His photos will be presented in an upcoming book, *Love And Understanding: The Jazz Photography of Don Schlitten*, scheduled to come out in August on Fantagraphics Books.

—Frank Alkyer



### Georg Wadenius, 1945–2026

Swedish guitarist, singer and composer Georg Wadenius died on April 30, just before his 81st birthday. He was instrumental in such bands as Made in Sweden and Solar Plexus and worked with high-profile Swedish artists Cornelis Vreeswijk and Pugh Rogefeldt. In the late ‘60s and early ‘70s he also wrote, sang and performed music for children. American bluegrass singer Stefan Grossman introduced him to Blood Sweat & Tears. He played with BS&T for three years starting in 1972. From 1979 to 1985 he was part of the Saturday Night Live Band and soon became one of the most sought-after session players in New York.

—Tor Hammero



# Emmet Cohen



## MESSENGER OF JOY

BY ALLEN MORRISON PHOTO BY KEVIN ALEXANDER

The first thing people notice about Emmet Cohen, the thing his legions of fans cite most frequently, is his smile: broad, uninhibited, genuine. He flashes it frequently when he plays.

**A**mong jazz musicians of a certain mindset, smiling is frowned upon. Cohen couldn't care less.

"There are enough examples of the masters of this art form smiling," he says, "from Louis Armstrong and Fats Waller to Dizzy Gillespie and 'Smiling' Billy Higgins, that anyone who wants to express joy should feel comfortable doing so. Herbie Hancock on stage with a keytar in his hand ... there are endless examples.

"It's about staying true to who you are as a person," he reflects. "If you find others being upset with some-

thing you're doing, that's usually a vulnerability in their ability to be comfortable with who they are."

He was smiling plenty when he appeared recently at Jimmy's, a surprisingly large, well-appointed jazz venue in downtown Portsmouth, New Hampshire. He was beginning the latest leg of his U.S. tour, a centennial-year tribute to Miles Davis and John Coltrane with his all-star quintet: Jeremy Pelt on trumpet, Tivon Pennicott on tenor, Reuben Rogers on bass and Joe Farnsworth on drums.

Cohen told the packed house that the band was







"We have figured out our show, and people seem to be really connecting with it," Emmet Cohen says of his band's current tour, a tribute to Miles Davis and John Coltrane. "The audiences are large and exuberant. It feels like we're doing what we're meant to be doing."

"coming in hot" after a week at Birdland in New York during which they played 10 shows in five days. They hit the ground running with a high-energy "Surrey With The Fringe On Top" full of tricky shifts in time and feel, then covered other songs from various Miles and Trane eras, everything from "Autumn Leaves" to "They Say It's Wonderful" to "Amandla." They ended the set with a medley including "Milestones," "All Blues," "So What" and "Giant Steps." As leader, Cohen generously showcased the horn players, as was only fitting for such a tribute. When he did solo, he displayed staggering technique but, as usual, wielded it judiciously in the service of poetic expression.

Pennicott, who is a few years older than

the 35-year-old Cohen, met the pianist in 2008 in Miami, where they played a few gigs together during Cohen's freshman year at the University of Miami's Frost School of Music; Pennicott had recently graduated. They reconnected in New York in the late 2010s. They played together at Cohen's steady organ gig at the uptown jazz mecca Smoke, with trumpeter Benny Bennack III and drummer Joe Saylor.

"We created a sound that was so free-flowing, we could change keys and tempos at any time. Everybody had huge ears. We got to a point where we would just go into any song at any moment. It was such a freeing experience for all of us."

When the quintet played Birdland,

Pennicott said, they were trying to channel the kind of freedom that Miles' Second Quintet had during their legendary Plugged Nickel engagement in Chicago.

"They were just so free in how they would play. What you heard in Portsmouth — we don't really know what's gonna happen. Emmet just starts an intro ... and we just go. He has a powerful group that can go anywhere, that's rooted in the tradition, and there's no worries about our creating. That's what I love about this. Emmet is like, 'You know what? I feel like doing this!' And he knows and trusts his band."

Cohen is thrilled with the way the new quintet had gelled, he said via video chat from Santa Barbara, California. He was in the middle of the West Coast leg of the tour — Southern and Central California, San Francisco, Seattle and Portland. "We have figured out our show, and people seem to be really connecting with it. The audiences are large and exuberant. It feels like we're doing what we're meant to be doing."

His approach to Miles and Coltrane is to play the repertoire, avoid imitation and encourage the band members to fully express themselves. "The most truthful version (of Miles and Coltrane) is one that connects to their spiritual nature," he said.

Some of those moments are captured in Cohen's new quintet album, *Universal Truth* (Mack Avenue), which features Davis and Coltrane standards as well as a suite of Cohen originals (Cohen's regular New York bassist Yasushi Nakamura substitutes for Rogers). Elder statesmen Ron Carter and George Coleman make guest appearances on several tracks. Cohen's intent, he has written, is to "honor the lineage of this music, connect the generations, and create something that feels both current and deeply personal."

On his website, Cohen prominently quotes Art Blakey, in all-caps for added emphasis: "JAZZ WASHES AWAY THE DUST OF EVERYDAY LIFE." That's the spirit Cohen tries to project in the weekly livestream *Live from Emmet's Place*, which became a global jazz phenomenon during the COVID-19 pandemic and unexpectedly put his career into overdrive. Since its launch in 2020, the webcast has amassed more than 100 million views across various social media platforms, 64 million-plus on YouTube alone. It catapulted Cohen into the stratosphere of jazz, enabling him to sell out concert halls and clubs all over the world. Last December, he was voted the No. 1 pianist in the DownBeat Readers Poll.

*Emmet's Place* also boosted the careers of many other New York musicians in his orbit. They include such young, like-mind-

ed jazz artists as original trio members Russell Hall and Kyle Poole, Patrick Bartley, Bruce Harris, Philip Norris, vocalists like Veronica Swift and Cyrille Aimee, and many others who embrace the same joyful, neo-traditionalist approach in which the love of playing the classics — and expanding them to incorporate modern approaches and individual expression — is seen as a virtue.

*“We knew back in the day that Emmet had it.”*

—Christian McBride, an early mentor

Cohen could easily have become a classical pianist. A prodigy, he studied classical piano from ages 3 to 18. When he plays jazz, his classical training is evident in many ways: in his dynamic range, tone production, rhythmic precision, in the evenness of even the speediest of his well-tempered runs, in his formidable hand independence. It’s also present in his ability to evoke the whole history of the piano — not just jazz piano going back to ragtime and stride, but also occasionally the vocabulary of classical piano’s greatest composers and virtuosi.

He calls his father, George, a genial retired psychologist, and his mother, Marla, an artist, “super supportive,” saying he “never really felt pressured to live a life that they wanted for me.”

“I think he’s being a little kind,” George said, admitting to being a stage father. “I think there was implicit pressure.” He cites his own background as a “frustrated” but professional singer — he once appeared in a production of the musical *The Fantasticks* that toured Europe, among other credits. There also was a family history of jazz talent: George’s first cousin was an exceptionally skillful jazz pianist named Greg Kogan, who played with the Buddy Rich and Lionel Hampton bands. Moreover, Greg’s father, Maurice, played saxophone in Broadway pit orchestras and had the nickname “Hawk” because he sounded like Coleman Hawkins. Emmet was so taken with the congruities between himself and the Kogans that he made that the theme of the essays he submitted with his college applications.

With that family background, George was on the lookout for early signs of musical talent, he said. He related an oft-repeated family story of how he first discovered Emmet’s proclivity for music.

“Starting when he was 1, I used to put on classical music. The speakers were in the ceiling, and I would point to them and say ‘Rachmaninoff,’ or ‘Mozart,’ or whoever it was. One day, when he was 2½, I put on Pachelbel. And before I could get to him, he came in and pointed at the speakers and said, ‘Pachelbel!’ So, I got very excited, and I called Marla in, and I said, ‘Bingo,’ you know? I knew it, right?”

Shortly after that incident, George and Marla brought Emmet to a piano teacher who taught the Suzuki method, in which children learn the repertoire by ear for the first few years. “She said, ‘We have

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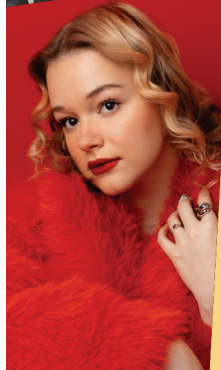
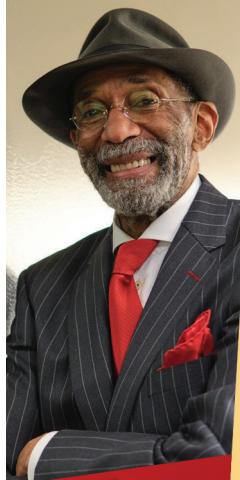
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Live from *Emmet's Place*, Episode 108, featured Cohen with Terell Stafford on trumpet, Dick Oatts on alto saxophone, Peter Washington on bass and Kyle Poole on drums.

a problem. He's interested, but his hands are too small! We brought him back in six months, and she said, 'Great, it's perfect.'" He took classical lessons without pause until age 18. "So, maybe it was true that we never put pressure on him to take any particular path, but as far as I was concerned, music was his path. And I bombarded him with music in the house."

George sat with him each time he practiced and was also not above bribing the young boy. In one famous incident, he promised Emmet the hot video console of the day — a Sega Dreamcast — if he could learn "Für Elise" and play it with no mistakes. "That's the fastest I ever learned anything," Cohen said.

Among his earliest pieces were Mozart minuets. He loved Chopin and Bartók and acquired an affinity for Bach. "Bach just always made a lot of sense to me," he mused. "The language of it is very particular. ... I found a lot of similarities to bebop. How the voice-leading and counterpoint interact. The similarities in tension-and-release. How the V chord leads to different tonal centers."

He perceives an improvisational aspect to Bach's writing. "There might be a string

of eighth notes that get you from one chord to the next. The way he would write it, there were seemingly endless possibilities of how to get from one thing to another." All of it suggested the exploratory freedom of jazz improvisation.

Cohen cites Christian McBride as one of several key mentors in his development as a musician. Like the Cohen family, the eminent bassist, bandleader and radio personality is a resident of Montclair, New Jersey. McBride met the 11-year-old Cohen shortly after the family moved there, when Emmet joined a workshop at Montclair's Jazz House Kids Foundation, run by McBride and his wife, Melissa Walker.

"We knew back in the day that Emmet had it," McBride said. "He was very serious about the music. When you see such serious students, you give them exceptional care. He had a hunger; he wanted to learn the tunes, meet the musicians and be deep on the inside of what was going on in the jazz community."

Ultimately, McBride gave the young pianist a spot in his trio called Tip City, a piano/guitar/bass outfit that he launched in 2017

"to just play some good tunes and some good swinging straightahead." He chose Dan Wilson as the guitarist. "You know, when something was swinging really hard, they would say that was tipping," McBride said. "I learned the phrase 'Tip City' from Mulgrew Miller and James Williams. If they heard a band that was really swinging, they would just say, 'Tip City!' So, I thought, who do I know who tips really well? And I thought of Emmet."

In middle school and high school, Cohen kept up with his classical studies. Every Saturday, George would drive him to Manhattan to attend the Manhattan School of Music's pre-college program, where he studied with Dr. Peter Vinograd. At the same time, he began supplementing his classical studies with jazz lessons from another teacher at MSM, Jeremy Manasia.

"He's a great jazz pianist," Cohen said. "When I was in high school, I would go to his house in Manhattan. I'd take the bus in from Montclair, and I'd sit with him for three hours sometimes. Jeremy was playing me all this Barry Harris and Bud Powell and Sonny Clark and Brad Mehldau and Monk and Trane. ... And I was just like,

‘Whoa!’ All these light bulbs went off. I couldn’t wait to go home and practice.”

Cohen explains his decision to forego classical music for jazz this way: “I never truly felt like a successful classical pianist. It was always really challenging to execute these pieces at the highest level. It took a tremendous amount of focused time on one passage. I mean, you have to be crazy, or so obsessive and particular, to be at the top of your game as a classical musician. I have so much respect for the people [who do it]. ... I realized that I just couldn’t keep up.

“And it wasn’t resonating with my personality type. I’m an extrovert, and I love to spend time around people and be social. To be a classical pianist, you almost have to be all of the opposite things. You have to be alone.”

When he applied to college, Cohen had offers from every conservatory he applied to, including Juilliard. He settled on Frost primarily because of Shelly Berg, the dean, who wooed him to Miami.

According to George Cohen, his son was afraid that certain other schools would try to exert too much control over him. “Whereas Shelly Berg promised him that he would help him with business and let him work everywhere while he studied. I’m very grateful for what Shelly has done.”

“I spent four years taking one-on-one lessons from Shelly,” Cohen said. “He’s sort of a Yoda figure in jazz education. He recognized my power and potential. He wanted to help me access what was inside of me. I hadn’t had a teacher like that before.”

“Emmet was a great jazz pianist at 17,” Berg said. “When he first arrived, I said to him, ‘You’re a terrific pianist, and, yes, we’ll do some nuts-and-bolts, and anything else you want to learn how to do better. But we’re really heading toward one day. It’s the day that you play one note, and I start crying.’

“And that day came. It’s interesting, because he knew that was a goal. And many times before that, he would turn around during a lesson to see if I was crying. And I would just sort of look at him like [*he shakes his head and shrugs*] — ‘Nope.’ Then, when it happened, he didn’t turn around to check. He knew it had happened. He stood up from the keyboard, turned around and hugged me. He knew I’d be crying. I’m just so proud of him.”

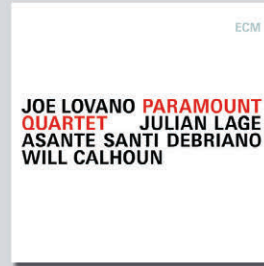
In addition to his prodigious keyboard talent, Cohen’s open nature and focus on human connection has been responsible for his popular success. It also led him to his latest project: He has developed a course to enable musicians to think holistically about their music careers.

“Students need to hear that their creativity doesn’t have to stop at their instrument,” he said. “I want to bridge the gap between artistry and entrepreneurship, and help them brainstorm how to make something that’s bigger than just their music, album or project. I learned about that through trial-and-error, by doing it in a way that features the other musicians, not just yourself. When you’re generous to others, the blessings come back to you tenfold. I kept *Emmet’s Place* free because I wanted people to see it. The money came in anyway.”

His desire to share his joy in making music has something to do with the old-school principle of “playing pretty for the people,” which, perhaps paradoxically, is often associated with Charlie Parker, whose phenomenal technical mastery did not detract from the infectious joy in his playing.

That’s Cohen’s approach, too. “I very much like to play for the people. Just like many of my jazz heroes who loved people and wanted to make them happy.”

DB



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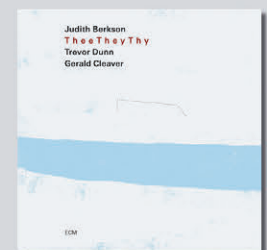


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# JOE LOVANO THE MOMENT IS NOW!

*Photos and Text* BY MICHAEL JACKSON

One of Joe Lovano's buzz terms is "the moment of now" and with seemingly infinite patience — despite a schedule that would, on paper, exhaust the average person — he occupies the present with impressive equilibrium. It's what makes Lovano's music peculiarly vivid and resistant to any hint of being by rote or dialing it in.





Lovano with the Marcin Wasilewski Trio backstage at the Village Vanguard in New York. From left: Wasilewski, Michal Miśkiewicz, Lovano and Slawomir Kurkiewicz.

Listen to his myriad recordings — a short list includes 25 with Blue Note alone between 1990 and 2016; his duos with Hank Jones; face-offs with the great drummers Elvin, Blackwell, DeJohnette, Idris Muhammad, Billy Hart, Lewis Nash — there’s always “music within the music,” as he puts it about his polyrhythmic, polytonal concept.

Lovano feels all tempos within every tempo, yet paradoxically — given the anticipatory chromatic barrage heralding his sonic gambits — a chill, groove-compliant composure pervades. The combination renders Lovano’s delivery uncommonly hip and tour-de-force, but never over-egged or egregious.

Case in point, at a March 2025 master class at Paul Maslin’s PM Woodwind store in Evanston, Illinois, the Cleveland-born saxophonist called “Donna Lee” for a duo demo with bassist Marlene Rosenberg. Confronted with a room full of saxophonists, many top pros, the assumption was this would be an uptempo roast, but Lovano took the bebop warhorse at a medium clip, digging into measured implications, responding to Rosenberg’s ideas en route. As he commented about the melody played slower, “It sounds like a Coleman Hawkins solo.”

The following night Lovano debuted his Paramount Quartet at Evanston’s SPACE with veteran bassist Asante Santi Debriano, Living Colour drummer Will Calhoun and

guitar prodigy Julian Lage. The group, which had just eponymously recorded in the South of France for ECM, navigated fresh pieces from the session including Lovano’s “The Call,” “Fanfare For Unity,” “Congregation” and a spellbinding rendition of Wayne Shorter’s “Lady Day.”

Given a competing ECM release in 2025, *Homage* (a sophomore session with Polish pianist Marcin Wasilewski’s trio), succeeding *Daily Bread* (his second album with Trio Tapestry, featuring Carmen Castaldi and Marilyn Crispell), Lovano fans have waited well over a year to sample Paramount Quartet’s debut, which in the tradition of much of his work for the prolific German label (stretching back to *Psalm* with Paul Motian in 1982) proves luminous, succinct and quite stunning.

DownBeat caught up with Lovano by phone, after his weekend’s participation (sans saxophone) at the SFJAZZ Gala; a week at New York’s Village Vanguard with Crispell, Andrew Cyrille and Ben Street; and touring the U.S. with Coltrane 100 in an ensemble that includes Melissa Aldana, Nduduzo Makhathini, Linda May Han Oh and Jeff “Tain” Watts.

The rollicking conversation has been edited for space and continuity.

**Michael Jackson:** *The gala in San Fran was a testimonial for George Benson as well as*

*Ashley Kahn’s tribute to the centennials of Miles and Coltrane?*

**Joe Lovano:** Gary Bartz was there representing Miles, and I told a story about my dad jamming with Coltrane in the ’50s. The SFJAZZ Collective played. It was amazing. And George, who’s an elderly gentleman now, sang “Moody’s Mood For Love,” played his ass off, told some great stories.

**Jackson:** *Red Holloway told me a story about a Jack McDuff gig with George. Apparently McDuff finally got upgraded on a flight and got blowback for lighting a big joint in first class! Does that remind you of your early days with McDuff?*

**Lovano:** [laughs] Well, my first record date was with Dr. Lonnie Smith, *Afro-desia* [Groove Merchant, 1975], and George was on that session. We hung at his pad in Englewood. ... He played us takes from *Breezin’*, which had yet to come out. ... I was with McDuff, on the Chitlin’ Circuit, same time I was with Lonnie. Jack had a four-sax section. I was on baritone and soprano, Dave Young and Bill Cody on tenors, Willie Smith on alto, who’d later arrange for my album *52nd Street Themes* [Blue Note, 2000].

**Jackson:** *Next to your father — tonsorial artist and big-toned tenorist Tony Lovano — and Cleveland’s Ernie Krivda, Indy’s Dave*

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*Young was your mentor, and then, when in 1976 you joined Woody Herman's band, Frank Tiberi. You mentioned at PM Woodwind that Frank, at 97, is finally getting his Coltrane recordings released.*

**Lovano:** *The Tiberi Tapes!* He's got 60 hours of early Coltrane from Philly, and Impulse! has just released two tunes: "Giant Steps" and "Satellite." Frank's an incredible musician, and mentor, a beautiful voice on the saxophone who also played bassoon and double reeds. George Garzone and I played on his *Tiberian Mode* [1999, NY Jam Records].

**Jackson:** *Your own mentoring proclivities have not been insignificant.*

**Lovano:** I've been Berklee's Gary Burton Chair in Jazz Performance since 9/11/01 — my first day. Since then, so many folks have emerged on the scene, played in bands with me: esperanza spalding, Lawrence Fields, Leo Genovese, Kendrick Scott, Walter Smith III. Prior to that, I was faculty, when Rufus Reid was in charge in the '80s, at William Paterson. I had folks like Eric Alexander and Tony Malaby. Thad Jones and Mel Lewis started that program.

**Jackson:** *Did Mel ever deploy his Chinese cymbal behind you with his orchestra at the Vanguard?*

**Lovano:** [laughs] Every time we played! Dizzy [Gillespie] gave him that. Diz would carry that Chinese cymbal everywhere, and he'd have every drummer play it at some point.

**Jackson:** *Legend has it Mel only tipped on that cymbal behind the strongest soloist.*

**Lovano:** He was one of the greatest big band drummers, yet always treated it like a quartet behind the soloist. He was so unique, following from Shelly Manne and other cats he was into.

**Jackson:** *You didn't get to play much with Thad as he'd left for Copenhagen during your tenure but you got to play a bunch with Hank Jones.*

**Lovano:** Playing with Hank was a highpoint in my life.

**Jackson:** *Different piano adversaries — Hank, Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Chucho Valdés, McCoy Tyner — what have been the challenges with each?*

**Lovano:** Each has their own sound/touch/feeling/dynamics. You have to focus on "the moment of now." None of them play at you, they play with you, create music together. For me, it isn't a matter of, "It's easier to play with Herbie because. ..." You have to listen, shape music, not just play at the same time. Coming up with Paul Motian and Mel Lewis gave me ideas and confidence about creating music within the music, which is what I'm trying to do with my current band The Paramount Quartet.

**Jackson:** *Julian Lage seems to have assimilated, then streamlined, the edgy guitarists of your past, like Abercrombie and Scofield.*

**Lovano:** I've shared the stage with a beautiful line of creative guitarists, starting with Bill DeArango, who, when 52nd Street ended, returned to Cleveland, opened a music store, mentored everyone. Jim Hall was at the root of the music. He inspired Abercrombie, Scofield and Bill Frisell, who I worked with in trio with Paul [Motian] from 1981 until Paul's passing in 2011, then Jakob Bro, now Julian.

**Jackson:** *Shame we couldn't locate Julian for the group photo at SPACE. Where did he go?*

**Lovano:** Who knows? Idris Muhammad, after the gig, liked a





The Paramount Quartet at SPACE in Evanston, Illinois. From left: Lovano, Will Calhoun, Julian Lage and Asante Santi Debriano.

bubble bath with cigar.

**Jackson:** *Salient during Paramount's set, live and on the album, is a beguiling performance of Wayne Shorter's gorgeous, seldom-heard "Lady Day," with its shifting harmonic colors.*

**Lovano:** Julian is an initiator of ideas with a beautifully expressive approach to ballads. I first heard "Lady Day" on Wayne's *The Soothsayer* and played it in Orvieto in 2023. Mike Gibbs made an arrangement for me. I wanted to play it with Paramount because Will played with Wayne. He also played with Pharoah Sanders, has some different roots. I've been influenced by all these drummers who supported me, back to Joe Dukes "The Dixie Bomber," with Jack McDuff.

**Jackson:** *You and Asante go back to the '80s ...*

**Lovano:** He has inner feeling, is an amazing soloist, really tells stories. The guys were excited to record for ECM, having followed the label back to Dave Holland's *Conference Of The Birds* [1973].

**Jackson:** *The pivot to the glorious, macroporous gloom-school of ECM from the heady, urban excitement of Blue Notes like Quartets: Live At The Village Vanguard [1995] has been marked. How has working with Manfred*

*Eicher been, who you've known for decades? Was he present at the Paramount session?*

**Lovano:** Yes, and his presence was felt. After our first take [possibly "Congregation"] he didn't think it was the right tune to start with. For Manfred, a session is not one tune at a time; he wants a performance, a oneness from piece to piece. I knew this, so it didn't fluster me to change the order. When we came back to it we played with a different attitude that fit the flow. He is a master of sound and sequence.

**Jackson:** *That flow includes unpredictable changes of horn between tenor, tarogato and G mezzo soprano. The latter icily enters over arco bass on "The Call." Tim Garland and Jon Irabagon have been following your lead experimenting with new horns. When did the mezzo enter your arsenal?*

**Lovano:** I ordered it from Peter Jessen in Copenhagen when I was playing with Jakob Bro in 2008. It took him a year-and-a-half to make; my serial number is 02! The mezzo is a fourth away from concert pitch. The top of the horn meets the bottom range of the alto. When I collected it in 2010, I was touring with McCoy [Tyner]. The first thing I played on it was "Sama Layuca," McCoy's piece that is a real champ.

*[sings the melody] Do-do-do-do-dee-dah ...* He didn't see the horn until I really laid

on that melody and then looked up — "Oh, yeah! Wow! What's that?"

**Jackson:** *Your originals often have an Ornettish impishness. "Amsterdam" is like a naughty nursery rhyme: You blow together, then asymmetrically against Julian's guitar, Will's martial beats keeping an eye on things, creating mischief, too.*

**Lovano:** I first visited Amsterdam with Woody Herman. We played the Concertgebouw, and I wandered off into the streets after the show, the red light district, the whole scene. I saw a sign for the Bimhuis. There were four bassists playing a concert of the hippest music you can imagine. Next day on the band bus everyone's talking about what they'd done, and I said, "I heard a four bass-player band." They couldn't believe it.

**Jackson:** *I just had the privilege of spending [Dutch drum legend] Han Bennink's 84th birthday with him.*

**Lovano:** Oh, really? I love that cat! We did a bunch of gigs opposite the Clusone Trio — Paul [Motian] and Bill [Frisell] and myself. We played that little town in Italy, Clusone, that Han, Michael Moore and cellist Ernst Reijseger named their band after. There was a huge clock right there on the stage that rang every 15 minutes. After the first ring

we played to that clock. Paul left space for it. I'll never forget, it was so funny.

**Jackson:** *I can only imagine Han's antics with that clock.*

**Lovano:** Oh, definitely, he might have put his ladder up and climbed it! [laughs]

**Jackson:** *You've had successful liaisons with Europeans. Your quartet with Marcin delivered the enigmatic splendor of Homage last year, the first ECM album recorded at Rudy Van Gelder's New Jersey studio [engineered by Maureen Sickler]. Of the handful of musicians I associate with your poetic sensibility and use of routinely stellar rhythm sections, from all over, Charles Lloyd comes to mind.*

**Lovano:** Charles has been an influential character, figure and musician from the earliest times — *Of Course, Of Course* with Gábor Szabó and Ron Carter, an early Tony Williams date [from 1965]; his quartet with Keith [Jarrett]. ... We first met at the Lausanne Festival. Charles came to the soundcheck to say hello to Paul [Motian], carrying Michel Petrucciani — who had inspired Charles to come back on the scene after a break. Charles also plays some tarogato these days. We kind of switched because right at the time I moved to ECM, he moved to Blue Note. A beautiful spirit, and his embrace over the years has been really special.

**Jackson:** *Did you two play table tennis? Apparently he always wins but doesn't like to talk about who the winner is.*

**Lovano:** I never did. [laughs] But I'd, maybe, play pool with him.

**Jackson:** *Talking of tenors-of-our-time, your comadre, Melissa Aldana, tore it up at International Jazz Day in Chicago. The vehicle was, rather benignly, "Summertime," but it was the "Coltrane version."*

**Lovano:** Ah, beautiful. I played the first IJD: We addressed the General Assembly of the United Nations. It was far out! I met Melissa and her saxophonist father in Chile in the early '90s. She got a scholarship and joined my Berklee ensemble in 2007. It's been great to see her emerge. She's a serious young lady. We've toured with Coltrane 100, working deep cuts including the rarely touched "Kulu Sé Mama" with Nduduzo [Makhathini] vocalizing; things from *Meditations*; "Expression" from Trane's last recording and "Peace On Earth." I'm looking forward to upcoming gigs.

**Jackson:** *Those gigs include the Detroit Jazz Festival, where you'll serve as artist-in-residence.*

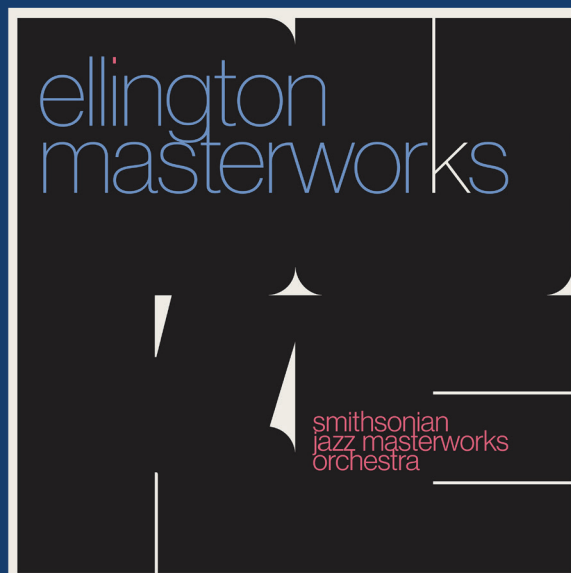
**Lovano:** Yes, I'll be there with Soundprints with Dave Douglas, Coltrane 100 and Paramount Quartet. My roots with Detroit go back to hits at Club Mozambique with Lonnie Smith and Jazz West next door: I'd drive three hours from Cleveland to play there from 2 a.m. to 6 a.m., Saturday and Sunday mornings.

**Jackson:** *With that said, in your 70s, are there rules for the road these days, any lobby call too early?*

**Lovano:** [laughs] We have some early lobby calls ahead. I'm touring Trio Tapestry, then working with a pianist from Milan, Antonio Faraò, in "Quartet Explorations" with Ira Coleman and Johnathan Blake, before another tour with Paramount. ... In the meantime, I have to get back out to my yard work — I do a lot of crazy stuff between solos, man. DB

**The Paramount Quartet will record live at New York's Village Vanguard for ECM records on Aug. 26-27.**

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# Reviews

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



Lakecia Benjamin brings her "A" game to *We Dream*.

## Lakecia Benjamin *We Dream*

ARTWORK  
★★★½

A couple pre-release clips shared on Lakecia Benjamin's Insta a few months ago suggested just how fierce *We Dream* was going to be. On one, she and Chris Potter were blowing through "Take The Coltrane" and sparks were flying. Made it seem like the collabs for the alto sensation's upcoming disc were going to bring mucho heat. It certainly turned out that way. From a trio of trumpeters to Hiromi and her piano pyrotechnics, the guest list crafts a compelling case for having a few friends over to throw down.

One of jazz's forever goals is making the studio feel as rousing as the bandstand.

Benjamin has and hasn't been successful at it previously. This time out her ample cohort saturates its landscape with vehemence, and producer Kassa Overall vividly captures all the action.

The opening blasts of the leader's horn mixing with Terence Blanchard's feisty yet flexible brass declarations sets a high bar, but along the way Sean Jones and Chief Xian aTunde Adjuah keep the animation level goosed. Occasionally enhanced by counterpoint gambits, Benjamin's music is thicker than usual. That often creates a richer atmosphere, one the sax player soars through with authority.

Perhaps the alarm sounds loudest on "Dream Breaker," where Potter, Benjamin and Jones negotiate a modern bop territory that refreshingly ditches the boss's modal fixation for a sec (she's been in Traning a bit too long)

while enjoying an extra kick from Jeff Watts, whose oomph looms large wherever he goes.

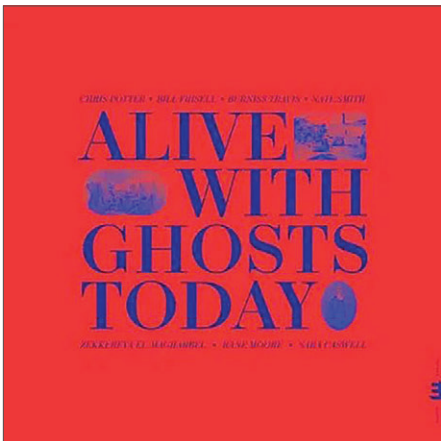
From the emphatic orations by various participants (Tank of Tank and the Bangas coos and raps) to the rhythmic savvy that Overall sprinkles through the various grooves, *We Dream* brings a blast of vigor to the fore, coming on strong and making a sizable dent.

—Jim Macnie

**We Dream:** First Light; Beyond The Dawn; My Only; Mi Gente; Ascension; Dream Breaker; We Dream; Flame Keeper; Hiromi Jam; Right Now; New World. (53:24)

**Personnel:** Lakecia Benjamin, alto saxophone; Oscar Pérez, piano (1, 2, 4–9); Miki Hayama, synth organ (3), synth (7–9); Chris Rob, piano, organ, synth (10); Elias Bailey, bass, tuba (8); Richie Goods, bass (8, 9); Jahmal Nichols, bass (10); Jonathan Barber, drums; Jerome Jennings, drums (4); Joe Blaxx, drums (5); Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums (6); Sean Jones, trumpet, flugelhorn (3, 6); Terence Blanchard, trumpet (1–3); Chief Xian aTunde Adjuah, trumpet (4); Lessie Vonner, trumpet (4, 5); Chris Potter, tenor saxophone (6, 8, 9); Tarriona "Tank" Ball, vocals, poetry (7); Hiromi, piano (8, 9); Bilal, vocals (10); Kassa Overall, rap (10).

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



**Chris Potter**  
*Alive With Ghosts Today*  
 EDITION  
 ★★ ★

Chris Potter's *Alive With Ghosts Today* is making a statement. It has all the established leitmotifs and grandiosity expressed in its composition to very clearly and obviously pronounce that Chris Potter is making a statement. It's important and bold, befitting a musical recounting of abolitionist John Brown. However, it's hard to separate these songs from the notion of them being part of a larger suite.

Sure, the grooves of "Osawatomie Brown"

**Tyshawn Sorey**  
*Members ... Don't!*  
 PI  
 ★★ ★ ★

Tyshawn Sorey has always indulged more in the journey over the destination. In his latest project, he explores Max Roach's somber yet hopeful 1968 album, *Members, Don't Git Weary*, with arrangements that channel the multi-movement works of Beethoven as well as Mingus.

The band moves effortlessly through full-throated improvisation and spacious meditations. On "Abstrusions," Adam O'Farrill's trumpet is searching and longing, while pianist Lex Korten guides the band through the dark, introspective soundscape. Sorey's drums build heat beneath the surface, always pulsing, until the band emerges with unity and clarity. "Effi" provides a sharp contrast, with Sorey's rhythmic groove driving Mark Shim's tenor sax toward frenetic, hard-driving lines that evoke the politically charged spirit of then and now. O'Farrill and Sorey stretch into extended dialogue, moving fluidly from post-bop to soul to blues and back.

"Equipoise," split into two parts, serves as the album's centerpiece. The horns move from blustery, avant-garde phrases to powerful, throaty motifs, while Korten's melodic lines shift from bluesy and soulful into something more melancholy and searching. Tyrone Allen

and "Sister Annie" build to real country jams, but everything that comes with that feels more like the hearty, earthy vegetables your parents are forcing you to eat with the tasty main course. To that end, Potter's compositions lend more weight to the magnitude of the story he's telling than to the vibe his group is laying to convey it. Not that these folks don't find a good groove: You can't go wrong with bassist Burniss Earl Travis and drummer Nate Smith holding it down. It's always a good time to hear Bill Frisell twang on the guitar, whether in elevated or more rootsy directions.

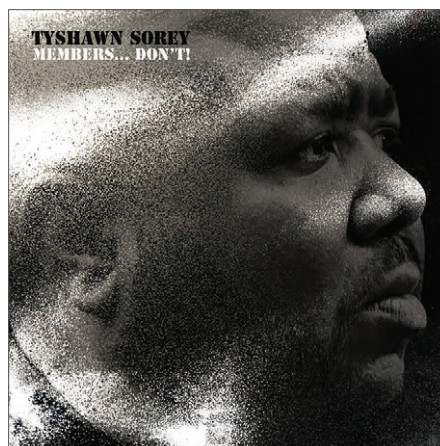
One can discuss many things about the hero abolitionist John Brown — not least his pointedness. There was no mincing around his clear intention to eliminate the horrors of slavery and promote the equality of all mankind, for which the rise in stature of the American Negro was of tantamount importance. Such directness could have been considered Brown's leitmotifs, but were they to be expressed musically, one might think it wouldn't be as laboriously as Chris Potter is presenting here.

—Anthony Dean-Harris

**Alive With Ghosts Today:** *Alive With Ghosts Today* 1; Osawatomie Brown; The Heavens In Scarlet; Sister Annie; This Earth Would Have No Charms For Me; Into Africa; Mine Eyes; *Alive With Ghosts Today* 2. (49:42)

**Personnel:** Chris Potter, tenor and soprano saxophones; Bill Frisell, guitar; Burniss Travis, bass; Nate Smith, drums; Rane Moore, clarinet; Zekkereya El-magharbel, trombone; Sara Caswell, violin.

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



II's bass solo here is perhaps the most arresting moment on the record: poignant, deliberate and making full use of temporal space.

The album builds toward its resolution, the title track. Fay Victor's deep, smoky vocals refuse to be rushed, grounding Sorey's reimagining firmly in the present. Sorey's version of "Members, Don't Git Weary" is unhurried and immersive, a powerful culmination of collective uplift.

—Ivana Ng

**Members ... Don't!:** *Abstrusions; Effi; Absolutions; Equipoise* (Part 1); *Equipoise* (Part 2); *Libra; Members, Don't Git Weary*. (1:35:49)

**Personnel:** Tyshawn Sorey, drums, arrangements; Adam O'Farrill, trumpet, electronics; Mark Shim, tenor saxophone; Lex Korten, piano; Tyrone Allen II, bass; Fay Victor, vocals (6).

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



**Nduduzo Makhathini**  
*The Myth We Choose*  
 BLUE NOTE  
 ★★ ★ ½

Across his prior albums for Blue Note, South African pianist Nduduzo Makhathini has painted a series of contrasting soundscapes. There was the horn-heavy churn of *Modes Of Communication*, the supple drive of *In The Spirit Of Ntu* and the songful intimacy of *SenzeMina*. No surprise, then, that *The Myth We Choose* draws upon yet another sonic palette, breathily atmospheric and sprinkled with electronically altered textures.

Given the production's reliance on space — both the silence between notes and the resonance of reverb — it's tempting to place this within the newly fashionable "spiritual jazz" movement. And as the liner notes make plain, this is very much an album of ideas, grounded in Zulu culture and often articulated in the Bantu tongue.

But it's just as easy to hear this music as the product of distillation, as Makhathini concentrates his ideas to their essence. Although the album is dotted with guest spots, most of the music focuses on Makhathini's piano and Dalisu Ndlazi's bass. Ndlazi is in many ways the project's secret weapon, as his fondness for playing just behind the beat not only deepens the pocket with drummer Lukmil Perez, but makes his bass lines feel more like melodic conversation than mere accompaniment.

Which fits, because melody is at the heart of everything here, from the vocal balladry of "Linwalo la Mubebi" to the driving pulse of "Imvunge KaNtu," reminding us that melody is, at root, a form of storytelling. And what's more central to myth than that?

—J.D. Cosidine

**The Myth We Choose:** *Kuzodlula; Imvunge KaNtu; Kwamabili; Unehmbeza; Lioze LineNangakithi; What People Say; Primordial Egg; Ekuqaleni; Liriwalo la Mubebi; Umbono; Liriwalo la Mubebi* (Reprise); *Tethered; Ongaphesheya; What People Say* (Reprise); *Kuzodlula* (Reprise). (1:04:05)

**Personnel:** Nduduzo Makhathini, piano, keyboards (1, 8–10, 12, 14, 16), vocoder (8), vocals (1, 2, 10, 16), hand claps (2, 5); Shabaka, flute (5); Robin Fassie, trumpet (1); Keenan Ahrends, guitar (10); Dalisu Ndlazi, bass (except 11, 14, 15), hand claps (2); Lukmil Perez, drums (1, 2, 4, 8–10, 12, 13), hand claps (2); Ayanda Sikade, drums (7, 16); Black Coffee, drum programming (14); Omagugu, vocals (6, 14); Muneji, vocals (9, 11); Thando Zide, vocals (12).

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

# The Hot Box

Critics	Jim Macnie	Anthony Dean-Harris	Ivana Ng	J.D. Considine
<b>Lakecia Benjamin</b> <i>We Dream</i>	★★★½	★★★★	★★★	★★★
<b>Chris Potter</b> <i>Alive With Ghosts Today</i>	★★★½	★★★	★★★	★★★★
<b>Tyshawn Sorey</b> <i>Members ... Don't!</i>	★★★★	★★★½	★★★★	★★★★½
<b>Nduduzo Makhathini</b> <i>The Myth We Choose</i>	★★★½	★★★½	★★★★	★★★½

## Critics' Comments

### Lakecia Benjamin, *We Dream*

Benjamin plays with a joyful expressiveness balanced with a hefty weight that makes her a delight to listen to. She knows all the right tricks of pop hookiness in her composition while maintaining the roots of jazz enmeshed all throughout her playing. —Anthony Dean-Harris

Benjamin's tender melodies and searing lyrics are buoyed by a sumptuous rhythm section and an ensemble that journeys seamlessly between bluesy textures and frenetic groove. —Ivana Ng

Forget the rapping. The most genuinely hip-hop thing about Benjamin is the way she ups her game through guest cameos, be it the hard bop fire of "Dream Breaker," featuring Jeff "Tain" Watts and Sean Jones, or the ferocious funk of "Flame Keeper," with Hiromi and Chris Potter. —J.D. Considine

### Chris Potter, *Alive With Ghosts Today*

John Brown stumped for effective action over well-meant rhetoric, and the rebellion ethos of the Harper's Ferry uprising drives the interplay of this ambitious suite. Elaborate arrangements feed back-and-forth maneuvers between leader and squad. Lots and lots of liftoff. —Jim Macnie

Potter's jagged-edge reeds and punk-spirited strings are forceful and confrontational, pulling blues, folk and rock into an uneasy tension, while the gentle, understated rhythm section makes that tension navigable and draws us in deeper. —Ivana Ng

A jazz suite inspired by John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry was not on my Chris Potter Bingo Card, but I love the sound of the violin/clarinet/trumpet horn section, while the chemistry between Potter, Bill Frisell and Nate Smith is glorious. —J.D. Considine

### Tyshawn Sorey, *Members ... Don't!*

The drummer's update of Max's gem is the kind of repertory that hits hard. Their windy solos and stormy teamwork flip off downpressers and share elation. Everyone rocks, but man, Fay Victor's Amen Corner is full-on explosive. —Jim Macnie

Sorey's live interpretation of Max Roach's *Members ... Don't Git Weary* takes all the liberties of a live performance — including the "you had to be there" feeling. The whole exercise was better served through Roach's rambunctious but economical sense of space. —Anthony Dean-Harris

It would be hard to imagine another drummer/bandleader as successfully taking on the mantle of Max Roach, but Sorey succeeds because he brings a band at least as good as Roach's was, particularly pianist Lex Korten, trumpeter Adam O'Farrill and singer Fay Victor. —J.D. Considine

### Nduduzo Makhathini, *The Myth We Choose*

He's an expert at reporting on dashed dreams, personal protest and relentless hope. That makes him a wise historian and confident optimist. A mix of celestial voices and captivating melodies, this placid program battles global ennui, making its mark in just a few spins. —Jim Macnie

Makhathini has solidified his sound as equal parts of this era, of his home of South Africa, and of this plane of existence, altogether grounded and searching at the same time. —Anthony Dean-Harris

Makhathini carries the weight of ancestral wisdom into the present through his spiritual compositions. He layers in electronic textures and ethereal vocals that pull the music forward in time. The result is a poignant sound tapestry that feels both grounded and prophetic. —Ivana Ng



## CHICK COREA

*Sometime Ago: Live In Germany 1972*

A long-lost treasure from one of the most creative periods of Chick Corea's life, finally available in its entirety on this 2 CD Solo Piano set. His genius shines at age 31 on this a magnificent live recording from October 29, 1972, by the 23-time Grammy Award winner!

MOOSICUS



## HENDRIK MEURKENS

*Samba Tonto*

Hendrik Meurkens returns to Brazil with 'Samba Tonto'. The album features the legendary drummer and percussionist Portinho.

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## VIRGINIA MACDONALD

*In Search Of...*

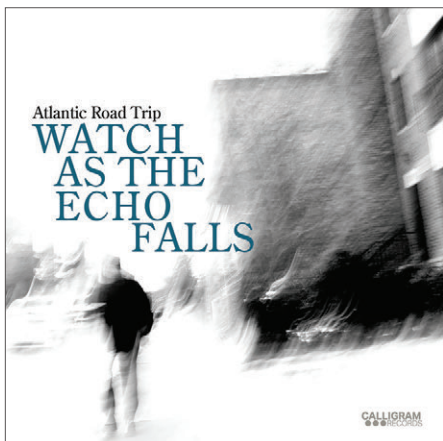
Canadian-born, Juno Award winning clarinetist Virginia MacDonal's long-awaited debut album "In Search Of..." is an apt showcase of her musical abilities.

CELLAR

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## Atlantic Road Trip *Watch As The Echo Falls*

CALLIGRAM  
★★★★½

*Atlantic Road Trip* sounds closer to an Atlantic Ocean Voyage, as this second album by the transcontinental trio adds further folkish frolics to a chamber-jazz painterliness. From Glasgow, Chicago and The Hague, Paul Towndrow, Chad McCullough and Miro Herak employ alto saxophone, trumpet and vibraphone, respectively, to their nautical evocations of travel, rest, contemplation and sudden explorations.

## Leila Olivesi *African Rhapsody*

ATTENTION FRAGILE/ACEL  
★★★★

An impressively polished and varied production for octet plus vocalist and choir, *African Rhapsody* is the seventh album by Ms. Olivesi, a French composer-pianist who besides maintaining a performance schedule is a specialist regarding Mary Lou Williams and Duke Ellington, and vice-president of Paris' La Maison du Duke.

These models are evident throughout Olivesi's suite of originals, plus a cover of Duke's "Little African Flower." Imaginative and meticulous horn voicings backdrop well-considered piano parts, creating multi-sequence mini-suites that turn on featured spots for distinctive soloists. Sophisticated counterpoint (the climactic out-chorus of the tribute to "Wayne"), use of wordless vocals ("Chinguetti") and lyricism ranging across the program from swinging blues to frothy whimsy are Ellingtonian elements marking these works.

Alto saxophonist Herbin is a principal on the title track, able to work the Johnny Hodges vein, but also bop and squeak, as on the calypsoesque "Joy," which mostly spotlights lively trumpeter Ghomari. On "Aurore," singer Bertault and guitarist Codjia, whose sound is fleet and trebly, are forefront; together they project a Return-to-Forever/Pat Metheny vibe.

As with many albums nowadays, these original tracks (each member contributing) cohere into what sounds like an informal suite, imbued with a highly narrative, visual nature. Their spangled aura is reminiscent of that magicked up by John Surman, in his solo and duo countryside rambles, where he added electronics. These compositions are less melancholy, though, more invested with a sense of joyous optimism and straightforward appreciation of a beaming existence.

A generous reverb grows the scope of these mere three players, yet they still reserve space between their notes and phrases. The acoustics are warm in this magical forest setting, as rays flash through pines. There's a light effects coating on McCullough's horn, and a conscious flirtation with the alto lines on "Parting Of The Adriatic." Towndrow's flutes and whistles, of course, heighten the folk-dance lightness, breathy and prancing across the glowing vibes progressions. The trumpet picks out its tartly prickled pointillist parts, the vibes hanging up a thin veil of silvered faerie reflections, McCullough also adding subtle synth oscillations.

—Martin Longley

**Watch As The Echo Falls:** Exordium; Parting Of The Adriatic; Silere, Prologue; Spell Breaking; Fading Photograph; Past Memories; Cadmus; And Again; Echo Falls; Epilogue; Singularity. (44:38)

**Personnel:** Paul Towndrow, alto saxophone, flute, whistles; Chad McCullough, trumpet, flugelhorn, synthesiser; Miro Herak, vibraphone.

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



I like drummer Kontomanou's mallets-on-toms turn on "Afro Queen." But after 98 seconds he's supplanted by a piano cue, the choir and Herbin imagining somewhere celestial. As with Ellington and Williams, the vocalized religiosity gets too thick for me. But as with them, Olivesi is redeemed for the disbeliever with astute ensemble charts and swinging movements.

—Howard Mandel

**African Rhapsody:** African Rhapsody; Corsica; Wayne Left Town; Blue Chinguetti; Little African Flower; Joy; Aurore; Afro-Queen; Les Nuits; Un jour, le silence; New York. (59:51)

**Personnel:** Leila Olivesi, piano, composer; Baptiste Herbin, alto saxophone; Adrien Sanchez, tenor saxophone & flute; J.C. Richard, baritone and soprano saxophones; Olga Arnelchenko, alto saxophone (7); Quentin Ghomari, trumpet; Manu Codjia, guitar; Yoni Zelnik, bass; Donald Kontomanou, drums; Camille Bertault, vocal; Poetic Birds, choir.

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



## Nubiyian Twist *Chasing Shadows*

STRUT  
★★★★½

The nine-piece Nubiyian Twist describes its music as a blend of U.K. jazz, Afrobeat and the Jamaican-rooted sound system culture that shaped reggae, ska and dancehall music. On its newest release, *Chasing Shadows*, all three influences are seamlessly intertwined into something new, but also familiar and groovy enough to expand the palettes of some jazz listeners.

Out on Strut Records, *Chasing Shadows*' premise explores the relationship between the organic and the digital in a world increasingly run by technologies that challenge what's honest. "Red Herring" featuring The Pharcyde's Bootie Brown, with a smooth, soulful and jazzy production style reminiscent of Flying Lotus, contains a prescient warning: "Something's murky in the waters/ Sip a taste and you won't find truth." The lyrics of "Azimuth" contain a similar dubiousness, as vocalist Eniola Idowu weaves around cascading horn arrangements singing: "Anti-clockwise, I think I'm going/ Wish that we could turn back time."

Sonically, too, the dialogue between the digital and organic shines through the group's combination of electronic effects and human musicianship: horns, raw voice and embodied percussion. The use of live and sampled jazz also conveys this tension. The instrumental track, "Threads," features the live jazz stylings of the Nubiyian Twist horn players overtop a looped track from jazz pianist Patrice Rushen, creating a cool, thought-provoking soundscape.

A creative and thrilling melting pot of sounds and rhythms, *Chasing Shadows* is 21st-century hybridized jazz at its best.

—Alexa Peters

**Chasing Shadows:** Azimuth; Red Herring; Chasing Shadows; How Far; Sunlight; Message; Mlonje—Voices Joined; Echoes; Body Flows; Threads; Rhythm Of You. (43:28)

**Personnel:** Tom Excell, guitar; Luke Wynter, bass; Lewis Moody, keyboards; Jonathan Enser, trumpet; Nich Richards, alto saxophone; Denis Scully, tenor saxophone; Hannah Mae Birtwell, baritone saxophone; Finn Booth, drums; Patrice Rushen (10), Joe Armon-Jones (11), keyboards; Eniola Idowu (1, 4, 9), M.anifest (4), Bootie Brown (2), Fatoumata Diawara (3), Mr. Williamz (6), Zawose Queens (7), vocals.

**Ordering info:** [strut-records.co.uk](http://strut-records.co.uk)



## Allison, Cardenas & Nash *Triological*

SUNNYSIDE

★★★★½

Drummerless trios have been around awhile. Yet they still sound fresh when you hear them. Most of the time. A former drummer, this reviewer is characterizing *Triological* as one without a defining beat, a percussive snap.

And, of course, the trio's strength always comes from who's in it, not what repertoire they play. Here, we have three veterans who know what it's like to play in a variety of settings. Bassist Ben Allison, guitarist Steve

Cardenas and reed player Ted Nash sound like they've been a band for a long time. (Witness their four previous albums as a group.) Part of what makes *Triological* unique is that we are listening to original music from the guys, whereas previous efforts focused on recognizable composers.

Thinking of the great Jimmy Giuffre trios, especially the one with Jim Hall and bassist Ralph Pena but also later with Paul Bley and Steve Swallow, one can't help but appreciate the ways *Triological* knowingly shifts musical gears — whether it's Nash's use of certain reeds, Cardenas' subtle use of electronics (e.g., Allison's melodically wandering "Milton") or the interplay between them that allows each voice to speak its own language simultaneously (the delicate rollout that allows everyone to essentially solo even as they rally round the meditative theme of Nash's "Burnt Toast & Avocado"). Cardenas' fanciful "Puddle Jumper" evokes the spirit of Giuffre's first trio, his guitar sinews played in the spirit of Jim Hall, Allison's bass lines Ralph Pena's.

*Triological* is a true delight.

—John Ephland

**Triological:** See Forever; Puddle Jumper; Burnt Toast & Avocado; Fellas With Umbrellas; Milton; By Heart; For Bill; Back Home; Ida's Spoons; Peace Out There. (49:00)

**Personnel:** Ben Allison, bass; Steve Cardenas, guitar; Ted Nash, tenor saxophone, clarinet.

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

## Jonathan Suazo *Ricano Vol. 2: Fruto de Mi Corazón*

MIEL

★★★★

Not for nothing is masterful young alto saxist Jonathan Suazo releasing music on Miguel Zenon's Miel Music label. Both are potently gifted musical forces from Puerto Rico who happen to play alto sax — very well — and boldly champion the musical culture of their heritage.

Suazo had attention-earning impact with 2023's *Ricano Vol. 1* ("ricano" is a portmanteau of Puerto Rican and Dominican roots); the eager expectations are met with the release of *Ricano Vol. 2: Fruto de Mi Corazón*. The music bears out the passionate dedication to a musical ethos, managing to balance lyrical and melodic graces with energetic and sophisticated twists and turns, with commanding collaborators on board.

Suazo's second project is laid out thoughtfully, as a conceptual whole, while offering a bounty of blowing spotlight moments and ensemble feats. Hints of things to come, almost in overture form, arrive on opener "Mi Música Bella," blending vocal parts, intricately arranged lines within the groove and surprising structural turns.

As a closer, his unapologetically romantic "La Magia" follows the feistier musical spirits: the tumbling fervor of "Llamadao," the simmering



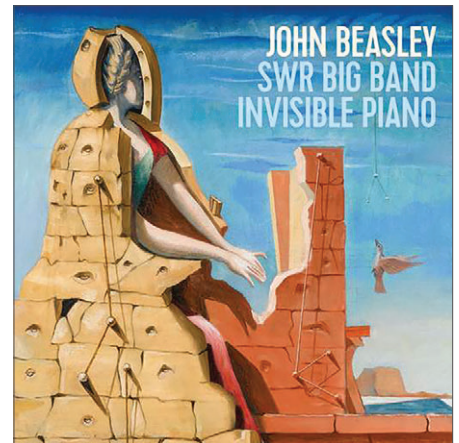
"Llueve To Los Dias" and the emotionally engaging "Redención." Two short interludes serve as project caulkings, including the tender "Cecilia," named after his young daughter, nearing birth during the sessions. In short, many personal and broader musical threads are woven into the fabric of Suazo's impressive album, a happy marriage of corazón and cabeza.

—Josef Woodard

**Ricano Vol. 2 Fruto de Mi Corazón:** Mi Música Bella; Calle Hija del Caribe; llamado; Si No Fuera Por Tu Amor; Llueve To' Los Dias; Interlude; Candela; Rona Blues; Redención; Cecilia; La Magia (instrumental version); La Magia (vocal version). (73:00)

**Personnel:** Jonathan Suazo, alto saxophone; Francisco Alcalá, drums; Ian Ashby, bass; Zaccai Curtis, Benito Gonzalez, Edmar Colón, piano; Lee Fish, drums; Luis Rodriguez, electric bass; Kike Serrano, Otoniel Nicolás, Paoli Mejías, percussion; Fabiola Méndez, electric cuatro, voice; Tanicha Lopez, Jeremy Bosch, Dariel Peniazek, voice.

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



## John Beasley & SWR Big Band *Invisible Piano*

O-TONE

★★★★

It was a novel and irresistible challenge put forth by SWR Big Band director Hans-Peter Zachary to John Beasley: Record some solo piano ideas, transcribe the results and arrange them for the Stuttgart-based German jazz orchestra. In preparation, Beasley visited the Staatsgalerie Museum in Stuttgart, wandering the galleries, singing ideas softly into his phone. One painting stood out to him: a giant woman embedded in a mountain, playing a piano which was similarly ensconced. Max Ernst's 1923 work *Invisible Piano* became both title and theme for Beasley's fantastical keyboard ruminations.

From the opening irregular ostinato of "Concentric," this freewheeling approach to composition is apparent, as the piano part is mirrored by the big band. The next four pieces are all named after artworks Beasley happened upon at Staatsgalerie, all entirely different from each other but equally evocative as Beasley's themes migrate smoothly back and forth between piano and orchestra. The title track is particularly compelling, a restless waltz pirouetting around a central pedal point, ultimately spinning out into adjacent vortexes of beautiful intrigue.

It's hard to pick what is more remarkable here: Beasley's original ruminations (which could stand on their own in a solo piano format), the resultant arrangements played so deftly by the excellent SWR Big Band or the innovative technology employed to marry the first two things. But what is certain is that this is a singularly unique project from the brilliant mind of a generationally exceptional artist.

—Gary Fukushima

**Invisible Piano:** Concentric; Woman With Chariot; Galaha; Invisible Piano; Danseur Espagnol; Fire And Rain; Can't Hide Love. (38:22)

**Personnel:** John Beasley, piano, synthesizer; Magnus Lindgren, flute (fl); Norbert Nagel, Matthias Erlewein, Jörg Kaufmann, Andreas Maile, Pierre Paquette, woodwinds; Nemanja Jovanovic, Felice Civitareale, Karl Farrent, Martin Auer, trumpet/flugelhorn; Marc Godfroid, Ian Cummings, Georg Maus, trombone; Jürgen Neudert, euphonium; Benno Trautmann, Ingo Klinkhammer, French horn; Juliane Gralle, tuba; Decebal Badila, bass; Guido Jöris, drums; Rhani Krja, percussion.

**Ordering info:** [o-tonemusic.de](http://o-tonemusic.de)

## Saying What They Have to Say

**Billy Price: *Random Madness* (Get Hip; ★★★★★ 47:32)** Though never as widely celebrated as his aptitude merits, Billy Price nonetheless has established an enviable reputation over several decades. The dyed-in-the-wool soul-bluesman, based in Pittsburgh, sings stirring throughout his latest album's 14 original songs, a blue-ribbon program socked home with expressive understanding and abundant confidence and meticulous phrasing. Informed by rich soul and blues past yet modern-sounding, Price probes lyrics on mixed-up romance without being overwrought. Even with the jittery-jive entertainment of "Creature Of Habit," the listener can feel a mind and a heart at work. Price's band members, including noted producer-drummer Tony Braunagel and jazz-inclined saxophonist Eric Spaulding, share their leader's focused belief in the primacy of delivering soulful grooves.

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

**Todd Albright: *Blues For Dexter Linwood* (Misfortune; ★★★★★ 39:02)** Recording his voice and 12-string guitar on a single mic in mono sound at a short bare-bones session, Todd Albright integrates deep familiarity with the golden work of prewar East Coast and Delta blues artisans into his own musical vision. Delivering his first album in nine years and fourth overall, he spruces up historic fare like Mississippi John Hurt's crime saga "Frankie" and Blind Lemon Jefferson's kiss-off "Shuckin' Sugar." Albright merges precision in his singing and finger-picking of thick double strings with emotional virtuosity. He conjures blues poetry on the human condition. Guests in sync with him are harmonica player Dave Hundrieser on four numbers, and fairly well-known guitarist Charlie Parr on the standard "Step It Up And Go."

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

**Johnette Downing/Nathan Williams & The Zydeco Cha-Chas: *My Little Snap Bean—Zydeco For Children* (Wiggle Worm; ★★★★★ 38:30)** *Zydeco For All Ages* is a truer subtitle. The studio alliance of New Orleans children's author-musician Johnette Downing and spirited zydeco standard-bearer Nathan Williams results in the big fun of bayou dance rhythms in community- and culture-building Creole traditional songs. Downing's just mildly charismatic as a singer but that matters little to delighting in such happy music. Smart blues producer-musician Scott Billington, married to Downing and a longtime friend of singer-accordionist Williams, monitors the proceedings to ensure that nothing sounds silly, not even "Hitch Up My Pony."

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

**Laura Chavez: *My Voice* (Ruf; ★★★★★ 38:09)** All-instrumental blues albums aren't so unusual these days. Consider releases by



**Ironically, Laura Chavez's *My Voice* is not a vocal album.**

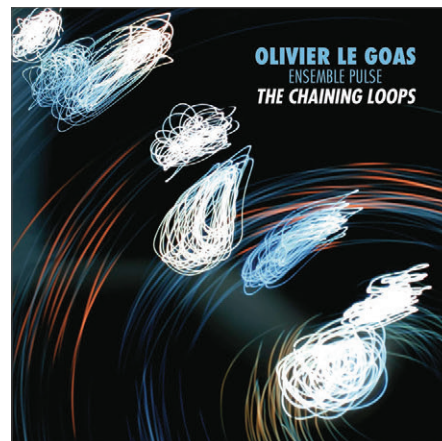
Tinsley Ellis, Rick Vito, 11 Guys Quartet and Tom Principato. They're now joined by upcoming guitarist Laura Chavez's first feature album with its displays of honest expressionism welded to riveting guitar discourse. The Californian, who names Sue Foley and Debbie Davies as having encouraged her ardor for the blues, has a storyteller's coherence and imagination. The sensual tenderness of Latinized "Mamba Negra" leads into aggressive emotional release a la Ronnie Earl. Two more nods to her Mexican bloodlines, Phil Manzanara-ish "El Cascabel" and an exciting strut-shuffle down "Napa Street," especially show that she is developing a capacity for projection of self-authority. Chavez's sped-up revival of Creedence Clearwater Revivals' "Born On The Bayou," an appreciation of her father's fondness for blues-rock in the late 1960s, stirs up more activity than bees out of an upended hive. Don't overlook French keyboardist Lea Worms in the able supporting cast.

Ordering info: [rufrecords.de](http://rufrecords.de)

**Joe Bonamassa: *B.B. King's Blues Summit 100* (Keeping The Blues Alive; ★★½ 142:40)** The grandiosity of Joe Bonamassa's salute to the memory of B.B. King on his 100th birth year, featuring 40 celebrities, distracts listeners from the hard truth that almost none of the musicians involved get close to the huge emotional pull of the peerless master's mix of piercing sadness and purifying joy. Still, elders Bobby Rush, Buddy Guy and Dion have the world-weary savviness to appropriate King songs and make them their own. Christone "Kingfish" Ingram, Susan Tedeschi and a few others infer a clear understanding of King's majestic art as they interpret King-size classics. The rest, including ubiquitous King stand-in Bonamassa, have their heart in the right place without offering anything in the way of even faint revelations.

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

AMY BRAT



### Olivier Le Goas & Ensemble Pulse *The Chaining Loops*

CHALLENGE

★★★★★

An exciting album of shifting masses, virtuoso musicianship and ever-changing rhythms, *The Chaining Loops* bristles with provocative interplay. The French drummer-composer Olivier Le Goas and his six Ensemble Pulse colleagues perform five absorbing tracks with panache, from the expansive title tune to "Light In The Sky," featuring a melodic exchange between saxophonist Frederic Borey and vibraphonist David Patrois.

Patrois launches the album with a cool, slow melody that gives way to the trombone blasts of Gueorgui Kornazov. Yoni Zelnik's bass walks the tune forward briskly, and Borey's saxophone and Mederic Collignon's cornet intercut, the mix constantly shifting as foreground and background joust.

Patrois also launches "Direction," more relaxed than the title track, if no less complex. Le Goas surrounds his septet from the bottom up while Patrois embroiders and Borey rolls out long, circular saxophone. Unison lines coalesce, stately and grave, ending this track on course.

"Friction" picks up where "Direction" left off: medium tempo, deliberate. Borey almost loses himself in his solo; Le Goas and bassist Yoni Zelnik roil; and guitarist Michael Felberbaum plays it sweet and delicate.

"Fifteen Miles" starts as a twilight tune of cymbal shimmer and vibraphone aura until it accelerates; Patrois doesn't so much solo as ride the tune, affirming Le Goas' ethos of flexibility. Immediately afterward, Collignon lets loose with wild vocalese, expressing yet another aspect of Le Goas' work: fearlessness. The album's most shape-shifting tune, it may also be the prettiest.

—Carlo Wolff

**The Chaining Loops:** The Chaining Loops; Direction; Friction; Fifteen Miles; Light In The Sky. (46:41)

**Personnel:** Frederic Borey, saxophones; Mederic Collignon, cornet, voice; Michael Felberbaum, guitar; Gueorgui Kornazov, trombone; Olivier Le Goas, drums; David Patrois, vibes; Yoni Zelnik, bass.

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

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## Lars Danielsson Liberetto *Echomyr*

ACT  
★★★★

*Echomyr*, according to bassist Lars Danielsson, is a neologism for the combination of reverberant sound and soulful depth: music that reflects the 67-year-old Swede's growing interest in expressing human emotion. With a decade of work behind it, his quartet — British guitarist John Parricelli, Martinican pianist Gregory Privat and Swedish drummer Magnus Öström — has built the kind of trust needed to express music that delves deeply.

## Jeff Parker ETA Ivtet *Happy Today*

INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM/NONESUCH  
★★★★

Guitarist Jeff Parker's ETA Ivtet with saxophonist Josh Johnson, bassist Anna Butterss and drummer Jay Bellerose has been working together for years in Los Angeles, first at the small room dubbed the Enfield Tennis Academy (a reference to David Foster Wallace's novel *Infinite Jest* and the source of the group's initials) and now at various other intimate venues.

This performance, consisting of two LP-side-long pieces, was recorded and mixed (it almost feels like a bootleg) at Lodge Room in L.A.'s Highland Park neighborhood in August 2025. The musicians were surrounded by a small but enthusiastic audience who can be heard whooping and hollering as the pieces gradually rise from gentle, mantra-like introductions to peaks of ecstatic, tuned-in interplay. The group's music hovers and wavers in a fascinating zone as welcoming to fans of Tony Conrad and Faust's *Outside The Dream Syndicate* or Miles Davis' *In A Silent Way* as the Grateful Dead's *Live/Dead* or Can's *Soon Over Babaluma*. It has some of the qualities of minimalist music — the pieces are built around extremely simple melodies, and it's generally

While pieces like "Allan" carry the formality of classical composition, expressed with light-handed drumming and flowing piano, there's an increase in intensity as the piece ends that counteracts the underlying austerity. Öström, best known for his work in e.s.t., is particularly flexible in these situations, shifting nimbly between fluid gestures and stadium-level drive.

A trio of other Danielsson compositions — "Supreme," "Ascending" and the title piece — add details with, respectively, Arve Henriksen's electronic trumpet effects, Magnus Lindgren's balletic flute and Carolina Grinne's ethereal English horn. In each case, the leader applies these added voices judiciously, wasting nothing.

Listeners won't mistake Liberetto for a typical American quartet, and may hear echoes of other distinctly "Northern" recordings, notably some by Jan Garbarek. There is asceticism in these compositions, but Danielsson's compositional characteristics are leavened by a popular music sensibility. While there may be tension, and that closing reminder of current world events, emotions are muted and channeled into intensity of purpose.

—James Hale

**Echomyr:** Pre; Allan; Supreme; Glør; Sensitiva; Ascending; Himlen Över Dig; Echomyr; Presto; Something She Said. (45:24)

**Personnel:** Lars Danielsson, bass, cello, electric guitar (6), gimbri (10), piano (10); John Parricelli, guitar; Arve Henriksen (3, 7), trumpet; Magnus Lindgren (6), flute, alto flute; Carolina Grinne (8), English horn; Gregory Privat, keyboards; Magnus Öström, drums, percussion.

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



more about gradual extrapolation of a groove than intricate, challenging solos — but it's also very much about the members of the quartet listening carefully to one another and never interrupting or drowning anyone out.

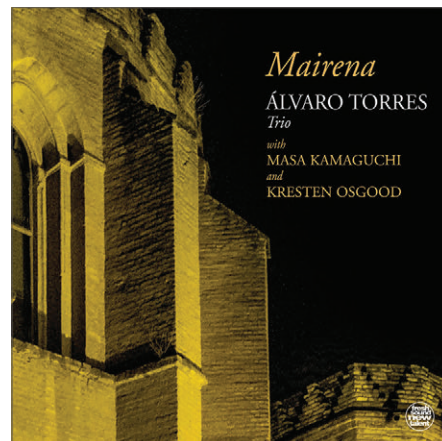
Individual players do seize the spotlight; Parker and Butterss both take conventional solos on "Like Swimwear," and even the typically anti-solo Johnson stretches a little on the title piece. But this is collective music first and foremost.

—Phil Freeman

**Happy Today:** Like Swimwear; Happy Today. (44:28)

**Personnel:** Jeff Parker, guitar; Josh Johnson, alto saxophone; Anna Butterss, bass; Jay Bellerose, drums.

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



## Álvaro Torres Trio *Mairena*

FRESH SOUND NEW TALENT  
★★★★½

Spanish pianist Álvaro Torres is quite explicit in his connection to flamenco tradition, but as a jazz musician he honors that folk heritage by internalizing its sound and forging something fresh with it.

The pianist lives in New York, where he's built a fruitful bond with bassist John Hébert and drummer Barry Altschul, but he keeps his European connections alive, working closely with the excellent Danish drummer Kresten Osgood, who brings crisp precision, loping drive and time-fracturing energy to this superb live recording taped at gigs in Madrid and Seville in the midst of a 2025 European tour with bassist Masa Kamaguchi. His post-bop chops are clear, but what distinguishes this trio is the halting flow.

The brooding "Calabosito" was inspired by the legendary flamenco singer Camarón de la Isla, but elsewhere the genre's influence is more oblique, deployed through rhythm and the silences embedded within them.

On these six original tunes Torres builds in pauses and dynamic space, a kind of two-gear rubato that makes the music lurch and stop, with a similar strain of hurtling force that makes its propulsion so exciting and unpredictable.

The melody on "Mairena" unfolds in terse stabs, leaving the rhythm section to chatter quietly between phrases. That method brings a delicious tension to the proceedings, bringing a volatility to a fairly direct post-bop sensibility.

In fact, as tuneful and harmonically sleek as Torres is, it's his sense of time and the rhythmic invention of his phrasing that distinguish his playing here.

—Peter Margasak

**Mairena:** Llum Verda; Mairena; Calabosito; Everything I Love; Lisbon Mood; The Good Life. (44:26)

**Personnel:** Álvaro Torres, piano; Masa Kamaguchi, bass; Kresten Osgood, drums.

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

**Noladet**  
*Somethin' To Relax With*  
 ROYAL POTATO FAMILY  
 ★★★★★

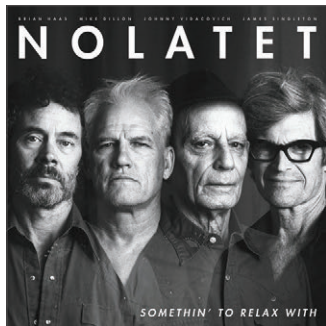
The New Orleans-based group's third release, *Somethin' To Relax With*, was actually recorded live at the LowDown in Tulsa, Oklahoma. It has all the technical polish of a studio recording, but the playing here evokes the magic of the small jazz club. The ensemble itself has been playing for many years, anchored by bassist James Singleton and drummer Johnny Vidacovich, who decided that the club in Tulsa would be an apt space to produce a recording. Pianist Brian Haas and vibraphonist and percussionist Mike Dillon round out Noladet, whose penchant for groove-forward, reflective tunes nevertheless make for engaged listening. Singleton's composition "Doc Richter To You" is a moment where that interplay checks out. It is followed by beautiful playing from Haas that introduces "Black Pencil," which has the feel of a through-composed piece, though its improvisational elements are clear. The arresting two tracks work well as peak and highlight. But these are hardly the only compositions in the six-tune program that will reward re-listening. The title track, a blues, is one of the rare times on the recording where one could hear the audible reactions of the live audience. There remains something relaxing about the driving force of the blues.

—Josh Myers

**Somethin' To Relax With:** Switchback; Somethin' To Relax With; Doc Richter To You; Black Pencil; Cluster B; Surely Hazard. (41:03)

**Personnel:** Johnny Vidacovich, drums; James Singleton, bass; Brian Haas, piano; Mike Dillon, vibraphone, percussion.

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



**Zhengtao Pan**  
**Jazz Orchestra**  
*Day By Day*  
 OUTSIDE IN  
 ★★★★★½

Much is afoot on writer/bandleader/conductor Zhengtao Pan's sixth album. A concept piece about a musician's routine life and practice, the set is both diverse (evoking Pan's Chinese heritage on "Childhood," driving hard on the post-bop "Endless Cycle," reinterpreting Ravel's prelude to "The Tomb of Couperin") and complex, with multiple sections and changes of key and rhythmic feel all over the place (though most especially on "Wind Dance"). It could easily be exhausting.

But it isn't. Because within all that ambition, Pan never forgets to hit the plainspoken emotional buttons. The daunting 7/4 of "Liu Yang River" goes down easy in part because its basic ostinato breaks down into two simple three-note phrases, but also because of the wondrous, majestic passages for horn and reed ensembles and solos. Guests acquit themselves well, with Steve Nelson's persistent soprano solo on "Wind Dance" and Sara Gazarek's wordless-but-not-formless vocal on "Aurora" of particular note. Drummer Jared Schonig is a powerhouse across the whole album. Pan's smart writing, though, is the star.

—Michael J. West

**Day By Day:** Childhood; Dave's Here; Family; Endless Cycle; Wind Dance; The Tomb Of Couperin I. Prelude; Liu Yang River; Aurora; Day By Day. (73:29)

**Personnel:** Zhengtao Pan, conductor; Andrew Gould, Juanito Saus, Sam Dillon, Ryota Sasaki, Andrew Gutauskas, Steve Wilson (5), Itai Kriss (6), reeds; Akihiro Kokufukata, John Lake, Sean Temme, Shota Yamaguchi, trumpet; Alan Ferber, Sam Blakeslee, John Yao, trombone; Jennifer Wharton, bass trombone; Chen Wang, guitar; Adam Birnbaum, Martha Kato, piano; Edward Perez, Rufus Reid (1), bass; Jared Schonig, drums; Sara Gazarek, vocals (8).

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



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## Big Names, Big Bands, Big Box

The V-Disc program lasted less than six years (1943–'49) but it documented quite a bit of rewarding music. In 1943, with the American Federation of Musicians in the middle of a recording strike, the idea for V (for victory)-Discs originated when Lt. Robert Vincent convinced James Petrillo, the head of the AFM, to allow musicians to record music for the troops. Petrillo agreed but with two conditions: the musicians were not to be paid, and the discs, which would be unavailable in the U.S., were to be destroyed when World War II ended. Fortunately, the V-Discs survived. All types of music was recorded but, since swing was at the height of its popularity, a large amount of high-quality jazz was documented that would otherwise have been lost.

Mosaic had previously compiled the superb limited-edition 11-CD box set *Classic V-Disc Small Group Jazz Sessions*. Its follow-up is the 10-CD *Classic V-Disc Big Band Jazz Sessions* (Mosaic; ★★★★★½ 1460:03). While V-Discs sometimes contained reissues of other recordings, Mosaic (as with the previous set) concentrates exclusively on performances recorded specifically for V-Disc. While many of the selections had been previously issued piecemeal, these two boxes are the most comprehensive V-Disc sets ever.

The quantity of music is extraordinary: 213 songs, including a dozen released for the first time. In addition, many of the bandleaders were persuaded to record very brief spoken introductions; a few dozen are included. While Duke Ellington is absent (his V-Discs were taken from radio shows and earlier recordings), and Benny Goodman will be released on a future set, 34 other bands are heard from. The number in parenthesis after the bandleader's name in this review is that of their orchestra's featured performances.

Disc 1 begins with Woody Herman (16), whose First Herd was his most enthusiastic, with the trumpet section always seeming to be on the verge of exploding. As with many of the V-Discs, such stirring numbers as "Red Top," "Apple Honey" and "Your Father's Mustache" predate the familiar recorded versions. Chubby Jackson's Mad Mob (3) has the uninhibited bassist leading the Herman band without the leader; Martha Raye takes an effective vocal on "He's Funny That Way."

Les Brown (6) had an underrated and solidly swinging outfit that outlasted all of the other big bands of the swing era. Doris Day sings "Take Me In Your Arms" while "Mexican Hat Dance" and "Flip Lid" are the Brown band's most notable performances. Charlie Barnet (8) and his group always sounded as if they were having a great time. The 1944 version plays new versions of his hits "Cherokee" and "Pompton Turnpike" and two early versions of "Skyliner" (with pianist Dodo



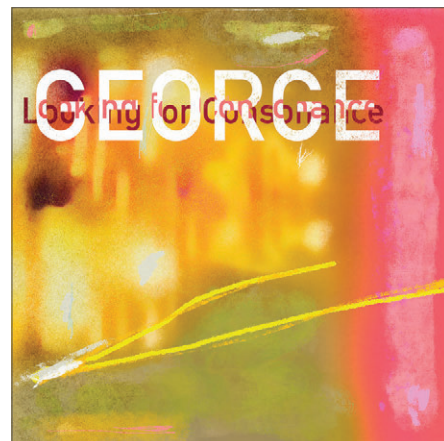
Marmarosa). Guitarist Barney Kessel is one of the band's main soloists, and Kay Starr sings "Sharecroppin' Blues."

By 1943–44, many bandleaders who were best known for playing sweet dance music felt it was safe to also play some swing. The numbers included by the bands of Mal Hallett (3), Clyde Lucas (3), Ted Fiorito (1) and particularly Kay Kyser (3) are all very credible swing performances. A small-group selection left off of the earlier Mosaic box features singer Dottie Reed on "Born To Be Blue." Gene Krupa (4) is featured with his string orchestra in 1944 and on two numbers a year later that showcase Anita O'Day. Three of Buddy Rich's struggling big bands of 1946–48 (12) are heard with plenty of drum breaks and two of the leader's effective vocals. Harry James' (11) very popular orchestra is mostly conventional on their numbers with the trumpeter and altoist Willie Smith getting in some good spots, particularly on the two-part "Eight Bar Riff." While Claude Thornhill (1) has only a cameo, the 1943–45 Count Basie Orchestra (26) is well represented, with Lester Young taking five solos on the earlier sessions.

The other orchestras include those led by Lionel Hampton (6), the Casa Loma Orchestra with cornetist Bobby Hackett (3), a strong instrumental set by Jimmy Dorsey (9), Tommy Dorsey (2), the first recorded reunion of the Dorsey Brothers since 1935 (2), Randy Brooks (2), Jimmie Lunceford (5), Don Redman (4), Charlie Spivak (3), Lee Castle (2), Tony Pastor (2), Yank Lawson's specially assembled ensemble (4) and Bill Heathcock's V-Disc West Coasters (8). Several excellent if obscure military jazz orchestras (12) are also represented, plus Glenn Miller's superb Army Air Force Band (10) and Sam Donahue's Navy Dance Band (20).

Robert Vincent must have been very pleased with how his idea turned out. **DB**

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



### George *Looking For Consonance* OUT OF YOUR HEAD

★★★★

Drummer-composer John Hollenbeck has a knack for creating forward-thinking ensembles. The Claudia Quintet and the John Hollenbeck Large Ensemble have been together for over 20 years, while his current quartet, GEORGE, was formed during the pandemic. It's a conglomerate of vintage funk and futuristic electronica, jazz and art-pop, structure and improvisation. While GEORGE's debut recording was all about embracing their harmonic sound, *Looking For Consonance* leans into the more elusive qualities in modern jazz and is what Hollenbeck describes as a combination of pragmatism and aspiration.

The opener, "bounce," sets the tone immediately with grooves colliding with Anna Webber's jagged saxophone lines. "Lewis," dedicated to AACM pioneer and trombonist George Lewis, shifts through knotty drum meters and airy flute passages. In just about every song, there is a reference to some kind of George, another mystical part of Hollenbeck's band. "Porter (10,000 men named George)" is compact but striking, built around slippery rhythmic undercurrents.

Beneath the deep, collective timbres, there is political purpose to each song. "Norma," dedicated to reproductive autonomy, may be the album's darkest track, driven by stern unison saxophone lines and hard-edged accents that never quite resolve into comfort. This is no doubt the most dissonant, freest tune on the record.

If *Looking For Consonance* has a limitation, it's that the music rarely settles for long. But listeners seeking dramatic peaks or overt intensity may find it of especial interest. —Veronica Johnson

**Looking For Consonance:** bounce; Lewis (dedicated to George Lewis); Nassam Alayna-LHawa (a diasporic offering for peace); George and Dee (dedicated to George and Dee Gamble); Georigist; Porter (10,000 men named George); Norma (in support of reproductive autonomy); Unicornio (for the Global South, in movement and resilience); Johnson (dedicated to George F. Johnson); Wayne Phases (dedicated to Wayne Shorter). (58:46)

**Personnel:** Anna Webber, tenor saxophone, flute, alto flute; Sarah Rossy, voice, synthesizer; Chiquita Magic, synthesizers, voice; John Hollenbeck, drums.

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



## Virginia MacDonald *In Search Of...*

CELLAR MUSIC

★★★★

*In Search Of ...* is Torontonian clarinetist Virginia MacDonald's erudite, authoritatively individualistic debut, recorded in 2024. MacDonald and her brilliant rhythm section — veteran grandmasters Geoffrey Keezer on piano and Ira Coleman on bass, plus badass Canadian drummer Curtis Nowosad — navigate a program including six diverse originals to which she applies harmonic breadth, rhythmic agility, melody-centric orientation, subtle

## Blue Moods *Directions & Expressions*

POSI-TONE

★★★★½

As many jazz cognoscenti will know, this is not Miles Davis' 1955 album. But in several ways, *Blue Moods' Directions & Expressions* exudes a similar invitation to relax as well as something more, as the group reprises a few of the legend's memorable moments.

Much in the manner in which it delved into the music of Charlie Mingus and Freddie Hubbard, the group — not exactly the same members — has selected choice bits of the Davis oeuvre, most delightfully "La Suite Kilimanjaro" and "Fran Dance," featuring Diego Rivera's saxophone, Eli Howell's trombone and everywhere the magic of pianist Art Hirahara and vibist Behn Gillece. On the former track, the group parses elements of this lovely ballad, and it's OK for you to yield to the temptation of dragging out an old copy of the original and playing them together, particularly toward the end, where Boris Kozlov's bass and Vinnie Sperrazza's drums bring things to a tight rhythmic close.

One of the album's most poignant recollections occurs on "Fran Dance," where Rivera, almost like his namesake, sketches a musical countenance of the beautiful woman. And if

attack, full tone and voice-like shadings.

She knows the bebop canon and disguises her sources well on three hip contrafacts: "Last Call At Dmitri's" is a venturesome "I Got Rhythm" variant with a form whose jagged intervals, executed in breathe-as-one unison by MacDonald and contralto Laura Anglade, reference Charlie Parker's "Au Privave" in the final bars; the title track refracts Kurt Weill's "Speak Low"; "Retrogression" is a Ferrari-tempoed mashup of George Shearing's "Conception," Eric Dolphy's "Miss Ann" and a taste of Monk's "Well, You Needn't," over which she and Keezer contribute vertiginously thrilling solos. On "Hope," a brisk swinger that evokes (for me) the spirit of Alvin Batiste, MacDonald spins out a multi-chorus dance, imbuing the notes with songlike tonal color, perhaps spurring Keezer to uncork his own florid, cogent declamation. On Mingus' "Duke Ellington's Sound Of Love," a MacDonald-Keezer duo, he conjures Ellingtonian harmonies and colors. Another highlight is Coleman's exquisite three-minute opening cadenza to "Stardust," which spurs MacDonald to raise the ante (as she does throughout) with two impassioned variations.

—Ted Panken

**In Search Of ...** : Last Call At Dmitri's; In Search Of ...; Stardust; Retrogression; Up High, Down Low; Hope; Duke Ellington's Sound Of Love; Eternal Return Of The Same. (49:24)

**Personnel:** Virginia MacDonald, clarinet; Geoffrey Keezer, piano; Ira Coleman, bass; Curtis Nowosad, drums; Laura Anglade, vocals.

**Ordering info:** [virginiamacdonald.ca](http://virginiamacdonald.ca)



there's an absolutely virtuosic solo, check out Howell's sprint on "Agitation." In scintillating phrases, images of Herbie, Wayne, Ron, Miles and Tony are evoked.

You wonder who's next for Blue Moods, and there is a multitude to choose from in this often-tricky endeavor, but whoever is selected is sure to be pleased by the group's renditions.

—Herb Boyd

**Directions & Expressions:** Boplicity; Somethin' Else; Circle; Stuff; Agitation; Générique; Lazy Susan/Half Nelson; La Suite De Kilimanjaro; Fran Dance; U'n'l. (58:60)

**Personnel:** Art Hirahara, piano; Diego Rivera, saxophones; Behn Gillece, vibraphone; Eli Howell, trombone; Boris Kozlov, bass; Vinnie Sperrazza, drums.

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



## Teiku *Klang*

GINGKO

★★★½

Teiku takes its name from a Talmudic acronym that translates to "unanswered question," but the ensemble's second album definitely answers at least one question: What next? When Teiku recorded its first LP, the group numbered five musicians and was solidly based in Detroit. The ensemble arose from the unique shared experiences of keyboardist Josh Harlow and percussionist Jonathan Barahal, who had both grown up in Jewish, Ukrainian-descended clans that had preserved unique approaches to reciting Passover songs and assembled a quintet that interpreted those melodies from a free-jazz angle.

Currently the band is split between Chicago and Detroit. Harlow, Barahal and bassist Jaribu Shahid (a mentor to both founders) have replaced Teiku's original two-horn front line with bass clarinetist Jason Stein. They've moved beyond familial sources to a broader ancestral base, paying special attention to regional differences in the expression of one Passover text.

The first version of "Ki Le Noeh" starts with a sinuous, Eastern European-rooted unison statement by bass clarinet and piano, then plunges into a high-velocity improvisation whose forcefulness recalls that of McCoy Tyner's mid-1970s groups. The second atomizes melody to make space for patient explorations of timbre; the third gets a tense, funky treatment; the fourth is a somber ballad that uses Stein and Shahid like a much fuller string section; and the final iteration casts time to the winds and stirs up a roiling, free-form maelstrom. The ensemble's command of instrumental colors and evident emotional investment persist through the varied approaches.

—Bill Meyer

**Klang:** Ke Le Noeh (Krumholz melody); Ki Lo Naeh (Fendrick Melody); Khasul Seydur Peysakh (Chasman melody); Ki Le Noeh (Shlita melody); Ki Le Noeh (Gerster melody); Odir Bimlikhe (Lunski melody). (39:42)

**Personnel:** Josh Harlow, piano, synthesizer, Fender Rhodes, percussion; Jonathan Barahal, drums, vibraphone, percussion, electronics; Jason Stein, bass clarinet, percussion; Jaribu Shahid, upright bass, bass ukulele, percussion.

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

## Five Albums You Can Vibe To

There's an old joke about how the drummer is usually the first player to arrive at the gig and the last to leave due to the mechanics of setting up their respective instrument, while the rest of band can just stroll up nonchalantly ... but tell that to the vibes player. To date, there's no MIDI plug-in that can successfully replicate the nuanced sound of the original vibraphone, itself an early electric instrument patterned after the marimba family of instruments.

Pioneered in jazz modalities by icons such as Lionel Hampton, Cal Tjader, Milt Jackson, Bobby Hutcherson and Roy Ayers, the legacy of the somewhat quirky instrument that was commonplace in otherwise unplugged combos for decades lives on through a number of recent releases that each express unique facets of the instrument.

**Hendrik Meurkens** inhaled the sun-drenched inspiration of Brazil and exhaled it in the form of *Samba Tonto* (Cellar Music; ★★★★★ 53:39), reflecting the vibraphone's long tradition as a staple in loungey music, while breathing fresh life into tried and true sounds. "Surfboard," a classic composition by Antônio Carlos Jobim, sounds as though the Walter Wanderley version of the track had washed up ashore in the South of France, while Meurkens' reimagining of his own "A Lullaby For Benny" is a distinct treat. The set features mythic drummer and percussionist Portinho, who's worked with artists such as Dom Salvador, Paquito D'Rivera and Astrud Gilberto.

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

**Simon Moullier**, recognized as a Rising Star Vibraphonist of the Year in DownBeat's Critics Poll, presents *Ceiba* (Independent Release; ★★★★★½ 56:50), a truly groovy album that features a cosmopolitan kaleidoscope of sonic influences (particularly in regards to its rhythms). For instance, the title track was spawned from his "love of the Mozambique drum groove," while "Fuji" was written while arriving in Tokyo, and its groove "is inspired by Cuban percussion," according to Moullier. The positively cooking "Mr. Hutcherson" is, perhaps unsurprisingly, an ode to the maestro Bobby Hutcherson.

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

A few years back, **Vance Thompson** began the transition from a trumpeter to a vibraphonist after a career-threatening neurological disorder took away his ability to play his instrument of choice. He began translating his sense of tonality and phrasing from his horn to his mallets. The resulting album, *Lost And Found* (Moon-



do; ★★★★★ 56:20), explores not only a new-found style, but serves as a continuation of a way of being that preceded it. Despite the marked differences between the instruments, "It didn't take too long before I sounded like myself," Thompson noted. "The Thread Of All Sorrows," which takes its title from a poem by Naomi Shihab Nye, is a bossa-tinged highlight. It will be interesting to see how he continues to master his relatively new instrument.

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

*Singular* (XJAZZ!; ★★★★★½ 38:42) is the self-titled release from a trio that folds synthesizers and other electronics into their sound, which feels both current and vaguely postmodern. Tracks such as "La fin d'un monde" and the title cut possess a haunting, industrial texture, while "PremierMatin" is a more straightforward pleasure that wouldn't sound out of place in a 1940s animated feature.

Ordering info: [wearesingular.eu](http://wearesingular.eu)

And earlier this year, Austin, Texas-based vibraphonist and percussionist **Carolyn Trowbridge** presented *Found Memories* (Independent Release; ★★★★★½ 42:55), her formidable debut as a bandleader. It's a recording that reflects versatility honed from playing in Afrobeat groups, rock bands and avant-garde jazz combos. "The Lonely Frost Flower" is a vibrant, faintly Western track that features Elaine Barber on harp and Alex Coke on flute. It also has a bit of psychedelia up its sleeve. Perhaps conversely, "The Duchess Of Sheba" (on which she plays both steel pan and vibraphone) has a distinctly Ethio-jazz flair.

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

This bevy of recordings shows that in an era marked by an ever-increasing share of synthesized instrumentation, the vibraphone still has something to say. **DB**



### Leslie Vincent *Little Black Book*

JAZZ IS COOL

★★★★

Leslie Vincent grew up wandering the globe with her military family. She has a bachelor of music degree and worked for a decade as an actor, appearing in dramas and musicals. After settling in Minneapolis, she began singing in jazz clubs and writing her own material.

*Little Black Book* is Vincent's third album, the first with all original tunes. She arranged the songs with the members of her longtime quintet, dipping into folk, rock, blues and jazz. She delivers the lyrics with plenty of wit, highlighted by her scatted ad-libs.

A horn section opens "Swinging Tattooed Queen." Vincent sings about a night on the town, trading scatted interludes with the band's improvisations. "You & I (Go Together Like)" is a love song, delivered intimately by Vincent and guitarist Blake Foster, who wrote the music. Foster plays a bossa nova melody on his acoustic as Vincent sings of spending a romantic night by the seaside.

Vincent trades vocals with Minneapolis pop star Jeremy Messersmith on "What Humans Do," a song they wrote together. They toss humorous images of a carefree life back and forth, while the band lays down a jaunty shuffle. Midway through, the drummer delivers a solo that sounds like a tap dancing interlude from a musical comedy from the '40s.

Vincent describes the isolation one feels when longing to begin a relationship on "Tallying Strangers." She sings softly, wondering if there's anyone searching for her, while a piano dances around her melismatic vocals. —j. poet

**Little Black Book:** Analog Love Affair; Tallying Strangers; What Humans Do; Love On Cape Cod; Ex #4; The Comedia; You & I (Go Together Like); Swinging Tattooed Queen; Rainy Days; Harriet The Spy; Till They Do; Hannah Always Cries At IKEA; Girls At My School. (40:31)

**Personnel:** Leslie Vincent, vocals; Patrick Adkins, piano and keyboards; Blake Foster, guitar; Matt McIntyre, bass; Ben Ehrlich, drums; Mitch Van Laar, trumpet; Jeremy Messersmith, vocals; Stephanie Wieseler, tenor saxophone; Zach Marley, trombone; Mary Alice Hutton, violin.

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

ROBIN KATZ



HYPNOS

## Robin Katz

### *Hypnos*

GEARBOX

★★★★½

Robin Katz's new album evokes more of an ambient, neoclassical quality than one of conventional jazz. However, the simplicity of classical guitar and Hammond organ encompassed by a highly exposed production style gives *Hypnos* jazz-powered heart and soul. After all, some of the most memorable moments in jazz can be found within a bold solo performance or cyclical motifs driven by just a few notes. On *Hypnos*, Katz embraces both.

Though the sparseness of the album makes it easier to consider every sonic detail and compositional choice, this mindset feels counterintuitive to Katz's vision of and aspirations for *Hypnos*, which he sees as "dreamy and hypnotic" and "a brief slumberous escape from the madness." Indeed, *Hypnos* is graceful, mesmerizing and calming. Each piece is best appreciated from a mental distance. Certainly, Katz and Ledwidge's musical proficiency is to be commended. The pair display poise and control as notes swirl around one another.

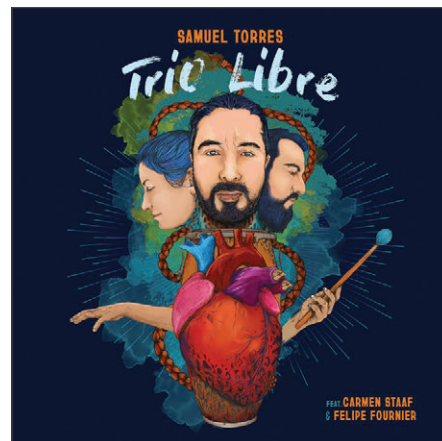
On tracks like "Kingdom," "My Friend Kushi" and "Silent Forest," the crisp but softened edges of the tones from Katz's guitar fluttering over Ledwidge's subtly wavy tones on the Hammond organ call to mind smooth pebbles skipping over serene water. It's only in the titular finale that the duo flips. The delicate flurry of Katz's notes quietly recede, letting the melodic whistle of the organ bring the entrancing record to a close. Ledwidge's dynamic surge at the very end may break any meditative state but thankfully, it only takes a quick restart to return to the oasis.

—Kira Grunenberg

**Hypnos:** Floating World; Kingdom; The Moon; My Friend Kushi; Stargazer; Silent Forest; Ukiyo; Hypnos. (26:44)

**Personnel:** Robin Katz, guitar; Nathaniel Ledwidge, Hammond organ.

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



## Samuel Torres

### *Trio Libre*

BLUE CONGA

★★★★★

For those who enjoy the boisterous flamboyance of Latin jazz, Colombian composer and percussionist Samuel Torres would like to point out that less can be more. That's the emphasis of his new recording, *Trio Libre*, which features a trio: himself, vibraphonist Felipe Fournier and pianist Carmen Staaf.

The stripped-down setting opens the mind to all kinds of counterfactuals and possibilities. For instance, what if legends like Machito or Chano Pozo engaged in late-night jams with intimate groups? Torres makes his thesis compelling in a group featuring superb interplay and brilliant, if brief, solos.

The music is also austere. The album consists of one piece, "We The People," which is in four parts plus interludes, and two others: "Tu Mi Vida Entera," a dedication to his wife, violinist Sarah Alden (and it's the first track in his career on which Torres sings), and a take on J.S. Bach's "Duet No. 1 in E Minor" on which Torres illustrates the commonalities in rhythmic syncopation between Afro-Latin styles and European Baroque music.

The core of the recording is *We The People*, which is easily taken as an assertion of American constitutional values in these times of turmoil. The highlights include Fournier's solo on "We Begin," Staaf's introduction to "Fragility" and the leader driving the band on "Libre." It's a beguilingly simple idea, but one that's effectively rendered due to the virtuosity of the musicians involved. Who needs a big band?

—Martin Johnson

**Track Listing:** We The People I; We Begin; We The People Interlude I; We The People II; Fragility; We The People Interlude II; We The People III; We Each Have Each Other; We The People Interlude III; We The People IV; Libre; Tu Mi Vida Entera; JS Bach Duet No. 1 in E Minor BMV 802. (32:00)

**Personnel:** Samuel Torres, percussion; Carmen Staaf, piano; Felipe Fournier, vibraphone.

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



## Jared Hall

### *Hometown*

ORIGIN

★★★★

On his third album for Seattle-based Origin Records, Northwest trumpet player Jared Hall celebrates his return to Spokane, the Eastern Washington city where he grew up and for the past four years has served as Whitworth University's director of jazz studies. Hall plays with immaculate command, has a gorgeous tone in all the registers and creates shapely solos. He and bassist Michael Glynn stand above their bandmates in that department, though tenor saxophonist Troy

Roberts occasionally catches fire. Hall puts his ear for fetching melodies to good use for five of the seven tunes on this textbook exemplum of classic hard-bop.

Framed by foot-tapping piano riffs, the infectious title track and "Family Groove" could easily have come from the pen of Horace Silver; "Step By Step" would have sounded right at home at California's Lighthouse. The hard-driving "Room 111," propelled by Glynn's agile walking bass, edges toward fiery Coltrane and McCoy, and Glynn shines as a soloist on the jaunty Bobby Hutcherson waltz "Little B's Poem," a smart pick. Monk's "Ask Me Now" gets the quick waltz treatment on solos. The Latin-tinged "Echoes And Origins" doesn't quite lock in and reprising the title tune as a closer feels a bit cute.

But pretty much everything is in its proper place here, which is both the strength and the weakness of a textbook-perfect album. For while Hall's homecoming message comes through, there's something academic about this affair that makes it feel more like well-made craft than affective art. —Paul de Barros

**Hometown:** Hometown; Step By Step; Little B's Poem; Echoes And Origins; Family Groove; Ask Me Now; Room 111; Hometown (Reprise). (48:22)

**Personnel:** Jared Hall, trumpet; Troy Roberts, tenor saxophone; Ben Markley, piano; Michael Glynn, bass; Kyle Swan, drums.

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



COURTESY NIR FELDER

When Nir Felder attended Berklee, it was accepted among students and faculty alike that if you were fully serious about guitar and music, you had to study with Mick Goodrick.

## Notes from Berklee's Guitar Dept. at 65: Unlocking Voice-Leading Mysteries

Being a teenage aspiring musician in the late '90s and early 2000s, a time before all things online music really got up and running, one had to rely quite a bit on imagination to formulate some sort of vision of what the vast musical world out there might be like. What did Coleman Hawkins' famous solo on "Body And Soul" sound like? Where was the Village Vanguard? How about *A Love Supreme*: What was that and how could I find out? How did music theory work and how could I use it to find a way to play the sounds I was hearing?

There was a lot of mystery about the whole endeavor. You got what you could from your friends and their parents' record collections and maybe a knowledgeable teacher or two if you were lucky, and other than that — you probably read *DownBeat* magazine. Or, in my case, *Guitar Player*. And you picked up what you could. I really longed for more access to the answers to the questions I was so curious about. I was lucky to find a few in a music

camp I went to in high school, a place where I met great players like Barry Greene, James Hogan, Jody Fisher, fellow student Ryan Scott and notably the current chairs of the Berklee Guitar Department Kim Perlak and Sheryl Bailey, a university which later became my alma mater and where I'm now a full-time associate professor. This year, Berklee's Guitar Department turns 65 years old.

Berklee itself was shrouded in mystery to me. Of course, there were 6 million guitar players there and they all practiced 39 hours a day, everyone knew that. Other than that, the facts were vague. But it seemed like the thing to do at the time if you wanted those answers, so I went, and found myself in the company of folks like Christian Scott (Chief Xian aTunde Adjuah), esperanza spalding, St. Vincent, Jeff Gitelman, Lawrence Fields and many more wonderful players who both inspired and pushed me and terrified me at times with their skills and abilities. I had some wonderful guitar teachers like Wayne

Krantz and David Tronzo, but it was accepted among students and faculty alike that if you were fully serious about guitar and music you really had to study with Mick Goodrick. I remember meeting Paul Motian in New York around that time. I told him I went to Berklee. "Study with Mick!" he said. Can't argue with that.

Mick was a mystery within a mystery. A Rubik's Cube of a teacher, he spoke in quiet aphorisms or not at all, and I was in turns awed, inspired, scared and puzzled by him, as I suspect most of his young students were. If you didn't play well he would certainly let you know, and if you did — well, no news was good news. Despite his soft presence, his influence both in and beyond the department was strongly felt. In fact, that was so much the case that at present writing, the guitar department curriculum that's been in use for the past five decades at Berklee is mostly his design. There are some ways it might look similar to other university guitar curricula, but there are a few characteristic things that are pure Mick that you'd be hard pressed to find anywhere else. I'd like to share a few of those things with you.

Though most widely known for his 1987 classic *The Advancing Guitarist*, in 2000 Mick published a more obscure tome, this time titled *Mr. Goodchord's Almanac of Guitar Voice-Leading for the Year 2001 and Beyond, Volume 1: Name That Chord*. I don't think it was quite the smash hit its predecessor was, and its approximately 400 spiral-bound, color-coded, arrow- and symbol-laden pages are now out of print, having terrified enough bewildered music students for its time. Yet, true to its title's promise, two more volumes followed: 2005's *Do Not Name That Chord* and 2007's *Beyond the Mother Lode*. I'm not sure the term "trolling" had been invented yet, but here is a great example of Mick's signature, tongue-in-cheek dark musical humor.

The topic at hand was voice-leading. For those who don't know, the term "voice-leading" commonly refers to the way the notes in one chord smoothly move to the notes in the following chord, ideally by stepwise (or as near to stepwise as possible) motion. No big jumps — just a smooth, connected sound, sort of the opposite of a guitar player sliding root-position barre chords all the over the neck like one might do when playing rock 'n' roll.

Often viewed as a purely chordal phenomenon, I'd argue that linear voice-leading (the rules, written or unwritten, dealing with how one note should move to another in a solo, how tension between individual notes

builds and resolves, and the “gravity” of specific notes in relation to one another) is one of the most pressing concerns in learning how to improvise successfully. Mysterious, I know. But do you know the sound of someone playing all the “right” notes and it’s still sounding ... wrong? Maybe you’ve experienced this in your own playing at times. Voice-leading could be the issue. Probably a broader topic than we can cover in these pages today, but suffice it to say for now that in jazz there is probably no greater resource for understanding linear voice-leading than Charlie Parker. His solos, written out extensively in the well-known *Omnibook*, can do a much better job than I can in words of explaining the concept as it pertains to jazz improvising.

But back to Mick. Mick was concerned with voice-leading in the sense of all the ways you could smoothly and gracefully transition from one chord voicing to another with as little motion as possible, and his almanac trilogy is a fully written-out testimony of every way in which a three- or four-part chord can be voice-led diatonically (within a key) to any other three- or four-part chord. We’re not just talking about the chords built in thirds we know and love. We’re also talking about chords built in fourths (quartal harmony) or in seconds (clusters).

Every mathematically possible diatonic triad, seventh chord, cluster or quartal voicing and its subsequent voice-leading through intervallic cycles (more on that in a moment) is covered in the pages of his Almanac — diatonic to what Mick saw as the four most common scales: major, melodic minor, harmonic minor and harmonic major. About the term intervallic cycles: By that, all I mean is that when moving from chord to chord, we’re going to move between them in a set interval pattern like a fourth or a second, throughout an entire key. Some examples will surely clarify what I mean.

In Example 1 we have triads diatonic to the key of C major moving in what Mick called Cycle 3. It’s just the diatonic triads of C major (C major, D minor, E minor, F major, G major, A minor and B diminished) moving between one another in the interval of a third, giving you C major, E minor, G major, B diminished, D minor, F major, A minor and leading you back to C major. As you can see in the example, only one note needs to move and the other two notes can remain as common tones.

Sounds pretty, right? But let’s do a little more with it. Example 2 adds a little motion between the chords in an off-the-cuff kind of way, to make it come alive a little bit musically. I *always* make sure students take raw material like these voice-led cycles and make it their own by creating some actual music

with it. As pretty as it is on its own, if you never use it in context, musically it lives in its own world as an exercise and may never really become a useful part of your playing and musical identity.

In Example 3, we again add motion but this time exclusively by connecting the one note that is moving between the chords with some sort of passing tone: chromatic or diatonic. You can play around with what type of passing tones you use and have fun with it. The options are basically limitless, so get creative. This time we’re using what we call “spread” or “open” triads that still have all the notes of the chord, just spread wider apart. Remember that you can also arpeggiate these and don’t just have to play them solely as chordal blocks. This would be a good way for horn players to explore the material. This one breaks from the cycle and ends on the IV chord, just because it sounds good to me.

In Example 4 things start to get interesting. Now we are suspending all the chords, that is, replacing all the thirds of the chords with the diatonic note above it. More and more mysterious.

In Example 5 we are mostly suspending

spread triads through Cycle 6 in C harmonic minor and adding some passing tones, before resolving back to C major with a Picardy third. The mystery deepens as we explore further.

Let’s leave it there for now. This material is wide and vast, especially when you begin to explore clusters and quartal harmony. Though it is diatonic to the four scales we mentioned here, we can eventually leave those confines behind as well and explore synthetic or symmetrical scales or chromatic clusters and beyond. Perhaps that’s a topic for another column. For now, enjoy and explore and remember to make this material your own by not just playing the examples but by adding your own ideas and creativity to them. It’s what Mick would have wanted. **DB**

Called “the next big jazz guitarist” by NPR, Nir Felder is a new voice in jazz and rock guitar. A New York City native and Grammy winner, Felder has become one of the world’s most highly sought after musicians, performing with an eclectic group of luminaries including Diana Krall, John Mayer, Chaka Khan, Erykah Badu, Dave Matthews, Kamasi Washington, Snoop Dogg, Marcus Miller and others. As a solo artist he has released three albums including his major label debut *Golden Age* (Sony). He is the winner of both the 2021 and 2023 *DownBeat* Magazine Critics Poll for Rising Star Guitarist and is a professor at both Berklee College of Music and the New School in New York City.

#### Example 1

#### Example 2

#### Example 3

#### Example 4

#### Example 5

Music engraving by Evan Macaluso



JUSTIN BORUCKI

A high percentage of the pitches Reid plays are on upbeat 16th notes.

# Vernon Reid's Guitar Solo on 'A Lost Way Found'

I've been a fan of guitarist Vernon Reid from back when he was in Ronald Shannon Jackson's Decoding Society. Some of you who are familiar with his large body of work may be wondering why for this transcription I would choose this track, "A Lost Way Found," from the triumvirate album *Urban Mythology 1* with bassist Jamaaladeen Tacuma and drummer Grant Calvin Weston. After all, it's more sparse, laid-back, almost

ambient and not as "shreddy" as what Reid is typically known for. I feel there is a lot to be learned from his playing here, and it shows Reid's playing in a much different context. Also, I happen to really like this track.

The entire album plays like a jam session. One gets the sense that often the "record" button was hit with little to no discussion beforehand. This tune reads like that. Tacuma starts it off with a vamp bass line that suggests C

minor, and then Reid starts implying other harmonies over the top. The transcription starts when Reid switches to a more straight guitar sound. It's octave-transposed (as is typical for guitar) and often Reid is letting notes sustain over one another, but for ease of reading I have written them as if they don't.

Part of the reason this is so troublesome (as far as writing) is the amount of 16th-note syncopation Reid uses. In the very first mea-



# Aeon 5 by Devon Bass

## Hand-Built, Responsive & Accessible, with Clarity & Punch

One definition of the word “Aeon” is “a period of time.” It’s a fitting name: a nod to the ubiquitous Jazz-style bass guitar, which has become a timeless classic. Devon Smullen got his start designing and building bass guitars in the 1990s, and he’s spent all of that time evolving his craft, updating instruments with state-of-the-art technology and building custom instruments to order. And by custom, I mean *custom*. When you order a Devon bass, you choose the specific pickups, preamps, exotic wood tops, custom finishes — the works. As you can imagine, this process is time-consuming, and that’s reflected in the price point (a typical Devon build ranges from \$4,500 to \$7,500). The Aeon 5 will be released as a series of limited-run instruments that are still built by hand — no mass production here — but with certain standardized elements that make builds more efficient and bring the price down to \$2,999. Devon’s goal is to have the first limited run hit the market this fall (first come, first served!) followed by similar runs every two months or so.

Before getting into the many features and tech specs of the Aeon 5, I need to talk about how it performed in live situations. Admirably — that’s how. There was admittedly a bit of a learning curve thanks to the powerful active four-band preamp and coil-tap switchable pickups (more on those below), but once dialed in, it was a dream to play: comfortable and responsive, with clarity and punch from every note across the two-octave fretboard. Unprompted, bandmates and sound engineers alike were quick to praise how good the Aeon sounded, cutting through the mix and leading to some inspired playing.

The test instrument was an Aeon 5 featuring a solid lightweight stained ash body, a one-piece rock maple neck, and a 34-inch maple fretboard with 24 frets and a zero fret. Ash and maple is a classic combination for J-style basses, and this instrument takes it to another level. The neck was fast and supremely playable from top to bottom: perfect intonation and a tight B-string throughout. The very first thing I noticed upon taking the bass out of its case was the “rolled” maple fretboard. This rolling results in a smooth, rounded edge with no sharp corners and a broken-in feel right out of the box. All Aeon and Devon basses feature this (custom Devons are even more rolled), and Devon was among the first — if not *the* first — to standardize it across their entire lineup. The playability, construction quality, finishes, hardware, electronics and clever design touches all stood out immediately.

Speaking of electronics, the test bass featured Bartolini J-Squared pickups and a Trickfish J-Core preamp. The tonal flexibility of this setup is next-level. Both pickups have coil-tap switches, letting you choose between parallel, single-coil and series modes. I’ve only just tapped — pardon the pun — into the full potential of this system, but I found a real sweet spot with the bridge pickup in series and the neck pickup in single-coil. The coil-tap feature alone creates an enormous range of tonal possibilities, and that’s before you start working the stacked bass/treble and stacked high-mid/low-mid controls. Rounding things out are a stacked master volume/toner, neck/bridge pickup blend and an active/passive switch. The passive mode on this instrument deserves special mention: It’s genuinely remarkable, and not just a fallback for when the batteries die.

Devon is also currently test-running magnetically swappable pickups. Depending on the situation, you’ll be able to go from Bartolini to Trickfish to Delano (actual pickups in Aeons still TBD) by simply pull-

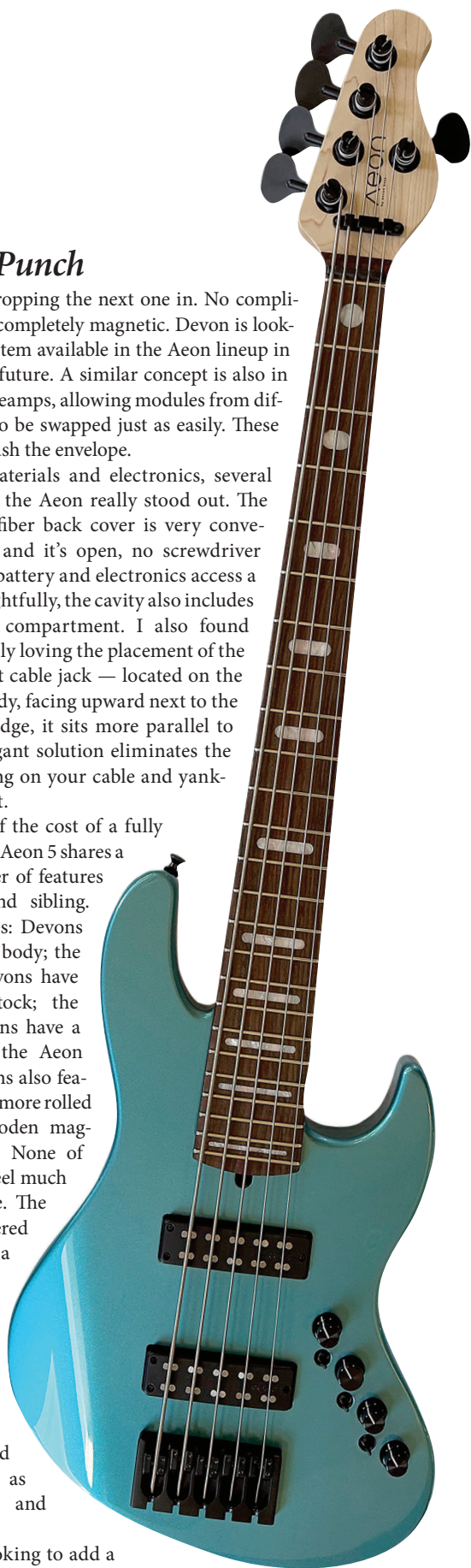
ing one out and dropping the next one in. No complicated installation, completely magnetic. Devon is looking to have this system available in the Aeon lineup in the not-so-distant future. A similar concept is also in development for preamps, allowing modules from different companies to be swapped just as easily. These basses definitely push the envelope.

Beyond the materials and electronics, several design touches on the Aeon really stood out. The magnetic carbon fiber back cover is very convenient: One touch and it’s open, no screwdriver required, making battery and electronics access a total breeze. Thoughtfully, the cavity also includes an Apple AirTag compartment. I also found myself unexpectedly loving the placement of the ¼-inch instrument cable jack — located on the back side of the body, facing upward next to the string-through bridge, it sits more parallel to the floor. This elegant solution eliminates the problem of stepping on your cable and yanking it loose mid-set.

At roughly half the cost of a fully custom Devon, the Aeon 5 shares a remarkable number of features with its higher-end sibling. The key differences: Devons have a chambered body; the Aeon is solid. Devons have an angled headstock; the Aeon is flat. Devons have a three-piece neck; the Aeon is one-piece. Devons also feature figured tops, a more rolled fretboard and wooden magnetic back covers. None of those differences feel much like a compromise. The Aeon will be offered exclusively as a five-string, with three body/fretboard configurations: ash/maple, alder/maple and alder/rosewood. Limited runs will include active and passive versions, as well as Modern and Classic options.

Any bassist looking to add a serious five-string to their arsenal should absolutely check out the Aeon 5. —Jon Paul

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



## 1. Long-Lasting Tone

Elixir has debuted its next generation of acoustic guitar strings. Elixir Attune Strings deliver a crisp, clear sound with a natural feel and long-lasting tone. They have a firm grip that puts players in control of bends and vibrato and are durable enough to withstand even the most aggressive playing styles.

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



## 2. Return to Roots

For its 60th birthday, Kustom Amplification is returning to its roots with the release of two all-new compact amplifiers, each wrapped in the Kustom Tuck & Roll upholstery that helped define its look. Leading the launch are the Kustom '66 Dart Guitar Amplifier and the Kustom '66 Cuda Bass Amplifier — modern, portable practice amps designed as an homage to Kustom's designs of the 1960s. The '66 Dart and '66 Cuda are available in four colors and represent the first of several special releases planned throughout the year.

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



## 3. Organized Effects Chain

On-Stage's GPB-DLX Deluxe Pedalboard is a pedal-organization solution that enables musicians to easily store and transport an entire effect chain as a single portable unit. The two-tiered board has room for up to 11 standard-sized pedals. The upper tier, which holds three standard-sized pedals, can be removed entirely, or positioned on the left, on the right or in the center of the main platform to fit the user's preferred pedal arrangement.

More info: [on-stage.com](http://on-stage.com)

## 4. Elevate Your Bass Tone

Trace Elliot has introduced the Dual Band Compressor. By extracting the compression circuit from the TE-1200 bass amplifier and dropping it into a pedal format, classic dual band compression is readily available for any bass guitar application. With separate "lo band" and "hi band" controls, the Dual Band Compressor lets the player adjust the amount of compression separately for the best results.

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



## 5. New TransAcoustics

Yamaha has launched two new TransAcoustic guitar models featuring Bluetooth capabilities, built-in acoustic effects and enhanced sound quality. The TAG1 C/TAS1 C is designed for intermediate to advanced players, while the TAG1 E/TAS1 E is ideal for beginner to intermediate skill levels.

More info: [usa.yamaha.com](http://usa.yamaha.com)



## 6. Rugged Character

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

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## Willie Jones III

A month before the June release of *Memories Of You*, the ninth leader album by Willie Jones III and the 34th release on his WJ3 label, the 58-year-old drummer joined DownBeat for his second Blindfold Test.

### Robert Stewart/Billy Higgins

"Invitation" (*Judgement*, World Stage Records, 1994) Stewart, tenor saxophone; Higgins, drums; Eric Reed, piano; Marcus Shelby, bass.

"Invitation." The tenor player could be Stanley Turrentine. The drummer sounds like Billy Higgins — the left hand, the way he comps, the fills. The drum solo is a masterpiece. Oh, this is Robert Stewart's session, with Eric Reed on piano and Marcus Shelby on bass. I watched the whole thing in the engineering booth. It's on Billy's label, World Stage Records. Stanley is one of Robert's main influences. ... Eric had been with Wynton a couple of years; Mark and I had done a lot of gigs with him in L.A. At first I didn't recognize Eric's phrasing. 5 stars. I'm biased.

### Tyshawn Sorey

"Libra" (*Members ... Don't!*, Pi, 2026) Sorey, drums; Mark Shim, tenor saxophone; Adam O'Farrill, trumpet; Lex Korten, piano; Tyrone Allen, bass; Gary Bartz, composer.

I don't recognize the song. The band is on fire. I love the energy. Is Johnathan Blake the drummer? Justin Faulkner? [*piano improv section*] This transition sounds like a completely different song, and I liked the first song a lot better. I love the drummer's playing — obviously, a lot of technique and very creative. The composition isn't doing his playing justice. [*new section*] Now he's swinging; he's in there. Is Giveton Gelin the trumpeter? I can't identify anyone, but I love their playing. They made it back. Oh, "Libra." I would have started the song like this, then gone into the swing, and extract that second section. 4 stars.

### Greg Hutchinson

"Seven Steps To Heaven" (*Kind Of Now*, Warner, 2026) Hutchinson, drums; Ron Blake, tenor saxophone; Ambrose Akinmusire, trumpet; Gerald Clayton, piano; Joe Sanders, bass.

Lewis Nash on drums. It's not?! *Agh!* Lewis' cymbals don't sound like that, and that's not his touch. This drummer can play. Joe Farnsworth? It's a nice arrangement of "Seven Steps To Heaven." They start right on the solos. It's not over-arranged. I liked all the solos, and how they fit with the drums. But I can't name anyone. [*afterwards*] I'm kind of ashamed, because Hutch is my favorite drummer from my generation. I associate his drum sound with the Roy Hargrove records, or Eric Reed's records 25 years ago. 5 stars.

### Steve Lehman Trio + Mark Turner

"23b + 23g" (*The Music Of Anthony Braxton*, Intakt, 2025) Lehman, alto saxophone; Turner, tenor saxophone; Matt Brewer, bass; Damion Reid, drums.

It's an Ornette Coleman-Don Cherry vibe. I like the bass and drums, but I'm having a hard time placing the drummer, who is busy, but not too busy. The performance calls for everything he's playing; the drummer and bassist player are hand-in-glove, having a dialogue. Is the tenor saxophonist Mark Turner? He's playing great. [*alto saxophone solo*] The vibe changed. I'm not crazy about what the alto is doing in relation to the ensemble. [*afterwards*] I know Damion very well. I played with his dad, Richard Reid, a great bass player, when I was starting out. 3½ stars.

### Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra

"Buhaina, Buhaina" (*And So It Goes*, RMI, 2023) Jeff Hamilton drum feature.

I recognize Jeff Hamilton's toms and cymbals, his touch. He's one of my



"Jeff knows just what to play, how to construct drum fills around the arrangement," Willie Jones III says of Jeff Hamilton. "Very musical."

favorite drummers, and this is the Clayton-Hamilton Orchestra, one of my favorite big bands. Whether it's big band or trio, Jeff knows just what to play, how to construct drum fills around the arrangement. Very musical. Both he and John Clayton had a huge influence on me. That was killing. 5 stars.

### Kenny Garrett

"Soldats de Champs" (*Sounds From the Ancestors*, Mack Avenue, 2021) Kenny Garrett, alto saxophone, electric piano; Vernell Brown Jr., piano; Corcoran Holt, bass; Ronald Bruner, drums; Rudy Bird, percussion; Lenny White, snare.

Kenny Garrett. I don't recognize the drummer or anyone else. I like the tune, but I'd rather hear just the drummer on the snare drum. Everybody's doing their own thing between the percussion and the drums, and it doesn't fit. Kenny's doing what Kenny always does: bringing the fire. He hasn't lost a step. If I saw this live, maybe I'd have a different opinion. [*afterwards*] I know Ronald from L.A. I'm a huge fan of him and Lenny White. But there's too much going on. It's Kenny Garrett, so 4 stars.

### Roscoe Mitchell/Albert "Tootie" Heath

"Hey Donald" (*Hey Donald*, Delmark, 1995) Mitchell, alto saxophone, composer; Heath, drums; Jodie Christian, piano; Malachi Favors, bass.

I can't guess the drummer or bassist. The drummer is older-generation; they know swing. Is that how the saxophonist's tone usually sounds? The intonation is tricky. Tell me. [*afterwards*] My second year at Cal Arts, Roscoe was Marcus Shelby's and my teacher and we did a concert with him. It was exhausting. In 1995, Roscoe made a record with Tootie Heath, who was my drum teacher at Cal Arts. That's the one. Great cover.

### Cannonball Adderley/Roy McCurdy

"Blue And Boogie" (*Burnin' In Bordeaux: Live In France 1969*, Elemental Music, 1969/2024) McCurdy, drums; Cannonball Adderley, alto saxophone; Nat Adderley, trumpet; Joe Zawinul, piano; Victor Gaskin, bass.

Vincent Herring. No? The drummer is Kenny Washington. Joe Farnsworth? Oh, this is Cannonball Adderley. So, Nat Adderley, Roy McCurdy, maybe Walter Booker. Ron McClure? [*Victor Gaskin*] What year is this? [*1969*] Joe Zawinul. [*long drum solo*] I've never heard this. Incredible. Roy still plays like this at 90. My introduction to Roy was when he played with Nancy Wilson; I saw them many times live and on television. I never took drum lessons from Roy, but I used to hang out with him and Tootie, who had a little hi-hat fraternity. 5 stars. **DB**

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

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