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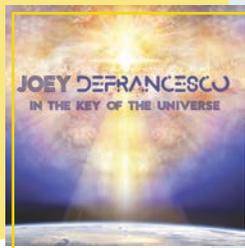


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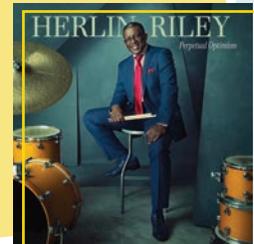
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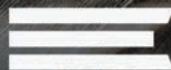
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JAZZIZ

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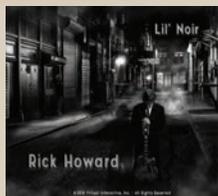
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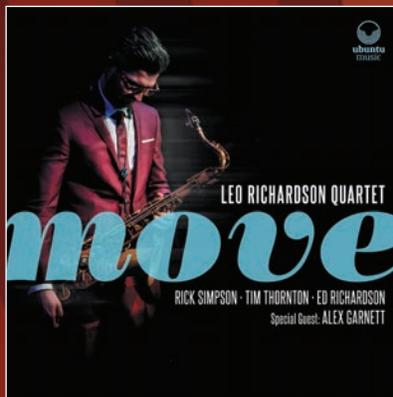
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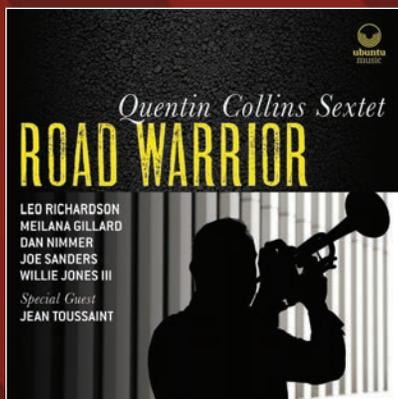
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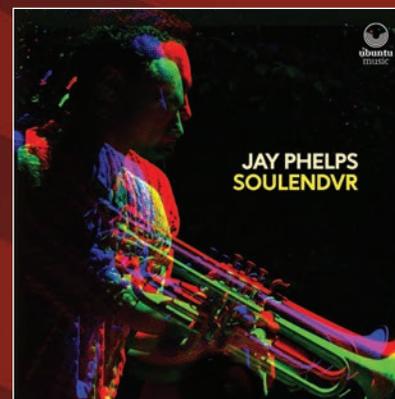
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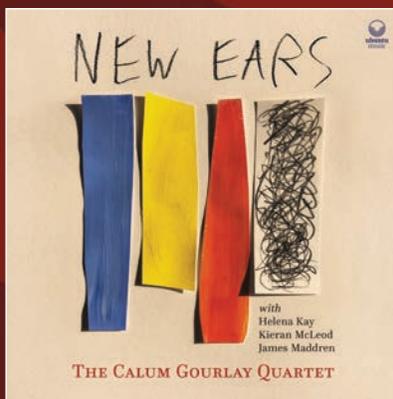
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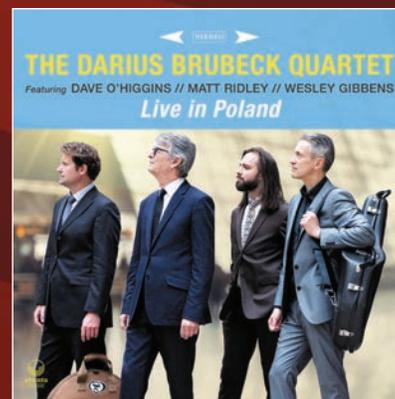
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"Assured, clever, fluent"
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"Explosive energy"
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Jazz Journal



The Other Side of Abbey Road

In the '60s, when I was an impressionable, prepubescent lad growing up in New Jersey, there was an undeniable disruption in music in the United States, largely emanating from across the Atlantic. Britain's "The" bands — The Beatles, The Who, The Hollies, The Animals, The Moody Blues, The Yardbirds, The Kinks, The Rolling Stones, The Dave Clark Five and others — were changing the pop-music landscape in the United States. As evidenced by George's Benson's *The Other Side of Abbey Road* and other recordings, the Brit invaders were also influencing the American jazz landscape, even as American musicians continued to influence the British jazz scene. I knew nothing about jazz back then, but I credit the British bands for cultivating my impressionable musical palate and turning me into a music freak.

Trying to conjure that '60s buzz during a family vacation in Europe two years ago, I dragged my wife and kids to some of London's most iconic music spots. For instance, we stayed at the Cumberland Hotel in the West End, which is where Jimi Hendrix often resided while in London; it's where he gave his last interview a week before he died in 1970, and it's listed as his residence on his death certificate. In the mornings, at a restaurant across the street, I attended business meetings with various parties to discuss how I could best introduce



JAZZIZ to a UK readership. The rest of the time, my family and I took in the sites. On the crossing at Abbey Road (famously depicted on The Beatles final studio album), just outside the entrance to Abbey Road Studios, I couldn't resist asking a passing tourist to take a photo of us on my phone. That's me, my wife and two of our kids in the picture below.

Among the outcomes from that trip to London was learning about the city's vibrant jazz scene and securing JAZZIZ distribution in the United Kingdom. This issue, in fact, will be

the first to occupy space on British newsstands. To welcome our new readers, I thought it'd be a good idea to cover London's diverse and exciting jazz scene. Sure, London has produced its share of stellar jazz musicians over the years, but these days an array of vital young artists are flourishing in the city's many jazz-friendly venues, and, like their rock predecessors in the

1960s, they are beginning to heavily influence a young crop of American musicians.

In the months and years to come, we hope to strengthen and deepen our relationship with England and the entire United Kingdom. For now, I'd simply like to say that it is our great pleasure to make the acquaintance of our new friends across the pond. —**Michael Fagien**



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STATEMENT OF THE ART™



The Rabbit and the Duke

A new book explores the art and idiosyncrasies of **Johnny Hodges**.

In the meticulously researched *Rabbit's Blues: The Life and Music of Johnny Hodges* (Oxford University Press), author Con Chapman paints a fascinating portrait of one of Duke Ellington's most valued sideman. A complex individual, the surly saxophonist crafted some of the most tender, romantic solos to ever issue from the Ellington bandstand. And while he played with Ellington for more than 40 years, off and on, their relationship was fraught with personal differences as well as grievances over money and song credits.

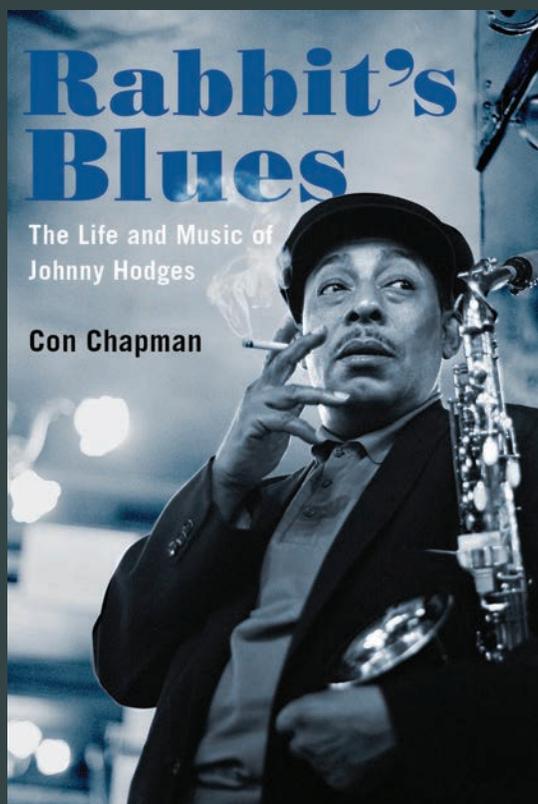
Yet Ellington's esteem for Hodges was unquestionable. "Johnny was, with one exception that I found, always the highest paid soloist," says Chapman, who pored over the band's books, making use of skills he honed as a longtime Boston-based attorney. Hodges took the lion's share of solos, his sensuous alto becoming a hallmark of the band. "[Critic] Dan Morgenstern has this great quote about how when [Hodges] started playing, there'd be this collective sigh from the women in the audience," Chapman says, "and Duke would sort of use that as part of the music."

Born in Cambridge in 1907, Hodges gravitated to the burlesque

houses and nightclubs of Boston as a teenage prodigy. He was still in short pants when, after hearing him play in Boston, Ellington made several attempts to hire him. Abashed by his lack of sight-reading skills, Hodges resisted. But Ellington persisted and Hodges took his place among Duke's men in 1928. He was affectionately known as "Rabbit," a nickname that, according to Hodges, was derived from his habit of running from truant officers, but which likely caught on because he resembled the animal. Another nickname, "Jeep," was inspired by a character from the Popeye comic strip. Hodges' sound was ideally suited to Billy Strayhorn's compositions, which brought Ellington's music — and the saxophonist's playing — to sophisticated heights.

Hodges left the band in 1950, when Ellington cut his pay, due to changing economic fortunes. He led his own small combos, but found it tough sledding and returned to the fold in 1955. "He was kind of coming back with his tail between his legs," Chapman says. "Supposedly, his wife made the call to Duke. She called him up and said, 'Do you need an alto player?' And Duke said, 'Of course I do.'"

Hodges died in 1970, three years before Ellington. —**Bob Weinberg**





Johnny Hodges plays with his 16-year-old son, John Hodges II, and Duke Ellington in April 1964 at the National Association of Broadcasters Convention in Chicago.

RITY

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prelude

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Happy 75th

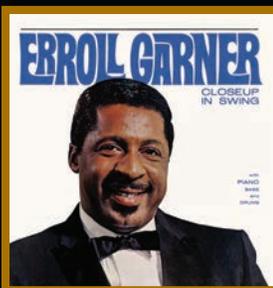
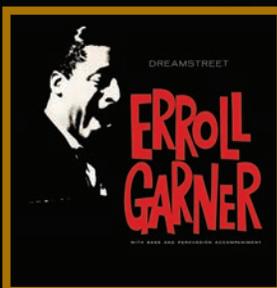
In mid-September, drummer

extraordinaire Billy Cobham celebrated his 75th birthday — which actually arrived several months earlier, on May 16 — with a weeklong residency at the Blue Note jazz club in New York City. On the evening that this photo was taken, trumpeter Randy Brecker sat in with Cobham's Crosswinds Project band, which included guitarist Fareed Haque, bassoonist/saxophonist Paul Hanson, keyboardist Osam Elelwy and bassist Tim Landers. As ever, Cobham played with ferocity and didn't miss a beat.

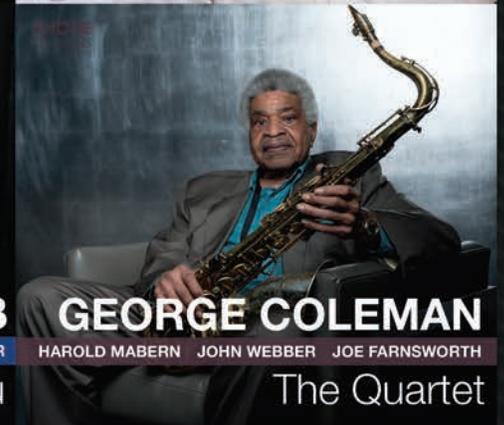
Photo by Enid Farber

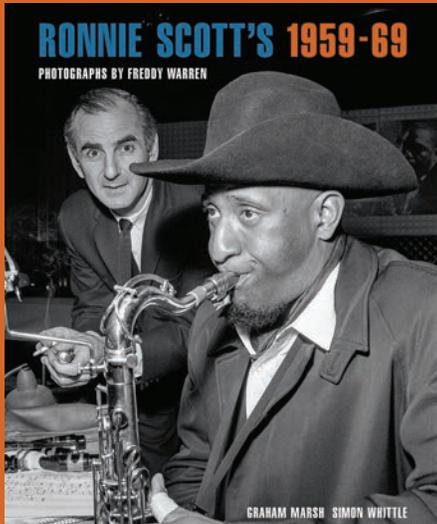
Garner by the Dozen

The Mack Avenue Music Group is in the midst of re-releasing a dozen classic, newly restored Erroll Garner albums from the 1960s and '70s, all of them originally released on the Octave Records imprint, which Garner and his manager, Martha Glaser, founded in the early '60s after the pianist parted ways with Columbia Records. As of the beginning of November, six of the 12 albums that Garner recorded for Octave had been released, and the Erroll Garner Jazz Project — a collective formed to curate Garner's vast musical archives — was planning to roll out an additional release each month through June 2020. Connoisseurs of Garner's exquisite artistry will be pleased to learn that each release in the Octave Remastered Series contains a newly discovered bonus track, eight of which are previously unreleased Garner compositions. The six albums released as of November are: *Dreamstreet*, *Closeup in Swing*, *One World Concert*, *A New Kind of Love*, *A Night at the Movies* and *Campus Concert*. Still to come were *That's My Kick*, *Up in Erroll's Room*, *Feeling is Believing*, *Gemini*, *Magician* and *Gershwin & Kern*.



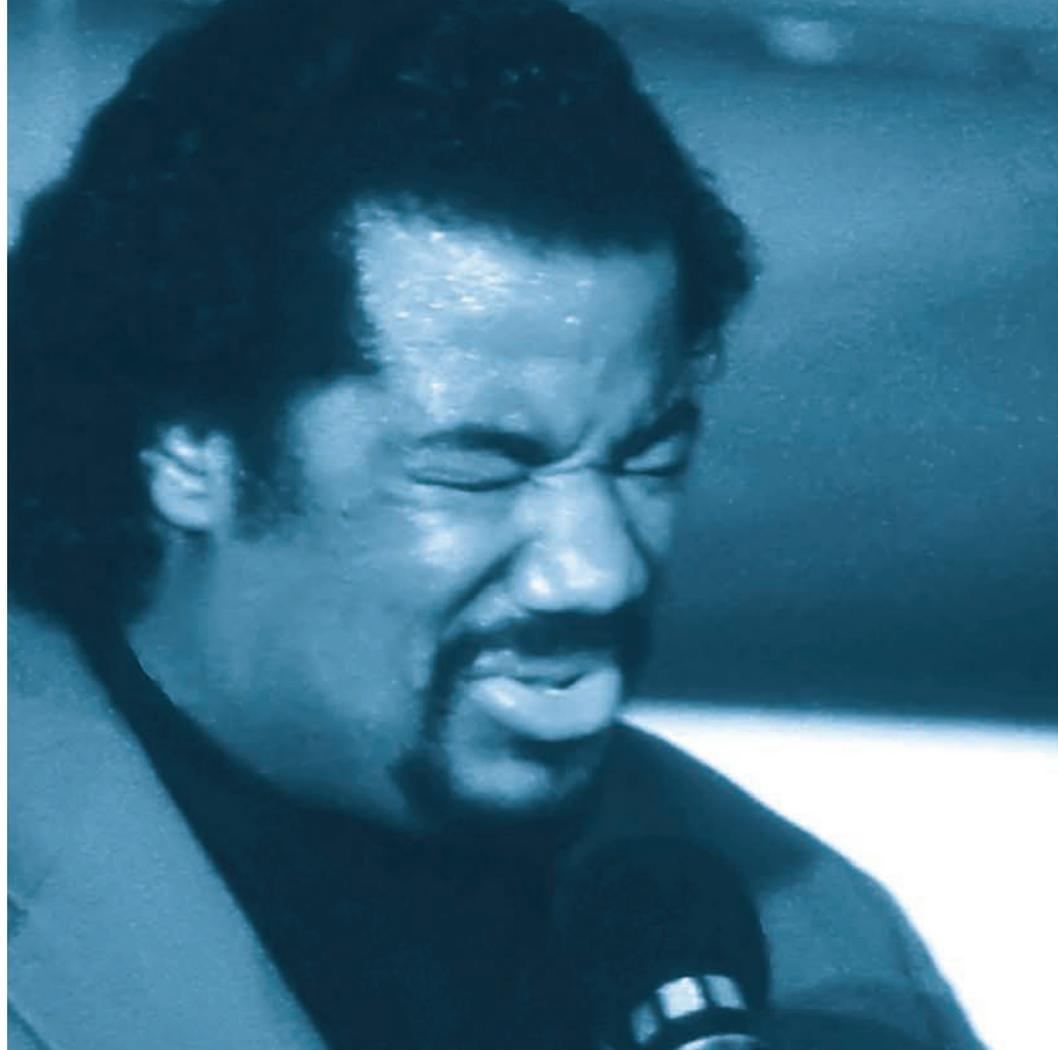
THE LATEST RELEASES





Classic Shots

To celebrate the 60th anniversary of London's premier jazz club, Reel Art Press recently published *Ronnie Scott's 1959 – 69*. The 144-page book includes more than 150 previously unseen prints shot by the late Freddy Warren, who photographed every major happening at Ronnie Scott's for over a decade. Warren's photos captured Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk, Nina Simone, Zoot Sims, Art Blakey, Stan Getz, Duke Ellington and many others while they performed, rehearsed or just hung out at the club. The photos were some of the many that Warren's nephew retrieved from the ruins of the photographer's home after it was destroyed by a fire in 2010. Sadly, Warren died in that fire. Fortunately, a vast archive of his work is still with us, a small but vital sampling of which is available in this handsome volume.



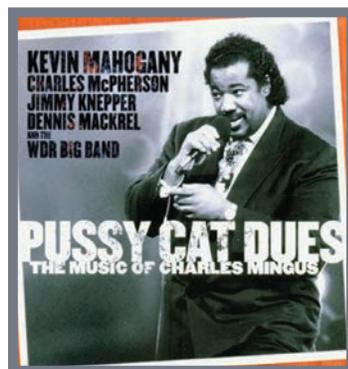
REQUISITE

Kevin Mahogany

Pussy Cat Dues: The Music of Charles Mingus (Enja)

In 1995, baritone vocalist Kevin Mahogany teamed up with the redoubtable WDR Big Band to spotlight the compositions of Charles Mingus. Elevating the proceedings further was the presence of former Mingus associates Charles McPherson and Jimmy Knepper, on alto saxophone and trombone, respectively. The ensemble was captured in concert in Cologne, Germany, the results recorded and released in 2000.

Mahogany's warm, flexible instrument easily crests the big band, as he caresses Mingus' lovely, evocative lyrics on "Eclipse" and "Portrait," his delivery full of romance, his diction ensuring that Mingus' poetry can be fully appreciated.



Of course, the Kansas City-born singer, who died in 2017 at age 59, also exercises his blues and bop chops, with his exuberant scat singing featured on the title track and a raucous rendition of "Better Git Hit in Your Soul." Mingus' moving tribute to Lester Young, the deeply bluesy "Good-Bye Pork Pie Hat," with lyrics by Rahsaan Roland Kirk, is beautifully rendered by Mahogany and company. As has come to be expected from the Cologne-based WDR Big Band, musicianship is excellent throughout, and McPherson and Knepper lend authenticity. — **Bob Weinberg**



Kind of Blue Note

Bill Frisell releases his debut on a venerable label.

By Brian Zimmerman



Guitarist Bill Frisell, long-known for his genre-straddling work in jazz and Americana on labels such as ECM and Nonesuch, released his debut recording for Blue Note Records in October. The album, *Harmony*, features Frisell backed by vocalist Petra Haden, cellist and vocalist Hank Roberts, and, on guitars, bass and vocals, Luke Bergman. “With this latest album, Blue Note was

totally confident in my own ‘whatever-it-is-I’m-doing’ style,” says Frisell, who on *Harmony* once again explores the hazy zones between jazz, country, pop and R&B. “It’s all over the place, but they were cool with that. I know this isn’t typical Blue Note music, but [Blue Note President] Don Was was so confident in it, so trusting. He didn’t even hesitate.”

To celebrate Frisell’s Blue Note housewarming, we asked the guitarist to share some of his favorite Blue Note albums of all time, from the early cuts that influenced him as a young artist to the albums that continue to inspire him to this day. Here are his picks:

Various Artists *Blue Note’s Three Decades of Jazz, Vol. 1: 1949 – 1959*

Sonny Rollins *A Night at the Village Vanguard* (1958)

Lee Morgan *Search for the New Land* (1966)

Sam Rivers *Fuchsia Swing Song* (1965)

Grant Green *Green Street* (1961)

Charles Lloyd and The Marvels *I Long To See You* (2015)

To read what Frisell had to say about each of those albums, go to www.jazziz.com/frisell.

Photo by Monica Jane Frisell



So It Was Said

“One night I’m playing and she’s on the side yelling at me, ‘Make love, make love!’ I’m 21, what do I know about making love? I really don’t know why she had me in her band. I wasn’t ready as a player. Maybe ‘cause I wasn’t scared of her. Betty definitely made me tougher, even in life. She was a life coach. She told me the golden rule of playing with a vocalist: ‘Your job is to make *me* sound great.’” —JD Allen, on performing with Betty Carter in the early ‘90s.

One for Trane

Poncho Sanchez salutes his earliest jazz hero.

Poncho Sanchez is no stranger to the tribute album. During the course of his nearly four-decades-long career, filled with legendary encounters and collaborations with some of his musical idols — jazz titans such as Cal Tjader, Chano Pozo, Dizzy Gillespie, Mongo Santamaria and Tito Puente — he’s released several of them. On his latest, *Trane’s Delight* (Concord Picante), the master conguero honors his earliest jazz influence, John Coltrane. “He’s been one of my heroes since I was like 12-years-old,” Sanchez says.

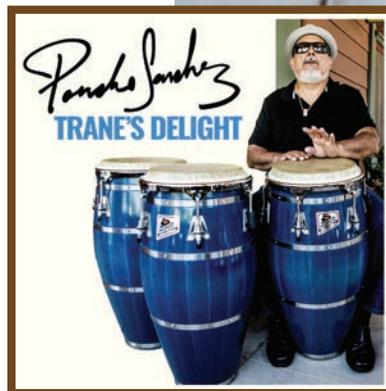
After a seven-year recording hiatus, the Grammy-winning percussionist and his longstanding ensemble, the Poncho Sanchez Latin Jazz Band — trombonist and musical director Francisco Torres, trumpet and flugelhorn master Ron Blake, saxophonist Robert Hardt, pianist Andy Langham, bassists Rene Camacho and Ross Schodek, and percussionists Joey DeLeon and Giancarlo Anderson — have come out swinging with their usual energetic potency, with the bandleader conjuring the exhilarating rush he felt while listening to his first Coltrane album, 1962’s *Coltrane*. “Man, when I put that needle on that record, I sat back with my mouth open going like, ‘Wow!’” Sanchez recalls. “It really threw me off because it was pretty heavy for a 12-year-old kid in eighth grade listening to something like that. It was an experience

that stayed with me for the rest of my life.”

On *Trane’s Delight*, within a Latin-jazz framework, Sanchez and his band reimagine three seminal Coltrane tunes, six standards associated with the late saxophonist — including “The Feeling of Jazz,” a Duke Ellington composition first recorded on 1963’s *Duke Ellington and John Coltrane* — and two Sanchez/Torres originals that pay homage to Coltrane while showcasing the band’s wide range of influences. “I don’t credit myself as being a great songwriter,” Sanchez quips. “I only do it under pressure.”

Coltrane’s “Liberia” is played as a mambo, while “Blue Train” is set to the cadence of a *cha cha chá*. “Giant Steps,” another signature Coltrane composition, swings, crackles and pops at a breakneck, rumba-like tempo. “Not everybody can play that tune,” Sanchez notes. “That’s rough stuff.”

For Sanchez, the time was right to tap into Coltrane’s inimitable spirit. “Coltrane means life,” he says. “His records sound like hope, like good things are happening to jazz, and to me and the world. It’s so positive, man.” —**Lissette Corsa**







Sights and Sounds

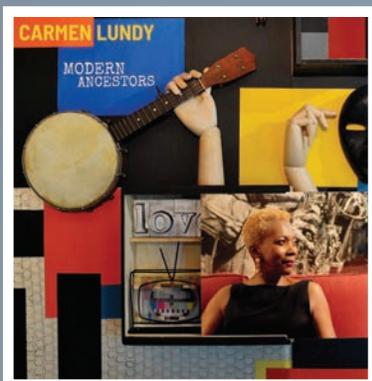
Carmen Lundy continues to create art for eyes and ears.

On *Modern Ancestors* (Afrasia Productions), singer/songwriter Carmen Lundy incorporates Afro-Cuban rhythms, spiritual sounds inspired by the church, modern jazz harmonies and other elements to create a multi-dimensional, collage-like self-portrait. That's a fitting notion, as the respected vocalist is also a gifted visual artist. One of her works, a sculptural piece incorporating a banjo, graces the album's cover. The repurposing of a vintage musical instrument works well as a metaphor for the album as a whole, which pays tribute to Lundy's influences (she cites Billie Holiday, Sarah Vaughan, John Coltrane, Geri Allen and others), not through homage or imitation, but by following their examples of originality and individualism. —Shaun Brady

HOW DOES YOUR WORK AS A VISUAL ARTIST COMPLEMENT YOUR MUSICAL LIFE?

I've been able to work at my craft as an artist, perform and sing around the world, come back home, walk out of my music studio and go to the other end of my house to do art. I began to work with found objects

after gravitating toward an interest in Picasso after being crazy for Van Gogh for most of my life. I was inspired to try things that took up space. I love things that are similar, like textures in sound and in the visual field, or the way chords have a certain personality and colors have a certain energy in the same way. It's a wonderful balance to my other creativity.

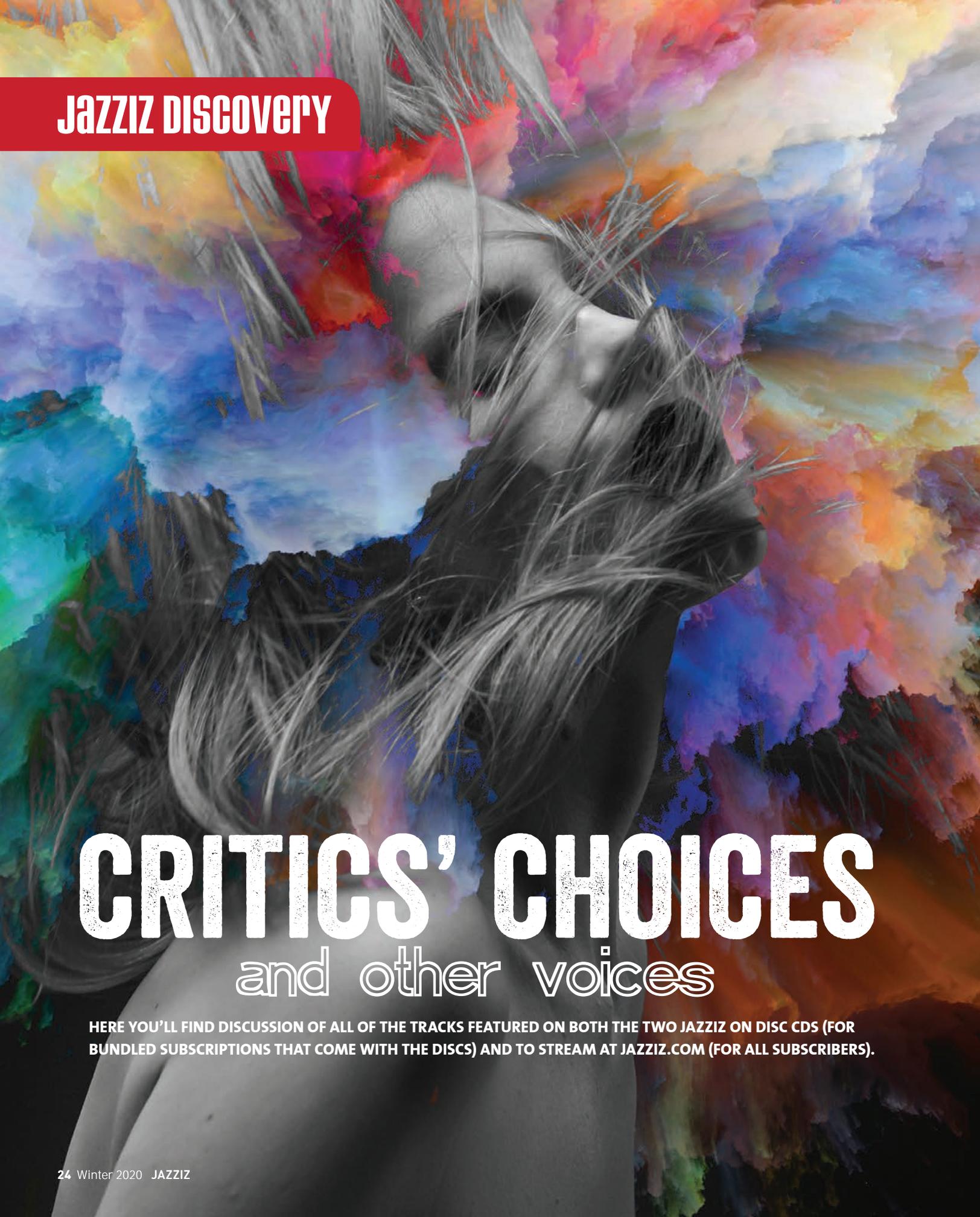


WHEN DID YOU TURN YOUR ATTENTION TO VISUAL ART?

I had a friend who was an art dealer and had a gallery down the street from WDNA, the jazz radio station in Miami. When I would visit him, I would wake up to a Mary Cassatt over the bed or a Dutch master in the kitchen. That piqued my interest, so when I moved to New York I began to collect art, buying from street vendors and the homeless. Over time my interest grew, so I took a sketch pad and watercolors along on a four-month tour of Europe and began to try my hand at painting.

YOU CALL THE NEW ALBUM *MODERN ANCESTORS*, BUT INSTEAD OF A TRIBUTE TO JAZZ LEGENDS PAST, IT'S A COLLECTION OF ORIGINAL SONGS. WHAT DID YOU HAVE IN MIND?

This modern point of view has to do with trying to get the listening audience on board with jazz vocals in a way that has nothing to do with songs from another time. As a composer for the last 35 to 40 years, I'm at a point where I don't feel like I have to please everyone by covering the standards just to get some attention. I spent many, many years developing my craft, learning the repertoire, playing with incredible artists and learning from the greats. I realized my voice was going to be in original music, not in my version of "Love for Sale" or "Dindi." Forty years later we've lost so many of our great modern ancestors, but for me the point of the modern was to simply ask the listener to hear me for now and to let me sing about now.



JAZZIZ DISCOVERY

CRITICS' CHOICES

and other voices

HERE YOU'LL FIND DISCUSSION OF ALL OF THE TRACKS FEATURED ON BOTH THE TWO JAZZIZ ON DISC CDS (FOR BUNDLED SUBSCRIPTIONS THAT COME WITH THE DISCS) AND TO STREAM AT JAZZIZ.COM (FOR ALL SUBSCRIBERS).



DISC 1

- 1 **Kirk Whalum** "Korogocho" *Humanité* (Mack Avenue)
- 2 **Stefon Harris and Sonic Creed** "The Cape Verdean Blues" *Blackout* (Motéma)
- 3 **Jazmeia Horn** "Free Your Mind" *Love & Liberation* (Concord)
- 4 **Andrew Cyrille/Wadada Leo Smith/Bill Frisell** "Pretty Beauty" *Lebroba* (ECM)
- 5 **Melissa Aldana** "Visions" *Visions* (Motéma)
- 6 **Dudu da Fonseca & Helio Alves feat. Maucha Adnet**
"Pato Preto" *Samba Jazz and Tom Jobim* (Sunnyside)
- 7 **Chick Corea** "Armando's Rhumba" *Antidote* (Concord)
- 8 **Veronica Swift** "'I Hope She Makes You Happy" *Confessions* (Mack Avenue)
- 9 **Jonathan Avishai** "Joy" *Joys and Solitudes* (ECM)
- 10 **Dominic Miller** "Bicycle" *Absinthe* (ECM)
- 11 **Chucho Valdés** "Ochun" *Jazz Bata 2* (Mack Avenue)
- 12 **Jana Herzen** "Night Blooming Jasmine" *Nothing But Love* (Motéma)

DISC 2

- 1 **Guillermo Klein y Los Guachos** "Nos Mirarán Pasar" *Cristal* (Sunnyside)
- 2 **Bill Frisell & Thomas Morgan** "Epistrophy" *Epistrophy* (ECM)
- 3 **Poncho Sanchez** "Trane's Delight" *Trane's Delight* (Concord)
- 4 **Nature Work** "The Shiver" *Nature Work* (Sunnyside)
- 5 **Charlie Porter** "The Privileged Few" *Immigration Nation* (OAA2)
- 6 **Kelley Sattenfeld** "Harvest Moon" *When We Were Young: Kelley Sattenfeld Sings Neil Young* (self-released)
- 7 **Miho Hazama & m_unit** "Today, Not Today" *Dancer in Nowhere* (Sunnyside)
- 8 **Ralph Alessi** "Around the Corner" *Imaginary Friends* (ECM)
- 9 **Harriet Tubman** "The Green Book Blues" *The Terror End of Beauty* (Sunnyside)
- 10 **Joe Lovano/Marilyn Crispell/Carmen Castaldi** "Spirit Lake" *Trio Tapestry* (ECM)
- 11 **Russ Lossing** "Fiasco" *Motian Music* (Sunnyside)
- 12 **Rick Howard** "Lil' Noir" *Lil' Noir* (Virtual Interactive)
- 13 **Terri Lyne Carrington + Social Science**
"Dreams and Desperate Measures (Improvised Suite, Part 2)" *Waiting Game* (Motéma)

DISC 1



1. Saxophonist **Kirk Whalum** is Memphis royalty, his name etched into a brass note on Beale Street alongside that city's many iconic musical figures. A Grammy winner and 12-time nominee, Whalum has more than done good by his hometown, playing on albums by the likes of Barbra Streisand,

Al Jarreau and Whitney Houston, and injecting plenty of funk and soul into a string of his own contemporary-jazz recordings for more than 30 years. On his latest release, *Humanité* (Mack Avenue), Whalum takes a global approach, recording with musicians all over the world in studios, hotel rooms and office buildings as far-flung as Tokyo, Johannesburg and Nairobi. For the super-funky "Korogocho," our selection, Whalum fattens the bottom end with two expert bassists, fusion-jazz master Marcus Miller and his Indonesian counterpart, Barry Likumahuwa, the pair engaging in a neck-snapping game of can-you-top-this? For his part, Whalum squeezes out sparks of excitement with his supple soprano.



2. Ten years have passed since the last recording by **Stefon Harris and Blackout**, the forward-looking group led by one of today's premier vibraphonists. For their latest release, *Sonic Creed* (Motéma), Harris and company interpret modern-jazz classics by the likes of Bobby Timmons, Horace Silver,

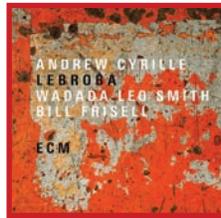
Wayne Shorter, Abbey Lincoln and Bobby Hutcherson, as well as a couple of compositions by the leader, who switches between vibes and marimba. The ensemble offers a breezy read of Silver's "Cape Verdean Blues," included here, featuring outstanding solos by saxophonist Casey Benjamin and Harris himself, whose understated yet affecting mallet work throughout gives credence to his topping the 2018 *DownBeat* Critics Poll for his instrument. The group picks up its heels on the way out, with Pedrito Martinez's fiery percussion driving the action. The album, in Harris' words, "is a reflection of African-American life in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Furthermore, it is a sonic manifestation of family, community and legacy."



3. Vocalist **Jazzmeia Horn** earned a Grammy nomination for her 2017 debut album, *Social Call*, presenting her with the potentially paralyzing challenge of topping it. Undaunted, Horn returned to the studio with a batch of original songs that reveal even greater dimensions of

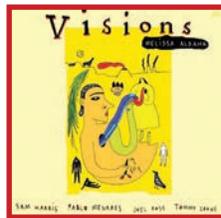
her talent. The resulting *Love and Liberation* (Concord Jazz) is a mature and honest statement from an artist who mines the raw material of her own life on a set that feels simultaneously classic and fresh. With touchstones Sarah Vaughan and Betty

Carter figuring prominently in her aesthetic, Horn, not yet 30, sings tunes that range in theme from romantic obsession to the demands on her time made by her two young daughters, and nods to mentor Jon Hendricks with a timely update of his civil rights anthem "No More." Beginning with her finger-snapping count-off, the opening "Free Your Mind" states Horn's thesis about shedding the burdens of hate and small thinking in favor of a more expansive worldview. The singer receives beyond simpatico support from pianist Victor Gould, bassist Ben Williams and drummer Jamison Ross, as well as the punctuating horns of saxophonist Stacy Dillard and trumpeter Josh Evans.



4. Drummer **Andrew Cyrille**, trumpeter **Wadada Leo Smith** and guitarist **Bill Frisell** display an uncanny synergy on *Lebroba* (ECM), their individualistic voices melding to produce a work of sublime sensitivity. Tunes unfold unhurriedly, cinematically, with care and attention

paid to mood, atmosphere and dramatic development. Cyrille masterfully accents his trio mates' statements, the three engaging in a fascinating conversation in which each contributes equally. Cyrille's "Pretty Beauty," included here, concludes the set with a ballad that the drummer says was inspired by an image of his daughter, all dressed up, when she was just 2 years old. Smith's muted trumpet, Frisell's lightly stroked chords and Cyrille's whispering brushes create an exquisitely tender soundscape that brilliantly utilizes space and tone to convey the warm glow of nostalgia and its inevitable converse, the melancholy awareness of passing time.



5. Commissioned by The Jazz Gallery, saxophonist **Melissa Aldana** composed a suite dedicated to iconic Mexican painter Frida Kahlo, which she premiered in 2018. Aldana then gathered her quintet in the studio to record the work, the results of which can be heard on her latest release,

Visions (Motéma). The saxophonist's research into the life and art of Kahlo led her to realize that she was engaged in a similar struggle to express herself in honest and meaningful ways and create a powerful statement of self. Aldana does just that, jumping from the gate with the album's title track, included here, which illustrates her challenges though shifts in structure and mood. Her questing tenor ambles over frequently rocky terrain established by pianist Sam Harris, bassist Pablo Menares and drummer Tommy Crane, while Joel Ross' sparkling vibes seem to toss out a lifeline. "Experimenting both harmonically and rhythmically with moments of frantic movement interspersed with order and structure is one of the ways I conjure the messiness, struggles and heartbreaking contradictions present in these visions of identity and self-worth," Aldana explains in a press release.



HEAR
THE INTERVIEWS

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6. Brazilian music veterans **Duduka da Fonseca** and **Helio Alves** have been working steadily together for more than 25 years. Drummer Da Fonseca, a native of Rio de Janeiro, has been living in New York City since 1975. Pianist Alves, who grew up in São Paulo, moved to the Big Apple in 1993 at the urging of trumpet player Claudio Roditi. The pair had played together in Rio in the 1960s and have renewed their partnership on stages and studios ever since. Their latest release, *Samba Jazz and Tom Jobim* (Sunnyside), teams them with Brazilian vocalist Maucha Adnet, a close associate of the late Jobim. As the album title foretells, the program includes some Jobim gems and explores the intersection between American jazz and Brazilian tradition. With bassist Hans Glawischnig rounding out the rhythm section, Adnet, Alves and Da Fonseca provide a lively interpretation of Jobim's "Pato Preto" (Black Duck), a rhythmic strut with an infectious chorus made all the more charming by Billy Drewes' breezy flute playing.



7. Although his ancestry reveals southern Italian roots, **Chick Corea** has more than a few strands of Spanish lineage within his musical DNA. Early in his career, the pianist worked with the Latin bands of Willie Bobo and Mongo Santamaria, and he's woven those influences into his own music in various settings over the years, most explicitly on 1976's *My Spanish Heart* and 1982's *Touchstone*. The 78-year-old Corea revisits music from both of those recordings on the recent *Antidote* (Concord), a joyful re-examination of the Spanish tinge accenting his life's work. A vivacious read of "Armando's Rhumba," a piece Corea composed in honor of his father for *My Spanish Heart*, highlights the album. The leader's sprightly piano gleefully introduces the track, and he's soon joined by a complement of horns, flamenco guitar and percussion. Trombonist Steve Davis, flutist Jorge Pardo, trumpeter Michael Rodriguez and guitarist Niño Josele step lively in solo spotlights, while bassist Carlitos Del Puerto, drummer Marcus Gilmore and percussionist Luisito Quintero keep the rhythms boiling. Corea himself has lost not a step, his playing as joyous and full of life as ever.



8. It's rare to hear a young jazz vocalist whose delivery eschews soul, R&B or hip-hop influences, but **Veronica Swift**, at age 25, offers an excellent example on her official debut recording, *Confessions* (Mack Avenue). The daughter of pianist Hod O'Brian and vocalist and educator Stephanie Nakasian, Swift certainly understands the genre on a cellular level, as recognized by the judges at the 2015 Thelonious Monk International Jazz Vocals Competition, who awarded her second place. The singer receives expert backing on a dozen tracks

that include gems by the likes of Johnny Hodges, Schwartz and Dietz, Dave Frishberg and Bob Dorough. Her own composition, "I Hope She Makes You Happy," our selection, compares favorably with the other titles, sounding like a lost standard. Accompanied solely at first by bassist David Wong, Swift invokes equal parts bitterness and melancholy as she ironically offers good wishes to her ex and his new lover. Pianist Benny Green and drummer Carl Allen elevate the mood. They join Wong in a fleet bebop section that carries over into Swift's vocals, which take on a bolder expression as she races to the finish.



9. As a sideman with trumpeter Avishai Cohen, pianist **Yonathan Avishai** has made a significant mark in the jazz world, his sensitive and spacious playing contributing greatly to Cohen's sound during the past few years. The Israeli-French pianist has also been leading his own trio, with bassist Yoni Zelnik and drummer Donald Kontomanou, which released its debut recording *Joys and Solitudes* (ECM) earlier this year. A subtle effervescence pervades the entire work, which opens with a scintillating read of Duke Ellington's "Mood Indigo," taken at a glacial pace but suffused with bluesy warmth. From there on, the program comprises Avishai's original compositions, including the tune "Joy," which perfectly encapsulates the mood of the album as a whole. This is a quiet, confident joy, rather than a boisterous whoop of celebration, as Avishai elicits a subdued sparkle from the keys, while Zelnik's stately bass figures and Kontomanou's coruscating cymbals shiver with excitement. The pianist also makes the case that "joy" and "solitude" are not mutually exclusive concepts.



10. Argentine-born guitarist **Dominic Miller** has been a staple of Sting's band for nearly 30 years. He's also been making his own recordings since 1995, and released his debut for the ECM label in 2017. Miller follows up the atmospheric guitar-drum duo album *Silent Light* with the equally picturesque *Absinthe* (ECM), expanding his palette with a quintet. The album title references the intoxicating spirit favored by the Impressionist painters who lived in the south of France, where Miller currently resides. Miller's nuanced virtuosity on nylon- and steel-stringed guitars shines throughout, his pristine picking intertwining with Santiago Aria's button-box *bandoneon* to create an atmosphere that embraces folkloric roots. This approach is further realized in the playing of keyboardist Mike Lindup, bassist Nicholas Fiszman and drummer Manu Katché, all of whom perfectly express the leader's aesthetic. Miller's rolling guitar pattern is picked up by Fiszman and Katché on "Bicycle," our selection, with Aria and Lindup adding sonic touches that conjure a pleasant afternoon pedaling around the Medieval ruins at Pernes-Les-Fontaines, where the album was recorded.



WATCH
THE PERFORMANCES

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11. Forty-seven years is a long time to wait for a sequel, but Cuban pianist **Chucho Valdés** finally released a follow-up to his 1972 *Jazz Batá* album. On *Jazz Batá 2* (Mack Avenue), Valdés once again adds *batá* drums — once associated primarily with Yoruba religious ceremonies — to his heady jazz mix. His father, the influential pianist and composer Bebo Valdés, had done the same back in the 1950s, inspiring his son's *batá* explorations with his seminal 1970s band Irakere. What once was a radical blending of secular and sacred music has become more familiar to jazz audiences over the decades, and Valdés senior and junior were pioneers. Chucho Valdés showcases his mastery of the idiom through his playing and writing for his quartet throughout *Jazz Batá 2*, as he explicitly calls up Yoruba themes on various tracks. The lovely “Ochún,” for example, is named for an *orisha*, or Yoruba deity, that represents feminine beauty. Valdés' sweet opening solo statement sets the tone for the piece, which also features Regina Carter on violin. Bassist Yelsy Heredia, percussionist Yaroldy Abreu Robles and *batá* drummer Dreiser Durruthy Bombalé supply the infectious *merengue haitiano* rhythms, which buoy Valdés' bluesy-gospelly-classically influenced playing.



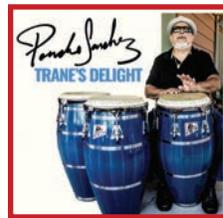
Switzerland that culminated in a residency at the Swiss institution and the resultant recording. The Argentine-born bandleader composed most of the music, but borrowed tunes from his countrymen, Carlos Gardel and Alfredo Le Pera, who also provided the basis for “Nos Mirarán Pasar” (They Will Watch Us Pass By), our selection. The piece begins with an edgy horn fanfare that grows increasingly festive, giving way to saxophonist Miguel Zenón's happy, frenetic duet with drummer Jeff Ballard. The ensemble jumps back in and rides the ecstatic theme to a sunny conclusion.



2. Guitar innovator **Bill Frisell** and upright bassist **Thomas Morgan** have developed a close rapport during the past several years, working together in duo and ensemble settings. The pair reprise their intimate 2017 recording *Small Town* with their second duo album, *Epistrophy* (ECM), once again recording live at the Village Vanguard and dipping into songs encompassing jazz, Americana and pop interpreted through a unique improvisational filter. Following a template of sorts, they again revisit a James Bond theme, delve into the traditional folk canon and pay affectionate homage to Paul Motian, the late drummer with whom they both worked. And, as the title to the new record reveals, they also tip a hat to Thelonious Monk with reads of “Pannonica” and “Epistrophy.” As Bill Milkowski observed during a recent radio concert of the duo, Frisell is the foremost interpreter of Monk on guitar, which he proves again with his spiky chordings on the latter tune, included here. Morgan, as throughout, engages in resonant conversation with the guitarist, his velvety tone serving as a calming counterpoint to Frisell's often jagged phrasing.



12. Guitarist, vocalist and Motéma label founder **Jana Herzen** can be found in the credits of a few of her imprint's releases of late, and not just as producer. She performed alongside bassist and frequent collaborator Charnett Moffett on his recent recording *Bright New Day* as well as on their 2018 Nett Duo release *Overtones*. Moffett lends his virtuosity to Herzen's new solo album, *Nothing But Love* (Motéma), as well, as part of the quintet supporting her vocal and guitar work on a set of original tunes. The sense memory behind the lovely “Night Blooming Jasmine,” included here, harks back to Herzen's first experiencing the scent of the heady flower in 1980s Woodstock. Years later, she developed the song while sitting in her sister's garden in Santa Cruz, the blossom's perfume still redolent in her mind. Herzen captures the wistfulness a transient scent can engender, in her lyrics and in her delivery, which is underlined by the simpatico musicianship of Moffett, pianist Brian Jackson, violinist Scott Tixier and drummer Mark Whitfield, Jr.



3. Conguero and bandleader **Poncho Sanchez** was in the ninth grade when he saved up his money to buy an album by John Coltrane, whose music he had been hearing on the radio in mid-1960s Los Angeles. The impact proved profound. “His music has been imprinted on my mind and my soul ever since,” Sanchez explains in the liner notes to *Trane's Delight* (Concord Picante), his tribute to the iconic saxophonist putting a decidedly Latin spin on the Coltrane canon. Sanchez selected songs by and associated with Coltrane, interpreting classics and a few obscurities. Driving the action on congas behind his Latin Jazz Band, Sanchez chose not to mimic Coltrane's sound so much as to evoke its soulful excitement. The album's title track, written by Sanchez and trombonist/musical director Francisco Torres, nods to Tadd Dameron's bebop staple “Our Delight” while stressing its Afro-Cuban nature. Sanchez's fluid hand-drumming streams beneath the harmonizing horns and rhythm section, providing a

DISC 2

1. Approaching their 25th anniversary, **Guillermo Klein y Los Guachos** convened on Jazzcampus Basel to record *Cristal* (Sunnyside), their sixth album, which lives up to its title with clear and focused melodic themes. Klein, who has taught at Jazzcampus Basel, had assembled the all-star 11-piece Guachos for a weeklong stand at their home club, New York's Village Vanguard, before embarking on a tour of Germany and



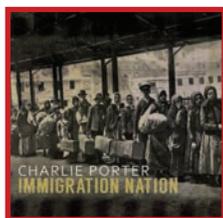
LISTEN
TO THE MUSIC

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lively pulse for Ron Blake's fiery trumpet solo. The leader's own solo, with comps from pianist Andy Langham, reveals why he's been revered for decades in the jazz and Latin-music worlds.



4. Certainly, there's plenty of overlap among the phone contacts of reed players Jason Stein and Greg Ward, two outstanding figures on Chicago's adventurous jazz scene. However, the pair sought to remedy the dearth of recordings on which both their names appear by waxing an album with their newly formed quartet, **Nature Work**. The eponymous results, released on the Sunnyside label, capture the spontaneous creative chops of the participants, with plenty of improvisational sizzle packed into nine numbers written by bass clarinetist Stein and alto saxophonist Ward respectively, while bassist Eric Revis and drummer Jim Black maintain rhythmic excitement throughout. Opening track "The Shiver," our selection, sets the tone for a set of old-school Chicago edge music, containing enough bluesy bebop elements to keep the proceedings accessible, but played with raw intensity. Stein and Ward trade brisk, anxious lines in the intro before Revis and Black swoop in with a menacing, relentless stomp. Like junkies jonesing for a fix, Ward's and Stein's respective solos continue to raise the level of anxiety, as Revis and Black go from walking to running before the tune concludes with unison statements from the horns.



5. Trumpeter and composer **Charlie Porter** released an impressive self-titled 2018 debut recording that featured tracks ranging progressively from solo to sextet settings, then reversed back the other way. The Juilliard grad waxes conceptual on his sophomore recording, *Immigration Nation* (OA2), as well, this time tackling the immigrant experience. A descendent of Lebanese, Greek, Italian and English immigrants to the United States, Porter treats the subject with great compassion through two song cycles, "Leaving Home" and "New Beginnings," which conjure the fear, excitement, resentments and eventual acceptance of people striving for a better life in a new country. Kicking off the second suite, "The Privileged Few" begins with a solo fanfare from Porter's burnished horn before he's joined by the rest of his sextet in a joyful but tempered expression of optimism. "I wrote 'The Privileged Few' as an examination of privilege on many levels," the trumpeter writes in the album's liner notes. "Though monothematic, it highlights the dichotomy of the privileged vs. the underprivileged by vacillating between two distinct worlds of sound." Soulful solos by pianist Oscar Perez and tenor saxophonist Nick Biello help Porter achieve his vision, which is also poignantly voiced in his own nuanced performance.

6. For her third recording, vocalist **Kelley Suttentfield** chose a songbook outside the jazz canon, namely, the folk-and-country-



tinged rock of singer-songwriter Neil Young. Suttentfield brings her intimate artistry to 11 classics by the Canadian-born rocker on the self-released *When We Were Young: Kelley Suttentfield Sings Neil Young*, injecting jazz feeling and phrasing into guitarist Tosh Sheridan's original arrangements of this rootsy material. In addition to Sheridan, Suttentfield receives expert backing from pianist/keyboardist Matthew Fries, bassist Phil Palombi, drummer Eric Halvorson and The Memling Ensemble String Trio. The singer had interpreted the lovely "Harvest Moon" on her 2009 duo recording with guitarist Tony Romano (*Among the Stars*), and reprises it here with a lush ensemble read. Sheridan's guitar, Fries' piano and Halvorson's brushes provide the hushed sparkle of refracted moonlight, while Palombi strolls amiably alongside Suttentfield's romantic vocals.



7. Conductor and composer **Miho Hazama** follows up her 2018 collaboration with the Metropole Orkest Big Band, *The Monk: Live at the Bimhuis*, with an album showcasing her brilliant writing for her little big band, the m_unit ensemble. Her third recording with the group — which is stocked with jazz allstars such as saxophonist Steve Wilson, trumpeter Jonathan Powell and vibraphonist James Shipp — *Dancer in Nowhere* (Sunnyside) boasts top-shelf musicianship on a set of colorful, evocative pieces that share a cinematic quality. The opening "Today, Not Today," our selection, opens the album on a moody, introspective note, mirroring the effect of one awakening in the morning and reflecting on what lies ahead. Hazama's effective use of strings adds dimension to the unmistakably jazzy sounds of vibes, trumpet, baritone sax and rhythm section. A curator of the Jazz Gallery Composers Showcase, Associate Director of the New York Jazzharmonic and mentor to other young composers, Hazama has established herself among New York's jazz elite.



8. With his introspective, nocturnal music, trumpeter and composer **Ralph Alessi** seems a perfect fit for the ECM aesthetic. Alessi continues to refine that sound on his third release for the imprint, *Imaginary Friends*. Fortunately for the leader, his friends are quite real and include saxophonist Ravi Coltrane, a longtime collaborator with whom he attended the California Institute of the Arts in the 1980s, and bassist Drew Gress, who played on both of his previous ECM releases. Pianist Andy Milne and drummer Mark Ferber round out the quintet, displaying great sensitivity on Alessi's inward-turning original material. The rhythm section lends sterling support on "Around the Corner," our selection, establishing an uneasy canter on this decidedly moody piece. Alessi and Coltrane introduce the melody in unison before the trumpeter wanders off into a solo of heartbreaking reverie.

A close-up photograph of two hands cupping a heart. The hands are positioned at the top and sides, with fingers slightly curled. The heart is a solid, vibrant red color and is centered in the palms. The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly wood, which is slightly out of focus. The entire image has a soft, warm glow.

SHOP
FOR GIFTS

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9. Formed more than 20 years ago, the power-trio **Harriet Tubman** blends jazz, rock and African-American tradition in ways that refresh concepts of the avant-garde. The group took a long break from recording before returning to the studio in 2011 and waxing their third album; it would take another six years before they released a fourth. Now, Harriet Tubman — guitarist Brandon Ross, bassist Melvin Gibbs and drummer JT Lewis — has teamed up with producer and engineer Scotty Hard for their powerful fifth album, *The Terror End of Beauty* (Sunnyside). The trio utilizes rhythms that hark back to the Gullah/Geechee culture of the South Carolina and Georgia sea islands, as well as African grooves and blues patterns. These deep roots undergird even the most modern-sounding songs on the album, including the relentlessly driving “Green Book Blues,” which resonates with house-shaking bass and drums. Ross’ acid-guitar lines cut through the murk, and Hard’s studio effects add layers of atmosphere. Throughout, the trio communicates a feeling of unease, not unlike that of the African-American travelers who looked to the eponymous Green Book for safe places to stay while on the road.

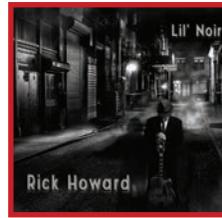


10. From straightforward to avant-garde, tenor saxophonist **Joe Lovano**’s presence on a session is a hallmark of excellence. After more than two decades recording for the Blue Note label, Lovano makes his ECM debut as a leader with *Trio Tapestry*, an album of great depth and beauty, alongside pianist Marilyn Crispell and drummer Carmen Castaldi. Lovano first met Crispell in the mid-’80s, when she was recording with saxophonist Anthony Braxton’s quartet in New York City. He and Castaldi played in bands together in their teen years in Cleveland and both attended Berklee in Boston. The musicians’ closeness is evident throughout the 11 tracks here, which mostly comprise short but meaningful musical statements. Mysterious ritual allusions weave into many of Lovano’s compositions, including “Spirit Lake,” included here. Lovano’s breathy tenor and Castaldi’s hushed pattering open the piece, creating an aura of anticipation. Crispell enters soon after, spiking the proceedings with her own mystical touches and ratcheting up the tension through her interaction with Castaldi. A vivid tapestry, indeed.



11. As a member of Paul Motian’s quartet, pianist **Russ Lossing** had a privileged perch from which to observe the drummer-composer’s methodology. In fact, Motian, who died in 2011, would frequently enlist Lossing to play Motian’s melodies for him while they were still in their embryonic state, even seeking his input as to what chords to add. So Lossing was in a unique position to honor Motian, with whom he worked

for a dozen years, by playing his compositions on the 2012 solo-piano tribute *Drum Music*. He follows up that recording with the 2019 release *Motian Music* (Sunnyside), this time recruiting longtime trio mates Masa Kamaguchi and drummer Billy Mintz, on bass and drums respectively. While much of the music echoes the moody, mysterious vibe associated with Motian, the program also encompasses the spiky bebop of “Fiasco,” included here. Mintz sizzles with effervescent cymbal work, as he and Kamaguchi establish the brisk rhythms over which Lossing unleashes shards of dissonance that evoke the song’s title.



12. Veteran guitarist **Rick Howard** has played in a variety of settings, lending his expertise to recordings by the disparate likes of King Sunny Ade, Bob Marley, Betty Wright and Shania Twain. His jazz bona fides are equally impressive — he toured with Chico Hamilton and Biréli Lagrène — and readily apparent on his recent recording *Lil’ Noir* (Virtual Interactive). Through a program of 10 original compositions, Howard displays a great facility for classic 1950s-era jazz guitar, eliciting a silky, bluesy tone inspired by Kenny Burrell, Tal Farlow, Pat Martino and Wes Montgomery. Intimate and unflashy, Howard’s soulful sound could indeed have featured in the soundtrack to a classic film noir, as suggested by the title and the desolate cityscape cover photo of his new recording. On the album’s mood-shifting title track, Howard’s play is backed by a gang of like-minded rhythm mates comprising pianist Stu Shelton, bassist Paul Shewchuk and drummer Joe Bilardo. What starts out as a sunny, carefree riff falls into shadowy territory and ends on a somewhat ambiguous note, as the best film noirs always do.



13. Drummer, bandleader and composer **Terri Lyne Carrington** plunges headlong into the fraught sociopolitical landscape with *Waiting Game* (Motéma), a new double album she recorded with her aptly named Social Science band. Recruiting guest rappers, DJs, spoken-word poets and vocalists, Carrington tackles themes of racism, social justice and street violence on Disc 1. Throughout, she’s accompanied by an A-list squad of jazz musicians including pianist/keyboardist Aaron Parks, guitarist Matthew Stevens and bassists Derrick Hodge and Morgan Guerin, all of whom provide urgency and poignancy. Disc 2 consists of an improvised four-part suite titled “Dreams and Desperate Measures,” the second movement of which we’ve included here. The piece opens with the mournful expression of strings, Esperanza Spalding’s upright bass slowly wandering a desolate soundscape of cello and violins. Parks’ shimmering keys, Stevens’ delicate picking and Carrington’s feathery stickwork reveal an ensemble working at a very high level of nuance and restraint. ■

A stack of several books is shown, with a teal color overlay covering the entire image. The books are stacked in a slightly offset manner, creating a sense of depth. The text is centered over the books.

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One for **the Books**

Reading is fundamental to Brian Lynch's concept of jazz.

By Bob Weinberg

Reading the books to which Brian Lynch links his compositions is not a prerequisite for appreciating the music on his exquisite, first-ever big-band album *The Omni-American Book Club* (Hollistic MusicWorks). From joyous Latin-jazz jams to African-drum-fueled workouts to salutes to straight-ahead-jazz heroes Blue Mitchell and Woody Shaw, the program abounds with the aural and visceral pleasures of a roaring 19-piece ensemble stocked with top-shelf musicians and thrilling soloists. But if you come away from the experience with a suggested reading list, or even a few concepts that make you think about jazz and Western culture in a new way, that would please the trumpeter and educator, who teaches at the University of Miami's Frost School of Music. Lynch explains the literary connections to each track in a detailed booklet accompanying the album.

A voracious reader from childhood, Lynch, 63, contextualizes the music on *The Omni-American Book Club* with concepts he gleaned from the works of favorite authors such as Albert Murray, Amiri Baraka, W.E.B. DuBois and Ta-Nehisi Coates. It's no accident that African-American thinkers feature prominently on his syllabus; his interest in their writing was sparked by a desire to find out more about the culture that created the music he loves.

Lynch, who is white, first read Murray's then-new *The Omni-Americans* when he was 14 or 15, and it opened up critical avenues of thought. When album producer Khabir Sehgal mentioned the book in conversation, Lynch revisited the work, bringing the perspective of a seasoned jazz artist who had worked with the likes of Art Blakey and Horace Silver. "Re-reading it in later years, I realized something about the overall sensibility of it," he says by phone on a weekday morning in mid-September. "I didn't understand everything Murray had to say [as a teenager] until I learned much more about African-American culture and the music itself, because I was fairly embryonic in my understanding of either at that point."

Lynch's understanding of African-American culture and music expanded exponentially as the budding musician made the rounds of the jazz clubs in his hometown, Milwaukee. Several of the artists on the scene were transplants from Indianapolis, including vibraphonist Buddy Montgomery and organist Melvin Rhyne, with both of whom he apprenticed. The experience taught him to think on his feet. "Just the way these musicians played and how they made music, it was never about putting things down on paper," he notes. "It was just like, 'Learn this.' And then we'd learn it, and we'd play it again, and you'd have to be ready for it to be different the next time."

“I definitely see my role as a musical artist to be caught up with things that have to do with society and culture. That comes from the relationship between the music I was drawn to and the books I was reading.”

The trumpeter’s formal studies continued at the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music, one of the first college conservatory programs to offer a jazz degree. With a mainly African-American faculty, the program emphasized a cultural approach to the music — that is, to truly know and understand jazz, students needed to know and understand black culture and attitudes. Lynch was aided in his pursuit of this knowledge by the head of the jazz program, Tony King, whose office was stuffed with books that provided insight and perspective.

At the same time, the trumpeter was feeding his appetite for Latin music, eventually recognizing its connection to straightahead jazz. “I don’t think I knew it right off the bat,” he says, “but [Latin] sounds and rhythms were in the music [I listened to] when I was growing up. Whether it was McCoy Tyner or Horace Silver, those rhythms were there. But a little later, when I started getting aware of ‘real’ Latin music and salsa, it was like discovering another continent on the map of music, one that’s connected to the continent you’re on. It’s all Afro-diaspora music.” Lynch eventually landed a spot with Eddie Palmieri’s band, recording nine albums with the maestro.

Quite naturally, Afro-Caribbean rhythms percolate throughout *The Omni-American Book Club*, starting with the rousing opener, “Crucible for Crisis.” Flutist Orlando “Maraca” Valle, with whose band Lynch has worked in Cuba, takes a dazzling solo rooted in Afro-Cuban tradition, while Cuban-born drummer and Frost School faculty mate Dafnis Prieto creates an exciting tension on the bottom end. Lynch’s own burnished solo rides a bed of percussion provided by Murph Aucamp’s hand drums. Lynch dedicates the song to

DuBois and African-American historian David Levering Lewis, cross-referencing their influences in its title. “Levering Lewis’ book *God’s Crucible* is about Islam and the making of Europe in response to the Islamic conquest of a good deal of it,” he explains. “And of course, *The Crisis* is the name of the NAACP’s periodical that was founded by W.E.B. DuBois.”

Lynch recruited saxophonist Jim Snidero, a longtime friend and collaborator, on “Tribute to Blue (Mitchell),” which salutes the late trumpeter who had preceded Lynch in Horace Silver’s band. A silky, bluesy piece that makes great use of a sparkling ensemble filled with South Florida jazz elite, it’s enlivened by emotionally rich solos from Snidero and Lynch. Aptly, Lynch’s literary links here are Isabel Wilkerson, whose *The Warmth of Other Suns* details the history of the Great Migration of African Americans from the South in the first half of the 20th century, and Ralph Ellison, whose *Invisible Man* left an indelible mark on Lynch. Certainly, Mitchell qualifies as a Southerner who migrated North to make his own mark. “He’s from Miami,” Lynch relates. “He used to play right up the street from me at the Sir John Lounge.” Of course, this was long before Lynch had moved to Miami in 2011.

The bumptious “Woody Shaw,” dedicated to another important trumpet voice silenced too young from illness, provides a showcase for some up-and-coming South Florida talents, including trumpeter Jean Caze, saxophonist David Leon and drummer Kyle Swan, a current Frost student. Lynch connects the piece to literary lions Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and A.P. Spellman, whose writings heavily influenced his thinking about jazz and race.



RACHAEL & VILRAY

Rachel & Vilray *Let’s Make Love on This Plane* (Nonesuch)
Vocalist Rachel Price (of Lake Street Dive) and guitarist-singer Vilray expertly re-create the intimate, often-swinging pop jazz of the 1930s and ‘40s on a set mainly comprising Vilray’s originals. In duo and small-combo settings, the pair showcases material that sounds as if it could be issuing from a long-lost radio broadcast. Tunes such as “Do Friends Fall in Love?” and “Treat Me Better” display an easy camaraderie between the singers, and gems such as “At Your Mother’s House” and “The Laundromat Swing” exhibit great wit and superb musicianship. Although the title track might not have slipped past censors back in the day, Rachel and Vilray bring affection and expertise to this nostalgic trip.

NOW PLAYING

“I’ve always been a book person,” Lynch says. “In this phase of my life, I’m faking it as an academic. But I think that the amount of time that I put into my own auto-didacticism in reading, along with having a little bit of education, has really helped put me in good stead. I definitely see my role as a musical artist to be caught up with things that have to do with society and culture. That comes from the relationship between the music I was drawn to and the books I was reading. I think very much so, that’s the theme of this project.” ■

Gone Global

Kirk Whalum reaches out to the world at large.

By Jonathan Widran

One can imagine the knowing glances Kirk Whalum shot across the studio to Keiko Matsui as the saxophonist and keyboardist soulfully conversed over the easy-flowing grooves of “SJJ,” one of 14 tracks on Whalum’s expansive, socially conscious new album *Humanité* (Artistry Music). The title is a tongue-in-cheek acronym for “Smooth Jazz Legend,” a dubious distinction that Whalum impressively transcends via the rich, global sensibilities of his latest outing.

During a cruise a few years ago, Whalum was part of a lineup featuring Matsui, Gerald Albright and Peter White called “Legends of Smooth Jazz” — and it rubbed him the wrong way. “It’s always wonderful to play for appreciative audiences, but it was a bittersweet experience for me,” he says. “I thought, if that’s gonna be my epitaph, I better get moving on the next phase of my career. When I turned 60 during the recording of this album, I made important decisions about my future, changing management, the brand of sax I was using (he switched from Keilwerth to P. Mauriat after 30 years) and focusing on a new musical direction. The world, and my personal world, are way bigger than who’s on top of the smooth-jazz charts. I have no hopes and dreams there, but a lot of passion invested in sharing music with the global community. I would be missing so much beauty and the opportunity to play with so many artists around the world if I just played smooth jazz.”

To that end, *Humanité* stands out in scope and thematic intention from any other album Whalum has released during his nearly 35-year recording career. Produced by the saxophonist’s longtime friend, British trumpeter and producer



James McMillan, the sessions were tracked in studios in Paris, Tokyo, Jakarta, Nairobi and Johannesburg, as well as in hotel rooms and office buildings in other cities and even in Whalum’s living room in Memphis. Many of these sessions — and the inspiring, often gritty stories of the artists who participated in them — are chronicled in the as-yet-unreleased *Humanité: The Beloved Community*, an insightful companion documentary film, directed by Jim Hanon, that weaves colorful segments about the years Whalum spent growing up a preacher’s son in Memphis with stories about the diverse cast of artists featured on the album.

By design, Matsui and bassist Marcus Miller may be the only guest artists recognized by American audiences. From the



Hendrik Meurkens *Cobb's Pocket* (In & Out Records) — German-born, New York City-based harmonica great Hendrik Meurkens' latest release is named for the distinctive "time field" of legendary drummer and longtime collaborator Jimmy Cobb, who is part of an inspired lineup that showcases the swinging and improvisational possibilities in the rarely heard pairing of harmonica and organ. The all-star quartet on this date is rounded out by organist Mike LeDonne and guitarist Peter Bernstein. Though this is the first time all four have appeared together on the same session, the ensemble's dynamic performances and cool camaraderie on this collection of five classics and three Meurkens originals are an outgrowth of the many times they've crossed musical paths over the years.

NOW PLAYING

rousing, gospel-inflected cover of Curtis Mayfield's "Move On Up" (spotlighting UK vocalist Brendan Reilly) to the exotic and funky "From the East to the West" (sung by Japanese soul-gospel group Heavense), these McMillan-arranged studio dates emerged from the emotional, creative and cultural connections Whalum forged with these musicians (many of them superstars in their own countries) in the many places he's traveled and performed.

Other highlights include a

"The world, and my personal world, are way bigger than who's on top of the smooth-jazz charts. I have no hopes and dreams there, but a lot of passion invested in sharing music with the global community."

gorgeous rendition of Skylark's 1970's hit "Wildflower," sung powerfully by Liane Carroll (UK), with the song's lyrics intended in this case to draw attention to the tragedy of human trafficking; the buoyant, horn-drenched "Get Your Wings Up," featuring Andrea Lisa (South Africa); the brassy ensemble piece "Kwetu," spotlighting pianist Aaron Rimbui and the Ghetto Classics youth orchestra (both from Kenya); and the defiantly optimistic dance tune "Peace," with singer Grace Sahertian (Indonesia).

Another standout performance is delivered by Indonesian singer Afgan, a major star in Southeast Asia, who artfully balances R&B sensibilities with spiritual grace on a warm reading of Harold Melvin & The Blue Notes' "Wake Up Everybody." Whalum had been toying with the idea of creating a project like *Humanité*, but he finally resolved to make it happen soon after he joined Afgan onstage at the Java Jazz Festival, in Jakarta, and basked in the adulation of thousands of the singer's screaming fans.

Perhaps the album's most compelling track is the grooving jazz-fusion piece "Korogocho," which finds Whalum interlacing his punchy soprano with fiery dueling bass solos by Miller and young Indonesian virtuoso Barry Likumahuwa. "When I wrote the song," Whalum says, "I envisioned Marcus playing on it. He really brought it to life. But in the meantime, I met Barry at Java Jazz. They paired us up, and I thought, 'This cat is *bad!*' His playing connected with me on a spiritual level."

Both *Humanité* and the companion documentary film contain an undercurrent connecting the album's diverse musical elements to the civil rights movement. Whalum was 9 years old when Martin Luther King

was assassinated blocks away from his family home. At the time he was too young to understand the event's deeper implications. Yet at 50, when Whalum was in-session with a counselor, he says, "Guess what came up? That day. Turns out I had not processed it, and it was still causing underlying trauma in my life. Getting the train back on track had everything to do with how I would respond to what happened the day he was killed."

Whalum's church upbringing led him to embrace King's vision of "The Beloved Community," which The King Center defines as "a global vision in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood."

Humanité now serves as the latest and most creatively fulfilling leg of Whalum's journey back to personal wholeness while bridging his artistry to ideas concerning the greater good of humanity. "It's a very impressionistic album," he says, that addresses "social justice and issues we are continuing to deal with on a global level. Much of it reflects an insurgent counter-culture speaking against what we see that distresses us. By collaborating, we can empower each other and acknowledge the life of God in people from completely different cultures. Jazz means freedom of expression and the passion to communicate excitement about not being restricted by — and to — what's in front of you." ■

Truth to Power

Terri Lyne Carrington's new songs address pressing issues.

By Larry Blumenfeld

On a December afternoon in 2017, I gathered eight prominent musicians around a dining-room table in Harlem to discuss the idea of creating jazz in Donald Trump's America. (An edited version of that discussion appeared in this magazine's Summer 2018 issue.) "I don't have a lot to say about Donald Trump," drummer Terri Lyne Carrington told us when the conversation turned her way. On the subject of living and working as an artist in Trump's America, however, Carrington had plenty to say. "I'm kind of guilty of living a bit in the bubble and then one day waking up mad as hell," she began. "But then one day you come out of your bubble because you spend so much time practicing and working on music and you realize that, a long time ago, only privileged people could study and work in the arts. I'm fascinated by how we all talk about the things that affect us, and how we, as people and as privileged artists, voice concerns and make change happen."

Carrington spoke pointedly about racism and sexism that day. "Dealing with racism has been part of my whole life," she said. "But as a woman in the jazz field, I pushed away that part of my identity. Racism was always the first conversation, always the priority. I'm not able to prioritize that more so than sexism anymore."

Through the years I've learned that Carrington, both on and off the bandstand, turns ideas into action. Six months after delivering the comments above, she helped initiate WeHaveVoice, a collective of musicians fighting gender bias and patriarchy in the music community and working toward "a culture of equity." And in October 2018, Berklee College of Music

announced that Carrington — who had attended Berklee on a full scholarship decades ago and was the first woman to win a Grammy Award for the Best Jazz Instrumental Album — had accepted an offer to become the founding artistic director of its new Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice.

At that Harlem home in 2017, Carrington had told us, "I started this new musical project called Social Science. All the themes are related to something that I'm concerned about or other band members are concerned about. Stay tuned." Cut to a warm September evening in 2019. In the third-floor studio of a nondescript building on Manhattan's West Side, Carrington's record label, Motéma, had organized a pre-release preview of *Waiting Game*, the two-disc debut of Carrington's Social Science project. The audience — mostly press, music-business insiders and fellow musicians — sat on couches and armchairs. Carrington sat at her drum kit, surrounded by a quintet, at the front of the room. The mood felt somewhere between that of a house concert and of a nascent political underground meeting.

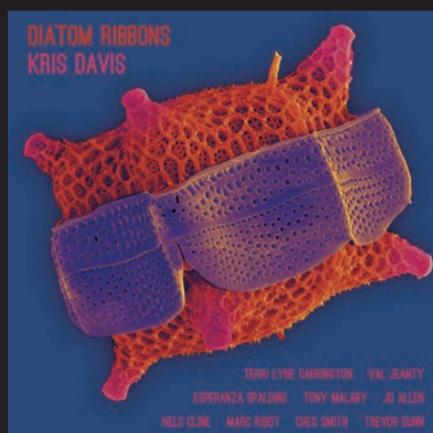
"This album took two years to make," Carrington said. "We took our time for practical reasons, but also to make sure that we communicated these ideas properly." The process began, she said, through conversations with her two main collaborators on the project, pianist Aaron Parks and guitarist Matthew Stevens. "We're taking on the issues that bother us."

That evening, Carrington played some of the new songs with Morgan Guerin alternately playing electric bass and tenor

saxophone, and vocalist Debo Ray either singing or speaking in chant-like tones. (On the album, these musicians are complemented by an impressive cast of instrumentalists, singers and rappers.) Yet even stripped down, the music's power was palpable. "Waiting Game," which appears in two versions on the album, began as an anthem and ended more like a ballad; Ray's voice lent stinging force to Carrington's lyrics — "How much can we endure? ... Complacency has its price." "I wrote that one right after the 2016 election," Carrington said afterward. "But it's interesting how relevant the words are right now."

Some of the songs evolved from existing pieces. "Bells" was composed by Parks and recorded as an instrumental on his last release. On *Waiting Game* it's reimagined as a statement about police brutality against African-Americans, blending Carrington's lyrics with Malcolm Jamal-Warner's rapping. "I wrote that one after seeing that horrifying video of Philando Castile getting shot in front of his girlfriend and her 4-year-old daughter. I wanted to tell the story from the perspective of the family members who have to live with this horror and loss."

Another Parks composition, originally written for trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire's band, became the riveting protest song that opens the album, "Trapped in the American Dream," which is about the American prison system, as articulated through music that builds in intensity and the urgent rapping of Kassa Overall. The music of "Purple Mountain," over which rapper Kokayi addresses the genocide of Native Americans, began as an untitled interlude that guitarist Stevens composed for his own trio. "Like our political lives, our artistic lives are organic,"



Kris Davis *Diatom Ribbons*

(Pyroclastic) — The pianist's last two releases focused on duets. Here she enlisted nine musicians, employed in shifting ensembles. One inspiration was her work with drummer Terri Lyne Carrington, turntablist Val Jeanty and bassist-singer Esperanza Spalding during tribute concerts for the late pianist Geri Allen. As did Allen, Davis plays with restless curiosity and without stylistic allegiances; she synthesizes disparate elements into coherent unity. This richly textured music conveys, above all else, a buoyant spirit. It's there in Spalding's singing, despite the forbidding intervals of Michaël Attias' "The Very Thing," and in how Davis shapes something like a ballad from that composition's abstract form. And it shines through the bittersweet "Sympodial Sunflower," where Davis duets with Carrington, whose drumming — gently here, forcefully elsewhere — carries the ideas forward.

NOW PLAYING

Stevens said. "Things change over time, especially in terms of your connections with other people. Instrumental music is a manifestation of our thoughts and feelings. So, there, Terri ended up making my own song clearer to me."

Carrington had worked with both Parks and Stevens in different contexts. "And one day, right after the election," Parks said, "she just called up and said, 'It's time to start a band.'" Stevens, who received a similar call, says, "She wanted us to bring in material, and all she really told us was, 'I want the songs to talk about this particular moment in time, and I want to frame our issues in ways we can feel good about.' There was no talk of genre or sound. Musically, all we adhered to was a level of performance and production. Lyrically, all she thought about was truth."

Throughout her career Carrington has gracefully blended jazz and pop impulses, acoustic and electric elements. Her drumming moves easily from understated to fierce, and always sounds authoritative. She's just as skilled as a producer. The latter quality is best evidenced by "No Justice (for Political Prisoners)," a slowly unfolding ballad that includes in its richly layered mix spoken-word and sung sections by Meshell Ndegeocello and samples of commentary by, among others, Angela Davis and Mumia Abu-Jamal.

The album's first disc is, by turns, hard-hitting and tender. The second disc was drawn from one 42-minute improvised session for which Carrington gathered Parks, Stevens and bassist Esperanza Spalding (and to which Edgar Colón later added orchestration). After a full disc of songs about activism and liberation, these improvisations sound fully committed, political in their own way, and, well, free. ■

"[Teri] wanted us to bring in material, and all she really told us was, 'I want the songs to talk about this particular moment in time, and I want to frame our issues in ways we can feel good about.' ... Musically, all we adhered to was a level of performance and production. Lyrically, all she thought about was truth." —Matthew Stevens



CRITICS'

BRAD MEHLDAU ANDREW CYRILLE PAUL NEDZELA
JOEL ROSS KIRK WHALUM CHUCHO VALDÉS
BRANFORD MARSALIS QUARTET JAVIER COLINA AND PEPE RIVERO
STEVE LEHMAN TRIO + CRAIG TABORN AMBROSE AKINMUSIRE
ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO COCHEMEA





PICKS

2019

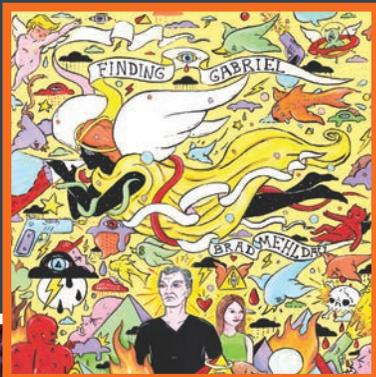
Over the last year, a lot of memorable albums have been released. As we always do in this, our Winter issue, we've asked our editors and critics to assess the new releases they've heard during those 12 months and send us a list of the 10 best they've encountered. As usual, the first title in every list is the author's top pick. The nine titles that follow are listed in no particular order of preference.





BRAD MEHLDAU *Finding Gabriel* (Nonesuch)

This nine-track gem — akin to early Yes, Genesis and Jethro Tull — takes a page out of the quieter chapters of the progressive-rock playbook, with a team of new all-star jazz musicians playing an old game. Big in scope and theme, like a jazz version of a rock opera, *Finding Gabriel* is Mehldau's *Thick as a Brick*, except that in Ian Anderson's world the characters were blissfully imaginary. —**Michael Fagien**



ESPERANZA SPALDING *12 Little Spells* (Concord)

BRUCE HORNSBY *Absolute Zero* (Zappo)

BRANLY/RUIZ/HASLIP *Elemental* (Blue Canoe)

DANIEL SZABO *Visionary* (Fuzzy Music)

DOMINIC MILLER *Absinthe* (ECM)

TOM HARRELL *Infinity* (HighNote)

PAOLO FRESU/RICHARD GALLIANO/JAN LUNDGREN *Mare Nostrum III* (ACT)

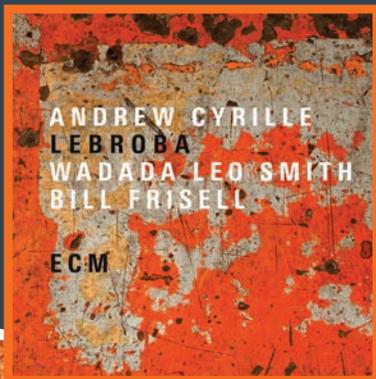
JAMIE CULLUM *Taller* (Blue Note)

JACOB COLLIER *Djesse Vol. 2* (Decca)



ANDREW CYRILLE *Lebroba* (ECM)

Three masters of nuance and subtlety combine their distinctive voices in ways that produce plenty of drama on drummer-composer Andrew Cyrille's *Lebroba*. Cyrille, who turned 80 in November, shades, colors and carves out architectural spaces for the textured tones of guitarist Bill Frisell and trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith. Mysterious, meditative and bluesy, the program shimmers like a fever dream, the veteran artists at their atmospheric best as they create sublime soundscapes that never lose touch with the human emotional element. The album's title is a portmanteau of the artists' birthplaces — Smith's Leland, Mississippi; Cyrille's Brooklyn; and Frisell's Baltimore — but the terrain they cover here is truly universal. —**Bob Weinberg**



THE OGJB QUARTET *Bamako* (TUM)

EVAN PARKER AND KINETICS *Chiasm* (Clean Feed)

JAZZMEIA HORN *Love and Liberation* (Concord Jazz)

FABIAN ALMAZAN TRIO *This Land Abounds With Life* (Biophilia)

ARUÁN ORTIZ AND DON BYRON *Random Dances and (A)Tonalities* (Intakt)

MATTHEW SHIPP TRIO *Signature* (ESP-Disk)

BRIAN LYNCH BIG BAND *The Omni-American Book Club* (Hollistic MusicWorks)

MARIO PAVONE DIALECT TRIO *Philosophy* (Clean Feed)

STEVE LEHMAN TRIO *The People I Love* (Pi)



PAUL NEDZELA *Introducing Paul Nedzela* (Outside In Music)

On this debut recording, baritone saxophonist and composer Paul Nedzela and his right-hand man, pianist Dan Nimmer, both members of The Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, emerge as two young talents with a mature sound. The bari may be an especially difficult instrument to master, but Nedzela is in a comfort zone throughout the album's 10 tracks. Whether skating nonchalantly through challenging bebop lines or relaxing in a ballad setting, he makes it all sound effortless. Further, he and the rhythm section — Nimmer, bassist David Wong and drummer Aaron Kimmel — sound like they're having a ball. That attitude proves to be contagious. —**Mark Holston**



- NANCY KELLY** *Remembering Mark Murphy* (Subcat)
- OSCAR HERNÁNDEZ & ALMA LIBRE** *Love The Moment* (Origin)
- MIGUEL ZENÓN** *Sonero: The Music of Ismael Rivera* (Miel)
- CAMILA MEZA & THE NECTAR ORCHESTRA** *Ámbar* (Masterworks)
- JOSEAN JACOBO & TUMBAO** *Cimarron* (E 7 Studios)
- BOB SHEPPARD** *The Fine Line* (Challenge Records Int.)
- SOFIA RIBEIRO** *Lunga* (self-released)
- BRIAN LYNCH** *The Omni-American Book Club: My Journey Through Literature in Music* (Holistic Music Works)
- JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA WITH WYNTON MARSALIS**
Una Noche con Rubén Blades (Blue Engine)



JOEL ROSS *KingMaker* (Blue Note)

Even if you're a casual jazz fan, it would be hard to ignore the buzz around Joel Ross. At just 23 years old, the vibraphonist turned heads this spring with the release of his debut album, *KingMaker*, which came across as a smart and self-assured statement, full of hypnotic grooves and intricate melodic structures. And in joining the prestigious Blue Note label, Ross became part of a storied lineage of vibraphone players that includes Milt Jackson, Bobby Hutcherson and Ross' own mentor, Stefon Harris. Elite as that company may be, Ross proved eager and equipped to join it. *KingMaker* revealed a player possessed of boundless skill and imagination, the type of artist who can push the music forward from the inside, merging tradition with innovation in an effort to arrive at someplace new yet familiar. —**Brian Zimmerman**



JAZZMEIA HORN *Love and Liberation* (Concord Jazz)

JIMMY COBB *This I Dig of You* (Smoke Sessions)

THE COMET IS COMING *Trust In the Lifeforce of the Deep Mystery* (Impulse!)

CHICK COREA *Antidote* (Concord Jazz)

FLYING LOTUS *Flamagra* (Warp)

VERONICA SWIFT *Confessions* (Mack Avenue)

BILL FRISELL & THOMAS MORGAN *Epistrophy* (ECM)

GUILLERMO KLEIN Y LOS GUACHOS *Cristal* (Sunnyside)

SNARKY PUPPY *Immigrance* (GroundUp)



KIRK WHALUM *Humanité* (Artistry Music)

Transcending his smooth-jazz roots, saxophonist Kirk Whalum reveals himself as a globally-minded musical visionary on this expansive collection, which finds him — in collaboration with producer James McMillan — channeling the ethos of civil rights, universal harmony and Martin Luther King’s “Beloved Community.” Pairing with renowned and upstart musicians from around the world and welcoming guest performances by Keiko Matsui and Marcus Miller, Whalum recorded sessions for *Humanité* in various locales, including Jakarta, Tokyo, Paris, Johannesburg and his own living room in Memphis. The compelling story of the recording is chronicled in director Jim Hanon’s companion documentary *Humanité: The Beloved Community*. —**Jonathan Widran**



FLOW *Promise* (Lmb)

LISA ADDEO *Listen to This* (Little Black Dress)

MARK WINKLER *I'm With You: Mark Winkler Sings Bobby Troup* (Café Pacific)

JUDY WEHLER *Crowded Heart* (Jewel City Jazz)

MINDI ABAIR AND THE BONESHAKERS *No Good Deed* (Pretty Good For A Girl)

TIERNEY SUTTON BAND *Screenplay* (BFM Jazz)

SCOTT WILKIE *Brasil* (BeachMusic Studios)

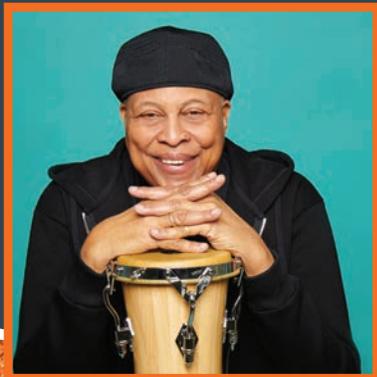
DAVID BENOIT *David Benoit and Friends* (Shanachie)

THE RIPPINGTONS FEATURING RUSS FREEMAN *Open Road* (Peak Records/eOnemusic)



CHUCHO VALDÉS *Jazz Batá 2 (Mack Avenue)*

With 1972's *Jazz Batá*, Valdés announced a small-group approach that blended jazz and folkloric influences from Cuba and the United States in equal measures. For all his astounding gifts as a pianist, Valdés' primary instruments have always been his bands. Here, his quartet — bassist Yelsy Heredia, percussionist Yaroldy Abreu Robles, and Dreiser Durruthy Bombalé on batá and vocals — is a wondrous vehicle, elegantly navigating the surprising twists and turns of demanding, intoxicating compositions that make the concept sound brand-new. —**Larry Blumenfeld**



- ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO** *We Are on the Edge: A 50th Anniversary Celebration (Pi)*
- RAJNA SWAMINATHAN** *Of Agency and Abstraction (Biophilia)*
- TYSHAWN SOREY** *Pillars (Firehouse 12)*
- MIGUEL ZENÓN** *Sonero: The Music of Ismael Rivera (Miel)*
- ABDULLAH IBRAHIM** *The Balance (Gearbox)*
- HARRIET TUBMAN** *The Terror End of Beauty (Sunnyside)*
- MATTHEW SHIPP/MAT MANERI** *Conference of the Mat/ts (Rogue Art)*
- TAYLOR HO BYNUM** *Ambiguity Manifesto (Firehouse 12)*
- KASSA OVERALL** *Go Get Ice Cream and Listen to Jazz (Kassa Overall LLC)*



BRANFORD MARSALIS QUARTET *The Secret Between the Shadow and the Soul* (OKeh)

This latest release led by the justly famous saxophonist presents an effervescent, memorable variety of performances by a deeply seasoned quartet. (Two of the band's members, pianist Joey Calderazzo and bassist Eric Revis, have been with Marsalis for 20 years; the drummer, Justin Faulkner, has anchored the group for 10.) The cuts range from the album's explosive opener, "Dance of the Evil Toys," to the delicately nuanced "Life Filtering from the Water Flower," yet the album never sounds unfocused because each tune — five originals, two covers — becomes a startling, individualized journey. With all respect to this quartet's previous sessions, this is arguably their best. —**Sascha Feinstein**



MELISSA ALDANA *Visions* (Motéma)

JERRY BERGONZI *The Seven Rays* (Savant)

GEORGE CABLES *I'm All Smiles* (HighNote)

DARRIN EVANS AND THE CAPTAIN BLACK BIG BAND *Presence* (Smoke)

LARRY FULLER *Overjoyed* (Capri)

LUKE GILLESPIE *Moving Mists* (Patois)

JOE LOVANO *Trio Tapestry* (ECM)

RALPH PETERSON & THE MESSENGER LEGACY *Legacy Alive* (Onyx)

FUMI TOMITA *The Elephant Vanishes* (OA2)



JAVIER COLINA AND PEPE RIVERO *El Pañuelo de Pepa* (Cezanne Producciones)

On this exquisitely intimate session, Cuban pianist Pepe Rivero and Spanish contrabassist Javier Colina breathe new life into classic Cuban compositions from the 19th and 20th centuries, paying special attention to the late pianist/composer Bebo Valdés. The virtuosic duo infuse *son*, bolero and *danzón* of yore with crisp clarity, emotional depth, nuanced lyricism and palpable *joie de vivre*, all of which serves to highlight the music's timelessness. Colina's sound on bass violin oscillates between majestic and guttural, while Rivero summons entire generations of rich piano traditions with single strokes, especially on the album's title track, a supple 19th-century contradanza composed by Manuel Saumell. With this captivating exchange, Colina and Rivero have created an album that is at once regal, dynamic, nostalgic and contemporary. —**Lisette Corsa**



LUIS MUÑOZ FEATURING LOIS MAHALIA *The Infinite Dream* (Pelín)

DAYMÉ AROCENA *Sonocardiogram* (Brownswood)

MIGUEL ZENÓN *Sonero: The Music of Ismael Rivera* (Miel)

PONCHO SANCHEZ *Trane's Delight* (Concord Picante)

CARLOS BARBOSA-LIMA *Delicado* (ZOHO)

JANE BUNNETT & MAQUEQUE *On Firm Ground/Tierra Firme* (Linus Entertainment)

SANTANA, FEATURING BUIKA *Breaking Down the Door/Dolor de Rumba* (Concord)

DUDUKA DA FONSECA & HELIO ALVES *Samba Jazz and Tom Jobim* (Sunnyside)

TRIO ELF WITH MARCO LOBO & MARIA GADU *The Brazilian Album* (Yellowbird)



STEVE LEHMAN TRIO + CRAIG TABORN *The People I Love (Pi)*

Alto saxophonist Steve Lehman has built a reputation as a conceptualist; on previous records he's explored the links between jazz and Senegalese hip-hop (*Sélébéyone*) and French spectral music (*Mise en Abîme*). This time around, he's focused less on big ideas and more on the direct visceral allure of a classic saxophone quartet. Lehman's sinewy lines twist and fold but also pack an emotional punch. Joined by pianist Craig Taborn, a fellow visionary, Lehman reworks some of his old material and interprets pieces from a few contemporary composers (Kurt Rosenwinkel, Jeff "Tain" Watts). Even when Lehman looks to the past, the end result sounds like jazz from the future. —**John Frederick Moore**



MATT MITCHELL *Phalanx Ambassadors (Pi)*

KASSA OVERALL *Go Get Ice Cream and Listen to Jazz (Kassa Overall LLC)*

PATRICIA BARBER *Higher (ArtistShare)*

THE ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO *We Are on the Edge: A 50th Anniversary Celebration (Pi)*

MIHO HAZAMA *Dancer in Nowhere (Sunnyside)*

DAMON LOCKS BLACK MONUMENT ENSEMBLE *Where Future Unfolds (International Anthem)*

RAJNA SWAMINATHAN *Of Agency and Abstraction (Biophilia)*

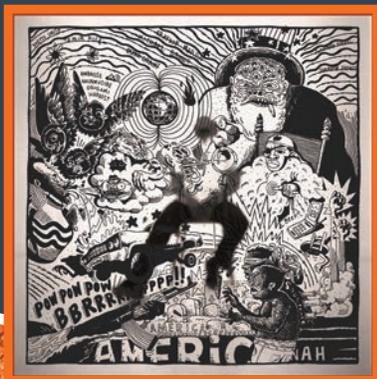
MELISSA ALDANA *Visions (Motéma)*

ANGEL BAT DAWID *The Oracle (International Anthem)*



AMBROSE AKINMUSIRE *Origami Harvest* (Blue Note)

From the time he won the Monk Competition in 2007, we knew Akinmusire's technique was off the chart, and it's evolved further over the years. But *Origami Harvest* ripples and sometimes roars with a new emotional urgency that rivals the musical fireworks. Combining a string quartet with his own rhythm section — and employing powerful rap from Kool A.D. (Victor Vazquez) on half the tracks — Akinmusire has constructed a musical mosaic of early 21st-century America, conflicted by power and politics (and always race), but still touched by beauty. *Origami Harvest* is multi-layered, sonically as well as contextually; as flexible as the dreamlike video that accompanied its release, it has a mesmerizing flow that belies the weight of the material. —**Neil Tesser**

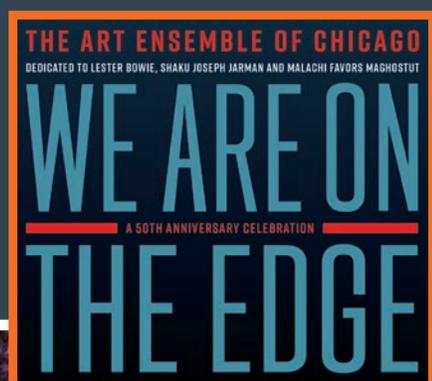


- FABIAN ALMAZAN** *This Land Abounds With Life* (Biophilia)
NATURE WORK (JASON STEIN, GREG WARD, ERIC REVIS) *Nature Work* (Sunnyside)
MIGUEL ZENÓN *Sonero: The Music of Ismael Rivera* (Miel)
STEFON HARRIS & BLACKOUT *Sonic Creed* (Motéma)
RUSS LOSSING *Changes* (SteepleChase)
NICK SANDERS TRIO *Playtime* (Sunnyside)
JOEL ROSS *Kingmaker* (Blue Note)
MIHO HAZAMA *Dancer in Nowhere* (Sunnyside)
TOM HARRELL *Infinity* (HighNote)



ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO *We Are on the Edge: A 50th Anniversary Celebration (Pi)*

This superb double-album celebrating the golden anniversary of the revolutionary Art Ensemble of Chicago documents a studio date and a live concert — both recorded in Ann Arbor, Michigan — and is dedicated to the memory of departed AEC founding members Lester Bowie, Malachi Favors and Joseph Jarman. The large orchestra assembled by saxophonist Roscoe Mitchell and percussionist Famoudou Don Moye consists of musicians connected in one way or another to Chicago's Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians. The music — at times cerebral and delightfully dissonant, at other times emotive and primal — brilliantly demonstrates that the Art Ensemble's creative essence, both timely and timeless, remains strong in a new generation of artists. —**Hrayr Attarian**

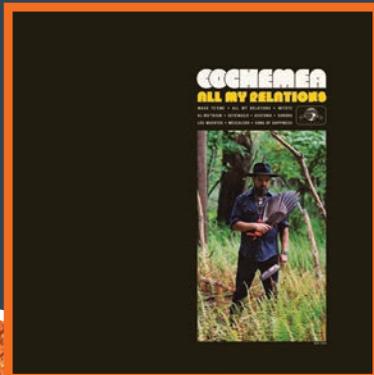


- MARYLIN MAZUR** *Shamania* (Rare Noise)
- LAYALE CHAKER AND SARAFAND** *Inner Rhyme* (In A Circle)
- WENDY EISENBERG** *The Machinic Unconscious* (Tzadik)
- AMBROSE AKINMUSIRE** *Origami Harvest* (Blue Note)
- 1032K** *The Law of Vibration* (self-released)
- THE OGJB QUARTET** *Bamako* (TUM)
- MARK DRESSER** *Ain't Nothing but a Cyber Coup & You* (Clean Feed)
- ANNA WEBBER** *Clockwise* (Pi)
- RALPH ALESSI** *Imaginary Friends* (ECM)



COCHEMEA *All My Relations* (Daptone)

Cochemea Gastelum of the Brooklyn-based Dap-Kings band plays his saxophone (and a bit of flute), most often with electronic effects, over a high-spirited percussion ensemble, along with a small coterie of guest instrumentalists and chanting vocalists. The music stirs in myriad influences — Native American, Afro-Cuban, South African, Mexican, R&B — evoking a rugged neo-primitivism with a nod to '60s/'70s space-jazz. Cochemea has a knack for writing beautifully simple ear-catching melodies, each getting to shine over the course of the album's concise 35 minutes. The organic production has the feel of a hi-fidelity field recording. This is honest, earthy music refreshingly free of pretense. —**Eric Snider**



NOAH PREMINGER GROUP *Zigsaw: Music of Steve Lampert* (Dry Bridge)

RUSS LOSSING *Motian Music* (Sunnyside)

ABDULLAH IBRAHIM *The Balance* (Gearbox)

STEVE LEHMAN TRIO + CRAIG TABORN *The People I Love* (Pi)

ANDREW CYRILLE *Lebroba* (ECM)

JON YAO'S TRICERATOPS *How We Do* (See Tao)

CHRIS LIGHTCAP *SuperBigmouth* (Pyroclastic)

JASON PALMER *Rhyme and Reason* (Giant Step Arts)

YONATHAN AVISHAI TRIO *Joys and Solitudes* (ECM)

LONDON CALLING

The Swingin'

60s

FIVE ARTISTS WHO WERE THERE RECOLLECT
THE LONDON JAZZ SCENE DURING THE 1960S.

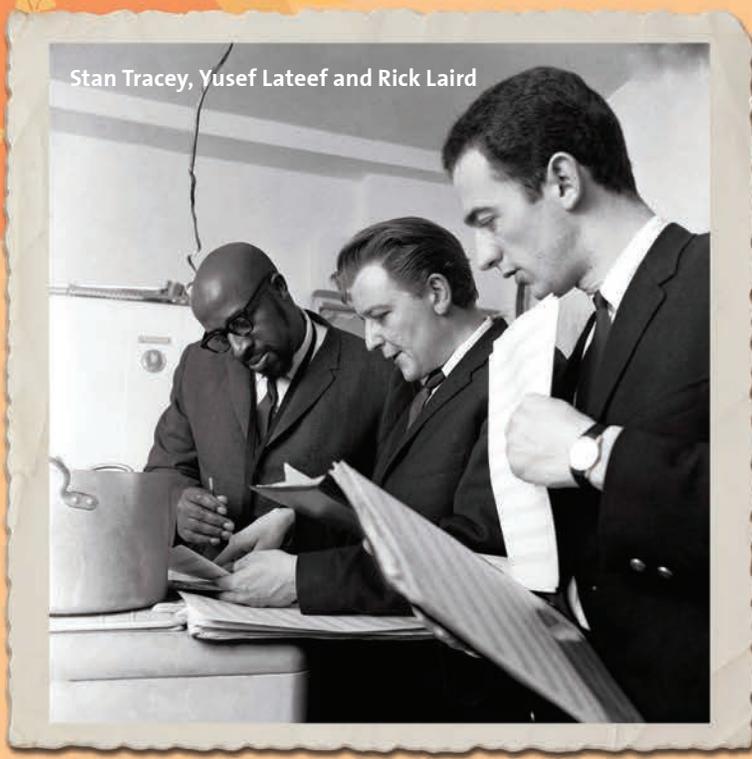
BY BOB WEINBERG





Ella Fitzgerald at Ronnie Scott's

Stan Tracey, Yusef Lateef and Rick Laird



recordings for the ECM label that find her at a pinnacle of her expressive powers. Winstone reminisced about the London jazz scene during a Skype chat from her longtime home on the English coast.

My first appearance at Ronnie Scott's was in November '66. That was brought about because of [drummer] John Stevens. I sat in with his trio at the Charlie Chester club, and John said, "Right, I'm going to tell Ronnie Scott about you." And he was as good as his word. Ronnie gave me four weeks, which is what they used to do then.

There were lots of jazz pubs at that time that featured trios, and they'd have a guest, mainly singers. I'd go to these places and say, "Can I sit in?" And I'd sing a couple of tunes. And they generally looked a bit skeptical, like, "Oh, God, here we go." But I often got gigs out of that.

I started with a friend of mine at a club on the East End, which was — we didn't know it at the time — owned by [organized crime figures] the Kray twins.

I knew a guy that worked behind the bar, and he said, "Oh, yeah, you can have the room once a week." So we started to do that and the bar would fill up with men in big overcoats. We had a trio, and every week we would offer guests. [Trumpeter] Ian Carr was one of the guests we booked, and I sang with the trio, as well. And he said, "You should sing with the New Jazz Orchestra. I'll introduce you to Neil Ardley," which he did. Neil Ardley would transcribe a lot of Gil Evans' music and he wrote lots of other things, as well. The experience of being able to sing with a big sound like that behind you is quite something. That was a great experience.

Michael Garrick was the pianist with the New Jazz Orchestra, and he gave me some songs [and lyrics] he had written. I went along to a gig he was doing with his sextet. I sat

"I'd go to these places and say, 'Can I sit in?' And I'd sing a couple of tunes. And they generally looked a bit skeptical, like, 'Oh, God, here we go.' But I often got gigs out of that."

in and sang one of the songs, and was about to go join the audience, and he said, "No, just stay on the stand and join in the next piece." I didn't know the next piece; it was a thing without words. I just listened and he said, "Take the solo." So I took a wordless solo, which I hadn't really done before, except singing free music. And at the end of the evening, he said, "One of

Overshadowed by the worldwide domination of The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, a creative jazz scene flourished in London in the 1960s. Young musicians converged on the city from all over the British Isles, pushing the music in new directions. At the epicenter, Ronnie Scott's jazz club opened in Soho in 1959. When the club moved in the summer of 1965, owners Ronnie Scott and Pete King retained the lease on what came to be known as "The Old Place," which briefly became an important laboratory for adventurous jazz. Rooms within, above or adjacent to pubs presented jazz, as did an upstairs rehearsal space for plays known as the Little Theatre Club, which hosted avant-garde jazz. At the same time, blues was exploding in popularity, Caribbean and South African musicians added to the mélange of sounds and rhythms, and fusion merged jazz with rock and world music.

Five decades later, a handful of artists who made a deep impact on the jazz world discuss their experiences on the London jazz scene of the 1960s.

NORMA WINSTONE

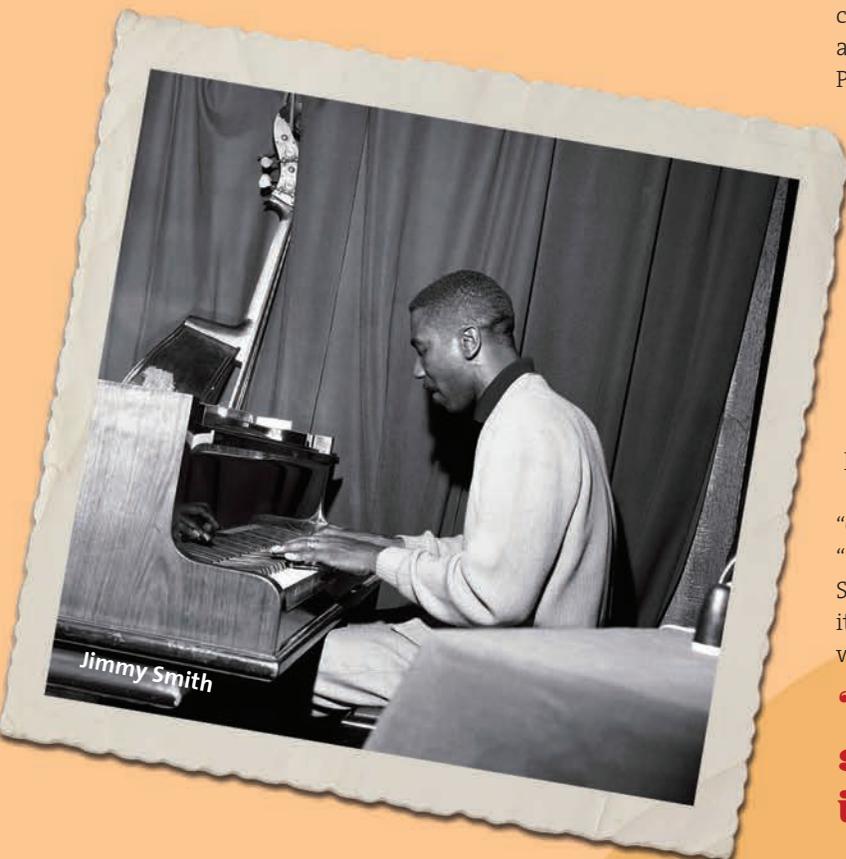
With her crystalline voice and impeccable technique, Norma Winstone established herself as a most unconventional jazz singer. Although she started out singing jazz standards in her native London, Winstone, 78, became swept up in the creative tsunami of an adventurous age. Attracting the attention of avant-garde bandleaders such as John Stevens, Neil Ardley and Michael Garrick, Winstone challenged conventional notions of the female vocalist. With her former husband, pianist John Taylor, and trumpet player Kenny Wheeler, Winstone formed the groundbreaking trio Azimuth in the '70s. In recent years, she's crafted sublime

the saxophonists is leaving. Would you like to join the band and sing the saxophone parts?" For me, it was a great chance to do something which integrated me into the band.

John Stevens was organizing various spontaneous happenings [with his Spontaneous Music Ensemble] and he asked me to join in. That's where I first met Kenny Wheeler. And Dave Holland used to come to some of them before he went to join Miles Davis. I had no idea what to do; I just joined in. It was great training. I think it affected everything else that I did, because you have to have your own ideas with free music. I mean, you're reacting, but you have to contribute something.

There was an audience when free music started happening, and there would be other audiences for the standards. I would fall between the two, because I did both. And then, when I started to work with people like Kenny Wheeler, that music wasn't free and it wasn't standards. It was his music. And of course it did find its audience, but I think it was a little difficult for people to understand.

You always have to be careful when you're thinking about [the past] that you're not just sort of looking through rose-colored glasses. Because you were young, everything seemed better and more happening. There still is a lot going on [in the London jazz scene]. But at that time, it seemed to be particularly individualistic.



MIKE GIBBS

Born in Zimbabwe, trombonist and composer-arranger Mike Gibbs attended Berklee School of Music in Boston before making his way to London in 1965. Gibbs had been heavily influenced by modern jazz writer-arrangers Herb Pomeroy and Gil Evans, as well as New Music innovators such as Gunther Schuller and Iannis Xenakis. Gibbs found fertile territory in London. Incorporating rock sensibilities and electric instrumentation, he attracted the attention of vibraphonist Gary Burton, who hired him to write tunes for his quartet. Currently living in Málaga, Spain, Gibbs, 82, remains in demand. He was wrestling with orchestration for a suite that was to be performed by Charles Lloyd when he talked about his London days via FaceTime in September.

I had met [British bassist] Graham Collier when he was a student at Berklee. Although I didn't know him very well, when I arrived in London I called him up. He had a band with trumpet, saxophone, a rhythm section and a French horn. And within the first week, he had dropped the French horn and hired me. Graham would rehearse once a week with Kenny Wheeler, [trumpeter] Harry Beckett, [pianist] Karl Jenkins and [drummer] John Marshall, and we had a gig occasionally. There really was a sort of social community, and many musicians played in many bands.

[Saxophonist] John Dankworth and I hit it off really well, and I worked for him for years, playing either movie scores or concerts at Ronnie Scott's, mostly with [vocalist] Cleo Laine, but also with a big band. Kenny Wheeler was in that band. Chris Pine was in that band, and because we both played trombone, we often got hired together. The way we made a living in those days was studio work, and he and I often got hired together, because we blended well.

I got to play in the last year of Ronnie Scott's Old Place on Gerrard Street. But then it moved to where it is now, and I played there often with Dankworth's band and my own band. Gary Burton was one of the regulars there, and he was playing my music. I wouldn't call it rock, but it became fusion. Then when I formed my own band, it was a lot of music that I had written for Gary. I got labeled with being the instigator of [fusion], but I was only arranging the tunes that Gary played, or he asked me to write in that vein.

When people look back on that period, they can say, "Oh, this began then," but I don't think people were aware of "forging a new sound." I don't think it was that kind of concept. Something emerged. A lot of stuff was by chance. I don't think it was consciously by design. We borrowed from each other, we were inspired by each other and not only by the music.

"Something emerged. A lot of stuff was by chance. I don't think it was consciously by design."

EVAN PARKER

Saxophonist Evan Parker found kindred musical adventurers when he arrived in London in 1966. While he had been studying botany at Birmingham University, the Bristol native had an epiphany after hearing Cecil Taylor in New York City and dedicated his life to exploring free jazz. Parker joined John Stevens' Spontaneous Music Ensemble and became a fixture at the Little Theatre Club, a hub for experimental music. At 75, Parker continues to refine his remarkable command of his instrument with uncompromising recordings on Clean Feed and Intakt. Parker shared his reminiscences of the London jazz scene by email.

I was introduced to John Stevens by [lyricist and illustrator] Alfreda Benge at the Royal College of Art diploma show in 1966. I was lucky to meet John. Through him I met all the other players who were looking to play free at that time.

The Little Theatre Club was up four or five flights of stairs from a doorway in a yard off St. Martins Lane, the border between Soho and Covent Garden. It held maybe 30 or 40 people

“I think there was a conscious desire to find something new that could be seen as a natural continuation of the free jazz that was already known to all of us.”

Ronnie Stevenson, Rick Laird, Stan Tracey and Sonny Rollins



at most. Stevens was the key figure who found the place and negotiated with the lease holder. It was essentially set up as a rehearsal space and try-out place for plays in the early part of the evening — the equivalent of off-off-Broadway — but crucially, also had a bar with a late license.

The other main place was the Old Place on Gerrard Street, now deepest Chinatown but back then in transition. It was the original Ronnie Scott's, which still had some time on the lease after they moved to Frith Street. Ronnie and Pete [King] passed it over to John Jack to manage for the younger players to use. The scenes for each overlapped, but the Little Theatre Club tended to be on average a little further out musically.

I met [guitarist] Derek Bailey at the Little Theatre Club, and we started to play some duo things. I think there was a conscious desire to find something new that could be seen as a natural continuation of the free jazz that was already known to all of us.

MIKE WESTBROOK

Pianist and composer Mike Westbrook was studying painting in Plymouth in 1958 when he formed his first band, which included teenage saxophonist John Surman. He and Surman moved to London around the same time and assembled an 11-piece band that also included saxophonists Mike Osborne and Lou Gare; Kenny Wheeler played on some of his projects, as well. His recordings with his Mike Westbrook Concert Band incorporated strong influences of Ellington and Mingus, as well as contemporary sounds and even anti-war messages, as on his 1969 LPs Marching Song, Vols. 1 and 2. Westbrook, 83, discussed this heady time via email.

Ronnie Scott's and The Marquee Club presented modern jazz every night and American soloists were appearing regularly. In addition, there were plenty of weekly jazz venues around town. But things were changing, politically, socially, culturally. Modern jazz had got into a rut, and fresh ideas had yet to make their mark. Alexis Korner's sessions at the Marquee did more than anything to turn audiences on to the blues. Soon the only jazz night at the Marquee was Sunday, but then that went over to R&B. Other clubs followed suit. My band had started to do interval spots at the Marquee and other venues. Now we had to find alternative places to play, usually pub rooms, like Mike Osborne's Peanuts Club in Bishopsgate.

During the residency at The Old Place, I formed The Concert Band to play large-scale works. We rehearsed and performed at The Old Place, made our first albums, broadcast, appeared opposite Dizzy Gillespie in the 1968 Newport in London Festival and won the Melody Maker Big Band Poll.

The American influence was all-pervading. Hard bop dominated the scene. Each new album from the States was seized on avidly, and musicians tried to emulate what they heard. Everything Miles Davis did had an immediate effect. Likewise Coltrane. The same with Mingus. Ornette Coleman opened things up for everyone.

“The American influence was all-pervading. Hard bop dominated the scene. Each new album from the States was seized on avidly, and musicians tried to emulate what they heard.”

In the course of a lot of playing at The Old Place, I found myself pushing further, and somehow getting my influences into perspective. I was finding I had something original to say, relevant to my own experience and to the times. Having been to art school and being self-taught as a musician, I perhaps had wider references to draw on. This was a time of Pop Art, of finding images in one’s surroundings and one’s own culture — in my case, European. It was a natural evolution, not a decision to differentiate my work from the American. In fact, my roots in American jazz have always been important to me and are always acknowledged in my work.

JOHN SURMAN

Saxophonist John Surman came to London from his native Devon in 1962 to study at the London College of Music. While, in his words, “jazz was whispered very quietly” in the halls of academia, Surman sought out jam sessions and gigs with compatriots such as fellow Devonian composer-bandleader Mike Westbrook. Surman immersed himself in the sounds of London, playing with Jamaican and South African musicians, as well as with blues bands. After releasing a handful of records on the Deram label, Surman formed an influential trio with bassist Barre Phillips and drummer Stu Martin. In recent years, Surman’s recorded highly regarded albums for ECM. He shared memories of the London jazz scene in a recent FaceTime chat from his home in Oslo.

The avant-garde explosion had hit by the [early- to mid-’60s]. Ornette had been around, and we’re hearing Coltrane, and [Archie] Shepp was around playing. But there were all these other influences. [Blues artist] Alexis Korner was broadcasting, so everyone was very well aware of the blues. And there were quite a lot of players that were crossover [blues-jazz] players like tenor player Dick Heckstall-Smith, [drummer] Ginger Baker and organist Graham Bond. So you’ve got this blues stuff that’s starting to move into the Stones and Jimi Hendrix, and this kind of fusion stuff is starting to happen. Around 1965, [pianist] Chris McGregor and the Blue Notes arrived from South Africa, then suddenly there’s another element.

The community I lived in was particularly a West Indian



Tony Bennett and Eddie “Lockjaw” Davis at Ronnie Scott’s

population. I spent a lot of time with those guys, hanging out, doing what a lot of people did in the ’60s, which I don’t do these days, [smoking] what we used to call “jazz cigarettes.” [Jamaican culture] was a great influence, and jamming with those guys was great, another rhythmic feel. As European [jazz artists], we were learning the trade: get the fundamentals in place, find out what this music had to say. Self-evidently, we weren’t from the Deep South. But we might still have something to say about oppression, because it’s there in all societies. The other realization that dawned on some of us, when you listen to Gil Evans, you say, “Well, he listened to a lot of Ravel.” And you listen to Bill Evans’ harmonies, and you say, “Well, there’s a lot of Debussy in there.” This is our culture.

By the end of the ’60s, the bubble had burst. People fragmented. Rivalries came up. Some kind of made it, others drifted away. Although there was a great explosion in the music, there wasn’t a great explosion in the financial situation. The survivors moved on. But it was, for jazz, an interesting time, because things really changed. The electronic stuff, the funk, the fusion blew apart all the free stuff and everyone went, “Whoa, where do we go now?” ■

“By the end of the ’60s, the bubble had burst. People fragmented. Rivalries came up. Some kind of made it, others drifted away.”

LONDON CALLING

LONDON RISING

CHECKING IN ON **SIX YOUNG ARTISTS**
RESHAPING THE SOUND OF LONDON JAZZ.

B Y B R I A N Z I M M E R M A N



T

hat buzz you hear emanating from the jazz underground? It's London calling. If you've paid even cursory attention to the state of modern jazz in recent months, you may have noticed that the scene across the pond is in the midst of an astounding growth period, one spurred by young, hungry artists whose music is leading jazz into the future. Modishly cosmopolitan yet unabashedly gritty, adamantly British while at the same time proudly indebted to the sounds of the Caribbean, India and Middle East, it's music that strives toward human connection and that's inspired by the punk, club and dub-step cultures that have been sustained across decades by London's youth.

All of which is to say that the current London jazz scene is a brash and beautiful composite of sounds, ideas, places and faces. Here, we introduce you to six notable musicians who embody the London jazz spirit, and whose music best typifies the London sound. In talking with these diverse artists, one point that was raised again and again is that the recent explosion of the London jazz scene isn't really recent – it only appears that way to newcomers in different time zones. In reality, it's the result of decades of tireless work by a network of artists, publicists, journalists, promoters, radio programmers and educators, all of whom seek to provide creative outlets for the city's artists. If anything, we hope this list brings you a few steps closer to one of the world's most vibrant jazz scenes.



JACOB COLLIER

The London jazz renaissance may well begin with Jacob Collier. The 25-year-old North London native's rise to prominence can be mapped almost line-for-line onto the rise of the U.K. jazz scene as a whole. The precocious, self-taught multi-instrumentalist burst into the popular consciousness in 2012 with a series of viral YouTube videos in which he looped himself playing hits by Stevie Wonder, Earth, Wind & Fire and others on a variety of instruments. For Collier, the goal was never celebrity, but rather to satisfy his own curiosity. "I really just fell in love with chords, harmony and notes," he says. "If you're saying I can add four notes to this chord, what happens with six or seven? If you're saying these notes won't work, how can I make them work? I was so busy having fun with these chords that I didn't even know I was having a career."

But a career was indeed blossoming. Collier's kinetic energy and online presence eventually caught the ear of jazz kingmaker Quincy Jones, who would help shepherd the young musician toward the release of his first album, *In My Room*. True to its name, the album was recorded in Collier's bedroom, with Collier singing, playing and producing everything himself. The album went on to win two Grammy Awards and a JazzFM Award for Best Initiative of the Year. Collier credits his hometown with fostering the sense of experimentation that has nourished his career to this point, acknowledging his city's sterling track record for musical tolerance. "We were the first country to understand what Hendrix was doing, to understand what pulse his finger was on," he says. "He broke here first because people have always had their ears and eyes open for people who would come in and break things open. The Beatles and Indian music, George Martin and the string section. These things are possible here, and that's why I'm so proud to be from this place."

Much as he's the perfect avatar for London's jazz renaissance, Collier is also a key indicator of that scene's momentous generational shift toward younger listeners. "In London, the thing that's exciting about jazz is that it's becoming less like the classical music of pop and more the mixing grounds for a music based in freedom," he says. "This generation, in so many ways, is defining their ways of doing things, putting our foot down and saying, 'This is the way we want the world to be, this is the way we feel.' Music is a great incubator for change. As long as it's honest, it will communicate anything it needs to." For anyone that needs proof of Collier's concept, they need look no further than his latest album, *Djessa, Vol. 2*, which contains a multitude of sonic universes and social observations in music that sound like nothing else

A close-up portrait of Shabaka Hutchings, a Black man with a beard and mustache, wearing a dark bucket hat and a black t-shirt with a white geometric pattern. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a thoughtful expression. The background is a warm, dark brown color.

SHABAKA HUTCHINGS

For all the seismic activity currently underway in London, perhaps the biggest ripple-maker at the moment is 35-year-old London native Shabaka Hutchings. The saxophonist was born in London but raised in Barbados, returning to the English capital at age 16. He was reared on the music of Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane, coming of age in the jazz clubs of London as a straightahead player. But it was through seminal partnerships with jazz-punk bands like Polar Bear and Acoustic LadyLand that he began to reconsider the role of the creative acoustic instrumentalist in modern music, and to see its impact on young audiences. “For once, I saw groups of young listeners who felt like they weren’t being turned off by jazz or acoustic music,” he says.

Those early shows served as a turning point in Hutchings’ life, and through additional affiliations with organizations like Courtney Pine’s Jazz Re:Freshed, Hutchings set out to break barriers in jazz and question notions of authenticity, especially as it pertains to jazz’s American origins. “I’d like to think my music comes from the same creative place as the people I admire in America,” he says. “But being in London taught me that I don’t always have to express it in a way that is directly relatable to the American tradition.”

Hutchings’ message now resonates as universal truth, but he can recall a time when his pathbreaking music fell on deaf ears. “I remember talking to people at Jazz Re:Freshed 10 years ago, and they were telling me they couldn’t even book artists at the London jazz festival,” he says. “Now those same artists are headlining.” Hutchings, together with his groups The Comet Is Coming, Sons of Kemet and Shabaka and the Ancestors, is largely responsible for that shift. And yet no matter how far the pendulum may have swung in his favor, he’s never one to settle into complacency. He’s already at work on a project with Martinique producer DJ Noss on a project that fuses saxophone and turntables in revolutionary ways. “I want to use jazz to get into those creative spaces where live, acoustic music doesn’t necessarily go,” he says. “But the whole idea is to do it organically, to just try and not be afraid to fail.” Until those new sounds are ready to grace our ears, listeners can look forward to a new Shabaka and the Ancestors album due out in March.



BINKER GOLDING

Saxophonist Binker Golding, 34, cut his teeth in the jazz clubs of his native North London, where his primary musical diet included Art Blakey, Sonny Rollins and other pillars of jazz's mainstream. What drew him to jazz — and what eventually inspired him to pursue his own way through it — was its ability to bring people to the dance floor. “The purest jazz was often the most danceable,” he says. “Somewhere along the way, we exchanged danceability for complexity, and I see a lot of what I do as a way of giving that back to people.”

To do that, he's cultivated a style that prioritizes emotional connection above pageantry and pomp. His endeavor has garnered popular attention and critical reward, including a 2015 MOBO (Music of Black Origin) Award for his breakout album, *Dem Ones*, with drummer and frequent collaborator Moses Boyd. He's also keenly attuned to the polyphony of voices that make up the contemporary London jazz scene, and his music astutely melds influences from cultures that surround him. “Reggae, dancehall, Afrobeat, grime — these are big parts of not just London music but London *life*,” he says.

Another undeniable influence: the punk culture of the 1970s and '80s. Golding was born at the tail of end of that era, and says that the current jazz scene vibrates on a similar frequency. “Punk was a really good example of music going back to zero, establishing the real intention of music, which is to communicate with the audience in a really genuine way,” he says. Golding strives toward that sort of connection on his new album, *Abstractions of Reality Past & Incredible Feathers*, which charts a path between the jazz fusion of previous decades and the hip-hop/broken beat-influenced sound of London's here and now.



YAZZ AHMED

South London-born, Bahrain-raised Yazz Ahmed didn't set out to become the voice of a movement, but when the nonprofit organization Tomorrow's Warriors — which promotes the inclusion of minority and female voices in British jazz — reached out to her to pen a piece for the Women's Day Festival in London in 2015, the 36-year-old trumpeter rose to the challenge and adopted a mantle she was born to wear.

Ahmed came from a family of artists, including a trumpet-playing grandfather and a ballet-dancing mother. After studying jazz in conservatory, she experienced a personal epiphany that set her on a course toward rediscovering her Bahrain heritage. This eureka moment would govern the direction of her art for the next decade, during which time she developed a seamless fusion of jazz and Arabic music on albums such as her aptly titled debut, *Finding My Way Home*, and her breakout disc from 2018, *La Sabatuse*. All the while, she was drawing the attention of modern British music kingmakers, appearing on Radiohead's 2011 live album *The King of Limbs: Live from the Basement* and touring with the English experimental group These New Puritans. The experiences opened her art to new forms of hybridity, eventually paving the way to her latest project, *Polyhymnia*, inspired by the ancient Greek Muse of music, poetry and dance. Each of the album's tracks is dedicated to a historical female figure or feminist movement: the suffragettes, American civil rights activists Rosa Parks and Ruby Bridges, Pakistani activist and Nobel Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai, Saudi Arabian film director Haifaa al-Mansour and British jazz saxophonist Barbra Thompson. The music is as melodically satisfying as it is socially uplifting, which makes it the perfect musical underpinning for the London scene: "People are reconnecting with their heritage, with their family history, with the things that interest them that aren't in the mainstream jazz bubble," Ahmed says. "And they're not afraid to express it. Because of that, we're finally hearing an equality of voices in jazz. We're finally getting a full picture."



NUBYA GARCIA

Few artists in the contemporary London scene bring as much raw energy to their performances as saxophonist and flutist Nubya Garcia. The 28-year-old North London daughter of Caribbean parents is renowned for her live shows, which channel all the ecstasy and energy of a Camden rave with the sharp-witted intelligence of a Wayne Shorter gig. And while she's been an integral presence on the London scene for nearly a decade, she garnered serious international attention after the release of her 2017 debut EP, *Nubya's 5IVE*, which featured bone-rattling grooves and electrifying solo chops. But it was her first full-length album, *When We Are*, that truly established her playing as a vital link between London's thriving DJ culture and its rapidly accelerating jazz scene.

Today, Garcia enjoys a glowing reputation for her role as a DJ, with a hit radio residency on the world-spanning, genre-defying online radio station NTS. For her work in both the jazz and DJ spheres, she's earned an impressive co-sign from British tastemaker Gilles Peterson, who featured her prominently on his scene-defining 2018 compilation album *We Out Here*. As the co-leader of such groups as NÉRIJA and MAISHA, she's moved to the center of the London jazz wheel, to which so many of the scene's breakout stars connect to her as spokes. She's gaining fast traction in the United States as well, having headlined the Winter Jazzfest in New York City in 2018 and drawing huge crowds at this year's South By Southwest Festival in Austin. Meanwhile, the accolades continue to rack up. Just recently, she was awarded the JazzFM UK Jazz Act of the Year Award for 2019. For Garcia, the future is limitless.



THEON CROSS

Theon Cross moves in the same circles as the jazz contemporaries featured here, but one (big) thing separates him from the pack: He's a tuba player, and while his mammoth horn may seem unwieldy, he still manages to bust a major groove (musically and physically; the guy practically head-bangs when he gets in the zone).

With a strong internal rhythm and the energy of a bullet train, Cross, 27, has been a ubiquitous presence on the scene since 2013, bringing the bottom end to ensembles like Hutching's Sons of Kemet and a trans-Atlantic ensemble helmed by American drum phenom Makaya McCraven. In whatever setting he finds himself, Cross brings an energy on the tuba that is dynamic and alive, drawing heavily from his own Caribbean background and from the Caribbean diaspora at large. Soca, calypso, reggae, zouk, dubstep and grime are all discernable in his sonic palette, but so too are influences from New Orleans second-line music and the great brass-band tradition of the United States. Cross' studio albums bring all of these elements together and then set them aflame in fresh, often unconventional formats, including the tuba-saxophone-drums trio on his 2015 EP, *Aspirations*, and the brass-band-meets-synth-pop group on his latest LP, *Fyah*. And if you thought the tuba was primarily a background voice, you better think again. In Cross' hands, the tuba is an all-frequency instrument, capable of rattling every cell in your body. ■

On the Record

A BRIEF GLANCE AT **10 NOTEWORTHY** LONDON-CENTRIC RECORDINGS.

That long touted “special relationship” between England and the United States extends from politics and humor to many of the arts, especially music. The London jazz scene, to quote the '60s pop hit, does indeed swing like a pendulum, occasionally — as at present — attaining renewed prominence among cognoscenti. But even at other times, London has remained a hotbed of recording, live performance and touring by jazz greats from both sides of the Atlantic. Here's a brief and by no means all-inclusive reminder of what that has meant.

BY NEIL TESSER



STEPHANE GRAPPELLI

Stephane's Tune (Naxos)

On tour in London when Britain and his native France entered World War II, the legendary fiddler stayed on, recording all the tracks heard here. Tunes with a local orchestra are typical of the era; the real

hook comes on eight tracks marking the debut of pianist George Shearing, who would take the States by storm a decade later.



DUKE ELLINGTON

The Great London Concerts (Jazz Heritage) Ellington's eight-nation European tour in 1958 began in London, where the band played two nights at the Gaumont State Theatre, an art-deco gem in the Kilburn district. The band had recently soared

back into prominence at Newport in 1956, and showed no signs of diminution (or even jet lag) on this one.



JOE HARRIOTT DOUBLE QUINTET

Indo-Jazz Suite (Atlantic)

A contemporary and musical confrère of Ornette Coleman and Eric Dolphy, Harriott moved from Jamaica to London in the early 1950s and spurred experimentation

for two decades. This disc sounds tame now, but in 1966 the fusion of jazz with a quintet of Indian musicians offered a unique, visionary and influential snapshot of Britain's melting pot.



CHRIS MCGREGOR'S BROTHERHOOD OF BREATH

(Fledg' Ling UK)

Led by the eponymous Scot pianist in the 1970s, the Brotherhood slammed together avant-garde Brits and South African explorers, such as saxophonist

Dudu Pukwana and trumpeter Mongezi Feza, who had relocated to London. It's a riff-heavy party at the corner of Count Basie and the Art Ensemble of Chicago.



STAN GETZ

Dynasty (Verve)

The great saxophonist recorded in an organ combo once in his career — in 1971 at London's world-renowned jazz club Ronnie Scott's — and it yielded this under-recognized double-disc gem. French

organist Eddy Louiss helmed the trio, with esteemed countryman Bernard Lubat on drums and Belgian guitarist René Thomas simmering under one after another of Getz's most inspired solos.



OSCAR PETERSON & DIZZY GILLESPIE

(Pablo)

Two of bebop's giants — both of them notorious virtuosi — together for 50 minutes of piano-trumpet duets that echo the classic partnership of Louis Armstrong and Earl Hines nearly a half-century

earlier. Recorded in 1974. In London.



BILL BRUFORD'S EARTHWORKS

(Summerfold)

In 1986, after anchoring Yes and leaving King Crimson for the second time, the powerhouse British drummer formed one of late fusion's most enduring bands, starring then newcomers Django Bates on

keys and Iain Ballamy on reeds. The entire Earthworks collection fills a 24-disc box; why not start here with their debut album, recorded in London.

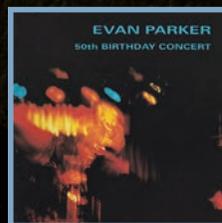


THE JAZZ WARRIORS

Out of Many, One People (Polygram)

Saxophonist-composer Courtney Pine led a surge of young Afro-British musicians that came to prominence in mid-1980s London, including pianist Julian Joseph, drummer Mark Mondesir and vibist Orphy

Robinson. This oversized big-band project from 1987 lets you hear all of them (and 15 more) in one place.

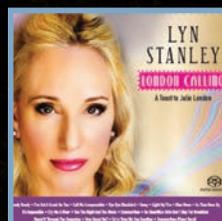


EVAN PARKER

50th Birthday Concert (Leo)

The saxophonist's overwhelming technique and multi-layered concept have helped define the free-improv movement in his native Britain, and throughout much of Europe, since the late 1960s. This

double disc set from 1994, recorded at the famous London venue Dingwalls, features several of his most trusted collaborators, including pianist Alexander von Schlippenbach and bassist Barry Guy.



LYN STANLEY

London Calling (A.T. Music)

Lyn Stanley never lived in London. She didn't record this there, and the album has nothing to do with the city. But the vocalist *does* offer this 2018 set as a tribute to elegant cool-jazz vocalist and actress

Julie London. (Sorry, couldn't resist.) ■

LIVE AND KICKIN'

A BRIEF TOUR OF THE LONDON CLUB SCENE.

In London, homegrown talent has been on the upswing, with the best and brightest players migrating steadily onto the international scene. The clubs from which most of them sprang range from upscale to hole-in-the-wall. Some book only local talent; others are less provincial. At most venues, artists and audiences tend to get up-close and personal, with jazz fans often squeezed together in small, crowded rooms. While hot spots are scattered throughout the city, tourists who plan well will have no problem sampling a wide swath of London's rich and diverse live jazz scene. Here are some of clubs they'd do well to check out.

BY ERIC SNIDER



The Jazz Cafe

THE SCOTT'S

ronnie scott's jazz club

Billboard advertisement for Ronnie Scott's featuring a grid of names and photos. The text "ronnie scott's" is visible in the top right corner of the billboard.

ronnie scott's



Billboard advertisement for Ronnie Scott's featuring a grid of names and photos. The text "ronnie scott's" is visible in the top right corner of the billboard.





Ronnie Scott's



Ronnie Scott's

RONNIE SCOTT'S

47 FRITH STREET, SOHO

This legendary club has been operating without interruption for 60 years. It opened in late October 1959, when tenor saxophonist Ronnie Scott, inspired by trips to jazz clubs in New York City, and his business partner, fellow sax man Peter King, opened Ronnie Scott's at 39 Gerard Street, in Soho. The debut act was a quartet led by British saxophonist Tubby Hayes. In 1965, the club moved a few blocks north to its current location, and the following year expanded into the space next-door.

The club is healthy as ever. "Open and busy seven nights a week," says Simon Cooke, the club's managing director. "A lot of tourists are frustrated, as we can be booked out quite a few weeks ahead, especially on weekends."

The roll call of musicians who've played Ronnie Scott's is legion — Count Basie, Miles Davis, Bill Evans, Wes Montgomery, Stan Getz and scores more in the early days; Wynton Marsalis, Chick Corea and other big names in later years. Pop stars such as Prince, Curtis Mayfield and Jimi Hendrix (who did his last public show there) have also found their way onto the club's stage.

Scott and King played a significant role in opening up jazz internationally. In the early '60s, they challenged the British Musicians Union's ban on allowing artists from the United States to play British clubs, and helped hammer out an



606 Club

exchange program between the countries. The venue's first U.S. act was tenor man Zoot Sims, who appeared in November 1961. The floodgates soon opened.

Scott died in 1996. King ran the place until 2005, when he sold it to London impresario Sally Greene. She and partner Michael Watt sunk three million pounds into a massive renovation of a club that Cooke says was "pretty tired." Today, Ronnie Scott's retains its classic feel, with sultry lighting, dark woods and red highlights. The main room comfortably holds 216 patrons. Eleven years ago, the venue added the Late Late Show, which starts around 1 a.m., and finds prominent players like Kamasi Washington and Robert Glasper regularly stopping by to sit in.

Summing up the enduring influence of London's legacy club, Cooke says, "Without Ronnie's, the U.K. scene would have been years behind where it is now." www.ronniescotts.co.uk

606 CLUB

90 LOTS ROAD, CHELSEA

You enter through a small, weathered brick archway and downstairs awaits one of London's most revered and longstanding jazz clubs, a place that, according to *The Independent*, "brings to mind jazz's golden age." The comparatively roomy stage is low to the ground, inviting a close connection between performer and audience. The 606 Club has been a bustling nexus of British jazz since musician Steve Rubie

took over in 1976. For years, he's presented live music seven nights a week.

In the early days, Rubie instituted a policy of hiring only British acts. Other major clubs were "regularly booking overseas musicians," he recalls, "and that meant opportunities for U.K.-based musicians were more restricted. I felt, particularly as we had developed into the local musicians' after-hours hang, that we should focus more on providing a base for local talent."

The policy has loosened over the years, and 606 regularly books American acts like Jerry Bergonzi, Peter Bernstein, Sheryl Bailey and Howard Alden. However, the calendar is more apt to be populated by such British artists as saxophonist Tony Kofi, pianist David Rees-Williams and singers Dana Gillespie and Ian Shaw.

The 606 Club has a fairly involved membership program, but non-members are welcome so long as they sit for a "substantial meal." A music charge of 10 to 14 pounds, which goes straight to the band, is added to the tab.

Artists who play blues, R&B, Latin and other styles of music are routinely welcomed onto the 606 stage. Freedom from genre strictures has been a characteristic of the London scene since the early '80s, Rubie says. And the 606 Club has contributed to that egalitarian culture. "I made a point of booking players across the spectrum with the specific idea of getting musicians from different genres to play together," he says. "It's fair to say that the club certainly provided a late-night platform for musicians to meet after their gigs and get to play

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Jazzlive at the Crypt

with others they may not have played with otherwise.”

Rubie is bullish on the current London jazz climate: “I personally think that the London scene is second only to New York, which I know well, in its strength and depth of talent.”

www.6o6club.co.uk

VORTEX JAZZ CLUB

11 GILLET SQUARE, DALSTON

For “out jazz” in London, Vortex is the place to go. Iconoclastic English saxophonist Evan Parker is an unofficial artist-in-residence there. The late noise-jazz guitarist Derek Bailey was a regular. More recently, forward-thinking players like Shabaka Hutchings, Sons of Kemet, Ingrid Laubrock and Vijay Iyer have found a home at the venue, which holds 100 customers for performances (70 seated). “We are indeed probably the most radical of the major jazz venues,” says the club’s director, Oliver Weindling, who, like the three other members of the board and most of the staff at the nonprofit club, is a volunteer. (A few part-timers get paid to work in the office and run sound.)

Vortex’s glass-cube facade, wedged into the red Dalston Culture House, is an attractive calling card. Get closer and you’ll

discover a ramshackle air — mismatched furniture, random objects, haphazardly painted walls. The place has a lived-in, music-comes-first feel.

The club’s origins date back to 1984, when former cab driver David Mossman and business partner Irving Kinnersley opened The Vortex art gallery, blending in occasional jazz gigs. The music won out, and in 1987 the owners relaunched the space as the Vortex Jazz Bar. The club moved a mile south into its new location in 2006. Over time, Vortex has dramatically expanded the range of its programming to include Afro-pop, rock, Latin, reggae and, in years past, opera and cabaret.

Running a nearly all-volunteer jazz club poses its challenges, Weindling admits: “We have to make sure we can get quality staff every night. Also, we are continuously stretched and have to devote more and more resources to fundraising and getting more daytime use. With the personal commitments of so many of the volunteers and members, sometimes it’s very hard to move the club forward.”

Vortex devotees and visitors are just happy that the club manages to keep operating — to the tune of 300 gigs a year, year after year. www.vortexjazz.co.uk

PIZZA EXPRESS JAZZ CLUB

10 DEAN STREET, SOHO

Don't be fooled by the name. This isn't some place where guys in stained aprons toss dough while a duo noodles away in the corner. Pizza Express stages more than 2,000 shows a year across five U.K. venues. Its Soho flagship has been presenting concerts since 1976. Much of the current talent skews British, but over the years the club has welcomed Doc Cheatham, Milt Hinton, Barry Harris, Art Farmer, Mose Allison, Brad Meldau, Gregory Porter and countless other U.S. and international acts. Pizza Express also mixes in generous helpings of funk and R&B, and shows a penchant for singers. Patrons walk through the restaurant, then downstairs to the music space — roomy as jazz clubs go, but very intimate, with a black, red and white color scheme. "I find it a really warm place to play," says American saxophonist Noah Preminger. "Probably my favorite in London." www.pizzaexpresslive.com

THE JAZZ CAFE

5 PARKWAY, CAMDEN TOWN

The Jazz Cafe is about as eclectic as it comes. The packed schedule includes deejays, neo-soul singers, a wide range of world music, tribute acts (Otis Redding, Bill Withers, Fela Kuti), Latin, blues and hip-hop artists and more. Saturdays give way to Soul City — disco, house and soul. There's jazz, too, of course. Sun Ra

Arkestra, Tom Browne and Charles Tolver were recent bookings. Historically, the club, which has been in its current location since 1990, has hosted the likes of Pharoah Sanders, Don Cherry, Cassandra Wilson and Ahmad Jamal. The high-ceilinged room is rimmed with a balcony that looks down on the stage. Depending on the night, the place can get SRO-packed and the dance floor manic, so jazz seekers are advised to check listings online.

www.thejazzcafelondon.com

JAZZLIVE AT THE CRYPT

ST. GILES CHURCH,

CAMBERWELL CHURCH STREET, CAMBERWELL

Jazz is alive and well at the Crypt. Tucked beneath St. Giles Church, the tomb-like space features stone columns and ceilings, narrow hallways and a small corner stage. The club opened in 1995 (as St. Giles Jazz Club), but its architectural origins date back to the 11th century. The Crypt, which is also a well-regarded restaurant, started with jazz gigs on Friday only, and over the years has expanded the slate to include select Thursdays and Saturdays. (Its Sketches From the Crypt jam sessions happen the last Thursday of every month.) Presently, the club doesn't book top-name international jazz talent, but over the years it has been an incubator of such up-and-coming artists as Tony Kofi, Kamaal Williams and Yusef Dayes. www.jazzlive.co.uk



The Jazz Cafe



Nightjar



Nightjar



Cafe OTO

MAU MAU BAR

265 PORTOBELLO ROAD, NOTTING HILL

This tiny joint is one of the city's favored multicultural bohemian enclaves. Mau Mau's far-flung programming augments jazz with reggae, dub, Afro-pop, rock and more, and holds regular jam sessions that showcase emerging talent. British tuba phenom Theon Cross and sultry singer Zara McFarlane performed there early on, as well as Jose James, Azymuth and Brazilian samba singer Elza Soares. Sundays are open-mic nights. On Thursdays it's Jazz Re:Freshed, a showcase for both new and established talent. Acts squeeze onto a little wooden stage, backed by a red curtain, and patrons get shoulder-to-shoulder amid the standing room in front. Mau Mau is so boho that it only accepts payments in cash. [facebook.com/maumauportabello](https://www.facebook.com/maumauportabello)

CAFE OTO

18-22 ASHWIN STREET, DALSTON

Cafe OTO, effuses *The Guardian*, is "one of the best known and loved spaces for experimental music in the world." About half of its programming is free improvisation and free jazz, with the remainder being noise-rock, ambient, electronic and whatever else might fall under the rubric of "experimental." In other words, don't come expecting catchy tunes and ear-pleasing solos. Cafe OTO is a single large room, capacity 150. Haphazardly outfitted with folding

chairs and other well-worn furniture, it has the feel of a union hall. The venue books music from the margins seven nights a week. Peter Brötzmann, Fred Frith, The Necks, Matthew Shipp, Joe McPhee and Thurston Moore are just a few of the more prominent names that have played Cafe OTO, which, by the way, does not have a stage.

www.cafeoto.co.uk

NIGHTJAR

129 CITY ROAD, HOXTON

Make sure your suit or dress is tailored just so. And a rakish fedora wouldn't hurt, either. Nightjar presents itself as an upscale hangout for beautiful people, chicly dressed. The live music — seven nights a week starting at 9:30 — is of the robustly swinging, pre-bop variety, with a bit of New Orleans funk and vintage pop mixed in. While the club books mostly London-based acts — like Pinstripe Suit and Caroline and the Bellbird Boys — its main attractions are its cocktails and the mixologists who concoct them. With its dark woods and mood lighting, Nightjar is every bit the speakeasy it intends to be. Co-owner Edmund O'Neill calls his place "a subterranean lair of a bar." And even though the club doesn't book artists that make a jazzhead's heart flutter, it offers a sophisticated night out, and stages talented professional acts that are fundamental to the experience.

www.barnightjar.com ■

AUDITIONS



THE POWER OF POSITIVE PIANISTICS

CONFIDENT IN HIS SOUND AND VISION, VICTOR GOULD SHINES ON *THOUGHTS BECOME THINGS*.

BY MICHAEL ROBERTS

“**W**e as human beings can manifest our own futures,” says pianist and composer Victor Gould. “The older I get, the more apparent it’s become to me that thoughts really do become things.”

During a phone conversation in late September, Gould explains the meaning behind the title of *Thoughts Become Things* (Blue Room Music), his third album as a leader. His observations reflect a worldview that underpins every note captured on the recording, a complex and ambitious musical statement built around a narrative that’s structurally stealthy but philosophically specific.

“I’m painting the picture of a fictional journey, where someone is racing through thoughts and organizing them in their head,” he says. “In the beginning, the tonality is kind

of minor, or even darker than minor. But slowly, bit by bit, it becomes happier and happier, and by the end of the piece, it’s like this character has finally broken out of that negative thought pattern. It’s never resolved, but they’re in a better place.”

Gould’s personal odyssey began in Simi

Valley, California, where his early love of classical music bent toward jazz due in part to the influence of Hollis Gould, his father, a talented amateur flute player. “One of the main reasons he got me on piano is because he wanted somebody to play with at the house,” Gould notes, laughing. “We were always jamming.” When the pair wasn’t making their own music, the house was filled with the sounds of Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock and Hollis’ personal favorite, flutist and

saxophonist Hubert Laws. And while he let his son borrow his discs, he imposed a strict limit. “He only let me have four of his CDs at a time in my room,” Gould recalls. “I had to be really organized to get through his entire collection.”

Rather than abandoning his affection for classical music, however, Gould found ways of incorporating some of its elements into his jazz songwriting. “I did a piece for symphony orchestra toward the end of my master’s degree program at the Thelonious Monk Institute in New Orleans,” he says. “It made me confident to add that instrumentation.”

Indeed, the blending of string quartet arrangements with wind instruments played by the likes of saxophonists Godwin Louis and Dayna Stephens, as well as masterful flutist Anne Drummond, gives *Thoughts Become Things* a scale and sweep that’s emblematic of Gould’s work. It’s a point of pride, as well. “I remember a critic saying that some of my music was too dramatic,” he says. “But I think of that as a compliment. Drama is a big part of music.”

Another key contributor to *Thoughts*, trumpeter and longtime collaborator Jeremy Pelt, co-produced the new offering. Gould credits Pelt with suggesting the haunting melody played by cellist Susan Mandel on the title track. The trumpeter also encouraged Gould to include “Brand New,” a fascinating solo-piano improvisation that he originally considered adapting as an introduction for another song. And the pair duet on “Polka Dots and Moonbeams,” a heartfelt version of the Jimmy Van Heusen chestnut that Gould sees as epitomizing the optimistic state his protagonist reaches. “The idea of polka dots and moonbeams is a little surreal, a little mystical,” he acknowledges. “But it’s a different way of looking at things we don’t always understand.”

The set concludes with the propulsive “What Do We Need,” in which Gould tackles questions of an existential nature. “I’m asking, ‘What does society need? What does planet Earth need?’” he says. “The melody is sort of a question. And when the piano, the strings and the bass come in, that’s the answer.” ■





The Bad Plus *Activate Infinity* (Edition)

The ethos of Jaco Pastorius' composition "Punk Jazz" was embodied by acoustic trio The Bad Plus from 2000 to 2017, as bassist Reid Anderson, drummer Dave King and since-departed pianist Ethan Iverson mixed adventurous originals with creative covers of Nirvana, David Bowie and Radiohead. But since Orrin Evans replaced Iverson on 2018's *Never Stop II*, the new pianist's 25-year career as an avant-garde leader and sideman has taken the trio in new directions. The trend continues on the new *Activate Infinity*.

A noticeable difference from the Iverson era is that the new disc is the second consecutive release featuring all-original material, something The Bad Plus had never done before. What hasn't changed is the democratic nature among the group's three composers. Anderson's opening "Avail" is a brief study in contrasts between Evans' sparse chords and King's percolating drumming. The bassist ties them together, as he does on his subsequent "Slow Reactors," a minimalist downshift that approximates chamber jazz via the restraint of Evans and King — all as Anderson's rolling bass line provides the unifying pulse.

King's ever-playful compositions include "Thrift Store Jewelry," a vehicle for Evans' soloing and comping amid the drummer's cacophony of tom-tom thunder and Latin-inspired rim shots;



The Bad Plus: Reid Anderson, Orrin Evans and Dave King

and "Dovetail Nicely," on which he and Anderson alternately churn and relax to accommodate Evans' classically inspired punctuations. The pianist's back-to-back contributions are literally centerpieces of the eight-song disc. On "The Red Door," Evans leads the rhythm section through a multi-tiered, improv-heavy romp, while his ballad "Looking Into Your Eyes" features a gorgeous melody for Anderson and King to sparsely underscore.

The raucous "Undersea Reflection" and the ballad-to-boiling opus "Love Is the Answer" also showcase Evans' gifts for melody and use of space. It will be interesting to see what The Bad Plus ever chooses to cover with him. If anything,

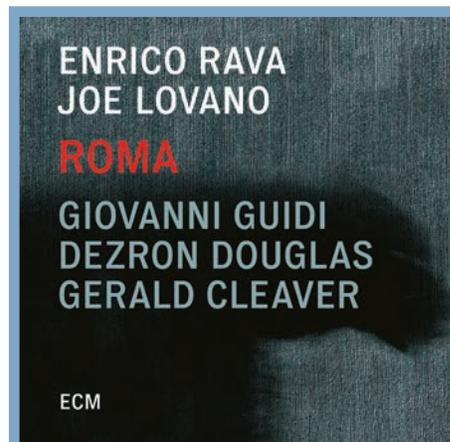
— Bill Meredith

Enrico Rava and Joe Lovano *Roma* (ECM)

Call them dreamscapes, call them musical abstract canvases — whatever the analogy, the performances on *Roma*, a long-awaited pairing of flugelhornist Enrico Rava and tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano, will please everyone who

instinctively knew Lovano's artistic sensibility would organically intertwine with Rava's warm tone and introspection. The two performed together briefly more than 20 years ago, but this 2018 tour was their first opportunity to develop and record a musical repertoire.

The live album opens with a 15-minute version of Rava's "Interiors" (not the longest cut), followed by a nearly 10-minute rendition of Rava's "Secrets," and the spirit of these pieces shares such a kinship that one hardly notices a break between the two. Then the quintet



elevates the energy with Lovano's "Fort Worth," as Rava releases phrases of genuine elation. The saxophonist's own assertive contributions also help to make this 24-bar blues a standout, before the group segues into Lovano's "Divine Timing," which, in its pace and energy, is more simpatico with the meditative, opening numbers. Do I wish, overall, there was a greater range of tempo on the album? Sure. Is it nevertheless largely gorgeous? You bet.

The concert closes with a lengthy triptych: Lovano's "Drum Song," on which he switches to *tarogato*, a Hungarian horn; Coltrane's "Spiritual"; and the standard "Over the Rainbow," a feature for Italian piano phenom Giovanni Guidi, who disguises the melody and investigates the changes with a tenderness that never flirts with sentimentality. Throughout, drummer Gerald Cleaver provides classy, unobtrusive textural support, but bassist Dezron Douglas is the unsung hero of this date. From start to finish, he grounds the occasion with muscular, meaty lines that fully ground even the most ethereal flights of fancy.

— Sascha Feinstein

Hiromi *Spectrum* (Telarc)

Back in 2009, when she was on the verge of turning 30, Hiromi recorded the solo piano album *Place To Be*. Her remarkable virtuosity was on full display throughout that set. While utilizing a



Photo by Frankie Celenza



Hiromi

technique on the level of Art Tatum and Oscar Peterson, Hiromi also tempered it with quietly emotional versions of some thoughtful ballads.

Since that time, Hiromi has mostly been heard with fusion-oriented trios that, while impressive and fiery, lack subtlety and generally do not live up to her potential. But now, at age 40, she has finally returned with a new solo piano album, *Spectrum*. While some of her earlier zany humor is largely missing (other than on "Mr. C.C."), both her technique and her creativity are very much present.

The opening "Kaleidoscope" utilizes cyclical patterns and rapid lines in the background that achieve a rippling effect. "Whiteout" is a picturesque ballad inspired by a blizzard that displays Hiromi's classical technique. After a swinging and joyful "Yellow Wurlitzer Blues," the pianist performs the episodic "Spectrum," which has its breathtaking moments, and an affectionate version of "Blackbird." "Mr. C.C." is a soundtrack for an imaginary Charlie Chaplin film; one

can easily imagine Chaplin developing a hilarious story to this music.

The program also includes an introspective "Once In a Blue Moon" (about the surprised joy one feels when something miraculous happens), a nostalgic tribute to a fading memory ("Sepia Effect") and "Rhapsody in Various Shades of Blue," which clocks in at nearly 23 minutes. While much of the latter performance is a fairly straightforward version of Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" (with an extended rendition of the closing part), Hiromi also takes the "blues" piece on visits to John Coltrane's "Blue Train" and The Who's "Behind Blue Eyes." As on *Place To Be*, *Spectrum* features Hiromi at her most inventive and memorable.

— Scott Yanow

Wallace Roney *Blue Dawn – Blue Nights* (HighNote)

Veteran trumpeter and composer Wallace Roney experiments with ensemble chemistry on this bracing eight-track set,

COMPOSITION IS KING

Songbook salutes pay tribute to legacies past and future.

By Josef Woodard

Being both evolutionary and tradition-channeling, jazz is an art form predisposed to honor its most influential creators. The legacies of legends gone by, and some still in the making, are ripe subjects for tribute projects, as this group of heartfelt new recordings attests.

Alto saxophonist and flutist **T.K. Blue** is a likely candidate to pay homage to the late pianist Randy Weston, who died in 2018.



Blue worked with Weston off and on for nearly 40 years, and he channels Weston's spirit on the aptly titled *The Rhythm Continues* (JaJa).

The album presents a selection of songs from Blue's Weston-themed suite, as well as tunes by Weston and his chief arranger, Melba Liston.

With its 19 tracks and suite-like structure, the album weaves a tapestry displaying Weston's enduring essence and influence. Layered horns enrich "Night in Medina," segueing into the rhythmic charge of "Kucheza Blues." The luminous ballad "Where" eases into Weston's signature song, "Hi Fly," a model of inspired simplicity in the jazz canon, but here folded into an Afro-Cubanized arrangement with the melody left out. Blue receives stellar support throughout from a hard-charging rhythm section, as well as fellow saxophonist Billy Harper and a rotating roster of young pianists.

On the *Frank Foster Songbook* (Sony/The Orchard), by the **Kenyatta Beasley Septet**, the two-disc, 10-track live album intentionally avoids Foster's signature song, "Shiny Stockings," as well as the generous body of Foster compositions written in his fruitful connection with the Count Basie Orchestra. Instead, trumpeter Beasley creates a portrait of Foster — who died in 2011 and was a Beasley mentor — from a variety of sources, vintages and moods beyond Basie (with the exception of the Basie-aligned blues "Katherine the Great").

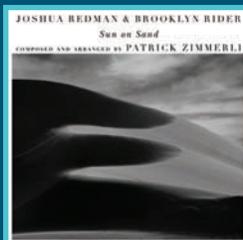
Beasley's compact big band, with four horns fronting a piano-bass-drum rhythm section, hints at a big band palette, but in lean form, with cameos by fellow New Orleans native Wynton Marsalis, guitarist Mark Whitfield, vocalist Carla



Cook and Eric Wyatt on tenor sax. The material ranges from the Latin-tinge of "Cidade Alta" and "Chiquito Loco" to the spidery swing of "Skull Dougery" to the lithe balladry of "Grey Thursday" and "Cecilia Is Love." The latter, written for Foster's wife-manager, concludes this fine, mainstreaming set on a lyrical note.

Brazilian legend Antonio Carlos Jobim left the planet in 1994, but his personal influence and cultural cachet retain their impact. On *Samba Jazz & Tom Jobim* (Sunnyside), led by drummer **Duduka Da Fonseca** and pianist **Helio Alves**, with guest vocalist Maucha Adnet, the Jobim songbook is well-accounted for, with vibrant takes on "Dindi," "Pato Preto," "Você Vai Ver" and "Polo Pony." But beyond his compositions, Jobim's deeper impact is evidenced through the embedded bossa nova attitude and the general Brazilian/jazz symbiosis. Guest spots by trumpeters Wynton Marsalis and Claudio Roditi abet the effort, with saxophonist Billy Drewes and guitarist Romero Lubambo in the core group.

Bridging the presumed borders of jazz and new music/contemporary classical is a growing venture of late. And it's an essential, distinguishing element in the collaboration of acclaimed contemporary string quartet **Brooklyn Rider** and project-hopping saxophonist **Joshua Redman**. With *Sun on Sand* (Nonesuch), the artists meet on the common ground of music by composer Patrick Zimmerli, who effectively works across classical and jazz zones and puts forth a driving and accessible energy with his often minimalist-fueled scores. This is evident from the start of *Sun and Sand*, which kicks off with the celebratory linear gymnastics of "Flash." Impressionistic mistiness enters the textural conversation on "Soft Focus" and "Starbursts and Haloes," and the eight-track suite circles back to an anchoring theme with an album-closing reprise of "Between Dog and Wolf." Brooklyn Rider supplies the foundation, while Redman serves as the resident improviser in the enticing mix.



and the results radiate dynamism and innovation. The 59-year-old former Miles Davis protégé taps the youthful energy of a core group that includes two teenagers at one end of the age scale while carving out a significant role for famed fusion drummer Lenny White, a spry 70, at the other. With several other youngsters in the mix, and the recording brilliance achieved at the historic Rudy Van Gelder studio, the session chalks up high scores on every front.

A subtle recognition of the Davis connection is imparted with the set's high-spirited opener. "Bookendz," a piece by multi-instrumentalist Wayne Linsey written for but never recorded by the late trumpeter, charges from the gate with a barrage of jagged, funk-laced rhythms by two drummers — White and the leader's 15-year-old nephew Kojo Odu Roney. Pianist Oscar Williams II solos with dancing lines and billowy chords that float lazily over the churning pulse. Bassist Paul Cuffari is the tendon that connects the percussive elements, while Quintin Zoto's streetwise guitar voicings provide a welcome, tart accent. Roney's solo demonstrates his penchant for melodic invention and technical daring. Claiming much of the glory, however, is 19-year-old saxophone phenom Emilio Modeste, whose soprano foray here is the definition of youthful exuberance unleashed.

While Modeste authored two works for the session and Williams one, it is the Lenny White composition "Wolfbane" that deserves special attention. Framed

by a slow funk rhythm and a two-bar melodic fragment drawn from Middle Eastern modes, the track, with Modeste featured on tenor, effortlessly blends funk, bop and free jazz into a trance-inducing masterwork. The enchanting "Why Should There Be Stars" highlights the core rhythm section's stylistic adaptability — and Roney's masterful ballad playing — while underscoring the set's laudable stylistic range and exquisite musicianship.

— Mark Holston

Jane Bunnett and Maqueque *On Firm Ground/Tierra Firme* (Linus Entertainment)

For more than a quarter of a century, Canadian saxophonist and flutist Jane Bunnett has immersed herself in Cuban culture and exhibited passion for the island's music. Maqueque, a band that includes a number of Havana-based female musicians, represents Bunnett's latest labor of love.

The group's third release, *On Firm Ground/Tierra Firme* — which also features Zimbabwean vocalist Joanna Majoko — is more than a collection of infectious rhythms and effervescent melodies, although there are plenty of those. The intricate, multilayered tracks brim with graceful spontaneity and exude soul. The latter is particularly prominent on tracks where Ohio-based sacred-steel player and vocalist Nikki D. Brown is featured.

The captivating "The Occurrence (to Amelie)" opens with spare handclapping

over which Majoko lets loose a stirring song. The overlapping instrumental refrains create a densely woven and mellifluous sonic tapestry around Bunnett's shimmering flute. The piece's composer, pianist Dánae Olano, embellishes the melody with elegance and resonant tones as she ushers in the conclusion.

Ensemble members showcase their individual expressiveness throughout. Drummer Yissy Garcia's lilting ballad "Habana de Noche (Havana at Night)" spotlights bassist Tailin Marrero's lithe and lyrical solo within a nocturnesque ambience. Bunnett blows serpentine lines with wistful yearning. A bluesy call and response hauntingly closes the tune.

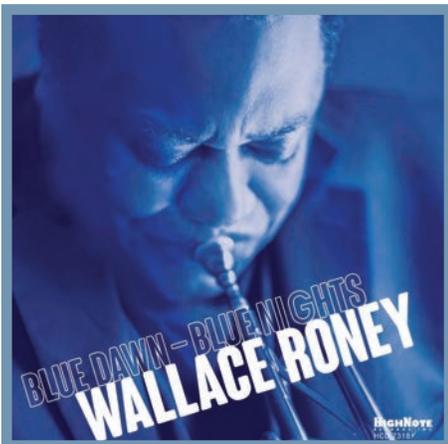
Former group member Daymé Arocena makes a memorable guest appearance on her intimate composition "Mystery of Jane's House." Arocena's expressive voice and Bunnett's acerbic saxophone blend with their bandmates' percolating beats to generate a cinematic feel. Percussionist Mary Paz, together with the rhythm section, builds a delightfully angular backdrop for Arocena and Bunnett.

The term *maqueque* loosely translates to a young woman's spiritual energy. It's an apt appellation for a collective that creates a unique blend of ethereal folkloric sounds and fiery jazz. Like its predecessors, *On Firm Ground/Tierra Firme* simultaneously intrigues and mesmerizes.

— Hrayr Attarian

Makar Kashitsyn *Jazz Animals* (Rainy Days)

The odds of young talent succeeding at any task are greatly enhanced by the presence of an effective support system. And that's precisely what 19-year-old tenor saxophonist Makar Kashitsyn has at his disposal on his debut recording, *Jazz Animals*. Because of Kashitsyn's willingness to defer to his highly skilled accompanists on a regular basis, rather than insisting upon



consistently dominating the action, he sometimes seems like a precocious contributor to the project as opposed to its guiding intelligence. But his open-minded philosophy, as well as his nascent compositional abilities, help deliver an entertaining present even as they bode well for the future.

A transplanted New Yorker originally from Moscow, Kashitsyn is clearly important to the folks behind St. Petersburg-based Rainy Days Records, for whom giving Russian jazz artists an international platform is a primary mission. As such, they've surrounded him with five strong comrades: drummer/producer Sasha Mashin; arranger and composer (of the tricky, beguiling "Song for Chad") Nikita Mochalin; commanding bassist Makar Novikov; quick-fingered pianist/keyboardist Alexey Podymkin; and the spectacularly gifted guitarist Alexey Polubabkin, who grabs the spotlight and doesn't let go on his three tracks, especially "Our Song," in which his solo is sexy and swaggering.

But just as key are tenor saxophonist and literal Kashitsyn tutor Chad Lefkowitz-Brown and flamboyant trumpet/flugelhorn pro Josh Evans, both of Christian McBride's New Jawn Quartet; and Dutch singer Hiske Oosterwijk, whose atmospheric yet swinging vocalizations add immeasurably to the final three cuts.

And Kashitsyn? His songwriting chops show genuine promise, with the joyful, propulsive "Going to

Ekaterinburg" and "Phone Call," marked by some tricky dynamic shifts, earning top honors. His playing, meanwhile, is intuitive and persuasive, as on "Confession," when he responds to showy features by Evans and Lefkowitz-Brown with a passionate expression of his own. Consider it a harbinger.

— **Michael Roberts**

Nicholas Payton *Relaxin' With Nick* (Smoke Sessions)

Closing in on 25 years since his Verve debut, versatile trumpeter and multi-instrumentalist Nicholas Payton creates something remarkable in this age of limited musical attention spans — a lengthy double-disc set of alternately soft-spoken and off-the-chain raucous live performances captured at Smoke Jazz & Supper Club in New York City.

Though certain pieces on *Relaxin' With Nick* — or parts of them, like the first few minutes of the ultimately hard-swinging "1983" and a moody, expansive take on "When I Fall In Love" — are indeed laid-back chill-outs, the album title has little to do with literal tempo. Grooving mightily with two unrelated Washingtons, bassist Peter and drummer Kenny, Payton puts any inkling of meditative cool to bed with the polyrhythmic cha-cha-cha-driven fusion jam of "El Guajiro"; a snazzy swing through "Tea For Two"; and his otherworldly, George Duke-esque synth solo on Benny Golson's "Stablemates." The

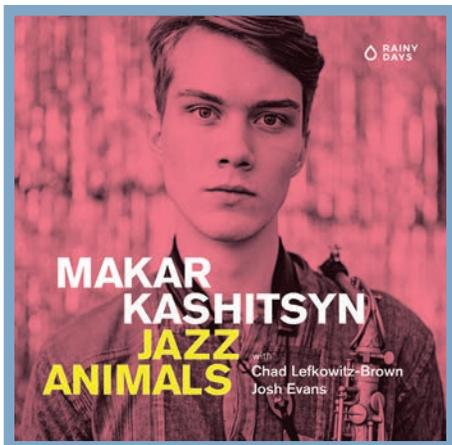
"relaxing" seems to refer to the casual, buoyant sense of fun Payton has with his explosive trio as he showcases his often ear-popping, equally burning melodic power and adventurous improvisational chops on the horn, piano and retro keyboards.

In a realm where most instrumentalists are stereotyped as masters of a single instrument, the most liberating 15 minutes happen on "Five." Over quickly shifting rhythms, Payton switches effortlessly from trumpet to keys to piano, artfully bridging seductive trad jazz and fiery jazz fusion. Most likely the audience was tapping its toes throughout the show, anticipating when the next unexpected burst of elegance or percussive craziness might occur. Nothing truly relaxing about that. Yet there's still something fresh, loose and creatively revealing about listening to Payton, free of studio confines and parameters, vibing thoughtfully and joyfully with his pals and sharing all these elements in such an intimate setting.

— **Jonathan Widran**

Joel Harrison *Still Point: Turning World* (Whirlwind)

More than most of his peers, guitarist Joel Harrison, 62, has refused to be hemmed in by the strictures of conventional jazz. His 21 albums as a leader include unique mutations of Appalachian music, interpretations of George Harrison songs,





Joel Harrison

collections of self-penned Americana-styled tunes that he sings in a crusty croak, and other uncategorizable projects that suggest he doesn't relish being defined primarily as a jazz guitarist.

Still Point: Turning World continues this theme, with Harrison's chosen reference point being Indian music, loosely defined. The album, albeit adventurous, delivers mixed results. In another outing that features unique instrumentation, Harrison is joined by saxophonist Ben Wendel, who also adds bassoon; Dan Weiss on drums and tabla; two revolving acoustic bassists, Hans Glawischnig and Stephan Crump; and the experimental Talujon Percussion Quartet. The featured player here is Anupam Shobhakar, a native of India, now living in New York, on *sarode*, a fretless cousin of the sitar.

The album begins in beguiling fashion with the first of eight "movements." The nearly 10-minute "Raindrops in Uncommon Times" unfolds gracefully and accents its South Asian elements with tabla, choppy marimba parts and a section where Shobhakar trades slurry, slithery solos with Harrison's amped-up guitar. "One Is Really Many" continues the momentum,

with a more pronounced jazz feel and a finely wrought melody that builds to a stirring climax.

The album strays from this thread as it unfolds, the melodies getting busier and busier, the arrangements becoming denser and less focused — although "Mvt. 5: Ballad of Blue Mountain" evinces a stately elegance. Harrison seems to prefer integrating his guitar work into the overall musical concept rather than showcasing it. He scarcely solos outright, more inclined to provide washes of color beneath Shobhakar's *sarode* excursions.

Still Point: Turning World deserves credit for ambition and for its precise ensemble playing. But, in attempting to squeeze so many musical elements together, Harrison fails to corral them into a cohesive statement.

—Eric Snider

Daymé Arocena *Sonocardiogram* (Brownswood)

Daymé Arocena's swift ascent in the international jazz scene as a gifted vocalist and composer is inextricably tied to her spiritual, genre-bending approach. Staying true to form on her latest excursion, *Sonocardiogram*, the Havana songstress

delves deeper into previously charted terrain. Only this time she's at the helm of the production, showcasing sinuously textured arrangements that have her exploring new and surprising directions.

Arocena exposes nuanced sonic hues and intricate sensibilities surrounding the raw emotions of love, loss of love, unbridled joy and spirituality. Referencing the echocardiogram as a barometer of sorts for what makes our blood flow, Arocena's latest outing brims with vital life force.

Accompanied by her quartet — pianist/keyboardist Jorge Luis Lagarza, bassist Rafael Aldama, and alternating drummers Marcos Morales Valdés and José Carlos Sanchez — Arocena conjures a cool, ethereally sophisticated vibe that's dark around the edges. She opens with a meditative, spoken-word prelude that's essentially a prayer to herself. It segues into a three-part suite in praise of Yoruba deities, followed by a street rumba interlude that transitions into the brooding, R&B-flavored "Porque Tú No Estás." Here Arocena weaves a sexy, billowing lament ending in a breathtaking, full-throated belt. "Para El Amor: Cantar!" starts off as a rumba then morphs into samba-jazz, underscored by a pliable bass line and shuffling, rhythmic traps. Lagarza's melodic keys intertwine with Arocena's vibrant, cascading vocals before the pianist soars on a crisp, elegant solo.

With dramatic tempo shifts and instrumental flourishes on electric keyboard, "Menuet Para un Corazón"



is the highlight of the set, as a circular, reverberating bass line propels Arocena's dreamlike contralto into the stratosphere. Arocena pays tribute to Cuban singer La Lupe on "Plegaria a La Lupe" and nods to past and present on "Homenaje," a bolero-cha giving off Brazilian chill vibes and avant-garde dissonance. *Sonocardiogram* epitomizes the beguiling hybridity that is part and parcel of Arocena's essence.

— **Lisette Corsa**

Ethan Iverson Quartet, with Tom Harrell

Common Practice (ECM)

Pianist Ethan Iverson describes his fourth appearance on ECM as a nostalgic love letter to the jazz he heard when first arriving in New York City 28 years ago. Recorded live at the Village Vanguard, his first leader date for the label hearkens back to an era when standard tunes were more than jam session fallbacks. And he could hardly have asked for better company on the front line than trumpeter Tom Harrell.

Common Practice may be a love letter but it's not strictly a ballad album. Of 11 songs, half qualify: "The Man I Love," "I Can't Get Started," "Sentimental Journey," "Polka Dots and Moonbeams" and "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You." Along with two spontaneous, "headless" medium-tempo blues, Iverson's choices from the Great American Songbook receive superbly modern updates while

conveying the original sentiments. Through sheer, masterful musicianship, Harrell and Iverson make each of these familiar songs their own via intelligent variations in harmonic, melodic and rhythmic refractions — with bassist Ben Street and drummer Eric McPherson offering consistent support throughout.

Maturity is key. Even on the classic up-tempo "Wee," Iverson never overplays, carefully responding to Harrell's solo only when conversationally appropriate. Meanwhile, Street alternates bass lines from two-beat to walking four, and McPherson uses his entire kit to melodic advantage.

This band swings hard, but their ballads are epic. Iverson's piano intros are harmonically complex mini-preludes. On "Polka Dots," he alters the bridge with oblique notes, beautifully re-harmonizing on the spot. Harrell often double-times with youthful enthusiasm. An Iverson trademark, the pianist uses two-fisted chords that totally ignore bar lines, persisting with harmonic sequences for as long as they take to resolve.

This beautifully recorded live set is all about four extremely talented individuals maintaining group cohesion, a prerequisite for the best jazz since its earliest inception.

— **James Rozzi**

Gerald Cleaver & Violet Hour

Live at Firehouse 12 (Sunnyside)

This sextet, the brainchild of drummer Gerald Cleaver, first appeared on record more than a decade ago. It's a top-notch assembly of talent, featuring the front line of tenor saxophonist JD Allen, trumpeter Jeremy Pelt, and Andrew Bishop on various woodwinds. The group was captured on stage at the New Haven, Connecticut, venue Firehouse 12 in December of 2006, the spirited results of which are presented on this new release.

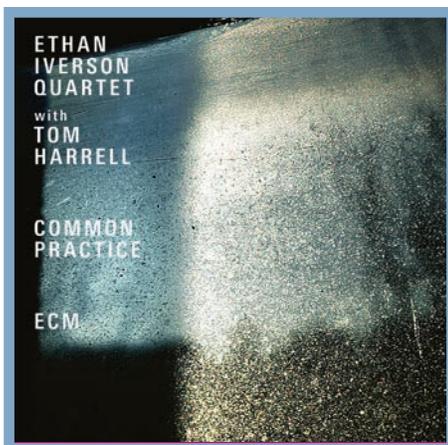
While Cleaver is known for applying his talents in more "out" jazz settings with the likes of Matthew Shipp and Roscoe Mitchell, balance is the key to

understanding his motivations with this group. Cleaver's sweet spot lies in seamlessly incorporating avant-garde elements within a more mainstream context. There's the way the slightly off-kilter harmony in the main theme of "Pilgrim's Progress" is offset by the hard-driving rhythm and the deeply melodic solos from Pelt, Allen and pianist Ben Waltzer. "The Silly One" presents a melody that's even more unsettling, but Bishop's bass clarinet acts as a ballast, steadying the dissonant front-line passages. Even amid the tune's intermittent rhythmic disruptions — and a few brief passages of group free improvisation — Cleaver and bassist Chris Lightcap maintain a funky mid-tempo glide that helps smooth the edges.

Contrast is another key to Cleaver's compositional method. "Tale of Bricks" opens with a low-key, free section featuring Cleaver, Waltzer and Lightcap. Cleaver and Lightcap eventually lock into a groove that invites the front line to burst through the abstraction with a soulful melodic statement. The waltz "Carla's Day" alternates ballad sections with bursts of high-energy swing, creating a push-pull tension. Pelt's solo, typically clear-eyed and lyrical, adds to the piece's intensity.

There's a lot going on, but the energy of the performances and the ingenuity of Cleaver's designs make it easy to just sit back and take flight with the music.

— **John Frederick Moore**





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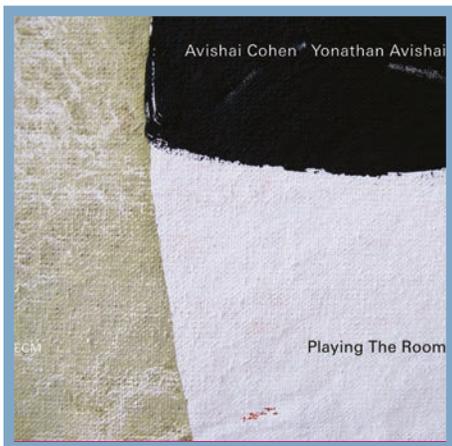
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Avishai Cohen/Yonathan Avishai
Playing the Room
 (ECM)

Following pianist Yonathan Avishai's contributions to trumpeter Avishai Cohen's recent ECM group projects, label founder and producer Manfred Eicher suggested the two longtime friends pair up for duo recordings at Auditorio Stelio Molo RSI in Lugano, Switzerland. The resonant wooden concert hall is renowned for its superb acoustics.

ECM is legendary for eliciting a recital hall sound from various recording studios, but there's nothing like the real thing. Hence, the sublimely ambient, three-way musical dialogue — trumpet/piano/hall — of *Playing the Room* has been released on CD and audiophile LP for listeners with discriminating ears.

Being generally slow in tempo, these nine songs may be described as ballads. But a slow beat can be subdivided to liven things up. For example, Avishai's "Two Lines," at first sounding like a subdued film soundtrack, evolves into a jaunty 6/8 dance at the halfway mark. Following an improvised solo section, the piece closes with call-and-response recapitulation.

Cohen's "The Opening" is the only other original composition. Using a phrase from the standard "My One and Only Love," both musicians manipulate the song's beautifully unfolding melody, displaying what distinguishes them from an array of pianists and trumpeters today — their tones. A few descriptive words



Avishai Cohen and Yonathan Avishai

come to mind: pristine, diaphanous, crystalline, exemplary, maybe even virginal. Avishai's touch is more of a caress, as though he feels his piano to be a living, breathing entity. Cohen's trumpet sound is pure enough to invite comparisons to Wynton Marsalis, Booker Little and Bix Beiderbecke.

Not that either musician is incapable of it, but swing is not on the menu. No matter. With a repertoire including compositions by Duke Ellington, Abdullah Ibrahim, Stevie Wonder and John Coltrane (Trane's "Crescent" is a standout), *Playing the Room* is a first-rate recording and certainly an asset to any listening room.

— **James Rozzi**

**Dave Holland,
 Zakir Hussain, Chris Potter**
Good Hope
 (Edition)

British-born bassist Dave Holland, Indian tabla master Zakir Hussain and New York-based saxophonist Chris Potter unofficially launched their Crosscurrents Trio in 2018 with concerts at the Istanbul Jazz Festival and elsewhere. The intergenerational group — Potter is 20 years younger than Hussain, who's five years younger than Holland — is aptly

named. The music on their debut recording seamlessly blends Western jazz grooves and harmonies with Eastern rhythms and percussion textures, a subtle exploration of the touch points between two seemingly disparate traditions. Not surprisingly, given the high-caliber musicianship, the session is all about communal interplay, with leadership variously shifting among the three players.

Each receives composer credits, individually, for the various tunes, although they have the feel of being heavily improvised. On Potter's "Ziandi," the opener, his tenor spins lean start-stop lines, and he tosses in a brief quote

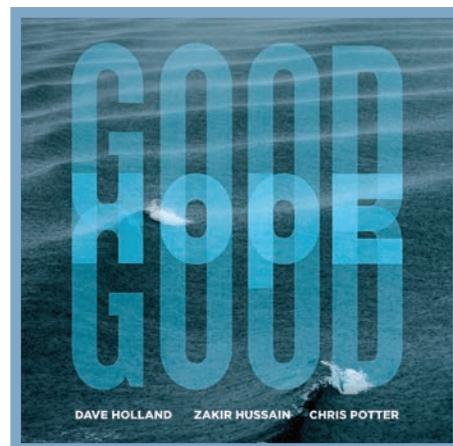


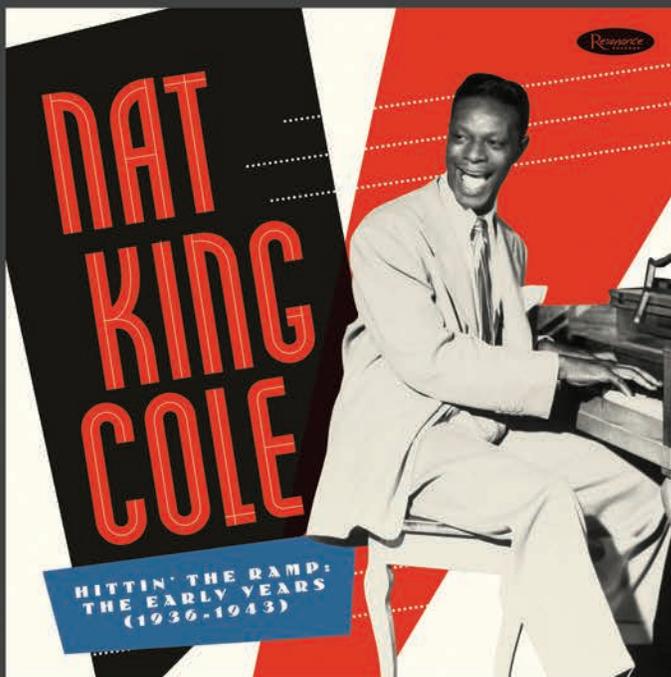
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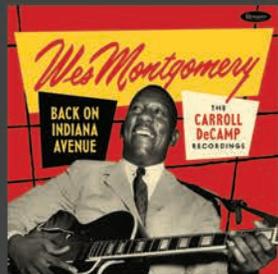


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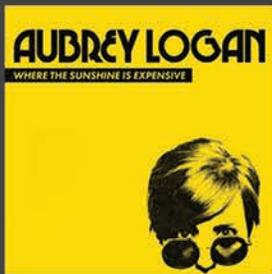
Newly-discovered recordings in the 1950s of jazz guitar legend **Wes Montgomery** captured in his hometown of Indianapolis, Indiana.

BILL EVANS
EVANS IN ENGLAND



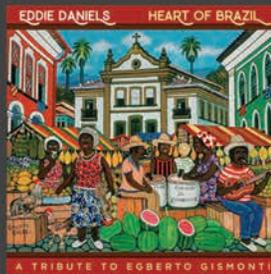
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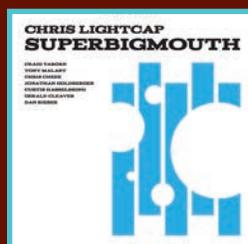
By Eric Snider



Steve Lehman Trio + Craig Taborn

The People I Love (Pi)

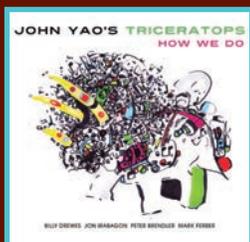
Two top-rank players — altoist Lehman and pianist Taborn — front a quartet that blazes through a riveting set of angular melodies and fleet, knotty solos. Splendid avant-bop with nods to late-Ornette funk, drum 'n' bass and myriad other elements.



Chris Lightcap

SuperBigmouth (Pyroclastic)

An octet (including Craig Taborn, Tony Malaby, Chris Cheek and Gerald Cleaver) renders bassist Lightcap's densely layered, cyclical compositions with gusto. Agile solos spar with surging ensemble crescendos, and heavy guitars add elements of prog-rock. Just the right portions of thick and messy.



John Yao's Triceratops

How We Do (See Tao)

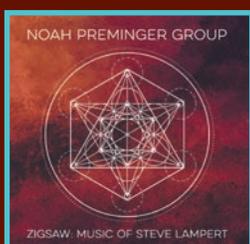
Like its prehistoric namesake, John Yao's Triceratops has three horns (plus bass and drums). Saxophonists Billy Drewes and Jon Irabagon and trombonist Yao display terrific chemistry through punchy originals that inject a dose of sleaze into a post-bop framework.



Veronica Swift

Confessions (Mack Avenue)

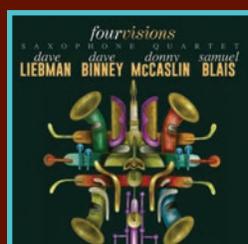
Backed by piano trio, the vivacious, crystalline-voiced singer, just 25, interprets a set of 12 tunes from the Songbook — both familiar and obscure. Her vocals are swinging and confident, but come up short on emotional resonance.



Noah Preminger Group

Zigsaw: Music of Steve Lampert (Dry Bridge)

Tenor man Preminger leads an ace septet (including electronics) through a labyrinthine 48-minute Lampert composition that lays the groundwork for some of the most intense, accomplished soloing you'll hear anywhere. Challenging, but well worth it.

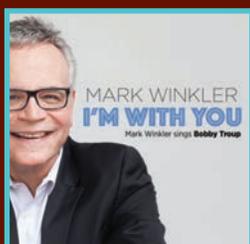


Four Visions Saxophone Quartet

Four Visions

Saxophone Quartet (Sunnyside)

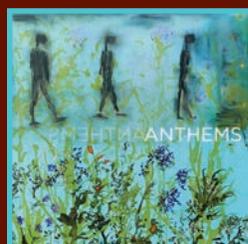
Who needs a rhythm section when you've got Dave Liebman (soprano), David Binney (alto), Donny McCaslin (tenor) and Samuel Blais (baritone) locking horns on a structured set of originals that ranges from neoclassical to Ellington-esque? Free blowing in measured doses.



Mark Winkler

I'm With You: Mark Winkler Sings Bobby Troup (Rhombus)

Vocalist Winkler hews to Troup's grabby melodies (including "Route 66"), bends notes and phrases and adds swagger, but rarely if ever oversings. Swinging, small-group martini jazz that goes down easy.



Caroline Davis

& Rob Clearfield's Persona

Anthems (Sunnyside)

Saxophonist Davis and pianist/keyboardist Clearfield lead a quartet through nine originals that emerge in mostly soft pastels, with a couple of uptempo diversions. Passingly pleasant, but this session could've used some more fire.

of “Peanut Vendor” before dropping out to make room for Holland’s lengthy solo. Hussain’s churning tablas drive the groove, and the piece climaxes with repeated unison bass-tenor figures. Potter’s “Island Feeling,” a modified blues, deploys a lilting melody over ambling rhythms, and the spiky “Good Hope” concludes with Hussain’s percussion wizardry against another tenor-bass line.

Potter’s soprano, darting over and through his bandmates’ grooves, changes up the sound on Holland’s sprawling, nearly 11-minute “Lucky Seven,” and also amplifies the shadows and light created on Holland’s tuneful “Mazad.” Potter, on tenor, cranks up the intensity of Hussain’s “J Bhai,” also a showcase for its composer, and Holland deploys some swerving, string-bending unaccompanied lines on Hussain’s “Suvarna.” A refreshing, off-brand collaboration, *Good Hope* allows for much inspired playing by three musically simpatico musicians. More please, sirs.

— Philip Booth

The Curtis Brothers

Algorithm

(Truth Revolution)

Even if your ear doesn’t immediately clue you in, the Curtis Brothers — pianist Zaccai and bassist Luques — are explicit about their pedigree: “the spirit of the great Art Blakey and his Jazz Messengers.” And that in-the-pocket hard bop hits you from opener “Three Points and a Sphere,” the anthemic unison theme with syncopated hard starts and stops, suffused with bluesy melodic content, even in Luques’ solo, pliant and lyrical while hewing to a deep bass heft and avoiding upper-register “guitaristic” flourishes.

The brothers come by the sound honestly, having studied at late Messenger Jackie McLean’s Artists Collective school in Hartford, Connecticut, and doing tours of duty with another former Messenger, alto saxophonist Donald Harrison. As on the brothers’ 2012 *Completion of Proof*, Harrison is joined by two other mentors and Blakey alums, trumpeter Brian Lynch and drummer Ralph Peterson.



Chris Potter, Zakir Hussain and Dave Holland

Six of the nine originals here, all by Zaccai, draw their titles from mathematical terms, while three others pay tribute to the elders. Whatever the overarching concept, fleet, next-generation hard bop is the order of the day. That includes the brothers’ deep understanding of Afro-Cuban rhythms, as distilled into the New Orleans second-line undercurrent of the medium-tempo ballad “Phi” or the shifting flow of Luques’ bass patterns on “Parametric” — where Peterson’s all-over-the-kit cross-rhythms obviate the need for additional percussion, especially in an extended “shout” chorus section.

Despite the hard-driving propulsion, there’s a keen understanding of dynamics

as well, whether on the easy 3/4 ballad-swinging of “Torus,” with especially eloquent solos from the leaders, or the slow-pressure-build Lynch feature “The Professor.” As the audience on this live album (recorded at Old Lyme, Connecticut’s Side Door) responds to Lynch’s crackling solo, you’re reminded of another verity of hard bop: the impulse to engage.

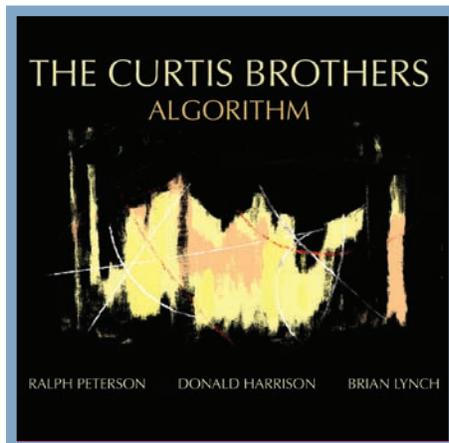
— Jon Garelick

John Coltrane

Blue World

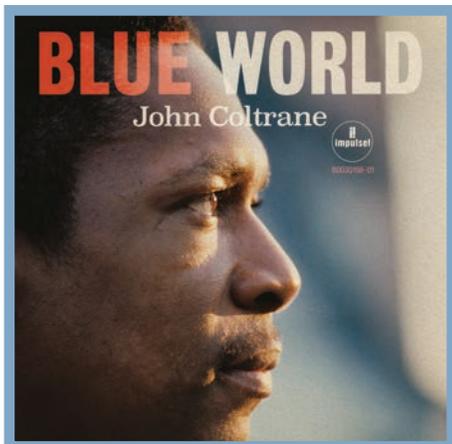
(Impulse!)

By now you’ve probably heard the story behind *Blue World*, the second “lost album” of John Coltrane’s to arrive in 15 months. At the behest of Gilles Groulx, a Canadian filmmaker who wanted to use Coltrane’s music in his 1964 film *Cat in the Sack*, the classic Coltrane quartet — pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Elvin Jones — entered the studio to revisit several previously recorded compositions. The fact that this approach was unique in the band’s history accounts for some of the buzz around *Blue World*, but not as much as the timing of this session: It was sandwiched between the recordings of *Crescent* and *A Love Supreme*, which together constitute the gravitational center of Coltrane’s universe.



John Coltrane

It's a slim volume, 37 minutes in all — only a quarter of which made it into Groulx's film — and likely to have listeners largely scratching their heads at the hype. "Naima" appears twice, and it's worth comparing with Tyner's initial recordings of the song in 1961; his solos are busy and sparkling, but in the intervening years he had learned to convey introspection, as well. Two takes of "Village Blues," which debuted in 1960, better capture the moment. Coltrane's flights make the original sound comparatively tentative. But only a new take on "Traneing In" (from 1957) and the title track, apparently written for this session, really sizzle. "Blue World" occupies the expansive landscape of Trane's last years. The theme sets the mood and tempo, with the tenor solo lightly tethered to the modal vamp. It's an impassioned



and well-modeled statement, but does it tell us something we didn't already know about Coltrane in 1964? Not really.

With a figure as groundbreaking, iconic and influential as Coltrane, there will always be an appetite for new discoveries. And we may enjoy hearing the quartet run through some of the old book. But coming on the heels of the far more revelatory *Both Directions at Once* — Trane's previous "lost album," which contained new compositions that tracked his transition during this period — *Blue World* barely satisfies that appetite.

— Neil Tesser

Chase Baird *A Life Between* (Soundsaboutd)

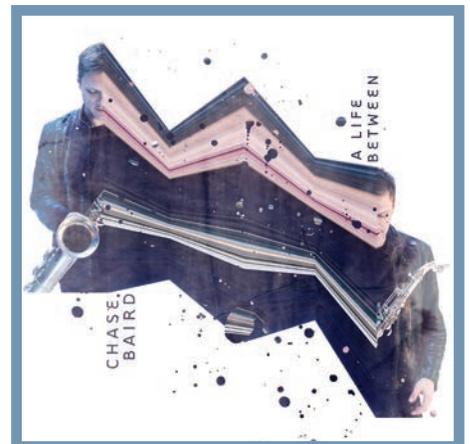
Chase Baird's new studio ensemble functions like an ecosystem. The New York-based saxophonist released his second LP, *A Life Between*, with the star-studded lineup of pianist Brad Mehldau, drummer Antonio Sanchez, bassist Dan Chmielinski and guitarist Nir Felder. There are no overlapping personnel from his 2010 debut *Crosscurrent*. Although this iteration of Baird's group may be new, their interplay teems with life.

Throughout the broad stylistic terrain of his seven compositions — juxtapositions of '90s rock (namely Radiohead), hard bop, post bop and 19th-century classical — Baird's solos leave ample room for dialogue. During his

solos on the hazy ballad "Dream Knows No End," each phrase echoes through the ensemble in a string of permutations that circles back to support him as he dances over the next change. Baird's rough-hewn tenor sound, enlivened by a rich repertoire of articulations, perfectly complements the warm ambience that Felder sculpts from a refreshing deployment of effects against the muffled body of his traditional jazz guitar tone. Their chemistry is most fruitful on the title track, a nocturnal confluence of Chopin and Coltrane. Mehldau's opening solo conjures a swift groove that gives motion within the confines of the wistful atmosphere. Baird and Felder then emerge frolicking, trading licks that soon weave into a rapturous joint solo. With a penchant for horn-like melodies that spill and splay over the groove, the guitarist deftly matches his bandleader's nimble, cathartic lines.

A similar dynamic emerges within the rhythm section. On "Reactor" — an angular, odd-metered banger — Chmielinski outlines the infrastructure in spare but syncopated bounds, granting the space and large-scale framework necessary for Sanchez to adorn the groove with feverish details. Mehldau brilliantly frames the action with echoes of previous fragments. Overall, each musician's razor-sharp responsiveness allows for cohesive, well-shaped arrangements without relying on the anchor of rote repetition.

— Asher Wolf ■





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Requiem for a Heavyweight

By Bob Weinberg

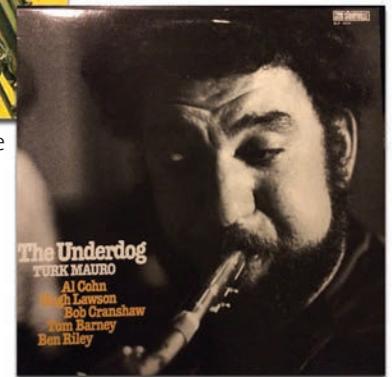
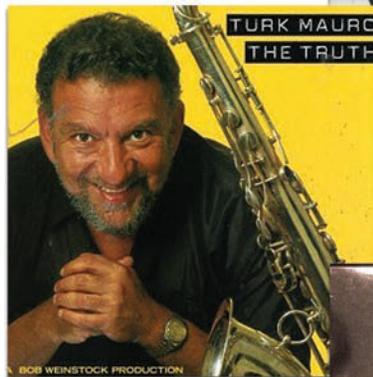
By the time he settled in South Florida, Turk Mauro had lived a fairly epic jazz life. On the cusp of 50 in 1994, the saxophonist had played with the bands of Buddy Rich and Dizzy Gillespie, and worked with Stan Getz, Zoot Sims and Al Cohn, among other marquee names. At the suggestion of Sonny Rollins, he had relocated to Paris, where he thrived for years before moving to the Sunshine State to care for his ailing father. Mauro worked fairly steadily, although his fortunes ebbed due to failing health and personal controversy (more of which later). After decades of scuffling on an increasingly diminished jazz scene, Mauro died in August at age 75.

With his wolfish grin and salt-and-pepper beard, Mauro became a fixture at clubs such as O'Hara's Pub in Fort Lauderdale, where he played with the area's top jazz musicians as well as with his longtime friend and fellow saxophonist Richie Cole. Like Cole, Mauro was rooted in the jazz and R&B of his early years, citing tenor man Gene Ammons as a major influence and including himself among the players who "were unaffected by the John Coltrane School of playing."

Born Mauro Turso in New York City, Turk developed a love for jazz at an early age. His dad, a truck driver, played tenor sax in a swing band. By age 11, Turk habituated the sidewalk outside the Metropole Cafe at Seventh Avenue and 48th Street, too young to enter but positioned just right to see and hear Zutty Singleton, Coleman Hawkins, Roy Eldridge and Charlie Shavers through the nightclub's glass doors. He eventually got to know the musicians. Trumpeter Henry "Red" Allen took him under his wing, allowed him to sit in and even got him gigs. As a young man, Mauro continued to impress the jazz elite, whose encouragement convinced him that maybe he could make a living playing jazz.

Mauro's future looked promising. He played a two-week engagement with Dizzy Gillespie, joined Buddy Rich's band, received strong reviews for his 1977 debut album, *The Underdog*, and opened the Blue Note jazz club in New York in 1981. But the '80s proved challenging. His sophomore recording, *The Heavyweight*, tanked. Jobs for trad jazzers were becoming scarce. In 1987, following Rollins' advice, he moved to Paris, finding success as an in-demand sideman until recession rocked the French economy. South Florida was his next stop.

Mauro was welcomed into the area's small but active jazz scene, winning fans and fellow musicians with his brawny



sound on tenor and baritone saxes, bawdy blues singing and a willingness to share stories and a joint after a set. But away from the bandstand, Mauro's life was far from rosy. His father's health continued

to deteriorate, as did his own; his colon burst, laying him up in the hospital. He was gambling and losing big, and his marriage was in free-fall. His frustration spilled over at O'Hara's one night in late 1999. During a set, he squabbled with vocalist Beverly Barkley, who remonstrated him for lighting a cigarette on stage. Later that evening Mauro punched the singer square in the face. He was arrested, and his career took a hit. Certainly, he was no longer welcome at O'Hara's.

Time passed, and Mauro worked at other venues. However, he continued to battle health issues, including dental problems and eventually cancer. About six years ago, Mauro retired, holding a farewell performance at The Arts Garage in Delray Beach. At the end, he was living in a friend's condo. When the friend died in July, his continued residence there was untenable, but Mauro died before it became an issue.

Fellow musicians paid tribute on Facebook, attesting to Mauro's generosity of spirit and unsparing honesty and the sheer joy of working and hanging with him. Mauro may not have attained the glittering heights of the names on the marquee at the Metropole, but he had made it past the door and onto the stage, where he enjoyed every minute of his hard-won life in the jazz world. ■

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Johnny Hodges, Billy Cobham, Erroll Garner, Kevin Mahogany, Carmen Lundy, Brian Lynch, Victor Gould, The Bad Plus, Daymé Arocena, John Coltrane, Turk Mauro and a whole lot more.