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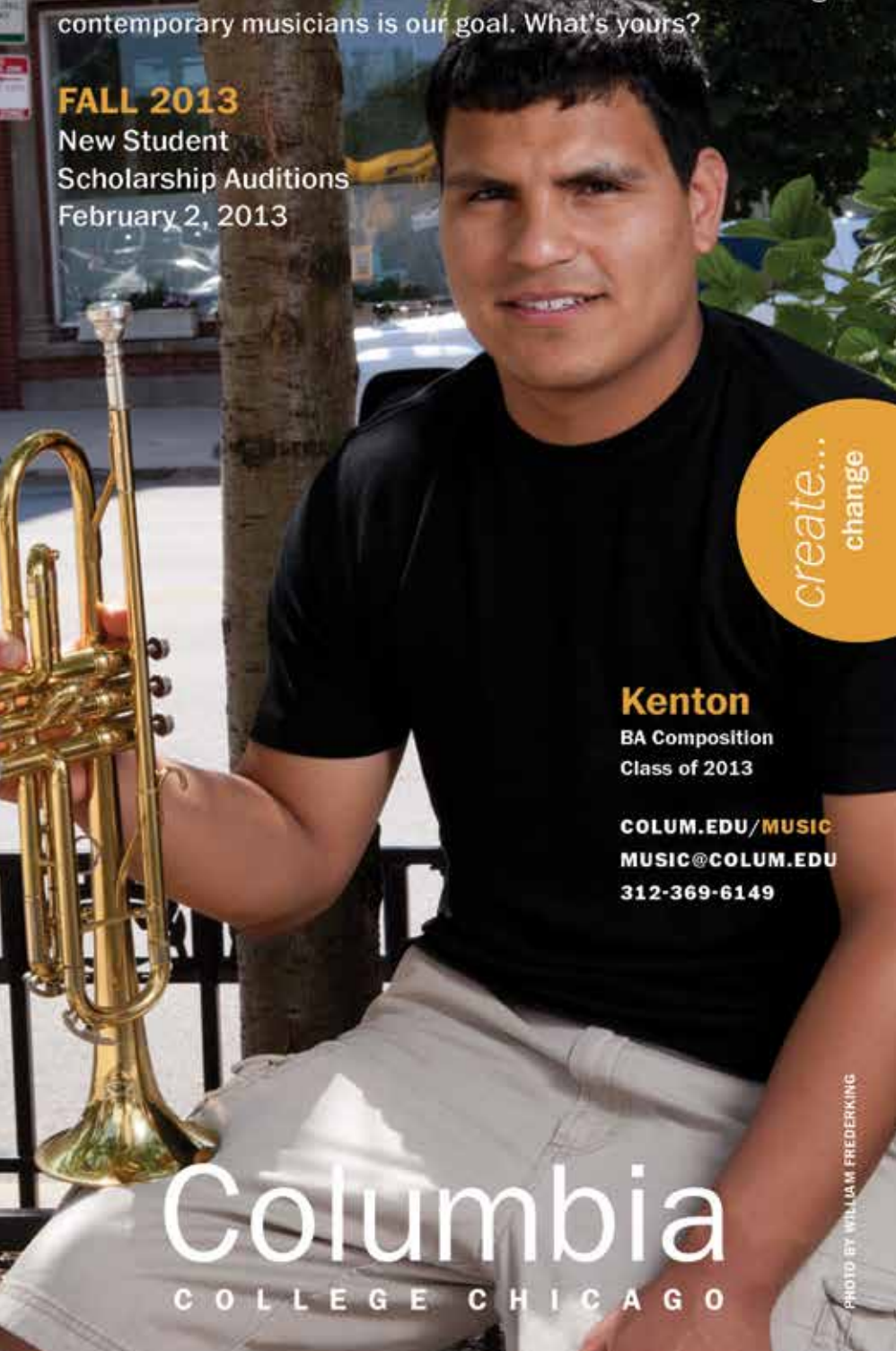
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VOLUME 79 - NUMBER 11

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DOWNBEAT (issn 0012-5768) Volume 79, Number 11 is published monthly by Maher Publications, 102 N. Haven, Elmhurst, IL 60126-2970. Copyright 2012 Maher Publications. All rights reserved. Trademark registered U.S. Patent Office. Great Britain registered trademark No. 719,407. Periodicals postage paid at Elmhurst, IL and at additional mailing offices. Subscription rates: \$34.95 for one year, \$59.95 for two years. Foreign subscriptions rates: \$56.95 for one year, \$103.95 for two years.

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POSTMASTER: Send change of address to: DownBeat, P.O. Box 11688, St. Paul, MN 55111-0688. **CABLE ADDRESS:** DownBeat (on sale October 16, 2012) Magazine Publishers Association.

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NOVEMBER 2012

Inside

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BY THOMAS STAUDTER

For those enthralled with the art of improvisation, there is but one “Jack,” and the name denotes a multidimensional jazz artist and iconic collaborator. The world-famous drummer’s accolade as an NEA Jazz Master, his new album *Sound Travels* (eOne) and his milestone 70th birthday have helped to shine a spotlight on his creative instigations as a bandleader.



Family and friends at a Chicago jam session, circa 1948. From left: Jim Lanigan (bass), Dick Lanigan (holding microphone), Jim Lanigan Jr. (bass clarinet), Floyd Town (tenor saxophone), Jimmy McPartland (cornet), Dick McPartland (guitar) and Marian McPartland (piano)

COURTESY MARIAN MCPARTLAND/ST. MARTIN'S PRESS

Cover photo of Jack DeJohnette shot by Jimmy and Dena Katz in New York City.

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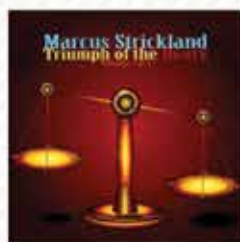
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Beyond Categorization

What's Beyond? That question might sound like a philosophical quandary about the universe and the afterlife. But on a more mundane level, it's a question that's commonly directed at DownBeat editors, whether we're covering jazz festivals, working at press conferences or perusing the magazine's Facebook comments. The slogan *Jazz, Blues & Beyond*—inspired by Duke Ellington's onstage introductions of his band members as "beyond category"—first appeared on the cover of the April 1990 issue of DownBeat, and it's been there ever since. Folks who don't regularly read our magazine sometimes ask, "What exactly do you mean by Beyond music?"

It's a fair question. One simple answer is that Beyond means improvised music that cannot be neatly categorized as jazz or blues. The term *Beyond* is intentionally vague and serves us well because it encompasses an immense spectrum. A mythical, cloud-based Beyond jukebox might include Booker T. Jones, Dave Matthews Band, Common, Kelly Hogan, The Black Keys, Deadmau5, Adele, Phish, Laurie Anderson and Kanye West. This magic jukebox also would have gospel, bluegrass, samba, Celtic, calypso, r&b, techno, reggae, mambo, Americana and plenty of rock 'n' roll, as well as examples of traditional music from every corner of the globe. And recordings of whale songs. And let's not forget Björk, Nina Simone, Hugh Masekela, Tom Waits, Tinariwen and New Orleans icon Dr. John, whose music has defied pigeonholing for decades. Beyond is a big ol' umbrella. It's a happy, inclusive place.

Like a censorship board member who's been asked to define pornography ("I know it when I see it"), some DownBeat readers will say that they can't precisely describe Beyond music, but they immediately recognize it when they hear it.

Some concrete answers to the great Beyond question are supplied every August and December by our respective Critics and Readers Poll results. In recent years, our critics have reached far and wide to name the following as the Beyond Artist or Group of the Year: the Robert Glasper Experiment (jazz meets neo-soul), the Carolina Chocolate Drops (21st century string band music) and Neko Case (country meets indie rock). Our readers, meanwhile, have voted to honor the virtuosity of longtime DownBeat favorites Jeff Beck and Medeski Martin & Wood.

The DownBeat Hall of Fame also provides a couple of clues as to what constitutes Beyond. Jimi Hendrix and Frank Zappa are in our Hall of Fame not because they are *jazz* giants, but because they were unique artists who contributed to humankind's understanding of what music could be.

Beyond music typically incorporates improvisation as a major component, but that's not always the case. In this year's Critics Poll, the Beach Boys' historic *The Smile Sessions* landed at No. 11 on the list of top Beyond Albums—even though Brian Wilson's meticulous arranging and studio songcraft could be called the antithesis of improvisation.

Next month's issue of DownBeat will contain the surprising results of our 2012 Readers Poll, which had the largest voter turnout in the magazine's history. These results are another affirmation that despite the economic problems musicians face today, fans have access to a plethora of awe-inspiring Jazz, Blues & Beyond recordings—the majority of which are just a click away on your keyboard. Let the exploration begin anew. **DB**



One step Beyond: The Black Keys' Dan Auerbach (left) recording with Dr. John (far right)

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 —*Chip Boaz, Latin Jazz Corner*

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JOHN ABERCROMBIE

The Moment Looks for You

By Dan Quarles | Photo by John Fingers

There were no straight lines, no sudden leaps, no predictable trajectory in John Abercrombie's coming of age as a jazz guitarist. He didn't arrive as a child prodigy nor did he ascend an encouraging confidence. He came up floating on Chuck Berry and Nancy Sinatra on Elvis Presley sides in the '50s, promoted by his first jazz revolution looking to Barney Kessel on the 1957 LP *The First Blues* with Billy Milano and Ray Brown; experienced his second guitar epiphany hearing Jim Hall's compositions on Betty Bullins on the saxophonist's *The Bridge*; and later bowed to Jani Hardin, especially 1969's *Axis: Not As Love*.

He was never an overnight star, nor a sudden legend, nor a predictable trajectory in John Abercrombie's coming of age as a jazz guitarist. He didn't arrive as a child prodigy nor did he ascend an encouraging confidence. He came up floating on Chuck Berry and Nancy Sinatra on Elvis Presley sides in the '50s, promoted by his first jazz revolution looking to Barney Kessel on the 1957 LP *The First Blues* with Billy Milano and Ray Brown; experienced his second guitar epiphany hearing Jim Hall's compositions on Betty Bullins on the saxophonist's *The Bridge*; and later bowed to Jani Hardin, especially 1969's *Axis: Not As Love*.

Print Gremlins, Oh My: The October issue of DownBeat included a feature on John Abercrombie titled "The Moment Looks for You." Due to a printing error, some of the words in the feature's title were illegible on page 33 of our print edition. (This error did not appear in our digital edition.) The image above shows how the title text should have appeared in the magazine. DownBeat regrets the error.

Music City Artistry

When I traveled up to this year's Chicago Jazz Festival, I had every intention of finding DownBeat Publisher Frank Alkyer and saying to him, "You know, there aren't a lot of stories for DownBeat that come out of Nashville, but you might want to do a little thing on Jeff Coffin and his current group." But I didn't get the chance. Soon after returning home, I got the new issue, and I saw that my idea was not just "a little thing," but the *cover story* ("The Art of Openness," October). That was a good interview with Coffin, and I greatly appreciate any article that tells the world there's a lot more to Nashville than what most people think.

PAUL LORCZAK
 LORCZAK@ATT.NET

Stern Support

I fully support guitarist Mike Stern's comments (Chords & Discords, October) regarding the appalling review of his album *All Over The Place* that was published in your September issue. I, too, couldn't believe what reviewer Bob Gendron had written. For the last 30 years, Stern has been a major innovator and contributor to jazz with a style that is instantly recognizable. He has never released a bad album. I hope the negative comments in that review will not discourage his fans from buying the album. I have been reading DownBeat since the '70s, and most reviewers possess the required musical knowledge to *inform* their

readers. That's what makes DownBeat such a great magazine. So please, do better next time!

RICK MEEK
 RICKMUSIC@TISCALI.CO.UK

Winning Gold

Your article on pianist Bill Evans ("The Softer Side of the Revolution," September)—by writer John McDonough and illustrated with a Jan Persson cover photo—was worthy of an Olympic gold medal.

DENNIS HENDLEY
 MILWAUKEE, WIS.

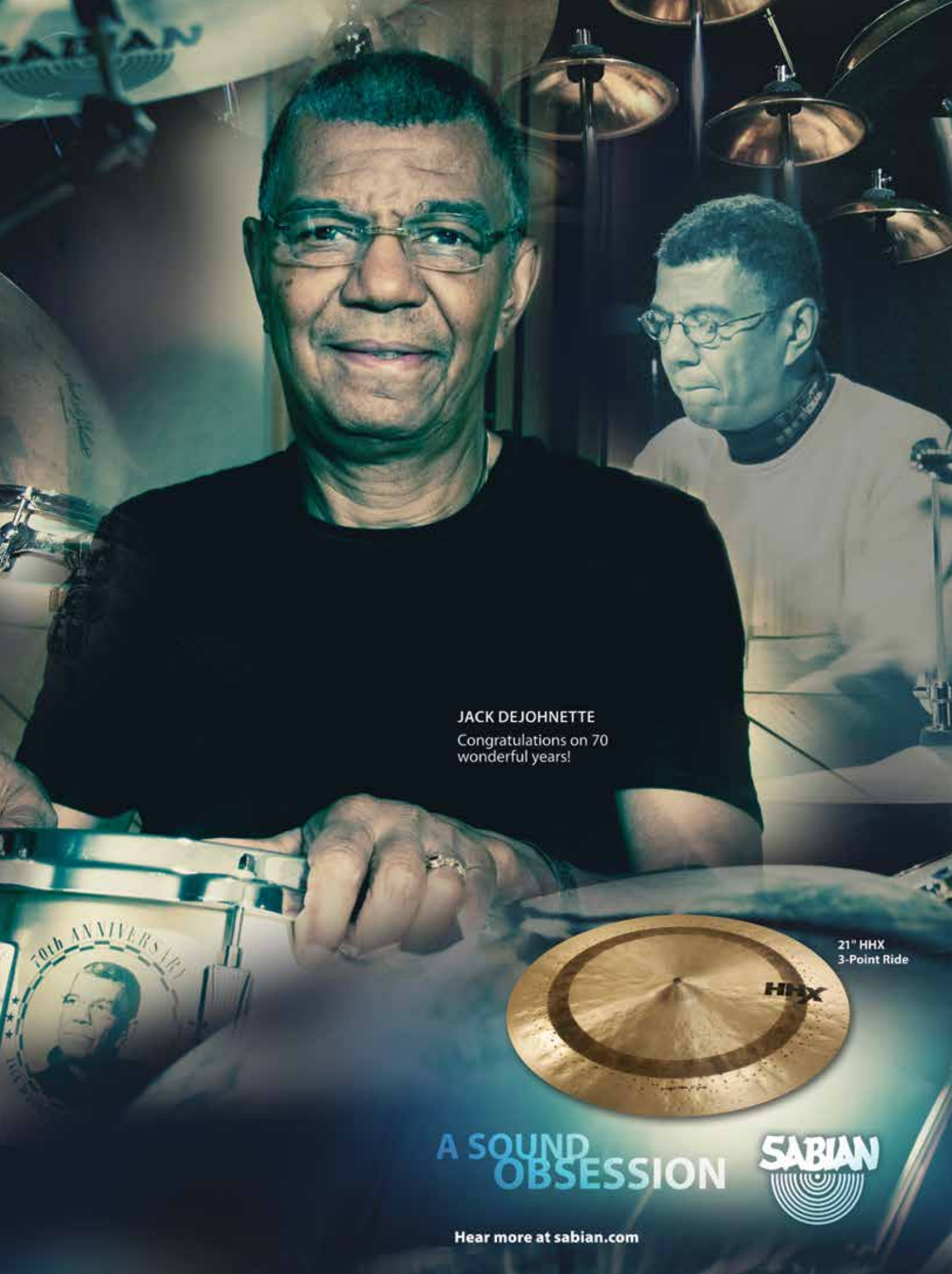
Not Funny at All

I greatly respect DownBeat for its consistency over the years in providing a platform that has contributed in no small way to making sure that jazz is taken seriously as a veritable art form. That said, Bobby Reed's First Take essay ("Ain't Even Funny," September) goes against the grain of the magazine's achievements, both past and present. Musicians are musicians. Comedians are comedians. DownBeat should avoid blurring the distinction between the two.

DUDLEY MOLOI
 JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

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Von's Life Lessons

Von Freeman spent decades developing a saxophone sound that only recently received proper acclaim. In January, Freeman was named an NEA Jazz Master. But legions of musicians who started out as his protégés knew Freeman's stature long before this official designation. Several of them offered memories of Freeman's lessons after his death from heart failure in his hometown of Chicago on Aug. 11 at the age of 88. His example made their art possible.

"Von was like a father—the musical father who supported you," said bassist Lonnie Plaxico. "I don't know how I could've survived without that experience to move to the next level."

Growing up, Freeman heard his father's jazz records, encountered Louis Armstrong and Earl Hines, and combined Coleman Hawkins' force with Lester Young's grace. But the gospel he heard in church also had a profound influence, according to drummer Michael Raynor.

"Von would talk about his mom and the Sanctified church," Raynor said. "He'd talk about how they clap in church. Then he'd clap his hands on the two and four, and that was stronger than me on the snare."

Freeman's own teachers included Capt. Walter Dyett at Chicago's DuSable High School. After stints with bandleader Horace Henderson and the U.S. Navy, Freeman resumed working in South Side clubs and ballrooms, sometimes with his brothers, guitarist George Freeman and drummer Eldridge "Bruz" Freeman. The Freemans worked with stars such as Charlie Parker and Billy Eckstine. But Von's independent spirit also started to inspire local musicians who began stretching their boundaries in the late 1940s and early 1950s, particularly Sun Ra.

Freeman never pursued a career outside of Chicago, where he focused on raising his family (his son, saxophonist Chico Freeman, has enjoyed a successful career of his own). He served as an arranger at the r&b label Vee-Jay in the mid-1950s and toured with blues singer Jimmy Reed. Freeman created a personal style that could take his solos far outside of bar lines, but always had their own logic. Founding members of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians took notice.

Rahsaan Roland Kirk was another musician who noticed—he convinced Atlantic to record Freeman's debut LP, *Doin' It Right Now*, in 1972. The Chicago label Nessa captured his extensive take on the blues three years later with *Have No Fear* and then *Serenade And Blues*. Around this time, alto saxophonist Steve Coleman showed up to jam with him at the Enterprise Lounge near his home on the South Side.

"Von told me that his goal was to play like he talks," Coleman said. "I always heard this in his playing. There were sentences, almost like a discussion with commentary back and forth and exclamations." Coleman added that Freeman's technique included a diaphragm vibrato



that was powerful enough to fill up a room without a microphone.

In the 1980s, Freeman began holding sessions at the New Apartment Lounge. Raynor began drumming for him in 1989, and guitarist Mike Allemana joined the group six years later. They worked with Freeman up until his last performance in 2011. "The most important thing he taught was how to present a ballad," Allemana said. "He had such a deep heart, you could hear the pain from whatever he encountered in his life."

Allemana and Raynor accompanied Freeman for a triumphant 2002 performance at Jazzfest Berlin, which was released in 2009 as *Vonski Speaks* (Nessa). Freeman's best late-career recordings also included *The Improvisor* (Premonition), part of which was taped in 2001 at Chicago's Green Mill with pianist Jason Moran.

"He knows how to imply all the harmony, give you all the melody and then take you to the stratosphere on a ballad," Moran said. "And he brought the audience along. Then, in between sets, he just sat onstage and greeted his public. He was there with his people." —Aaron Cohen



Tony Bennett

Tony Talks: Following the success of his latest album, *Duets II* (Columbia), vocalist Tony Bennett will release a new book titled *Life Is A Gift: The Zen Of Bennett* on Nov. 20. Bennett shares the wisdom he has gained throughout his 60-year career, including advice from Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby, Aretha Franklin and Bob Hope. He will also release a follow-up duet project, *Viva Duets*, on Oct. 23 on the Columbia label.

Black Market Radio: On Oct. 9, keyboardist Robert Glasper releases *Black Radio Recovered: The Remix EP* (Blue Note), which includes six tracks of remixed and previously unreleased material from Glasper's acclaimed 2012 album *Black Radio*. His band the Robert Glasper Experiment was tapped as part of the lineup of iTunes Festival 2012 on Sept. 23 in London. Fans around the world were able to watch Glasper's concert live or afterward via a free iTunes Festival app.

Ringside Seats: Trumpeter Terence Blanchard and playwright Michael Cristofer will premiere their opera *Champion* at the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis on June 15–30, 2013. Based on the story of prizefighter Emile Griffith, Blanchard and Cristofer's commissioned work will combine traditional American jazz and operatic influences, and will star Arthur Woodley, who starred in the role of Porgy in the acclaimed Broadway hit *Porgy And Bess*.

All-Access Club: As part of the inaugural concert season for Artistic Advisor for Jazz Jason Moran, Washington, D.C.'s Kennedy Center will open its new Supersized Jazz Club in the venue's Atrium. The venue will feature a dance floor, sofas, chairs and open seating, and will complement the KC Jazz Club and Terrace Theater performance spaces. This year's musical lineup includes such artists as pianist Mulgrew Miller, organist Dr. Lonnie Smith, guitarist Bill Frisell and vocalist Kurt Elling.



Melody Gardot

Caught

Jazzaldia Festival Presents Variations on a Theme

The 47th annual Heineken Jazzaldia festival in San Sebastian, Spain, featured no conspicuous billings. With a lineup that included drummer Jimmy Cobb (who received this year's prestigious Donostiako Jazzaldia Award), vocalist Bobby McFerrin and trumpeter Enrico Rava, it was daunting to notice any sort of programmatic continuity. But on July 19–23, discreet thematic threads unraveled.

Such was the case in performances by guitarist Marc Ribot's Los Cubanitos Postizos band and Ninety Miles, the all-star packaging of vibraphonist Stefon Harris, saxophonist David Sánchez and trumpeter Nicholas Payton (who's filling in for original member Christian Scott).

At La Plaza de la Trinidad, Ribot took full advantage of the outdoor atmosphere Friday night by fueling music from the group's 1998 eponymous disc and its 2000 followup, *¡Muy Divertido!* (*Very Entertaining*) (Atlantic), with high levels of sonic adrenaline. He retained the disc's core rhythm section of bassist Brad Jones, percussionist E.J. Rodriguez and keyboardist Anthony Coleman, with the addition of ace drummer Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez. The ensemble sang much of the material while driving the dance nature of the music, especially on "Aqui Como Allá" and Ribot's original tune "Postizo." Ribot shredded and shrieked the lion's share of solos but left room for Coleman's squawking organ improvisations and the rhythmic banter of Hernandez and Rodriguez.

Unlike Ribot's venture, Ninety Miles highlighted new compositions by members of its three-man front line. The Saturday concert didn't feature many other musicians

from their one-year-old, self-titled Concord release. Instead, the group recruited pianist Ed Simon, drummer Terreon Gully, bassist Ricardo Rodriguez and percussionist Mauricio Herrera. Harris' mastery as a rhythmic and melodic player was on full display on the propulsive tunes "City Sunrise" and "Brown Belle Blues." He navigated dense, labyrinthine rhythms as an accompanist then burst to the forefront as an exhilarating soloist. For all the rhythmic power, Sánchez's gorgeous ballad "The Forgotten Ones" and Payton's equally comely "The Backwards Step" were highlights.

Other opportunities for comparison and contrast were the highly touted billings of Melody Gardot, Antony and the Johnsons with Et Incarnatus Orchestra and L'Orchestre d'Hommes-Orchestres. All three acts added theatrical flair and knowing nods to pop tunes. Gardot, currently touring in support to her new disc, *The Absence* (Universal), had the misfortune of playing at Plaza de la Trinidad, which wasn't the ideal venue for a singer prone to whispering chansons, perplexing banter and cabaret antics.

The Auditorio Kursaal was a fitting setting for singer/songwriter Antony Hearty, who wore a drab black garment while fronting an orchestra that was dressed in all white. With themes of ecological decay, unrequited love, isolation and personal transformation, Hearty's music is decidedly down-tempo. Far chirpier was L'Orchestre d'Hommes-Orchestres' treatment of Tom Waits' music at the posh Teatro Victoria Eugenia. Because of the popularity of this six-man ensemble, festival programmers added a third night that was an unexpected breakout success.

—John Murph



E.J. Strickland Spreads the Love

To hear drummer E.J. Strickland and his quintet warm up at Smalls Jazz Club on Aug. 10 was an unexpected treat. As “Footprints” played quietly in the background, Linda Oh could not resist tackling Ron Carter’s driving bass opening while E.J.’s twin brother, Marcus Strickland, took off with the melody line on tenor sax. Penned by saxophonist Wayne Shorter, the piece highlighted the strengths of individual musicians in the now-historic Miles Davis Quintet. And E.J. Strickland’s compositions are always in line with that tradition.

Let’s talk about the respective careers of you and your twin brother.

When we first hit New York, a lot of people thought that there was just one of us going around playing drums and saxophone equally as well. You get compared to your twin a lot musically. We’re always going to be associated with each other and we knew that we had to be comfortable with that. Our parents didn’t force us to be alike, so I think that helped us with just accepting who we are.

How does it feel for you guys to be a part of the familial-bond tradition in jazz?

When we buy records from the Harpers, Marsalis brothers or the Adderleys and hear these family members come together and make music, it feeds the fire to do it ourselves. I feel great to be a member of that lineage. I think of them as bigger than life and look up to them so much that you never really consider yourself to be part of that. But wow, we are.

What made the biggest impact on you during your studies at The New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music?

Most of the faculty were actual legends and musicians who’ve honed their craft. Aside from being academicians, they actually lived the life-

style of jazz musicians. We were told early that the way to learn this music is not so much in school but “on the street,” from the masters. We went on to work with a lot of them—Reggie Workman, Billy Harper and Charles Tolliver. It’s almost like being in school again.

How do you come up with arrangements for the other musicians in your band?

When I decided to lead my own group, I didn’t want to make it all about drum solos. When I hear music, I like to hear balance. I want to hear everybody highlighted in some sort of way. And I love to hear composers, like Duke Ellington, who wrote specifically for the people in his band. He wrote to showcase their talents. His music is never boring, and I want to keep the audience on their feet.

What’s it like for you to direct Marcus?

I’m the older brother by two minutes, so I’m always trying to boss him around anyway [laughs]. Now I have justification. Everybody in my group is a highly respected bandleader and composer in their own right. The people that I work with, I handpicked them not only [for] their musical ability. They’re going to put their heart into the music. That’s really a factor when you’re leading your own band—the professionalism level of your group.

Are you currently working on new material?

The material that I played at Smalls is material that has not been recorded yet except for two songs that I did on *In This Day* (Strick Muzik, 2009). The remaining six tunes were brand-new compositions. I’m trying to do a double record. I have the E.J. Strickland Quintet, but my septet, the E.J. Strickland Project, features two vocalists, two saxophones, guitar, bass and drums. I have enough music to record two albums with each band if I wanted to. I just need an enabler.

—Shannon J. Effinger

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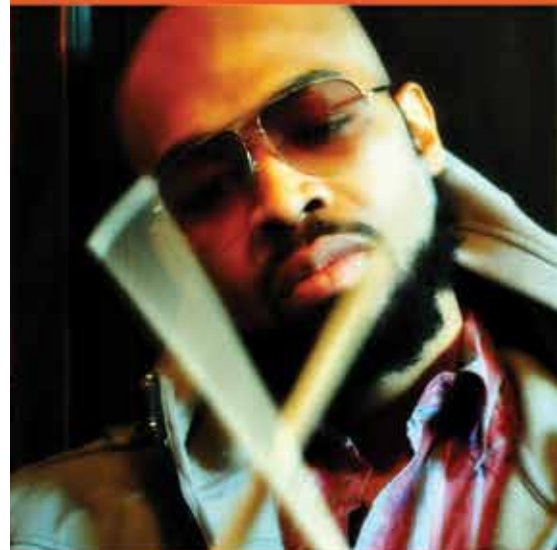
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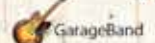
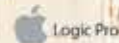
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40 Years of Yoshi's

Oakland Mayor Jean Quan and Yoshi's Jazz Club and Restaurant founders Kaz Kajimura and Yoshie Akiba ascended a bandstand on a sunny summer morning. Holding a framed proclamation, Quan read to a crowd of more than 6,000 festivalgoers, "I hereby proclaim that from this day forward, after 40 years of excellent service, the 26th of August will be known as 'Yoshi's Jazz Club and Restaurant Day' in the great city of Oakland."

Yoshi's has grown into one of the most influential jazz clubs in California. With two beautiful and acoustically stunning locations on both sides of the Bay—one location in Oakland, one in San Francisco—Yoshi's hosts a packed schedule of world-class acts.

"I grew up with jazz during the second World War," Akiba said while sipping green tea at the Oakland location. "There was a U.S. naval base near my house in Japan that used to hold jazz concerts. From the time I was 5, my family would bring us there to listen and dance. We had nothing. We hardly had enough food. But the music helped me dream."

After moving to the West Coast to study at the University of California at Berkeley, Akiba met Kajimura, who was then a newspaper reporter. "When we started, Yoshi's was a small restaurant behind the Berkeley campus," Kajimura said. "We opened it as a way to help out our common friend Hiro, who was a Japanese chef. The restaurant only seated 30."

It wasn't long before the fledgling restaurateurs added a second-story nightclub and, in 1986, Yoshi's Nitespot, a dedicated jazz club on Clairmont Street in east Berkeley, Calif.

"A jazz club is supposed to be smoky and cramped, probably in a basement," Kajimura said. "But we were novices in the business, so we just built the nicest club we could."

Praise of Yoshi's original Nitespot peppers many stories of Bay Area jazz denizens. Many recall a beautiful, open space with stained-glass windows, fresh-cut flowers arranged daily by Akiba herself and, above all, a strict silence policy for every performance.

"We wanted to get across to both the audience and the musicians that this was a place that really respected the music," said Chuck LaPaglia, manager of the Oakland location. "Yoshie made the same speech every night," LaPaglia continued, to which Akiba recited, "This is a wonderful musician and a wonderful occasion. Please do not talk."

But it takes more than respectful policies for greats such as drummer Billy Higgins to dub a venue "a church for jazz musicians." That *X* factor presented itself when Akiba took a very unusual piece of advice.

"[Bassist] Ray Brown taught me a lot about



The Yoshi's San Francisco staff



McCoy Tyner



Jeremy Pelt



Yoshie Akiba (right) and Kaz Kajimura receive a framed proclamation of "Yoshi's Jazz Club and Restaurant Day"

PHOTOS BY MANS BRESLOW

how to treat musicians," Akiba said. "He told me that if you want a musician to open their heart to you, just ask them if they believe in a spiritual world. So I did ... and they did."

"It's true," Kajimura added. "Roy Hargrove, Stan Getz, everybody loved talking to Yoshie about spirits."

All things considered, if there were such thing as a "Yoshie's technique," it would be to treat jazz musicians like the people they are, not like the legends they've become. Akiba meets

every performer on a human level, recognizing that a jazz god is also just a guy with a story who is probably in need of a shrimp tempura roll.

Yoshi's has supported the Bay Area jazz community both on and off the bandstand. It was the first place to hold a press conference for percussionist John Santos when he fought the removal of Latin jazz from the Grammy categories. The club supported pianist Susan Muscarella for 15 years as she opened and operated The Jazzschool in Berkeley. Now with its

new nonprofit, 51Oakland, Yoshi's is working to raise a new generation of jazz musicians in the same way it reared a city of jazz lovers.

The 40th-anniversary festival was very much an expression of all sides of Yoshi's, beginning with the Oaktown Jazz Workshops Ensemble—a big band of high school students—followed by Dos Four, a Cuban artist who pumps a reggaeton beat so infectious it brought an old man with a cane to his feet. The John Santos Sextet, a distilled group of Latin jazz artists, was joined by a few friends of Santos, singer Kenny Washington and Orestes Vilató on timbales. For the closing event of the festival, the party moved indoors to Yoshi's Club proper in Jack London Square. Organist Jimmy Smith headlined the first big concert played at Yoshi's original Nitespot, and to commemorate the event, Smith's protégé, organist Joey DeFrancesco, joined guitarist Larry Coryell and legendary drummer Jimmy Cobb onstage.

"I've been playing at Yoshi's since I was 19 years old," DeFrancesco said as he sat down at the organ, "and it's still one of the best places to play in the world." —Zoe Young

Memories of Yoshi's

"My group used to play at the Clairmont location all the time. One day before sound check, the management had to exchange grand pianos. The movers had the piano teetering on the edge of the stage, and I couldn't believe it, but they actually dropped it! We all covered and covered our faces, but instead of the piano exploding and sending keys flying in every direction, an air bubble formed under the mahogany top. It fell with a soft 'vwoomp' sound, and the piano was completely fine. I firmly believe it was Yoshi's magic that saved it." —Susan Muscarella, pianist and founder of The Jazzschool

"It was understood among the musicians and audience members that Yoshie herself embodied a 'barometer' of whether the band was truly swinging. She would take to the parquet floor between the bandstand and the audience and improvise a lovely solo dance, with her signature flowing linen shawls, to the delight of the audience, affirming involuntarily in her uninhibited response that the music was indeed sexy." —Benny Green, pianist

"In 2010, we played a show on my birthday at the San Francisco location. That also happened to be the same day the San Francisco Giants won the World Series. The win came just before we went on, so I had the pleasure of announcing that the Giants had won. The crowd went berserk, and we had a party all night. To throw a little numerology in: I was born in 1955, I was turning 55, and my favorite Giants player, Tim Lincecum, was number 55. That night was in the stars." —John Santos, percussionist and educator

European Scene | BY PETER MARGASAK

Xavier Charles Advocates Sound for Sound's Sake

French clarinetist Xavier Charles says he can't break down the stylistic strains of his deliriously abstract and evocatively tactile music-making. Charles is one of improvised music's most dyed-in-the-wool sonic explorers, rigorously committed to experimenting with sound in its rawest form. He creates work that sounds as if it was lifted from nature or taken straight from a factory rather than the bandstand.

Charles' work with Dans les Arbres—a Norwegian quartet with keyboardist Christian Wallumrød, percussionist Ingar Zach and guitarist Ivar Grydeland that released two stunning ECM albums—is all about various kinds of resonance, with tones lingering in the air and vibrating through strings. And in the trio The Contest of Pleasures with trumpeter Axel Dörner and saxophonist John Butcher, Charles contributes long, high-register tones and sibilant flutters to an ensemble-oriented cluster of stop-on-a-dime noises.

There are still ideas from jazz and classical music coursing through Charles' playing. He lives in Verdun, the city where he



was born, and it was there that he was first given a clarinet at age 7. Charles took traditional classical music lessons while playing in church and dabbling in popular music, but early on, the radio was his source for ideas.

"I clearly remember the voice of the DJ André Francis," Charles said. "He was very open to many kinds of jazz, and I discovered a lot of musicians, from Dixieland to pop to free-jazz to fusion."

The early years of Charles' career were spent in Lyon and Paris studying (including a stint with clarinetist Jacques Di Donato) and do-

ing commercial work. Over the last two decades, however, Charles has put his energy into developing a more unique musical approach.

"I remember deciding not to play music I've done before," Charles said. "With the practice of improvisation, I developed my own tools to play, not only for the sound materials, but also for how I am listening to what is happening around me. I often think of my clarinet as a microphone. Nature, animals and machines are a big pot of inspirations for that. Copying is like eating sounds."

Charles has never explicitly turned his back on playing lines and melodies. When he performed in Chicago in 2010 for an improvised gig with bassist Nate McBride and drummer Tim Daisy, he leaned his extended techniques with buoyant shapes and a tart tone heavily derived from the clarinet's vaunted jazz history. When Charles joined the celebrated Dutch post-punk band The Ex for its high-energy collaborations with Ethiopian saxophonist Gétatchèw Mèkurya, his ebullient solos burst with danceable melodies. He's on both of the project's record-

ings, including the terrific new *Y'Anbessaw Tezeta* (Terp).

Charles' interest in sound for its own sake is so great that he also plays in an experimental trio called Silent Block. In this configuration, he often doesn't play clarinet at all, and instead focuses exclusively on jerry-rigged vibrating surfaces, whether that means dropping dried beans across the miked surface of a pulsing woofer or amplifying the most microscopic sorts of friction into cacophonous noises.

"A sound is a sound," he said. "Playing with vibrating surfaces like speakers was a wish for me—a wish to not have to breathe to create a sound I can't produce with the clarinet. Now I am working on a system to mix the clarinet and the speakers."

Ultimately, it's not one instrument that Charles is behind. On a superb new recording called *Tsstt!* (Monotype) with trumpeter Franz Hautzinger, saxophonist Jean-Philippe Gross and tape musician Lionel Marchetti, it's frequently difficult to make out who's doing what, and what is acoustic and what is electronic. And for sound's sake, it doesn't matter. **DB**



Effortless Power & Beauty

Caught

Jazzfestival Saalfelden Reaches New Heights

Stirring sounds of New York underground and electronic jazz have been at home in the charming Alpine village of Saalfelden, Austria, each August since 1978. Since then, Internationales Jazzfestival Saalfelden has hewn to a true, uncompromising free-jazz spirit, with this year's program running Aug. 23–28. Credit co-directors Mario Steidl and Michaela Mayer for reorganizing the fest in 2004 and sustaining genuine *gemütlichkeit* among dignitaries, players and fans.

The main stage housed a refreshingly intimate conversation between bassist Bruno Chevillon and altoist Tim Berne. Berne appeared twice more: in BB&C's tart, flexible jams with drummer Jim Black and guitarist Nels Cline, and battling tenorist Tony Malaby affront Ches Smith's *These Arches*, which featured Andrea Parkins' laptop and Mary Halvorson's guitar. Decked in gold and firing signature salvos, Pharaoh Sanders held forth on bold, febrile tenor, with major support from trumpeter Rob Mazurek and São Paulo Underground's shrill samba.

Pianist Muhal Richard Abrams, who dedicated his set to late Chicago colleague Von Freeman, summoned Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) colleagues for an all-star, 20th-anniversary testament of his Experimental Band. With six shattering, resonating tam-tam crashes, the band unfolded a glacial, majestic soundscape of awe-inspiring gravitas. It unleashed skeins of stark vignettes, naked solos by trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith and epic jousts between saxophonist/flutist Henry Threadgill and saxophonist Roscoe Mitchell. Elder statesman and French bassist Henri Texier played deeply swung modal jazz with Louis Moutin simmering on drums as Texier's son, altoist and bass clarinetist Sébastien, and baritone saxophonist Dominique Corneloup emulated Impulse classics.



Gerry Hemingway morphed his drumkit, adding audio programs, video and voice as he fronted Riptide, a searching pentangle that included battle-saxes Oscar Noriega and Ellery Eskelin, Terrence McManus' hot-wired guitar and Kermit Driscoll's bass.

After relatively placid "composed" quintet sets by Halvorson's group and pianist Giovanni Guidi's melancholic incantatory unisons, violinist Jenny Scheinman burst on the scene with a short, peppy set that snapped the polite house to attention. Scheinman's violin lifted off over energy fields laid brusquely by Black, Cline and bassist Todd Sickafoose's rhythms for a decisive, blues-drenched jam.

Electric bands with rockish edges also proliferated the fest: Finland's sprightly Klima Kalima's "Finn Noir" tapped David Lynch film themes, and Washington, D.C.-based Les Rhinocéros backdropped video loops to wack-chic hard-core. Austrian guitarist Martin Philadelpho, a protean performer in many genres, aired a trio with MiniMoog genius Jamie Saft.

Trombonist Christian Muthspiel's Quartet reimagined lutenist John Dowland's *Lachrimae* (1604) as it wove seamless tapestries between the warp of resonant renaissance motets and the woof of edgy dance beats. Portugal's Red Trio examined minutely detailed pianissimo textures as John Butcher's sax exuded sympathetic rustles and twitters. Austrian trio Weisse Wände nonchalantly twitted contemporary culture through Christian Reiner's improvised poetry, which was layered over Karl Ritter's bent guitar and Herbert Pirker's snippy drums.

Townsfolk jumped downtown nightly as City Stage's huge tent showcased breezy local crowd-pleasers. These few outlier village acts did not overlap the main events, so multitasking and doppleganging were not required of diligent festivalgoers. —Fred Bouchard

PETE CHRISTLIEB

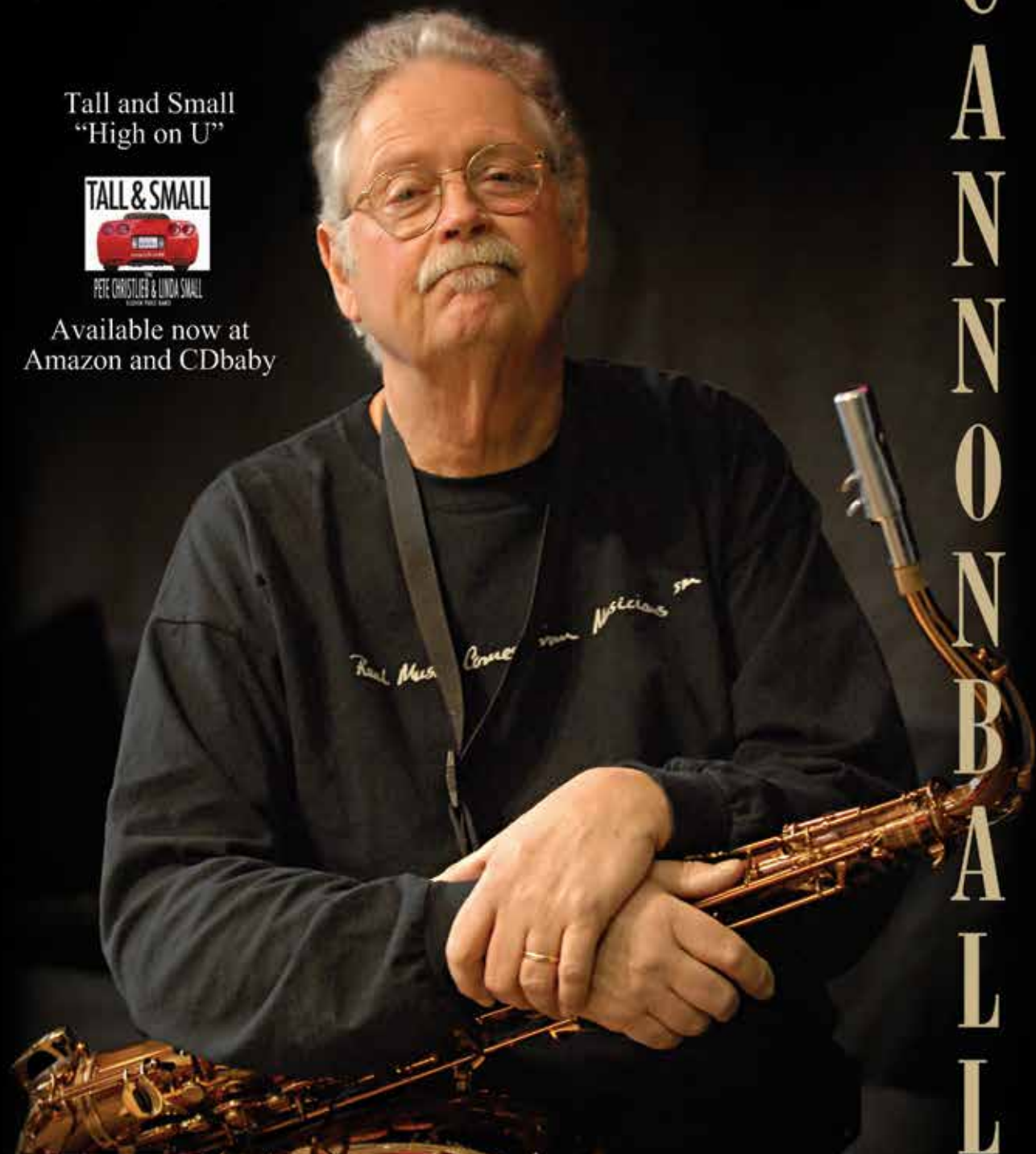
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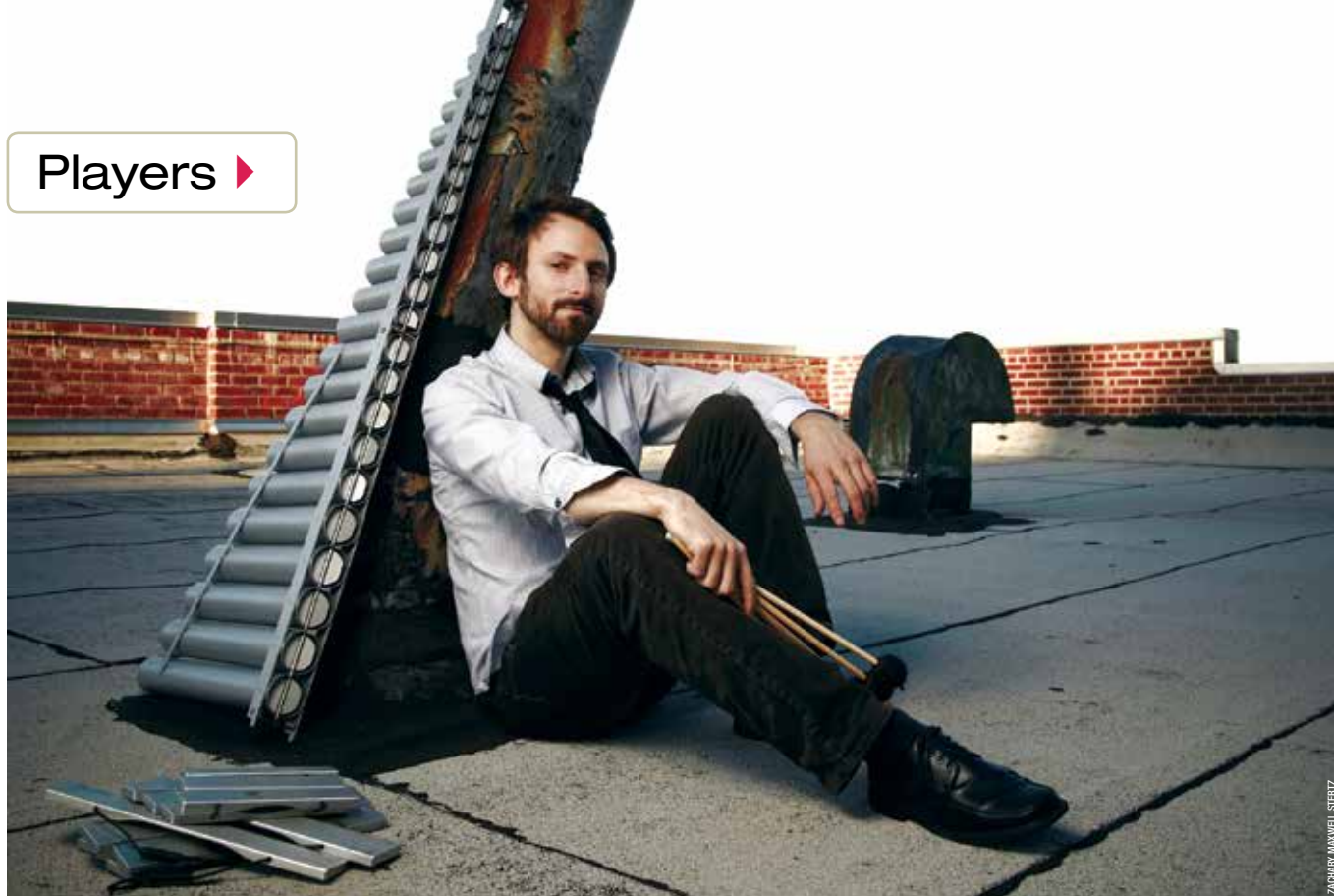
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Chris Dingman

Listening Within

Chris Dingman is fascinated by how the brain works. “Dreams are experiences of subconscious visions occurring during our sleep,” says the vibraphonist, referring to the title of his debut album, *Waking Dreams* (Between Worlds Music). “We talk about dreams as desires and goals, or things we wish we could do or someone we wish we could be. In that sense, [the song] ‘Waking Dreams’ was about what kind of musician I wanted to be and how to better myself. Often I would wake up from a dream and realize it was an expression of that desire. Sometimes it felt like I was in a hopeless position, and other times it felt like I was getting somewhere.”

Recorded with a great band—trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire, saxophonist Loren Stillman, pianist Fabian Almazan, bassist Joe Sanders and drummer Justin Brown—*Waking Dreams* was one of the most compelling jazz releases of 2011, built on tightly executed ensemble sections, atmospheric vibraphone washes and ethereal melodies. When this music was performed recently at New York’s Jazz Gallery (with Gerald Clayton and Drew Gress replacing Almazan and Sanders, respectively), the room’s 90-degree temperature, coupled with Dingman’s driving, nearly hallucinogenic compositions, made you feel as if your head was swimming in a hypnotic fever. *Waking Dreams* is undoubtedly heady stuff, but it’s derived from a higher plain.

“Chris is extremely connected to the higher qualities in music—what purpose music is supposed to serve,” Akinmusire says. He and Dingman toured Vietnam in 2005 as part of the Thelonious Monk Institute Band, which included Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter. “Chris is definitely playing towards a higher calling. You can call it God or spirituality—that has always been his focus—and you can hear that in his compositions. His music also reminds me of Satie and Ravel, [who] really appreciated beauty. Even if they composed something considered dissonant or ugly, there is still beauty at its core, and that’s what I hear in Chris’ music as well.”

A suite-like recording that alludes to nocturnal spaces and inner urges, dream states and sudden action, the 14 tracks on *Waking Dreams* grew from a compositional approach that was both known and unknown.

“This album is structured like you’re going from dark nighttime into

the morning and an awakening of light,” the 32-year-old vibraphonist explains. “Metaphorically and literally, I set it up to feel that way. The title track, ‘Waking Dreams,’ was ringing in my head as I was dreaming and drifting in and out of sleep. It was incorporating sounds that were outside in the world: cars going by, the sounds of birds, the things that happen around you during sleep that become incorporated into your dreams. Music would drift in and out as well. The dream happened on multiple nights—ridiculous dreams. I had to write it down.”

On his website, Dingman refers to experiencing feelings of “darkness, struggle, and loss, desire and hope, happiness, joy, and peace” while composing material for *Waking Dreams*. Everything fueled the composing process.

“My process involves listening within,” Dingman says. “Often, the song is already in the depths of my mind. For example, [the song] ‘Indian Hill’—I’d work on it, write down the notes, play it back, let it go and then go to sleep. When I’d wake up, more of the tune would be written. It was like the songs were already there, and I just had to find them.

“The world is pretty harsh for musicians,” he adds. “The world is not helping you. I went through difficult times during my twenties, trying to reach the next level as a musician. We all have things that are working against us, and when you try to face those things head-on out of frustration or anger, they multiply. Learning things about myself has led to a much brighter and happier place. I wanted to express that on the record. I wanted to inspire people who have dealt with similar things.”

A graduate of Wesleyan University and the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, Dingman is currently writing new music, but whether it’s influenced by waking or dream states, he won’t say. “Be Here Now” seems to be his music mantra.

“[*Waking Dreams*] sounds like an appreciation for the moment, for the here and now,” Akinmusire says. “Everything gets its full weight. It doesn’t sound like you’re trying to move to the next thing too quickly. Most people should have that as a goal for their lives. That’s one of Chris’ goals, and you can hear that in his music—an appreciation for the now.” —Ken Micallef

Ithamara Koorax

Comfortable Magic

The George Bernard Shaw play *Pygmalion* depicts the metamorphosis of a bedraggled up-and-comer as she alters her image to gain social acceptance. Ithamara Koorax does not abide by that credo.

The 12th track on Koorax's new album, *Got To Be Real* (Irma), has a Shaw-inspired title. The lighthearted, swinging refrains of "Pigmalião 70" are offset by Koorax's soulful vocals and unorthodox phrasing—the latter element serving as a reminder of the Brazilian-born singer's fearless rejection of industry norms.

"Each of Ithamara's albums is completely different from the next," said Koorax's longtime producer, Arnaldo DeSouteiro. "Some might say it's a bad marketing tactic because she doesn't follow a style. As a producer, I could be against it. Instead, I ask, 'What do you want to do next?'"

Recorded in three days, fresh off a whirlwind European tour, *Got To Be Real* is the first album Koorax has made with her full touring band—bassist Jorge Pescara, drummer Haroldo Jobim and Azymuth keyboardist/organist José Roberto Bertrami, who died in July at age 66. Koorax's decades-long mentor/student relationship with Bertrami has had a profound effect on her artistry.



"Bertrami knows everything about me," Koorax said. "We play together and it's comfortable magic. It was a wonder at first because we have a large difference in age. I couldn't imagine I would record and play for so many years and so many times."

The new album is an organic end product of onstage tweaks and rearrangements of the material. The title track—a sultry, soulful resurrection of the 1979 Cheryl Lynn hit—showcases Koorax's expansive

range, breathy delivery and masterful phrasing. The album is a 14-track, autobiographical account of Koorax's musical experiences.

Koorax, 47, is a native of Brazil's Petropolis region, and the syncopated nuances of the area's indigenous tones are evident on the disc. She nods decorously to local hero João Gilberto ("Hô-Bá-Lá-Lá") as well as Nonato Buzar ("Vesti Azul"), while also acknowledging the significance of her American jazz idols, including Cole Porter ("I Get A Kick Out Of You").

Koorax has a deep connection to the material. "They're songs I've been listening and dancing to since I was a teenager," she said. "So I joined the songs together—a lounge version of 'Never Can Say Goodbye,' a jazzy rendition of 'My Favorite Things,' even a few samba tunes."

Growing up as the daughter of an opera singer, Koorax began her musical education at the age of 5, learning piano for eight years before heading to university to study classical music. Her inspirations, however, are as diverse as her expansive discography. She spent as much of her childhood listening to John Coltrane as she did Rachmaninoff and Wilson Simonal. The songs on *Got To Be Real* reflect her diverse musical upbringing.

Koorax's varied, mature repertory is also the result of her experiences collaborating with jazz masters—including bassist Ron Carter on her 2007 world music outing, *Brazilian Butterfly* (Motéma), and guitarist Jon McLaughlin on 2003's *Love Dance: The Ballad Album* (Concord).

"Many of the tracks on all of these albums, no one knows outside of Brazil," De Souteiro said. "It's a feeling, and I think that's more important than when you know the song, and it's pleasant to your soul."

—Hilary Brown

Jan Garbarek Egberto Gismonti Charlie Haden *Magico: Carta de Amor*

Jan Garbarek saxophones
Egberto Gismonti guitars, piano
Charlie Haden double bass

The second of ECM's 2012 archival discoveries unearths a fascinating live set from this captivating trio, recorded in 1981 and mixed now from original analog tapes in 24 bit/96 kHz.



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JASON ROBINSON
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Josh Sinton

Ambitious Plans

The essays that accompany Josh Sinton's new album, *Pine Barren*, are absorbing, deeply confessional and emotionally revealing. They extensively detail the personal and musical thinking behind each piece of music.

And if Sinton had his way, you wouldn't read a word of it.

"I really did not want to write these essays," Sinton insists. "When you tell someone what you were thinking when you made a piece of art, they then go in with very deeply held preconceptions: 'I should be hearing his relationship with his mother in this song.' The great thing about music is that because it's abstract—because there are no concrete signifiers—it gives you this beautiful ambiguity. You can have the most focused inspiration and goal in mind, but it's up to the listener to parse out what personal resonance the music has for them. And I had to give that up."

Pine Barren, the second (and reputedly last) release by Sinton's group holus-Bolus, was released in serialized blog form on Sinton's website over five weeks in July and August. Each installment of streaming audio was accompanied by Sinton's in-depth accounting of the music, along with imagery by Brooklyn-based artist Elizabeth Dagggar. While Sinton eagerly predicts that more music will be offered this way in the future, he never intended to blaze a new trail. He recorded the album's dense and serrated music with the intent of finding a more traditional home, eventually making futile entreaties to more than 20 labels.

"For the most part, I got absolutely zero response," he recalls. "To put it mildly, I was shocked. I knew that if I let this bit of fruit hang on the vine too long, it would sour and shrivel up. I would just lose interest in it, and I believe in this record too much. That's when I started hatching plans."

Sinton realized that without the backing of a label or a well-known name, his music might disappear into the ether. So he reluctantly sat down and began telling the intimate stories behind the tunes. "I started thinking about extended liner notes," he says. "It stewed in my brain for a long time, and I threw out a lot of drafts. I still have problems with what I wrote, but it's the best I could do in these circumstances."

Sinton put together the initial incarnation of holus-Bolus in 2004. Back then, the baritone saxophonist and bass clarinetist was getting gigs infrequently, and they were all with big bands. So he assembled a small group to explore the kinds of music he wanted to play.



BRYAN MURRAY

After some personnel changes, the New York-based band's final lineup included saxophonist Jon Irabagon, guitarist Jonathan Goldberger, bassist Peter Bitenc and drummer Mike Pride.

With a daughter on the way in 2009, Sinton decided to document his work, not knowing what changes fatherhood would bring. He recorded *Transmit*, the second album by Ideal Bread—his band dedicated to exploring the music of his mentor Steve Lacy—and *Pine Barren*. Listening to the challenging, high-tension music on the latter album, one would be hard-pressed to identify traces of the composer's unhappy childhood or his apprehensive feelings about impending fatherhood. Yet these are the precise emotions that inspired the three suites that constitute the album and that Sinton details at length in his extended liner notes.

Sinton didn't discuss all the conceptual details with the band prior to recording. "Josh came into rehearsals with pages and pages of music and knew exactly what he wanted," says Irabagon. "But I didn't get the full scope of where he was coming from and the full effort that he put forth until I read the essays."

Bemoaning a lack of gigs and rehearsal time, Sinton has split up holus-Bolus since the recording of *Pine Barren*. He expects to spend the next year working on a new set of Lacy arrangements for Ideal Bread before devising what outlet his own compositions will use in the future. He'll continue to write from personal experience, he says, but without necessarily sharing those inspirations quite so much: "I would hope I get to keep as many secrets to myself as I can."
—Shaun Brady

Senri Oe

New Journey

With 25 years of experience as a performer, pianist Senri Oe is no stranger to the stage. In fact, the man is a bona fide pop star in Japan, with 45 hit singles, numerous Japanese Gold Disc Awards and a 1999 FNS Pop Music Award for Best Song to his name. Until recently, his voice could be heard on Japan's national broadcasting network NHK, where he served as a talk-show host. But despite such success, at age 47, Oe came to the realization that it was time for something new—and he took dramatic action to make it happen.

“When I was a teenager, I was a big fan of jazz, and I still wanted to learn it seriously, so one day, I decided to quit everything,” says Oe. “I came to New York and studied at the New School.” Learning from the likes of Junior Mance, Aaron Goldberg and Toru Dodo, Oe took on the daunting task of simultaneously expanding both his musical and English vocabularies, all while surrounded by classmates less than half his age. At one point, Oe took iPhone photos of an 18-year-old classmate's hands to help him practice complex, rootless chord voicings at home.

As Oe persevered through a difficult first two years in New York, he gained valuable lessons both in and outside the classroom. “On the subway, I would sing one little phrase from Red Garland and then learn it in all 12 keys, completely by ear,” Oe says, describing a challenge assigned to him by Goldberg. “It was very much like learning English. I would hear people talk on the subway and hear words I didn't know. ‘*Ebullient*, what does that mean?’ I'd look it up, one word, one phrase—I got it!” With a chuckle, he adds, “This is my work, learning little by little. Just like a turtle in the city.”

Oe's long-term approach has already begun to pay off, as evidenced by the engaging and wryly titled *Boys Mature Slow* (PND Records), which includes 10 original compositions. Trombonist Joe Beaty, who previously collaborated with Oe in the J-Pop big band Morning Musuko, plays on the album, along with bassist Jim Robertson, trumpeter Jonathan Powell and drummer Obed Calvaire.

“Senri has his own vibe and voice, and that's cool,” says Calvaire, who found out about the project through Beaty. “Coming from a huge pop background, starting all over and trying something new at his stage of the game is admirable. I could feel his enthusiasm and love for jazz from the beginning, and I admire his passion for what he's doing.”

Though he may be building from scratch in



some ways, Oe's deep background in songwriting has helped him approach jazz from a unique perspective. The pianist describes that, when writing pop lyrics, for example, he loves capturing poignant snapshots of much larger narratives—say, the hyper-charged moment when estranged lovers pass in the street and realize that they will never be together again. Oe's knack for storytelling hasn't vanished due to his musical realignment; rather, it rekindles every time he sits down at a piano. “I don't know how many people can hear it, because the music is instrumental, but I think of stories when I improvise and I write words to all of the melodies I play,” he says. “Sometimes they're in English and sometimes they're in Japanese. And the words change every time I play, especially on improvisations.”

Oe's bilingualism has proven musically useful in other contexts as well. “I used Japanese lyrics to help me figure out how to play in 5/4 and 9/4,” he says, rhythmically reciting Japanese phrases that have five, and then nine, syllables apiece. “Playing piano and singing at the same time was my profession when I was in Japan, so that makes learning this way easier for me.”

Though some might think Oe crazy for abandoning the spoils of his former career in favor of his current path, the pianist knows that his turtle's journey is leading him in the right direction. “I love jazz,” he says. “I open the door, and there are 10 more doors. Bill Evans? *One hundred* more doors. I wish I had more than 24 hours in a day to explore them all.”

—Michael Gallant

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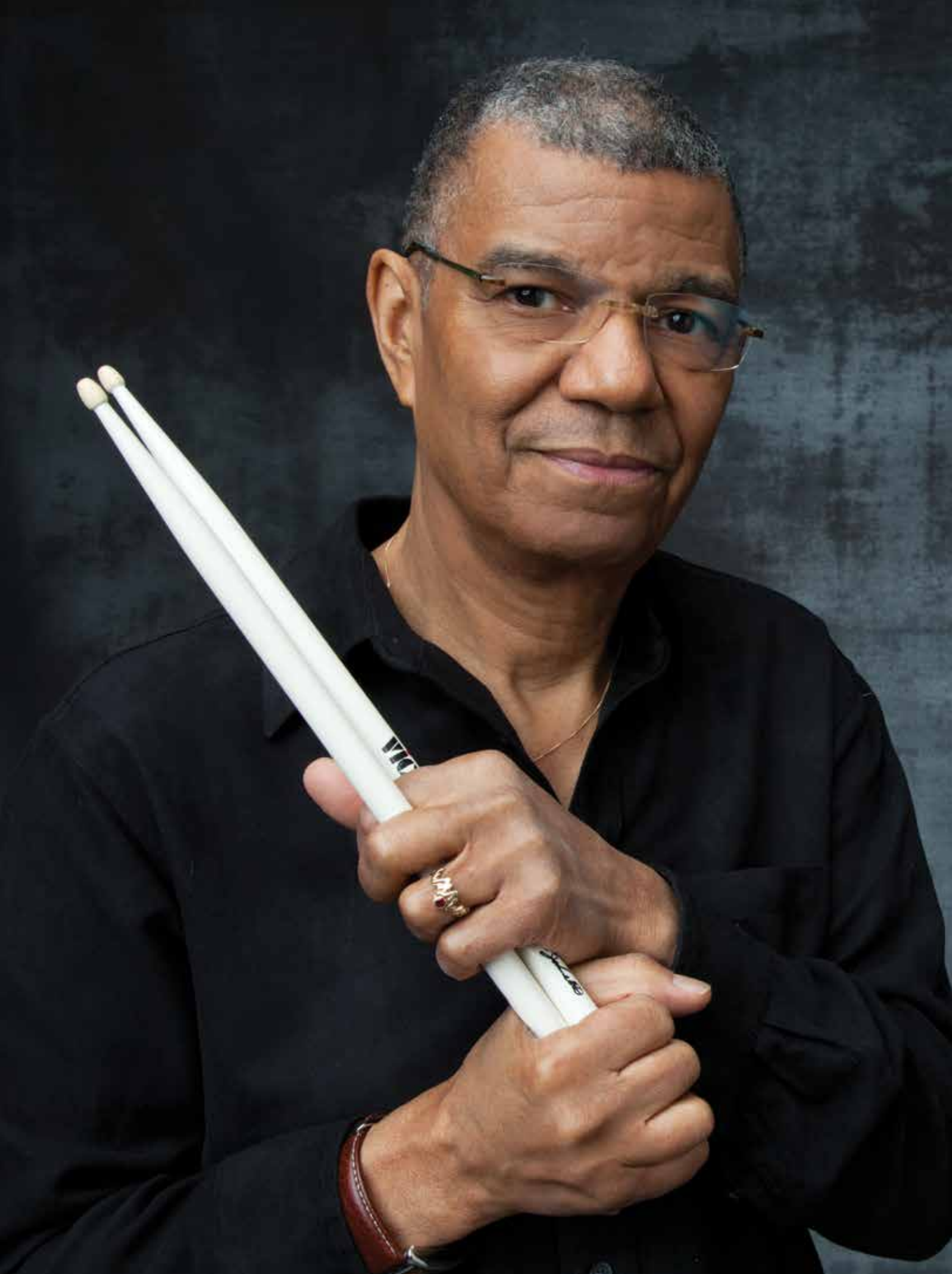
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Jack DeJohnette

UNCONVENTIONAL WISDOM

By Thomas Staudter | Photo by Jimmy and Dena Katz

Jack DeJohnette looks like he just stepped off one of the yachts moored nearby in the Rhode Island Sound when he shows up to play at the 2012 Newport Jazz Festival. ¶ Heading toward the Quad Stage wearing an olive-green T-shirt and matching baseball cap with white slacks while peering through sunglasses, the world-famous drummer and multidimensional jazz artist arrives backstage by himself, unnoticed by a group of fans he's just passed. It's Aug. 4. This sunny day is getting warmer by the minute, but DeJohnette, trim and just a few days away from his 70th birthday, is a picture of calm leisure. Ever since his first appearance at Newport in 1969 with Miles Davis, DeJohnette has been a regular here and knows the gig well. No sweat.

With 20 minutes to go until DeJohnette is to lead the first of two bands he's playing with on the Saturday program at Newport, he climbs up on to the drum riser, where a technician is assembling his drum kit, for a quick inspection. Although most of the specifications for the kit setup are sent in advance of his arrival—along with several photographs, taken from multiple angles—DeJohnette still wants to join in on the final twists, turns and tunings involved in his instrument's prepping for showtime. Baseball cap off and shades replaced with frameless glasses that give him the look of a hip college professor, fans in front of the Quad Stage finally recognize him and begin to call out to him with choruses of "Hey, Jack!"

In Hollywood, "Jack" means Nicholson; in U. S. history, "Jack" refers to President John F. Kennedy; and in 20th-century literature, the name "Jack" conjures images of hitting the road with Kerouac. However, for those enthralled and inspired by the art of jazz improvisation, there is but one "Jack," and the name denotes a powerful musical presence and iconic collaborator.

Media attention generated by DeJohnette's accolade as a 2012 National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Jazz Master, the release of his new album, *Sound Travels* (eOne), and his milestone birthday has helped shine a spotlight on his creative instigations as a bandleader.

Still, it's hard to shake the overarching image of DeJohnette as accompanist and sideman par excellence, partially because of the focus on his highly lauded work with Miles Davis on several of the trumpeter's recordings—including the classic *Bitches Brew*—as well as early and career-defining opportunities to sub in the John Coltrane Quartet. The drummer has enjoyed long associations with Charles Lloyd, Sonny Rollins, Betty Carter, George Benson, Chick Corea, Freddie Hubbard, Abbey Lincoln, Pat Metheny and Michael Brecker—and that's just a small fraction of high-magnitude notables with whom DeJohnette has toured, recorded or joined onstage for special events. Brilliant company for any sideman to claim, and part of a 40-year-long career of phone calls from jazz greats requesting the services of "Jack."

DeJohnette's most high-profile gig is in the Standards Trio with pianist Keith Jarrett and bassist Gary Peacock; it is set to celebrate its 30th anniversary next year. While the group's success arises from three strong, entwining musical personalities, Jarrett's superstar status eclipses most of the general perceptions and discussions of creative equality inside the trio. The organic wholeness of the group is undeniable, regardless of the cultural shorthand that keeps the focus on Jarrett, as any close listening of the trio's recorded ballads will reveal. Often, DeJohnette's careful mosaic of cymbal sounds (summoned from a vast palette) and Peacock's ominous pauses between bass notes heighten the tension inherent in Jarrett's exquisite reading of a melody.

"I want to be able to play ideas more than show off technique," the mild-mannered



DeJohnette performing at the Newport Jazz Festival, Aug. 4

DeJohnette says several days after Newport, relaxing in his home near Woodstock, N.Y. "My playing has been described as having a liquid, rolling way on the instrument, as opposed to a vertical way of playing. Miles described my playing as 'a drunk man falling up the stairs.' Some of that is the way I squeeze things into exchanges with musicians. I'm not always on the hi-hat, so musicians I play with learn to count for themselves because sometimes what I'm trying to play may overlap the downbeat. Or they wait until I hit the downbeat. Elvin [Jones] played a little this way. It's unconventional."

When he was named an NEA Jazz Master, DeJohnette was honored for the totality of his artistry, obviously, not just his great career as a drummer. More than 30 recordings as a leader and participation in hundreds of projects with other leaders point to a restless musical spirit, one of the foremost in all of jazz. DeJohnette's aversion to stasis resulted in his fronting myriad bands (some with names like Directions, New Directions, Special Edition and the Gateway Trio) that have allowed him to flourish as a composer and maintain a presence on his first instrument—the piano.

"I like the recognition," DeJohnette humbly admits. Along with the larger respect for his art, he wants to continue, he says, "being able to play with musicians I like to play with in my group." Still intent on developing his compositions and melodies, DeJohnette feels he has attained a level of satisfaction amidst a road that's full of new musical adventures ahead. "It's a great time," he says in a low voice, thinking over the words for

a moment, letting it all sink in a bit more before repeating the phrase.

A great time for his many fans and followers, too: One afternoon at Newport, two different bands, three musical excursions. First up, the Jack DeJohnette Group with alto saxophonist Rudresh Mahanthappa, keyboardist George Colligan (with his pocket trumpet), guitarist David Fiuczynski and electric bassist Jerome Harris. Every seat is taken, and crowds of people stand in the back of the Quad Stage tent. Before introducing the musicians with a short anecdote about how he first met each of them, DeJohnette announces that the day is extra special because he and his wife, Lydia, are celebrating their 44th wedding anniversary. Lydia, seated on the side of the stage, blushes and throws her husband a kiss. Once seated behind the drums, DeJohnette is ready for business. The musicians start with "Blue," a tune off the second Gateway Trio album, released in 1977. DeJohnette uses the snare, ride cymbal and hi-hat to create a nice stepping rhythm, and then with a few flicks of his hands, the rhythm becomes entirely more complex as he issues several rolls across the drum heads before the band kicks in.

When playing the drums, DeJohnette looks as if he's barely holding his custom-made sticks. At times, the rapidly moving drumsticks appear to be levitating. "I've had to make adjustments," he says, noting that he has been working on a new, lighter grip for years. "I'm trying to make gravity work for me. I'm still playing forcefully, but I can get the intensity I need by finding a balance between relaxation and tension."



*"My hands, **VIC STICKS**. The rest is history."*

Jack DeJohnette

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LEADING THE WORLD
ONE PAIR AT A TIME

DeJohnette's energy-saving efforts behind the drum kit produce heavenly fruit. When Fiuczynski solos at Newport, there is a beehive of activity on the drums, with DeJohnette and Colligan locked into devilishly rhythmic comping. DeJohnette's first solo of the afternoon finds him listening for something different while playing every part of the kit, including the metal stands and the sides of the drums. On his part, there seems to be a simultaneous expression and evaluation of that expression, a perpetual search for new patterns and paths.

"Jack's drumming is so special," says bassist/guitarist Jerome Harris, who first recorded with DeJohnette on the 1996 quartet album *Oneness*. "He listens deeply and is very responsive. He can lay down a beat, lock into it and play straight-up stuff. Or when the music and spirit call for it, he can be coloristic and create open fields. Usually, he is somewhere in between these two places. But flexibility is rooted in his art, and he expects band members to insert themselves and their ideas into the music. As a leader or a sideman, he takes responsibility for the whole sound. Orchestrating, coloring, instigating, responding, conceptualizing—he does all of that."

Before the Jack DeJohnette All Stars take the Quad Stage to close out Saturday at Newport, there is an extra treat: The drummer invites pianist Jason Moran up for 15 minutes of improvisation, with stretches of "Gangsterism On The Rise" (recorded on Moran's 2005 Blue Note album *Same Mother*) and Count Basie's "Splanky" thrown in. Given a duo setting, DeJohnette plays with added enthusiasm and tests the outer boundaries by striking the drums and cymbals with his live microphone, and then rapping like an auctioneer as Moran veers between swirls of notes and stop-and-go chords.

While setting up for a Jack DeJohnette All Stars performance at Newport, the backstage area has become an informal gathering of friends and fellow musicians. Moran, Joe Lovano, Bill Frisell and members of The Bad Plus, along with all of the All Stars—George Colligan (on double duty), saxophonist Tim Ries, trumpeter Jason Palmer, guitarist Lionel Loueke, bassist Christian McBride and percussionist Luisito Quintero—take time to say hello. For the All Stars, there are last-minute instructions.

Most of the songs in the All Stars set come from *Sound Travels*, one of the most accessible albums DeJohnette has released as a leader, and one that includes high-profile guest spots from Bobby McFerrin and Bruce Hornsby. The former provides wordless vocals that intertwine with DeJohnette's piano on "Oneness," showcasing a melody that exudes contentment. Hornsby sings on "Dirty Ground," a gospel-flavored track that flirts with soft rock and calls for safeguarding our environment. (Hornsby co-wrote that song with the leader, but the album's other eight compositions are DeJohnette's alone.) Quintero beefs up several songs with Latin and Caribbean flavors, notably the sprightly "Salsa For Luisito," "New Muse" and "Sonny Light."

DeJohnette was named a 2012 NEA Jazz Master



DeJohnette doubles on piano on all the album's tracks—except "Indigo Dreamscapes," where Moran steps in—and his keyboard work serves as a bedrock, even more so than his drumming does. DeJohnette is an incredibly versatile pianist, providing an expert *tumbao* on "Salsa For Luisito" and emphatic chordal playing in various musical styles. The album's closer, a solo piano composition titled "Home," finds him in a sanctified mood of gratitude that recalls Hank Jones on *Steal Away* (the 1994 collaboration with bassist Charlie Haden).

Elsewhere, with a rhythm section featuring Esperanza Spalding's energetic bass (as well as her vocals on "Luisito") and a front line with Ries, Loueke and trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire, the leader's strong melodies get the instrumental support they deserve. Onstage, this is also true, though the feel is looser.

At Newport, DeJohnette clearly enjoys being in the middle of this big, celebratory ensemble, and his steady eye contact with Colligan, McBride and Quintero proves that he's not merely sitting behind the kit, alone with his technique.

Among DeJohnette's gifts as a bandleader and drummer is the ability to create positively valenced situations for an ever-widening group of musical friends and cohorts. He is setting up the right circumstances and emotions for artists to feel comfortable as improvisers, and as such brings together one interesting ensemble and amalgam after another. Some of it, says Harris, gets captured on disc, like the *Saudades* band with John Scofield and Larry Goldings, but lots of projects take place under the radar and outside the States, such as DeJohnette's work with South African singer Sibongile Khumalo in a group called The Intercontinentals. "Tell Jack you want

to hear some of *that*," Harris advises.

"In some ways, Jack is not just drumming but using the drums to interpret music," notes Colligan backstage at Newport. "Because he's a pianist as well, he hears music harmonically and thinks creatively from different directions about what is important in the music. He makes it seem so easy: With Jack, all you have to do is get up on stage and listen. The structure is not as important as long as you are creating something."

Peacock—who met DeJohnette in 1970 and played on the drummer's *Have You Heard*, released that year—also has a deep understanding of his friend's unique style: "Jack doesn't 'play drums'—don't ever say that. It's irreverent. He sits in front of a trap set, but that's not what he does. ... When he's playing, he's playing the music; he *is* the tune. He always knows what's going on. That's the intuitive aspect of his playing."

Moran is one of the many young jazz stars today who have been profoundly affected by DeJohnette's artistry. He refers to DeJohnette as "one of those rare painters of rhythm." The pianist first recorded with DeJohnette on Don Byron's 2004 album *Ivey-Divey* (Blue Note), and Moran plays on *Sound Travels*. "What influenced me a great deal was the [1988] record Jack did with Dave Holland and Steve Coleman, *Triplicate*," Moran says. "The intensity and beauty of their playing is just awesome. I remember listening to the CD over and over and saying to myself, 'I want my trio to sound like *that*.'"

During a phone call from Louisiana, drummer Terri Lyne Carrington zeroes in on the character of DeJohnette's playing: "Jack is not a lick-oriented drummer. He's spontaneous and doesn't sound like he's playing stuff he's practiced."

The DeJohnettes have lived in their home outside of Woodstock for 38 years. They moved in from a Manhattan apartment in the years separating the births of their two daughters. Inside the log-frame structure, a feisty terrier named Rumi greets a visitor, and soon a salad made from garden-fresh greens and vegetables is being served for lunch.

Jack and Lydia (who hails from Highgate in north London) are a close, effective team. They fill in anecdotes for each other, and because Lydia has been by her husband's side since the time DeJohnette started playing with Davis, she has a formidable purview of the jazz scene. In 2005, the DeJohnettes launched their own label, Golden Beams Productions, to release music that other record companies might pass on, like 2007's *Peace Time*, which earned DeJohnette a Grammy Award for Best New Age Album.

(Moran suggests that DownBeat add a poll category for Best Jazz Spouse—with the understanding that Lydia DeJohnette would be the runaway winner year after year. "She has been thoroughly involved in the development of his art and career," he says.)

In addition to musical projects, the DeJohnettes have long worked together as peace

activists and environmentalists. They volunteer weekly at a food bank and are involved in the fight to stop the controversial natural gas drilling process called “hydrofracking” in the Catskill Mountains.

Front and center on a counter in their kitchen is a special snare drum co-manufactured by Sonor, the German drum company, and Sabian, the Canadian cymbal maker. The snare was given to DeJohnette for his 70th birthday at a concert and dinner held in the neighboring Bearsville Theater just days earlier. DeJohnette’s signature cymbals were melted and used to shape the frame, and a photo of him was etched into the side of the drum.

The DeJohnettes are still abuzz from the birthday bash. Carrington led a quintet with Spalding, saxophonist Tineke Postma, guitarist Nir Felder and keyboardist Leo Genovese, and the set turned into a jam session with performances by Lovano, McFerrin, Ries, Ravi Coltrane, Judi Silvano and others lighting up the festivities. After Carrington launched into DeJohnette’s “Silver Hollow,” the guest of honor soon took over the keyboard and then moved to the drums, much to the delight of the 200-plus friends and family members.

When it is mentioned to Lovano that DeJohnette did not initially intend to play at the party, he smiles and says, “Yeah, *right!*”

At lunch, DeJohnette talks about growing up on the South Side of Chicago, beginning formal piano lessons before he was in grade school and listening to the 78 rpm Decca and Okeh platters found in his uncle Roy I. Wood Sr.’s collection. Wood, a prominent African-American radio host and journalist, had a love for jazz and took young Jack to all the clubs. “I was an avid listener,” says DeJohnette. “I’d focus on the bass and the drums. I was fascinated by the different varieties and styles of music that I heard.” The world of music is a world of people: At age 7, DeJohnette sat in with T-Bone Walker. In high school, DeJohnette was leading a combo that rehearsed in the family basement, and before long he was practicing on the drummer’s kit. Watching legendary Chicago drummer Wilbert Campbell hastened DeJohnette’s development, he says. Encouragement from older Chicago jazz artists like Eddie Harris and Muhal Richard Abrams convinced him to move to New York with the idea of being a drummer. “And I didn’t go back,” he says.

“In terms of the freedom I had to play the instrument, that came with people like Muhal, Sun Ra, Miles, Coltrane and Sonny Rollins,” DeJohnette adds. “What helped develop me and the way I play with all these different people is the trust they gave me to explore my ideas in their music. I was fortunate enough to be in those situations where I’m hired because of what I bring to the music, no matter what it is.”

Walking out of the DeJohnettes’ kitchen, I point to the drumhead of the joint Sonor/Sabian and note that it has already been getting a good workout. DeJohnette grins.

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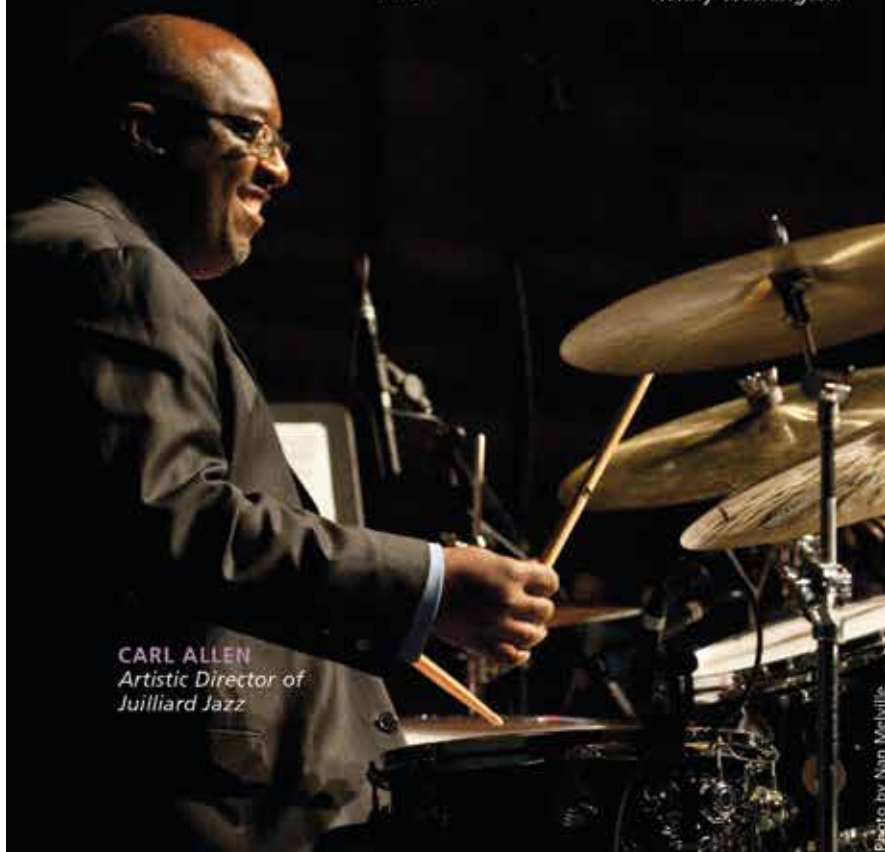
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Photo by Nan Melville

Ravi Coltrane

ANOTHER TYPE *of* ENERGY

By Josef Woodard | Photo by Mark Sheldon

On a Sunday evening in Los Angeles this summer, Ravi Coltrane was having a bit of internal GPS-challenged vertigo. “I turned the wrong way on Sunset,” he said with a touch of alarm, by way of a humble and unnecessary apology for being a few minutes late to an interview at Catalina Bar & Grill, the premier jazz club in L.A. for 25 years. Directional dysfunction might be expected of outsiders lost in the thicket-like topography of Lost Angels, except that this Coltrane spent more than half of his 47 years coming up in the region, growing up in the care of his mother, the late keyboardist and Vedantic spiritualist Alice Coltrane.

By this point, the jazz world knows certain things about Ravi Coltrane: He has been steadily, sturdily building an artistic reputation over the years, overcoming speculation and second-guessing about his life as the tenor sax-wielding son of the greatest tenor saxophonist in jazz history, John Coltrane, who died when Ravi was 2. Coltrane the Younger has worked hard to create his own intriguing artistic voice over the decades, intensifying when he moved to New York in 1991. He has ascended to a lofty place with this year’s release of his Blue Note debut, *Spirit Fiction*, which he co-produced with saxophonist Joe Lovano. Following a handful of previous albums, Coltrane’s latest has been embraced by critics and discerning listeners as a sign of the artist having matured while still maintaining his youthful verve and willingness to stretch.

He has returned “home” to play Los Angeles sporadically, and this summer’s three-night stint with his quartet at Catalina came seven years after the last such gig, back when he was turning 40. Between then and now, he has flown in for special occasions, including a momentous and memorable concert on Feb. 18, 2006, with his mother at UCLA’s Royce Hall, supporting her much-treasured, final album, *Translinear Light*, produced by Ravi and released on Impulse!

Records in 2004.

At Catalina this summer, over the course of two captivating and musically liquid Saturday night sets, Coltrane and his quartet, featuring his drummer of a decade’s standing, E.J. Strickland, casually but passionately covered a telling, self-defining expanse of ideas and tunes. Originals from Coltrane’s oeuvre merged currents with material by Ornette Coleman, Thelonious Monk, the occasional standard and, to close out, a one-two of songs with links to his notable parents: Charlie Haden’s lyrical tribute to Coltrane’s mother, “For Turiya,” and the mantra-like chordal maze of his father’s classic “Giant Steps.”

After our interview the next night, the ever-articulate and affable Coltrane was headed off to play his Sunday night set, and we broached the subject of becoming obsessed with music, even as a musician or listener slides into ever more mature turf in life. “I don’t know what it is,” he mused, “but it gets into your ear. It gets into your head. It gets into your body. It gets into your thoughts and your dreams, and our desires. We should desire this music. We should have a longing for it. This music’s very, very powerful.”

Before he left the Naugahyde booth, Coltrane said, “We’ll play something weird for you.” I half-jokingly requested Bob Dorough’s

“Nothing Like You,” the infamous non sequitur charmer capping off Miles Davis’ *Sorcerer*, which Coltrane’s band had done up in mercurial fashion the night before. Voilà: the band’s Sunday set opened with an ambling, half-hour version of the Dorough tune, varying left and right, hither and yon, full of the fire and exploratory verve we expect of Coltrane.

This Coltrane.

Below are excerpts from our wide-ranging Aug. 5 conversation.

DownBeat: *Spirit Fiction* is wonderful album. Do you have a sense of arrival with this record?

Ravi Coltrane: A sense of relief [*laughs*]. This record’s over. Now I can actually move on to the [next] record. This was the debut record. Just being on Blue Note is definitely a dream that many young musicians have when they come to New York. I came there in ’91 and it was this dream. I appreciated the opportunities that I had, on the labels that I did work with. I was never somebody who was hungry to gain this type of stature or exposure versus another type.

But when the Blue Note thing became more of a possibility, I was thinking, “OK, well now what? What are we going to do here?” I had a



Ravi Coltrane
performing in
Chicago,
Sept. 2, 2011

hyper-awareness of the fact that I was recording for Blue Note. That definitely made it challenging. That's why I feel a bit of relief now that it's done and the reviews have been good. I didn't really know what to expect from that.

But clearly, you want it to be as effective and at your maximum potential as a recording musician. You want to get all of these things on tape and get that onto the record and out to the people. That's always the goal. Sometimes you reach it, sometimes you get close.

And that's the nature of jazz anyway, in that it's a fluid music, don't you think?

Yeah, and it should be that way. If things are too controlled, too organized, too routinized, that's not the kind of thing that interests me.

I always felt another energy. When you listen to the masters that we reference on a regular basis, there seemed to be another type of energy behind how they made their records, how they made their work. Clearly, they wanted to be recognized. They wanted to have success. But there was something else that was driving it, which was as important or more important. It was about their idea, their vision, what they were trying to express. If you can work with the right people and have a good relationship between the record company and the artist, and work with musicians who understand what your intentions are, you can start to get that happening.

At the same time, you want it to be balanced

Personal History

Tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano plays a guiding role on Ravi Coltrane's acclaimed *Spirit Fiction* (Blue Note) as co-producer and also as a player, dialoguing with the leader on Ornette Coleman's "Check Out Time" and "Fantasm," composed by the late Paul Motian (in whose great trio Lovano was involved for nearly 30 years).

Coltrane has been a part of Lovano's Saxophone Summit band, taking the place of the late Michael Brecker in that group, among other more casual interactions with Lovano over the years.

Lending an overview of Coltrane's background and status as an evolving and respected player in jazz, Lovano notes that "his whole family history is amazing."

He continues, "Coltrane *Live At The Half Note* was made when Ravi was born. Growing up with Coltrane's influence like that, but really growing up with Alice and her music and her beautiful spirituality and incredible influence, Ravi has developed into being his own player. [It is] an amazing world that he has grown up in. I see him, today, as being definitely one of the top saxophonists on the scene.

"We all feed off of each others' ideas and energies and personalities on the scene. That happens when you're living in that community together. He's a serious young man, as a composer and improviser and someone who is always studying and developing within the world we live in. He's not living in the past, but he's feeding off of his rich history. He has an amazing history of his own. Our personal histories make us the players we are. You tell your personal story through your music, whether you're playing famous songs or soon-to-be famous songs.

"It's *your* personal story, and if you can tap into who you are and translate that with your ideas in your music, you're going to live a lifetime as a player.

"There are a lot of cats who play. But there are only a handful who are *players*."

Lovano feels that this is a ripe period in Coltrane's musical life. "As a player," Lovano comments, "his foundations are growing all the time and his roots are getting deeper in all kinds of ways of playing. We're hearing it and feeling it. To be a leader and present a band at that level—that experience grows every time you do it." —Josef Woodard

JACKIEM JOYNER
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Contemporary jazz saxophonist **Jackiem Joyner's** *Church Boy* features a collection of modern Gospel tunes including Toby Mac's "City On Our Knees," Israel & New Breed's "You Are Good" and Kirk Franklin's "Hosanna." Kirk Whalum and Jonathan Butler join label mate Joyner on two tunes and the results are spectacular, as you might imagine!

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by a collective of people who are going to make sure that the record has something to say, and is something of value.

We can look back on the era when your dad was making records as a golden era in jazz. For you, does having a connection with Blue Note mean more because there are fewer major-label jazz albums getting released nowadays?

This label [Blue Note] is very historic. We do have other labels out here making great jazz music. I know that, as a musician, we have to document our work. With all of the highs and the lows, the creative anguish and whatnot, it's still something that is a part of what we do. There are still people around who want to make jazz records, and try to extend that history and lineage to whatever comes next.

One of the strongest pieces on the album is Paul Motian's "Fantasm." Was that recorded while he was alive?

It was recorded maybe a month after [he died]. I saw Paul Motian play dozens of times. I never got to really work with him, but always admired his music. The first time I heard Lovano was on a Paul Motian record, *Monk In Motian*. That was the first time I heard [pianist] Geri [Allen], on the same record, in '88. After Paul passed [on Nov. 22, 2011], Joe was the guy I called. When someone dies, you have to call somebody and give condolences. Joe was the first one I thought of. I called Charlie [Haden], as well.

It just felt like we had to record some of his music. I told Joe I wanted to do something with just piano and two saxophones, and was thinking about Paul and one of his compositions. Joe said, "I know the perfect tune." That's how we got to "Fantasm."

Part of what made Motian a special musician was his unique, open sense of time. Working with and around time is also an aspect of your music. Last night, for instance, I found myself trying to count out "Thirteenth Floor," to crack the code of its meter.

Well, there are two versions of "Thirteenth Floor." I wrote this reharmon that goes between measures of 4/4 and 3/4. But the original piece was written over a bass line in 7, next to a drum part that was in 6. After seven cycles of 6, the pattern repeats, and after six cycles of 7, the bass part repeats. Eventually the two patterns will sync up down the road.

Speaking of this band, you have a great rapport with E.J. Strickland.

Yeah, it's going on at least 10 years with E.J. I was playing with [pianist] Luis [Perdomo] in 2000. E.J. started making gigs with me around 2001, and [bassist] Drew [Gress] came in around 2003. When Drew came in, it was like the glue. Things that felt on the edge and close to being

there, when he came along, we all got it.

You belong to a group of New York jazz musicians who easily straddle stylistic lines or camps. You're not avant-garde per se, although experimentation sneaks in there. You're not straightahead ...

Per se [laughs].

So, what are you?

It's interesting when you're not on the hard right or the hard left, but somewhere in-between. And that somewhere in-between doesn't have to be static, either. You can still maintain your character. For me, it's not about thinking, "OK, let me try to play this way, and that way." That would require a lot of effort for someone like me. I'm just looking for the sweet spots. It's like splitting these hairs and getting a bit of X and a bit of Y. It's never black or white. It's some strange combination of the two. Then you throw some M-BASE in there and get a strange combination.

[When] I got to New York, it was like you had to pick sides. You were going to be wearing a suit and playing this way, or wearing a dashiki and playing *that* way. You were either straightahead or you were out. You were playing at the Knitting Factory or Lincoln Center. There was very little middle ground. I felt that was just so rigid. I never felt completely comfortable in one situation or another.

I ended up falling, organically, in with these other types of scenes. I was doing gigs with Jack DeJohnette, with Kenny Barron, with Rashied Ali, with Joanne Brackeen. Starting out by playing with Elvin [Jones] was a whole other kind of introduction. And then Steve Coleman came along. There were a lot of things I could draw from that I did feel comfortable with. Again, they all fit somewhere in the middle of these polar extremes—or what seemed like polar extremes.

Joe Lovano, for me, is one of those guys who could be at Lincoln Center one night and the Knitting Factory the next night, and it would be very seamless. He is a perfect model for that idea of finding your place, finding your way within all the stuff that's out there. [Trumpeter] Ralph Alessi has a lot of that ability, as well. He can play traditional things or more avant-garde things, and still sound like himself. Mark Turner is another one. Wherever he goes, whoever he's playing with, he still sounds like himself.

When it's a matter of having to play this way when you're over here and *that* way over there, you're starting to lose your center.

Was your work with Steve Coleman a catalyst for you, an influential turn in your musical life?

It was, without a doubt. He is one of the biggest influences on me, and not in all the surface ways people would assume—that he plays saxophone and plays this rhythmically aggressive music. It is [influential] in those ways, but also in ways that move closer to method—how you approach your work, regardless of whether you're



DEBORAH FERGUSON

leaning closer to the avant-garde or straightahead end of the spectrum. It was more about the methodizing of getting his stuff together.

By playing with Steve, I realized I could shift the directions just by virtue of certain types of musical gestures, and reinforcing those gestures with codes and little moves. You can make these little segues and do these spontaneous arrangements, when everyone understands that this is part of the deal. It isn't about controlling what people could play. But I like to know that if we're going to have a unified focus, somebody has to lead that focus. I'm listening to them, they're listening to me, and hopefully, we're going the same place at the same time, and hopefully, I'm steering that to some degree.

A lot of that, again, comes from Steve, but it's more methodizing rather than some strict rhythmic codes or some specific M-BASE-like language. But that's part of the language—the more open-ended idea of the possibilities for form and rhythmic placement and pulse.

Your 2009 album was called *Blending Times*. Great title, and maybe one with a double or even triple meaning? There is the metric angle, but you have also managed to blend different eras on your musical path.

That's really what it is, more than anything. It was more on the idea of combining *before* and *after*. Half the record was recorded in 2006. In the beginning of 2007, my mother passed away, and I was still not done with the record. Now, I've got all this stuff on my mind. The idea of

playing music and picking up the saxophone was very foreign to me after my mother passed away. I'm faced with finishing the record from this very different perspective.

In a historic sense, you've always blended styles, times, eras and attitudes. Does that idea make sense from your perspective?

Well, it helps being from the post-'60s, post-'70s generational time. And it's not just about being a player. I was born in the '60s. I watched [the TV show] "Laugh-In" with my mom [laughs]. We watched Lawrence Welk. I listened to James Brown records as an infant. That was being played constantly through the house, along with Stravinsky records and the Jackson 5. Suddenly, I was hearing Steely Dan on the radio. What's happening here?

That was a really cool time to absorb things, and to live and have those things as reference points in your life. I feel fortunate to live in a time where we can reference all of these amazing moments in creative art and creative music. I know that it has only benefitted me, whether or not I'm trying to tie all these things [together]. I know I'm not doing that consciously, but subconsciously and unconsciously, there are a lot of things that can motivate us and affect us.

You're probably tired of people asking you about your dad ...

Depends on what they ask [laughs].

Have you felt influenced or guided by his music and his legacy, and the fact that you're part of his direct lineage? And has that feeling changed over the years? What is your relationship to the subject now, compared to when you started out as a musician in the public sphere?

My feeling about him is still very consistent with the feeling I've always had for him. I can speak about him as a father that I didn't know. I can also speak about him, and most often do, as John Coltrane, one of the greatest instrumentalists of recent times, somebody who inspired me to do what I do, along with other great musicians.

All of those records are important to me, and I can sing every solo note-for-note. The meaning for me is as profound as it is for any lover of that music, any follower or student of that music. I've been listening to it most of my life. I had very focused type of listening as a saxophone player. I stuck to my favorites, and kind of OD'ed on a lot of them. I transcribed solos. I analyzed certain aspects of the music.

But my goal never was that I had to emulate or master this before I could be myself. You could spend your whole life doing that, and loving it. It's not that it would be a drag to say, "I love John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins and Sonny Stitt and that's all I want to play. I'm going to learn all these things, play them in every key and write etudes based on it, because that's what I love." That notion is compelling for young musicians. For us to even begin to walk—forget

about running—we're crawling and we're trying to gain this foundational information and we're getting it from these players.

At some point, I recognized that for as much as I wanted to take in, just merely copying them or trying to emulate them in some literal, concrete, direct sense, was not my thing. This is not how John Coltrane played, or how Bird played, or Ornette. They weren't just stockpiling these things they had learned or worked out and inserting them into improvisations. They were able to channel very in-the-moment types of sounds.

From a broader angle, are you influenced by the evolutionary sprawl of John Coltrane's musical life? It was one of the wider and more radical evolutions in jazz history, from his '50s work, what we hear on *Fearless Leader*, through to *Interstellar Space* and adventurous later moves. Do you look at that as a model of what you'd like to, ultimately, do in your musical life?

Sure. You can see this very perfect arc. I just see one person, expanding and moving and growing. You can find these things that he's playing in 1965 that you can relate back to the rhythm-and-blues licks he was playing in 1955, and earlier, in 1950 with Dizzy's big band and Johnny Hodges' big band. There are rhythmic call-and-responses. There are certain things in his phrasing, and a certain momentum that stays very consistent.

I don't even know if I call it *changing*. It seems more like an expanding process. It's really easy to hear that it is one voice. Clearly, the styles and approaches were changing. The music changed radically, but I really hear a singular voice. That always blew my mind that you could do that, and do it throughout this very unique setting, utilizing all these unique approaches in improvised music.

The next logical question: What's your own next step in the expanding story?

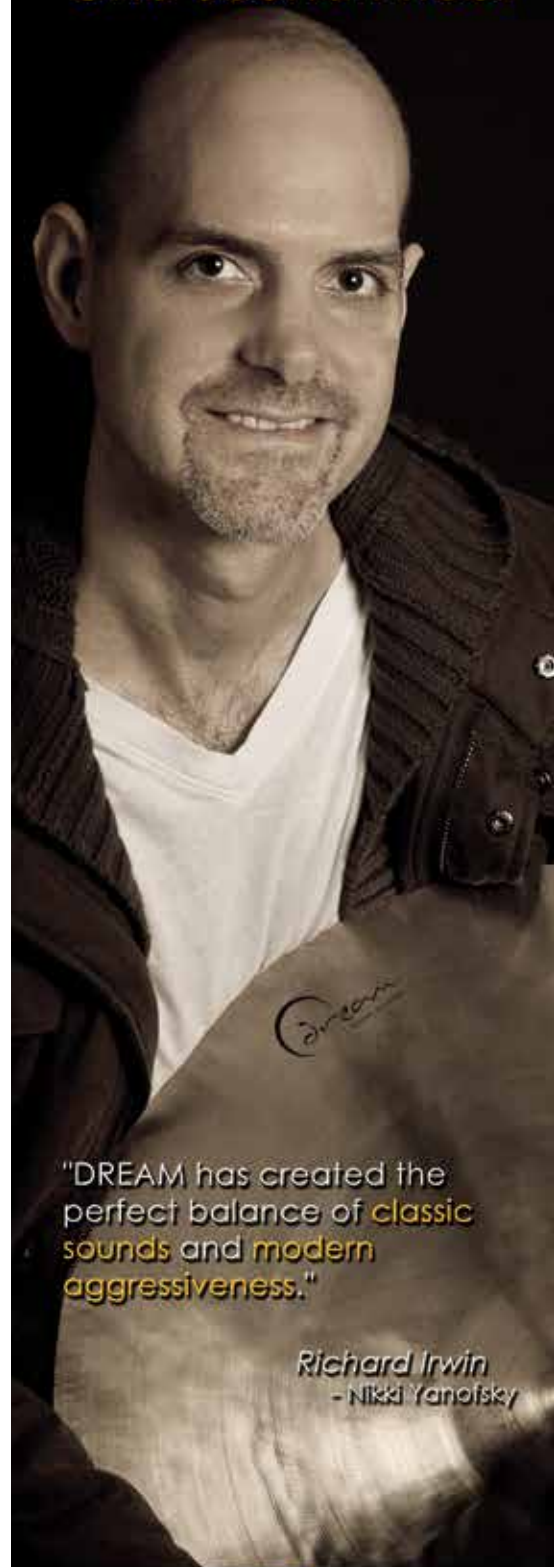
Yeah, steps are good. They don't have to be big steps, as long as they're steps. The unknown is risky, man. It's easier to just say, "Well, this is what's already happening. This is what people like. Let me just do that and do it very well, or just put my little spin on it."

Well, you can do that, but why not push a little bit and see what happens? What's the worst that could happen in this jazz era? People are going to like it or they're not going to like it. People can make records in their bathrooms now. You're worried about record sales? There's no more record sales. At this point, it should be liberating. It should be an incentive to try to find something unique, find something that's coming from inside you—something that's informed by not just the stuff that exists, not just the things you love from the past.

All these things are going to be fuel for us, things that motivate us, push us, guide us, gently sometimes and more forcefully other times. But ultimately, we have to take the reins. **DB**

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Marian
McPartland,
circa 1947

DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES

MARIAN MCPARTLAND & THE GOLDEN AGE OF JAZZ

By Paul de Barros

Pianist Marian McPartland, 94, has become an icon not only because of her career as a musician, but also her pioneering work as the longtime host of the National Public Radio show “Marian McPartland’s Piano Jazz.”

We’re proud to present an edited excerpt from DownBeat contributor Paul de Barros’ new book, *Shall We Play That One Together?: The Life And Art Of Jazz Piano Legend Marian McPartland* (St. Martin’s Press). In chapter five, “Windy City Apprentice (1946–’50),” we glimpse Marian and her new husband, cornetist Jimmy McPartland, as they set out to make a life together in his hometown of Chicago, where she soaks up the city’s new sounds. Marian, who grew up in England, had met and married Jimmy during World War II, when they played in a USO band in Belgium.



Marian and Jimmy lived in Chicago more than four years. It was a critical growth period—a musical apprenticeship for Marian and an emotional one for her and Jimmy as a couple. Through wit, keen observation and sheer force of will, Marian emerged from Chicago a modern jazz player. She also began to get a glimmer of recognition beyond the shadow of her famous husband. Her marriage, already fragile because of Jimmy’s alcoholism, survived its roughest period, including one dismal juncture when she gave up on it altogether. Years later she would complain that she and Jimmy should have stayed in New York in 1946 when Eddie Condon had offered Jimmy a job there, but in many ways, Chicago had been a better choice. The Chicago scene flowered in the late ’40s, giving her an opportunity to grow at her own pace—in the limelight, but not directly under the glare of the Big Apple’s unforgiving spotlight. Chicago was good for Jimmy, too. It was home, for starters, and showing off his new bride to family and friends was just the right medicine after the war.

In June 1946, Marian made what was probably her Chicago debut on a concert billed as “Swing vs. Jazz,” sponsored by the newly formed Hot Club of Chicago. Staged at the Moose Lodge on North State Street, the show pitted a trad band featuring Jimmy and Marian against the renowned swing band of Charlie Barnet. People packed the place and welcomed Jimmy home from the war.

Their first regular gig was decidedly low profile—in a South Side bar attached to a bowling alley called the Rose Bowl, near 119th Street on Michigan Avenue.

“Jimmy would very proudly introduce me for my number, which might be ‘Claire de Lune,’” said Marian. “There weren’t that many people in the bar, but I would be playing, and somebody in the bowling alley would get a strike, and everybody would *roarrrr*.”

Dick Wang, a high school trumpet player at the time (and later a distinguished jazz professor), recalled seeing Marian and Jimmy there while Dick was playing a gig nearby, with

pianist Audrey Morris.

"I was just knocked out," said Wang. "First of all, Marian had really good piano chops. ... She played the stride-style left hand. ... She had listened to Jess Stacy and to Teddy Wilson. She was throwing in these harmonies, and this was what fascinated Audrey. It was always explorative, the chord voicings especially."

"People started to notice me because I was with Jimmy," Marian said modestly. "He was very proud of me—he did show me off ... and in his better moments introduce me in such a way as to make me sound like the greatest thing since the wheel."

But Jimmy's drinking was becoming more and more of a problem, despite Marian's continual protests and his empty promises to quit. In August, Marian's sister Joyce, concerned about the letters she had been receiving from Marian, came to Chicago from England to offer moral support. Or so Marian thought, until she saw Joyce at the station. Joyce was five months pregnant. Two weeks before she arrived, she had married her boyfriend, Tony Armitage, the father of her child-to-be, with whom she had been living at the family home in Eastbourne. To conceal her advanced pregnancy from her father (she suspected her mother already knew), Joyce had decided to visit Marian in America. So there they were, two proper, upper-middle-class girls from Bromley, Kent, descendants of three generations of choir boys, whose parents had sent them off to the Stratford House for Girls to be groomed for nice husbands. One was pregnant out of wedlock; the other nearly penniless, married to an alcoholic jazz musician.

"My mother's dire prediction," wrote Marian in an autobiographical essay, "that I would marry a musician and live in an attic [well, not quite an attic, but the Dearborn St. apartment was close] had come true."

When Jimmy's band moved to the Brass Rail, in the Loop neighbor-

hood, DownBeat ran a feature noting that Marian "displayed unusual versatility" and published a sample of her chord voicings. In her comments for the DownBeat piece, Marian made it clear she now preferred modern sounds to traditional jazz. Her playing was undoubtedly a work in progress, as she leapfrogged from Jimmy's four-on-the-floor trad to the more abstract and complex style of bop, effectively skipping the swing era altogether. The result in the long run would be an eclectic, personal style described perceptively by one musician who hung around the Brass Rail in those days, accordion player Charlie Rex, as "homemade."

Jimmy and Marian worked at the Brass Rail till the end of 1947. By this time, the Chicago jazz scene had exploded. Clubs sprouted up everywhere, in the Loop and on the north and south sides of the city. Every brand of jazz was played: Dixieland, big-band swing, piano trios and—of particular interest to Marian—the new bebop she had first heard in Paris.

"Randolph Street was just like 52nd Street in New York," recalled Joe Segal, longtime owner of Chicago's venerable club the Jazz Showcase. "The first time I came here, I was stationed in the Army down in Champaign. I'd get the weekend off and grab the IC [Illinois Central Railroad] right up to Randolph Street. Joe Sherman's Down Beat Room, which was in the Oriental Theater, had Henry 'Red' Allen and J. C. Higginbotham. I was in hog heaven. And then Red Saunders was there, who was at the Club DeLisa a long time. Across the street was the Brass Rail. And the Band Box, that was the one that was underneath."

For Marian, Chicago was like an open university. She went out to hear everyone, setting her sights on learning how to play modern. And Chicago was going modern fast, the seeds having been sown by local boys such as pianist Lennie Tristano and bandleaders Bill Russo and Jay Burkhardt. The singer in Burkhardt's band was a straw-voiced lass from Milwaukee

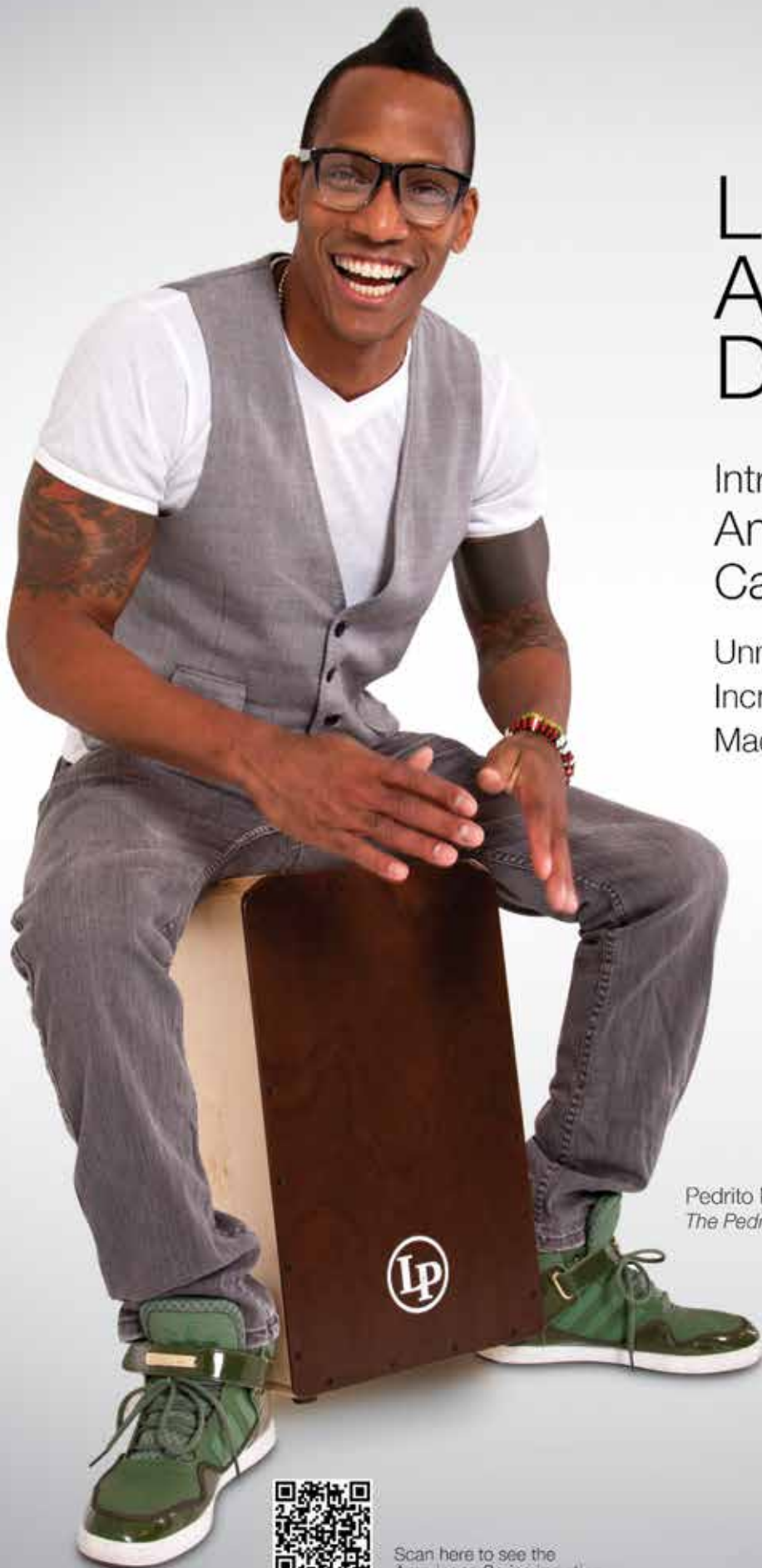


Marian on the cover, July 13, 1951

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From left: Marian McPartland (piano), Jimmy McPartland (cornet), Tommy Turk (trombone) and Flip Phillips (tenor saxophone)

named Jackie Cain who, after she hooked up with vocalist/pianist Roy Kral, went to work with the Charlie Ventura Octet. Jackie and Roy forged a personal style of bop singing that incorporated scat, witty lyrics, agile melodies and a light, airy sound. Their slinky, exotic “East Of Suez” with Ventura knocked everybody out. Jimmy’s bass player, Ben Carlton, hipped the McPartlands to Jackie and Roy. They all jumped into drummer Chick Evans’ car and raced down to the Bee Hive, on the South Side, to hear the new duo. Jackie and Roy returned the favor, dropping in on Marian and Jimmy at the Brass Rail. They all became fast friends. Kral’s advanced but accessible approach to bop, which honored the song while venturing into new harmonic territory, was right up Marian’s alley. She literally hovered over his shoulder, studying the way he comped, learning to add ninths and altered intervals to her chords. As Marian pointed out later, this was the way jazz was “taught” in those days.

Radio played a big role in Marian’s Chicago apprenticeship, too. She became an avid fan of Dave Garroway’s WMAQ show “The Eleven Sixty Club,” which championed Dizzy Gillespie’s “Groovin’ High,” Nellie Lutcher’s “Fine Brown Frame,” George Shearing’s “September In The Rain” and Lennie Tristano’s famous free-improvised version of “I Can’t Get Started.” What she didn’t hear on the radio, Marian heard on a portable record player carried everywhere by Ben Carlton, who turned her on to Woody Herman’s bebop band and bassist Chubby Jackson’s septet with Dave Tough. Marian learned from these recordings what she could not get from Jimmy: bop harmonies that included dissonant upper extensions of the chords (altered ninths, 11ths, 13ths); the new, laconic style of “comping” pioneered by Bud Powell; the light, even-handed touch of Lester Young’s disciples; and how to think about forging a middle ground between the transgressions of bop and a commercial sound. Over the years, all of this information would, in one form or another, come out in her own playing.

NEW YORK’S GOLDEN AGE OF JAZZ (1953–’58)

When Marian McPartland played at the Hickory House in New York, jazz was enjoying a golden age. Between 1953 and 1966, artists such as Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, Thelonious Monk, Dave Brubeck, Charles Mingus and Ornette Coleman, among others, produced some of the best work in the history of the music—nearly all of it in one city, New York, in one loosely configured community. Clubs proliferated. In Midtown, there were the Royal Roost, Birdland, Basin Street, Jimmy Ryan’s, the Embers, the Hickory House, the Composer, Child’s Paramount and the Metropole. In Greenwich Village, you had Condon’s, Café Bohemia,

Café Society, the Five Spot and the Central Plaza. Beyond New York, the music rumbled into living rooms on TV soundtracks—notably for “Peter Gunn,” the 1957 detective show with Henry Mancini’s wailing saxophone theme—and in mainstream motion pictures a few years later with Quincy Jones’ soundtrack to *The Pawnbroker*. Resident jazz bands played on late-night talk shows—indeed, “Tonight Show” host Steve Allen was himself a jazz pianist—and jazz musicians, including Monk, Dizzy Gillespie and Marian herself—were regular guests. Louis Armstrong appeared on the Ed Sullivan show and was interviewed by Edward R. Murrow on “Person to Person.” Monk, Brubeck and Duke Ellington appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine.

One of the highlights of the period for Marian was playing and recording with Joe Morello. The drummer brought a lift to her trio and jettied some much-needed air between the instruments. He treated the drums not as a mere rhythm machine—though he certainly swung—but as a delicate and intricate musical system. He was exact, but never clinical. Obsessed with technique, he worked at it constantly.

“I remember once I was driving to the Hickory House,” Marian said. “Suddenly, a cab went by at a furious rate. Joe was in it—practicing like mad on a practice pad in the cab. I broke up. It just looked so funny.”

Because of Morello, the Hickory House became a mecca for young drummers. Morello didn’t take well to hero worship. He got so tired of people comparing him to great drummers like Buddy Rich and Max Roach that he invented an imaginary drummer, Marvin Bonessa, who, he said with deadpan seriousness, was “better than all of them.” Like the legendary Texas pianist Peck Kelly, Morello said Bonessa rarely played out, so it was impossible to ever really hear him. Marian and Morello went along with the ruse, nodding solemnly whenever Bonessa’s name came up. Bassist Bill Crow claimed Bonessa eventually got a few votes in a *DownBeat* poll, so far did his reputation spread.

One regular visitor to the Hickory House was Duke Ellington’s right-hand man, Billy Strayhorn, who came into the club once or twice a week, always sitting in the same spot, the last stool on the right side of the bar. Whenever Marian played his brilliant ballad “Lush Life,” Strayhorn would turn to face her, raise his cocktail and his eyebrows high in a toast, and say, “Aaaah!” Marian, as always, was ahead of the curve in picking out enduring songs. Being in the theater district, the Hickory House often attracted Broadway types. One night, after Marian had played a set that included the ballad “Ill Wind,” a man walked up to her and slipped her a note. It said, “I’m Harold Arlen, and I love your playing.” Arlen, of course, had written the song, along with dozens of other evergreens, including “Over The



Jimmy and Marian in Cannes, France, 1945

Rainbow” and “Stormy Weather.” Marian never threw away Arlen’s note.

Jimmy and Bud Freeman played the Randall’s Island Jazz Festival that summer and the lineup was breathtaking—from Count Basie and Lester Young to the Modern Jazz Quartet and Billie Holiday. But New Yorkers were probably blasé: This was simply what jazz was in 1958. And as with all periods of abundance, who ever thought it would go away? One enterprising magazine editor, Harold Hayes at *Esquire*, presciently saw that the jazz scene in New York had reached critical mass and ought to be documented for posterity. Art Kane, art director for *Seventeen* magazine, was enlisted to take the photographs. Kane suggested they round up every jazz musician they could find in New York and take a class picture. The result was the historic photograph *A Great Day in Harlem*.

The call was for 10 a.m. on Aug. 12. (Gerry Mulligan later said he doubted anyone would come that early. Bud Freeman famously quipped in a documentary about the photo, “I didn’t know there were two 10 o’clocks in each day.”) At the appointed hour, musicians began to arrive and eventually a group of 57 congregated in front of a brownstone on the north side of 126th Street, in the block between Fifth and Madison. Among them were Count Basie, Lester Young, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, Oscar Pettiford, Bud Freeman, Johnny Griffin, Coleman Hawkins, Hank Jones, Maxine Sullivan, Jimmy Rushing, Chubby Jackson, Roy Eldridge, Art Blakey, Rex Stewart, Gerry Mulligan, Gene Krupa, Vic Dickenson, Red Allen, Mary Lou Williams ... and Marian McPartland. Wearing a fetching yellow sun dress and holding a briefcase-size handbag in her right hand, arm distended, her left hand stretched across her waist to her right forearm, Marian stood in the front row, next to Mary Lou, who was flanked on the other side by Monk. Along with Williams and Sullivan, she was one of only three women in the congregation.

When the shutter clicked, Marian and Mary Lou appeared to be having a conversation, Marian’s head cocked ever so slightly upward, listening. Gillespie, at the far right, one leg casually crossed over the other, stuck his tongue out at Roy Eldridge, who, standing in front of Diz, had just turned around to speak. The whole impression was one of a gathering of friends.

And so it was.

Conspicuously absent was Jimmy, who, when Marian had urged him to come that morning, had said, “That’s too fuckin’ early,” turned over, and gone back to sleep. *A Great Day in Harlem* was published in the January 1959 issue of *Esquire*. Few musicians even bothered to keep a copy. Later, they kicked themselves, for there would be precious few opportunities again to gather such a stellar assembly in New York. The Golden Era would soon be over.

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ALWAYS SEARCHING

By Dan Ouellette | Photo by Scott Friedlander

During the golden days of the '90s jazz boom in the San Francisco Bay Area, Joel Harrison was a guitar everyman. He was careening from playing rock and blues in cover bands in the roughneck territory of Richmond; writing television scores for A&E, Bravo and HBO documentaries; jumping into the fray of such avant jazz clubs as Beanbenders on Shattuck Avenue in otherwise quiet downtown Berkeley; and creating his own shape-shifting jazz projects, highlighted by his adventurous 1996 sophomore album, *3+3=7* on Nine Winds, featuring Nels Cline and Steve Cardenas on guitars and Alex Cline and Scott Amendola on drums.

When Harrison joined the scene's mass diaspora to New York in 1999 and settled in Brooklyn, the sky was the limit. "My goal was to play with as many people as possible," says the 55-year-old guitarist/bandleader/vocalist over cold beers on a humid day at Stonehome Wine Bar in his Fort Greene neighborhood.

And that's exactly what Harrison did, haunting many small jazz clubs that have since passed on, like the Internet Cafe and the Knitting Factory, as well as old standbys still standing like the 55 Bar and Cornelia Street Cafe. He says it was as if he were on rocket fuel.

"I felt like anything I could do to put a gig together and play with somebody new was going to make me grow," Harrison says. "I went from a small but talented pool of players to this immense pool of talented people, all of whom seemed to offer a new take on things—this multitude of voices interpreting both the tradition and my own music."

Faced with limitless possibilities in his new hometown, he settled on an approach: "Every musician needs a North Star around which everything needs to revolve. It's a foundation that can be built on, and jazz became that for me. I thought I can do whatever I want if I expand off of this tradition."

Expand is the operative word when it comes to Harrison's 14-album oeuvre, which encompasses a variety of genres—from country to classical to world—as he has evolved far and wide, away from the jazz beaten path in the 30 years that he has been cultivating and advancing his career. It hasn't been easy. Lesson No. 1 was how he was going to follow his intuition and look beyond a jazz life.

"There was a turning point a few years after I moved to Brooklyn," he recalls. "I booked a restaurant gig and hired Lee Alexander on bass and Gene Jackson on drums. I'm sitting there playing Herbie Hancock's 'Dolphin Dance' with Gene, who had toured with Herbie, and I thought, 'I can't do this.' Something inside me told me that it was fraudulent. I remembered Steve Coleman saying, 'When you come to New York, the only way you'll ever succeed is to find yourself and stick with it—don't try to be like anyone else.' I realized that I had to do my own music here. I'll sink or swim, but I can't be a fake jazz guitarist any longer."

So Harrison regrouped and grasped a clearer view of who he was as an artist. His conclusion? "I have a complicated relationship with the jazz tradition." He laughs and explains that even when he was younger, he had ambivalence as to whether jazz was his true voice and whether it was speaking to him at "the deepest place."

He also doubted his full commitment. "The only way to get into the jazz tradition is to be totally obsessed with it," he says. "Furthermore, I didn't go to any school to study it. I lived in Boston, but I didn't go to Berklee. The schools I went to, like Bard College, specialized in finding your own voice and being different. I ended up studying composition and 20th century music. So, in retrospect, what I lacked in a fundamental grounding in straight-ahead jazz, I made up for by becoming fascinated by the multitude of different kinds of music."

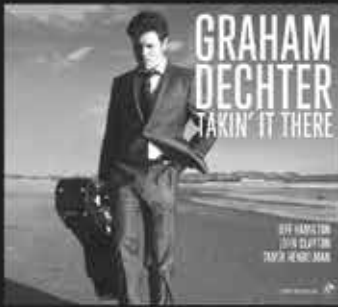
Jazz was certainly an influence in his youth, especially John Coltrane's and Miles Davis' seminal music of the '60s, but Harrison was also drawn to electric jazz delivered by the likes of

Weather Report, John McLaughlin and Frank Zappa. Then too he was enamored of the early '70s singer-songwriter pop movement, classical music of all stripes and world music. "It's common now, but that was unusual and even odd then," he says. "I was into Indian and African music and I wanted to learn about Balkan music."

After his epiphany playing with Jackson, Harrison decided to follow his instincts and leaped into his 2003 jazz-infused country-folk project, *Free Country* (ACT), which featured Norah Jones singing on two tracks and pianist Uri Caine and saxophonist Dave Binney guesting. Harrison's arrangements make for an impressive mix and match of two American-born styles. "This felt more like me," says Harrison. "Those were the standards that I chose to deal with."

From there, Harrison unleashed a series of albums that range from a covers disc to an out-jazz CD with guitarist Nguyễn Lê to a classical music-fired project with a string quartet and jazz quintet. Rather than being driven by a need to have a new concept each time he records, Harrison approaches his projects organically. "It's not like I try to be eclectic," he says. "I just am. I'm not coming up with a wacky idea and doing it because I think it's different. All my records have meaning and context for me."

He divides his forays into unorthodox music into categories, including projects that focus on his own compositions. Case in point: this year's *Search* album by the stellar Joel Harrison 7 on Sunnyside. Joined by tenor saxophonist Donny McCaslin, pianist/B3 organist Gary Versace, violinist Christian Howes, cellist Dana Leong, bassist Stephan Crump and drummer Clarence Penn, Harrison embarks on several long-form



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originals that develop as suites, including "A Magnificent Death," an emotional and compelling tribute to a friend who passed away.

"My composing often focuses on unusual instrumental combinations," Harrison says. "I value strong melodies, a world of rhythms, the Western tradition of counterpoint and interesting harmonies, and the balance of focused notation with the spontaneity of improvisation."

While Harrison's compositions are showcased on *Search*, he also filled out the disc with two seemingly disparate covers sequenced back-to-back: a new arrangement of the Allman Brothers Band's rocking "Whipping Post" and a tender take on Oliver Messiaen's "O Sacrum Convivium." He calls them counterweights to the intensity of his own compositions.

Then there are Harrison's covers projects, including two that come from entirely different universes: 2006's *Harrison On Harrison* (HighNote), where George Harrison's songs are explored in a jazz realm, and 2011's *String Choir: The Music Of Paul Motian* (Sunnyside).

"Those come from my need; it's no fun just playing your own music all the time," Harrison explains. "I love the process of exploring the act of spontaneous music through the lens of a tune I love. But I won't record 'Body And Soul.' I need to find my own songbook. I love country music. People haven't really plowed this earth so thoroughly in this tradition. That's why I recorded *Free Country*. It's funny: Anytime I play one of those tunes live, people love it and tell me I should do it more."

The seed for the George Harrison album was the 2003 New York Guitar Festival at Merkin Hall, where Harrison was asked to arrange a couple of the former Beatle's songs in a jazz-infused style. After that success, he continued working on the guitarist's material—Beatles' songs like "Within You Without You" and "Here Comes The Sun" and solo numbers like "Art Of Dying" and "My Sweet Lord"—and enlisted the support of Caine, Binney and saxophonist Dave Liebman for the album.

The Motian disc is more personal to Harrison. It was 10 years in the making and features fellow guitarist Liberty Ellman and an improvisation-steeped string ensemble of violinists Christian Howes and Sam Bardfeld, viola players Mat Maneri and Peter Ugrin, and cellist Dana Leong. The music moves from the inquisitive to the whimsical, from melancholy to ferocity. "I love Paul's music and I wanted to approach it in a different way," he says. "So there are no drums, and it's a chamber music experience. To get to know Paul is one of the greatest experiences in my New York life. I got to interact with him about my arrangements. He called me on the phone to discuss them."

Other "subspecies" of Harrison's works include his singer-songwriter endeavors manifest on his 2008 album *Passing Train* (Intuition/Tuition), where the songs are simpler and he sings, and fully notated classical music, showcased on his 2010 album *Life Force* (on Philip

Glass' label, Orange Mountain Music) with cellist Wendy Sutter and violinist Tim Fain.

On the subject of *Life Force*, Harrison says that it troubles him when his friends and critics downplay the importance of classical music. "I understand in this culture, where there's an onslaught of information [vying for] people's attention, that it's hard to find the time to focus," he says. "It's easier to put an album like this in a box so they don't have to go into another world they may or may not understand, or they may not even take the time to process it."

But Harrison hastens to note that many jazz players bring classical into their music in a "covert" way. He cites Henry Threadgill and Sonny Rollins as jazz masters who know their classical roots. As for the "overt" musicians, Harrison singles out the music of Billy Childs, John Hollenbeck and Drew Gress. "They're actively seeking ways to blend jazz and classical," he says. "I'm no soothsayer, but I think we'll see more of that in the next 10 to 20 years. Jazz artists can really expand and grow by looking into new possibilities that are part of the classical music tradition."

While Harrison's palette seems to already have all the colors it needs, recently he's been stretching out even further. International artists are seeking him out to collaborate. For example, last year he recorded the album *Holy Abyss* (Cuneiform) with Italian bassist Lorenzo Feliciati. "Lorenzo really liked my music, so he asked if we could record," Harrison says. "I had some songs I hadn't recorded, and we got a band together. I'm really pleased with it."

Recently Akihito Obama, a Japanese master *shakuhachi* player, called Harrison out of the blue to play his charts at a concert in the New York club Somethin' Else. While Harrison didn't know what to expect, he was game and came away from the experience exulted. "We could barely speak each other's language," he says. "But it was so much fun. It's a cliché, but it shows how music really is the universal language."

In addition, there's Harrison's recent work with Indian sarodist Anupam Shobhakar (who recently moved to New York) that resulted in the epic-sweep album *Leave The Door Open*, which has yet to find a label. The band features Versace, Weiss and bassist Hans Glawischmig. One tune from the collection is Harrison's "The Translator," which opens gently then breaks open into exuberant grooves. Harrison and Shobhakar's interplay creates a unique soundscape. "Jazz and Indian music have been played together for years," says Harrison. "But I believe this is the only project that I know of where traditional Indian music has found a 50-50 meeting place with Western music. Anupam doesn't do just the Indian thing. We collaborate."

As if that weren't enough, Harrison has been doing guitar sideman duties on occasion, sparking up and sliding into the funky grooves of the Glen David Andrews Band from New Orleans. "That's a part of my guitar playing that's often overlooked," he says, "but I love to throw down,

sweat and play grooves.” Harrison is currently in the early stages of forming a composers’ collective with such noteworthy artists as Oliver Lake, Jason Kao Hwang, Joseph Daly and others.

But his most awe-inspiring undertaking of late is his first big band project, *Infinite Possibility*, a six-piece work, steeped in horns and woodwinds, that is inspired by classical music and fueled with a jazz sensibility. It debuted in September at Shapeshifter Lab in Brooklyn. It was a Meet The Composers commission sponsored by Brooklyn Connection Works. “I needed to challenge myself,” says Harrison, pointing to a 5-inch stack of ledger-size paper containing a score he has written. “There I was fancying myself a jazz composer, but I had never written for a large ensemble. I felt compelled, so I applied for a grant. If I got it, I’d do it.”

The result? He received the grant and delved into long-form composing. “It’s a thrill,” he says. “It’s the difference between driving a Mazda and an 18-wheeler.”

Pianist Daniel Kelly, who has worked with Harrison on other projects, including the album *Urban Myths*, appears on *Infinite Possibility*. He marvels at the piece and its composer. “Joel is prolific,” Kelly says. “I’m impressed by how much he creates and the projects that he keeps coming up with.”

Howes, who has played violin on at least five Harrison strings-oriented albums (he’s lost count), agrees that the composer has spawned an amazing repertoire over the years. “Joel has had so many different projects that are all so different from each other,” he says. “When he blends the classical with jazz, he goes into other territories. He’s completely modern in that way.”

What Howes appreciates most is Harrison’s search for string players who have legitimate chops and can also improvise, which is right up his alley as a violinist. “Joel will give us these heavy, written-out, complex classical parts and then ask us to solo over the weird time signatures and chord changes,” Howes says. “Even with all that, he goes, ‘Just catch the vibe and solo over that.’ He’s looking for a confluence of skill sets from each of his players.”

In a conversation earlier this year, Harrison said, “I love all my albums, and they all represent my search. It’s a lineage that I’ve created.” In continuing the conversation, he adds, “The element of surprise is critical in any kind of music. Beethoven was a master of surprise. You listen, and all of a sudden he turns 180 degrees. The great improvisers are also the masters of surprise. It’s one of many compositional tools.”

But he worries that what he’s said comes off as somehow incomplete. As befitting a composer who needs to add and rewrite in order to clarify, Harrison sends an email a few days later. He writes: “You asked about surprise. If one is always searching for what is deep, lasting, meaningful and life-affirming, as opposed to popular, *au courant*, artificial and insubstantial, one is always surprised. The attitude is the approach.”

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Duduka Da Fonseca

NICK SUTTLE

Duduka Da Fonseca Quintet *Samba Jazz-Jazz Samba*

ANZIC 0041

★★★

“Duduka has the right feel, he has that *glide*,” Claudio Roditi once told me. The trumpeter and I were next-door neighbors for a spell, and he was trying to articulate the particular groove that his generation of Brazilian improvisers used when playing what they deemed “samba jazz.” Indeed Da Fonseca, the Rio-born drummer and a veteran of the New York scene, boasts a buoyant brand of propulsion. His ride cymbal sparkles, and his brush work is essence of panache. This new disc by his quintet provides the lilt as usual, but along the way it throws several punches. It’s a tad more muscular than what Da Fonseca usually offers, and refreshingly so.

The action is unmistakable in “Obstinato.” From the title alone we expect something pushy, and the pulse patterns at the center of the action make a great heartbeat for the group’s aggression. The leader details a pummeling strategy, saxophonist Anat Cohen gets as blustery as I’ve ever heard her and pianist Helio Alves becomes a tension machine, repeating the base chords with a Morse Code urgency. This must be the “jazz samba” side of the equation, because Gotham’s inherent aggression, not Antônio Carlos Jobim’s seaside elan, defines the turf.

As far as I know Da Fonseca has never covered Ornette Coleman on disc, so the romp through “Blues Connotation” is both novel and rousing. By peppering nuances of rumba into the music, the drummer and bassist Leonardo Cioglia detonate a series of tiny explosions. It also makes room for a lithe excursion by guitarist Guilherme Monteiro, which tilts the action back towards Brazil. Cohen wittily quotes the ubiquitous ’60s nugget “Summer Samba” during her feisty solo.

Of course the gentility that defines Brazilian rhythms is steadily accounted for through the program. A floating feel marks “O Guaraná,” even though it shares room with a John Coltrane aura. And “Flying Over Rio” is overt—a samba in the trad sense that allows the band to sweep everything forward with a relaxed vibe. As far as balance goes, Da Fonseca’s made a terrific little disc. —*Jim Macnie*

Samba Jazz-Jazz Samba: Depois Da Chuva; Savor Carioca; Rancho Das Nuvens; Blues Connotation; Obstinato; The Peacocks; O Guaraná; Flying Over Rio; Dona Olimpia; Melancia. (58;46)

Personnel: Duduka Da Fonseca, drums; Anat Cohen, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Helio Alves, piano; Guilherme Monteiro, guitar; Leonardo Cioglia, bass.

Ordering info: anzicrecords.com



Dave Douglas Quintet *Be Still*

GREENLEAF 1027
★★★★

We've come to rely on Dave Douglas to quietly confound expectation. He's reinvented himself repeatedly since he stormed the scene in the early '90s. Or maybe a better way of thinking about it is that Douglas has continued to reveal different things about himself, musically, as he's gone along. On this outing the trumpeter unveils by means of a spiritually oriented song cycle, perhaps his version of Americana, but something also much more idiosyncratic and personal.

The germ of *Be Still* is a list of songs that Douglas' mother prepared for him to play at a service after her death. It includes classic American folk songs, like "Barbara Allen," hymns like "God Be With You," two newly arranged art

Arturo O'Farrill *The Noguchi Sessions*

ZOHO 201205
★★★★½

Arturo O'Farrill, who has focused largely on experimental and Afro-Latin big band music, turns here to another kind of big band sound—the solo piano. His skills as arranger and player are an easy match for the orchestra resources of the keyboard. This disc was recorded in the Noguchi Museum, New York, and inspired by the sculptor's life and work.

Half of the dozen pieces are originals. But it's the familiar faces that you go to first. None more so than Stephen Foster's "O' Susanna." He begins with a transparent lyricism that filters and softens those origins through the cinematic imagery and emotional revisionism of John Ford. He then rides to higher ground, swelling in complexity while pausing occasionally to note where it's come from. Seven tracks later one hears shadowy echoes of another Foster anthem, "Dear Old Southland," in O'Farrill's own "Mi Vida." And speaking of echoes, listen carefully to the first notes of O'Farrill's opening free improvisation, "The Sun At Midnight," and you'll hear a brief unintended iteration of "Alone," an old Nacio Herb

songs, one by Jean Sibelius ("Be Still My Soul") and one by Ralph Vaughn-Williams ("Whither Must I Wander"), as well as three strong original compositions. Any somber vibe on the Douglas tunes is undercut by a powerful current of optimism—tenor saxophonist Jon Irabagon even gets a bit cheeky here and there, though he also matches the mood of each piece exceptionally. "Middle March" begins with the two horns together, rocking almost like a sibling singing team from Appalachia, before the full quintet comes in with lovely, organic, harmonically ambiguous interplay. Philadelphian pianist Matt Mitchell has been consistently excellent, and *Be Still* is no exception; his radar is perfectly tuned for a multi-directional session like this.

The surprise is Aoife O'Donovan. A singer of great authority who has led her bluegrass band Crooked Still for the last decade, O'Donovan was an inspired choice for *Be Still*. Her voice is often whispery, ghostly, but never anemic. She's able to phrase inventively and articulate clearly, which is key because the lyrics are key to Douglas' program. On "High On A Mountain," the most downhome track, she adds guitar, belting out the song's mighty message. She sings translucently, at the opening of "Barbara Allen," quite haunting, and Douglas dovetails with her joyously on the hymn "This Is My Father's World," which the singer adjusts to "this is my mother's world."

—John Corbett

Be Still: Be Still My Soul; High On A Mountain; God Be With You; Barbara Allen; This Is My Father's World; Going Somewhere With You; Middle March; Living Streams; Whither Must I Wander? (42:58)
Personnel: Dave Douglas, trumpet; Jon Irabagon, tenor saxophone; Matt Mitchell, piano; Linda Oh, bass; Rudy Royston, drums; Aoife O'Donovan, vocals, guitar (2)
Ordering info: greenleafmusic.com



Brown tune. O'Farrill's choices are global. But "Little Niles" is the only one that originates in the work of an American jazz pianist, Randy Weston. Of O'Farrill's own pieces, "Alisonia" is crowded with long, ricocheting arpeggios and swirling splashes of high anxiety that ultimately melt into a pool of relative peace.

—John McDonough

The Noguchi Sessions: The Sun At Midnight; O' Susanna; In Whom; Little Niles; The Delusion Of The Greedy; Siboney; Alisonia; Once I Had A Secret Meditation; Mi Vida; Obsession; Oh Danny Boy; Jelly Roll. (61:40)
Personnel: Arturo O'Farrill, piano
Ordering info: zohomusic.com



Arild Andersen/Scottish National Jazz Orchestra *Celebration*

ECM 0016925
★★★★½

As soon as this album ended, I wanted to hear it again. Its concerto-like mix of masterful, front-of-band solos by Norwegian bassist Arild Andersen, historic compositions associated with the ECM label and intricately developed arrangements by the likes of Christian Jacob, Trygve Seim and Scottish National Jazz Orchestra director Tommy Smith conspire to make it one of the best albums of the year. If the recording quality were just a tad brighter—it was captured live, at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland—five stars.

"May Dance," by Dave Holland, has the joyous, angular, inside-outside feel of '70s albums like the one Holland recorded it on with the trio Gateway. Smith's throaty, swashbuckling tenor saxophone—with pleasant traces of Albert Ayler—rises mightily at the start, dodging and weaving with the band. If there's a better version of "Crystal Silence" than Makoto Ozone's arrangement here, lead me to it. Framed by a shimmering soundscape, Andersen luxuriates in the unusual turns of Chick Corea's melody, then improvises lovely variations before the band creeps back in. The Norwegian folk mood—dancing in 6/8, this time—continues with Seim's "Ulrikas Dans," featuring a piping tenor saxophone/bass unison over hand drumming, some snappy Andersen and a playful tuba counterline. At 16:59, Andersen's "Independency, Part 4" (arranged by Mike Gibbs) is the longest piece on the album, but it never sags. Starting with floaty reverb, Andersen builds a meditative mood with consonant intervals; Smith buzzes in like a wasp, the two musicians spar in a freedom dance, then the band suddenly throbs into glorious swing time, collapsing humorously for a moment, then throbbing again.

—Paul de Barros

Celebration: May Dance; Mode Canticle, Part 1; Crystal Silence; Ulrikas Dans; Independency, Part 4; My Song. (61:42)
Personnel: Arild Andersen, bass; Tommy Smith, tenor saxophone, flute; Martin Kershaw, clarinet, soprano saxophone, alto saxophone; Paul Townsend, alto saxophone; Konrad Wisniewski, tenor saxophone; Bill Fleming, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet; Chris Greive, Phil O'Malley, Michael Owers, trombone; Lorna McDonald, bass trombone, tuba; Steve Hamilton, piano; Calum Gourlay, bass; Alyn Cosker, drums.
Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

The Hot Box

CD ▾ Critics ▶ John McDonough John Corbett Jim Macnie Paul de Barros

Duduka Da Fonseca Quintet <i>Samba Jazz–Jazz Samba</i>	★★★★½	★★½	★★★	★★★
Dave Douglas Quintet <i>Be Still</i>	★★★★	★★★	★★★★½	★★½
Arturo O’Farrill <i>The Noguchi Sessions</i>	★★★★½	★★★★½	★★★★½	★½
Arild Andersen <i>Celebration</i>	★★½	★★★	★★★	★★★★½

Critics’ Comments

Duduka Da Fonseca Quintet, *Samba Jazz–Jazz Samba*

A light Anglo-Brazilian fizz in 10 effervescent shots. Cohen, Alves and Monteiro waste no space. All make their points and move on. Length per capita is concise and proportional to content. Cohen steers with a light, laid-back energy. Ensembles are simple, brief, tight. Modest, unassuming in scope, but still a pleasure.

—John McDonough

Da Fonseca’s a fine drummer, Cohen’s usually a person of interest, but this particular CD blunts some of the potentially interesting edges. The Lee Morgan-ified version of “Blues Connotation” is fun, but douses the head with dull harmonies, a characteristic that seems to be the disc’s Achilles heel.

—John Corbett

Da Fonseca is one of the smartest, most tasteful drummers in Brazilian jazz, and Anat Cohen and Helio Halves both shine here, but this fusion of jazz and samba, while subtle and deft, feels a little stuck in the ’70s.

—Paul de Barros

Dave Douglas Quintet, *Be Still*

Restless warmth meets folkie contralto. The convergence is spacious, mutually accommodating, and eminently engaging. Douglas leads with authority, but solos with sprinkles of spidery quivers, snarls and rips. Quintet gets three pieces. Douglas and Irabagon most at ease as bass and drums ramble freely about (“Middle March”).

—John McDonough

I’m a fan of Crooked Still, pomo Stephen Foster moves and well-plotted interplay that goes out of its way to stress the melody at hand, so sure, put this one in the plus column. Aoife O’Donovan’s vocals are a smidge wispy when matched with brass and reeds, but their charm is undeniable.

—Jim Macnie

Wafting in the background, Aoife O’Donovan’s whispery vocals are charming—a nice match for Douglas’ witty, airy trumpet sound. Up close, she sounds gauzy, bland and merely atmospheric. The heart-on-sleeve vulnerability of the Irish folk material (love the arrangement of “Barbara Allen”) makes the harmonically complex Douglas originals sound that much more attractive—and out of place.

—Paul de Barros

Arturo O’Farrill, *The Noguchi Sessions*

O’Farrill’s solo debut is subtle, surprising, intellectually engaging, more like a set of essays than a concert. Makes me think how interesting it would be to hear him work with improvisors from different camps, maybe Rudy Mahall or Marty Ehrlich. Beautiful, dark sonorities are a specialty.

—John Corbett

The album his artistic profile needed. Love hearing him in this setting, very revealing. His free intro is a great welcome mat, and from “O’ Susanna” to “Danny Boy” the sentiment works as well. Factor in the brilliant sound of the instrument in this recording and you’ve got something unique.

—Jim Macnie

Solo piano requires a spine of tough ideas, stated clearly, then developed. On this episodic mishmash, O’Farrill does neither, offering hurried thoughts decorated with florid runs, tremolo and smashing drama. Great technique, and wonderful touch, but back to the drawing board for solo work.

—Paul de Barros

Arild Andersen, *Celebration*

Gets quick traction with a buoyant “May Dance” and ripping tenor. Then turns austere as lead falls almost entirely on Andersen’s plucking. Meticulous but not a voice to sustain such length and weight. The orchestra offers passing interludes of restrained beauty (think Gil Evans) and effective dialog. Commands more respect than enthusiasm, however.

—John McDonough

The recording plays to Andersen’s mammoth sound, pitting him against the adroit jazz orchestra, man vs. beast (or maybe beast vs. beast). Not sure what the selection tells us about the music of ECM, which has rarely gone orchestral, but it’s full of brooding passages and brief flashes of gritty tenor.

—John Corbett

Anyone who enjoys a program that features plenty of room for divergence is in for a treat. The bassist’s narrative arc contains solo passages, trio moments, splashy orchestral romps, giddy exclamation, reflective musings and a whole lot more. Sometimes the cycle seems like too much of a wild ride, but in the large it’s engaging.

—Jim Macnie



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SSC 1336 / IN STORES 10/02
iTunes.com/DaveKing

Partially in an attempt to silence some critics, King has recorded an album of jazz standards performed by a trio of unquestionably superb jazz luminaries. *I've Been Ringing You* brings the talents of pianist **Bill Carrothers** and former Bill Evans bassist **Billy Peterson** together with King’s expansive and expressive palette for a truly remarkable musical statement.



BILL McHENRY
LA PEUR DU VIDE
SSC 1331 / IN STORES 10/30
iTunes.com/BillMcHenry

Saxophonist and composer Bill McHenry has sculpted a singular sound and a unique musical approach. His expert blend of past and contemporary sounds and techniques has made McHenry a natural successor of the tradition of the great jazz tenor player.

McHenry has now recorded a new album live at the legendary Village Vanguard jazz club in New York City. *La Peur du Vide* (The Fear of Emptiness) showcases McHenry’s prodigious talents alongside a tremendous ensemble featuring pianist **Driri Evans**, bassist **Eric Bevis** and drumming legend **Andrew Cyrille**.



Available on
iTunes



**Nicole Mitchell And An_Arche
New Music Ensemble**
*Arc Of O, For Improvisers,
Chamber Orchestra
And Electronics*

ROGUEART 0041
★★★★½

The premiere of flutist Nicole Mitchell’s “Arc Of O” opus took place in Chicago as part of the city’s jazz festival and proved wildly original and audacious, each instrument twinned across an ellipse format on stage. Many of the musicians at that concert were Chicagoans with mileage working with the mercurial Mitchell. Unfamiliar with the An_Arche ensemble, assembled here live in Poland, I didn’t expect the unit to bear comparison with Mitchell’s original cast. But this excellent testimony

Josh Berman & His Gang
There Now

DELMARK 2016
★★★★

When Chicago cornetist Josh Berman originally conceived this superb project in 2007, he intended to play the music of the Austin High Gang (Bud Freeman, Frank Teschemacher, Jimmy McPartland and Eddie Condon) through a modern prism. He has since added original tunes to the octet’s repertoire. The members of his band were already immersed in concepts used by the old-school musicians like collective improvisation, so it was hardly a stretch to employ them in a slightly different context. On *There Now*, Berman’s Gang eschews the nostalgic, but there’s also an ardor for these durable themes.

The opening spin on “Love Is Just Around The Corner” is introduced by solo bass clarinet harrumphing by Jason Stein before the steamrolling theme kicks in, but more often than not the group erases any line between styles and eras. Berman also chops up different parts of the tunes, dropping them in to create novel sequences and exciting sources of tension. Berman’s original “One Train May

recorded by Eryk Koslowski and Kasia Palicka-Koslowska in Posnan three months later suggests that refinement of Mitchell’s scores and strategies took place in the meantime. Chicago exports reedist Mwata Bowden, violinist Renee Baker and saxophonist David Boykin do not overwhelm the Polish orchestra, which not only demonstrates precision and creativity from the strings but also a lovely spring and consistency from bassist Wojcinski and drummer Szpura. The latter make the groove on the final segment of Mitchell’s “Afrika Rising” suite bounce with energy, promoting rangy soloing from pianist Krzysztof Dys before the reentry of a string riff that recalls arrangements for one of Curtis Mayfield’s seminal hits.

One of Mitchell’s assets, one might claim the mark of genius, is her ability to command and maintain, through composition, conduction and her own liquid flutework, fresh grooves one minute, complete abstraction the next. Her snake charmer’s ability to make massed musicians wriggle like an organism is uncanny—only if you discount Mitchell’s rich experience with malleable AACM ensembles and the prerequisite of her Xenogenesis project: check prehensile passages three quarters of the way through the opener and during Part V of “Afrika Rising”—there’s not a moment that isn’t arrestingly alive.

—Michael Jackson

Arc Of O: Arc Of O, Part I, Part II, Part III; Afrika Rising, Part IV, Part V, Part VI. (58:28)
Personnel: Nicole Mitchell, flute, vocals, electronic samples; Renee Baker, violin; Mwata Bowden, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet, clarinet; David Boykin, tenor saxophone; Rafal Zapala, electronics, percussion; Krzysztof Dys, piano; Kuba Jankowiak, trumpet; Agnieszka Kowalczyk, cello; Remigiusz Strzelczyk, viola; Pawel Szpura, drums; Rafal Gubanski, clarinet; Kuba Klepczynski, trombone; Lukasz Krzeminski, oboe; Maciej Strzelcki, violin; Ksawery Wojcinski, double bass.
Ordering info: rogueart.com



Jerry Bergonzi
Shifting Gears

SAVANT 2123
★★★

Even though jazz ensemble lineups are rarely fixed, the groups that stay together are the ones we return to again and again. Boston tenor sax legend Jerry Bergonzi is no doubt aware of this, as the team of bassist Dave Santoro and drummer Andrea Michelutti appears on more than a half dozen of his albums, the earliest of which dates back 10 years. The duo crops up again on *Shifting Gears*, a sophisticated blowing session from Bergonzi that adds trumpeter Phil Grenadier and pianist Bruce Barth on top of Santoro and Michelutti. The album amounts to little more than a collection of smart heads and inspired solos, but, with a sensitive, worn-in bass-and-drums connection underneath it all, that’s enough.

“Dr. Zoltan,” written for a sax-playing optometrist who once studied with the leader, is a brooding ballad marked by mournful harmonies between Gonz and Grenadier and an inquisitive communiqué from Grenadier. “Zoning,” dedicated to Boston’s other tenor hero, George Garzone, features a quasi-Latin head and a coolly ferocious solo from Bergonzi. On “Doin’ The Hen,” Santoro finds a moment to pluck and rumble freely, accompanied only by Michelutti’s reliable swing beat and Barth’s unobtrusive chording. And the melody of “High Tops” is a mouthful, but it leads to a relaxed but passionate piano discourse and a tenor talk that starts so high, one would swear that Gonz had switched to soprano.

Shifting Gears suffers only from what it doesn’t do. It doesn’t go for a more interesting instrumentation than the tried-and-true jazz formula of tenor sax, trumpet, piano, bass and drums. It never significantly subverts the compositional sandwich of head-solos-head. And one never hears a player clawing at an idea just out of reach.

—Brad Farberman

Shifting Gears: Flying Ped; High Tops; They Knew; Wibble Wobble; Doin’ The Hen; Zoning; Dr. Zoltan; Between Worlds. (57:08)
Personnel: Jerry Bergonzi, tenor saxophone; Phil Grenadier, trumpet; Bruce Barth, piano; Dave Santoro, bass; Andrea Michelutti, drums.
Ordering info: jazzdepot.com



Hide Another” is a gift to vibraphonist Jason Adasiewicz, who delivers one of his most tender improvisations on record over velvety horn pastels before drummer Frank Rosaly corrals a chorus of freewheeling, overlapping lines from Berman and tenor saxophonist Keeffe Jackson.

—Peter Margasak

There Now: Love Is Just Around The Corner; Sugar; One Train May Hide Another; Cloudy; Jada; Liza; I’ve Found A New Baby; Mobile And Blues. (57:08)
Personnel: Josh Berman, cornet; Jeb Bishop, trombone; Guillermo Gregorio, clarinet; Jason Stein, bass clarinet; Keeffe Jackson, tenor saxophone; Jason Adasiewicz, vibraphone; Joshua Abrams, bass; Frank Rosaly, drums.
Ordering info: delmark.com

Eclectic Percussionists Meeting Traditionalists

Carmen Intorre Jr.'s *For The Soul* (Random Act 1008; 57:46 ★★★½) has a joyous bounce, the snappy drummer covering familiar territory, with mixed results. Stevie Wonder's "Too High" sports a novel arrangement with a driving backbeat and alternating swing measures. Saxophonist Jon Irabagon provides the spark. Essentially an organ-based band, Joey DeFrancesco and Pat Bianchi play tag-team across 10 tunes, including an apropos cover of producer Bob Belden's playful "Carmen's Caddie."

Ordering info: randomactrecords.com

Drummer Peter Buck's *Buck's Vibe 2* (Self Release; 57:47 ★★★½) reflects his work with jazzers, Bonnie Raitt, Stevie Wonder and Keb Mo to inform this eclectic mix of pop, jazz and funk. It all starts with vocals from Unique on "Organic Love," a seamy stroller that also features keyboardist Eli Brueggemann. The funk is on display with "Blindsided," a bouncy 5/4 tune. "Steppin' Up" offers another odd time signature, along with some rap from Xavier PG. Best cut: the dreamy rocker "Venus And The Moon," in 7, based on a simple two-chord vamp, featuring roughhewn guitar from Willis Clow.

Ordering info: cdbaby.com

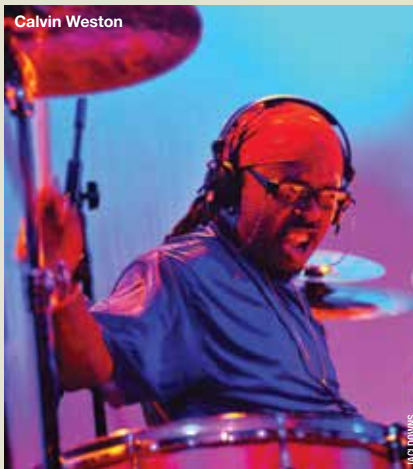
Roger Svedberg & Friends' *A Tribute To Milt Jackson Vol. 1* (Smot 002; 56:02 ★★★) was recorded live at Stockholm's Glenn Miller Cafe, and this swinging set also journeys forth through material readily familiar and linked with the legendary vibraphone player. Featuring a cooking sextet, vibist Svedberg's friends include trumpeter Jan Allan, tenorist Klas Toresson and pianist Daniel Tilling. Covers include down-the-middle takes on Jackson's "Bag's Groove," "Blues Legacy" and "Soul Fusion."

Ordering info: gogoyoko.com

A, B, C, & D Of Boogie Woogie (Eagle 202702; 68:05 ★★), also recorded live, suggests an interesting experiment. And yet, the run-through of all these tunes sounds like an ideal invite to a boozy karaoke session. Rolling Stones drummer Charlie Watts plays Paul Motian mostly light and ineffectual. Covering novelties like "Route 66" and "Roll 'Em Pete," this is a show-piece CD, its highlight being good stride piano playing between Axel Zwingenberger and Ben Waters.

Ordering info: eaglerockent.com

Works For Drums And Piano (Gateway Music CP01; 39:36 ★★★) could be music for dance, its classical vibe conjuring images of movement and velocity. "Paradiddle Rondo"



Calvin Weston

kicks things off with a marching cadence that's not quite 4/4, each player shadowing the other. Pianist Mauro Patricelli (sole composer here) throws down uncanny percussive cadences and sensitivity to pulse. "Elegia" reflects another dimension, its relaxed flow a breather, the modal structure, while still melodic, full of space. "Responsoriale" is manic, broken up, alternately playful while still offering that incessant pulse and a good view of drummer Chano Olskaer's sensitivity to nuance and groove.

Ordering info: citepeau.eu

Calvin Weston's *Of Alien Feelings* (Imaginary Chicago 010; 45:23 ★★★) is full-frontal rock, jazz almost an afterthought. Featured artists include John Medeski and Jack Walrath. Weston's ferocity on drums and synth percolates through the slinker "The Stumper," while the rapid-fire waltz "Byrdland" is another feature with co-writer/guitarist Karl E.H. Seigfried, this time on electric bass. "Meme From Turner" showcases saxist Nik Turner's jazzy wails and flutist Thijs van Leer's breezy, breathy flute.

Ordering info: imaginarychicago.com

Yonrico Scott's *Be In My World* (Blue Canoe 1310; 63:31 ★★★) has uptempo horn charts, soulful singing and some fetching instrumental touches. Check out guitarist Derek Trucks' guest spot on the juicy, slow blues of "Hear Me Now." "Confused," "Feel The Glow" and the title track show drummer/singer Scott best with sophisticated arrangements and varied moods.

Ordering info: bluecanoerecords.com

On *Silver Streams* (Jazz Compass 1021; 62:12 ★★★) drummer Joe La Barbera leads his crack quintet of 20 years through eight covers and originals. The front line of trumpeter Clay Jenkins and saxophonist Bob Sheppard is central, the music well played but not always ear-catching. Pianist Bill Cunliffe adds a sense of mystery. Scott LaFaro's "Jade Visions" is given an almost Miles Davis sheen, true to the spirit of a music once played by La Barbera's former boss Bill Evans.

Ordering info: jazzcompass.com



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SSC 1318 / IN STORES NOW
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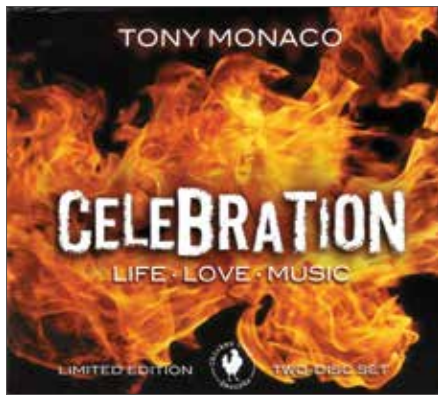
STEVE KUHN TRIO
LIFE'S MAGIC
SSC 1323 / IN STORES 10/16
iTunes.com/SteveKuhn

Back in 1986, when this music was recorded live at the Village Vanguard in New York City, I felt like a kid in a candy store...I was so happy to be playing with Ron Carter and Al Foster. They play with such ease and conviction...it was truly inspiring to be on the same bandstand with them. Listening back to the music now after almost 30 years, I think the freshness and vitality still exist. I am so happy Sunnyside is re-releasing this. I hope you enjoy it. Thank you.

—Steve Kuhn



Available on
iTunes



Tony Monaco
Celebration: Life, Love, Music

CHICKEN COUP RECORDS 7016

★★★★½

Tony Monaco's 16th-birthday gift remains unusual even by a music geek's standards. At an age when most teenagers want cars and cash, the Columbus, Ohio, native yearned to speak with Hammond B3 master Jimmy Smith. He got his wish and, four years later, even played Smith's club. While Monaco never gained the household recognition belonging to his mentor, it isn't for lack of chops but rather a lack of time. Monaco spent a majority of his career running a family-based Italian restaurant, working in the food-brokerage industry and, more recently, the concrete business. No wonder the organist finally got around to recording just slightly more than a decade ago.

Ezra Weiss
Our Path To This Moment

ROARK RECORDS

★★★★½

With his fifth album in a decade, pianist Ezra Weiss puts another strong foot forward with this sophisticated yet organic big band outing. On these seven tracks laid down by the Rob Scheps Big Band, the Portland, Ore.-based musician and educator showcases his musical intelligence, diversity and status as a bold, inspired figure in the contemporary jazz arranging scene.

Weiss' writing benefits from its avoidance of formulaic structures or easily identified genres or descriptors. "Jessie's Song" is a pulse-driven rumination rather than a ballad, as such, and echoes of Maria Schneider-esque elegance run through the album's title track, as if musically illustrating the koan-like title, "Our Path To This Moment." It feels like a search for as much as a definition of said "moment." A certain Wayne Shorter-like character, an angular romanticism and coolness-on-aural-impact, marks his tune "Kunlungeta," a study in the thematic development of a simple but malleable motif.

Shifting into his arranger role, Weiss shows imagination and emotional resonance with his

Monaco's relative anonymity, combined with his 30-plus years of vetting on the keyboards, makes *Celebration: Life, Love, Music* seem like an archival soul-jazz find rescued from the depths of a dusty record bin. The double-disc set is divided between a new studio album and a compilation of Monaco's finest extant songs, cut with an array of combos. Akin to Smith, Monaco's tunes draw clear lines to the blues. They're also rooted in an unshakable commitment to melody and gospel. The celebratory vibes of "Just Give Thanks And Praise"—taken higher by a church choir—and Sunday sermon-referencing phrases during "Indonesian Nights" suggest future collaborations with swishing, robed voices.

Yet it's Monaco's dynamic consistency, fleet fingers and effortless tempo control that bronze the diverse array of black-tie waltzes, steeplechase bop and sticky-groove funk with savory fluidity and in-the-pocket accessibility. Monaco can easily turn and burn and razzle-dazzle, but most importantly, he knows when to pull it all back and let the music sing.

—Bob Gendron

Celebration: Life, Love, Music; Disc One: Daddy Oh; Aglio e Olio; Indonesian Nights; Happy Sergio; Unresolved; You Rock My World; Just Give Thanks And Praise; Bull Years; Ninety Five; It's Been So Nice To Be With You; I'll Remember Jimmy (2012); Called Love; To Be Continued (62:28); Disc Two: Acid Wash; Backward Shack; Ya Bay BEE; Ashleen; Katarina's Prayer; Pasta Faggiloi; Takin' My Time; Blues For T; Rudy And The Fox; Slow Down Sagg; Just Give Thanks And Praise (Instrumental) (71:28).

Personnel: Tony Monaco, B3 organ, vocals; Jason Brown, drums; Columbus Choir Singers; Derek DiCenzo, guitar; Joey DeFrancesco, organ; Bruce Foreman, guitar; Ken Fowser, saxophone; Asako Itoh, piano; Reggie Jackson, drums; Robert Kraut, guitar; Byron Landham, drums; Donny McCaslin, saxophone; Mary McClelland, lead vocals; Sarah Morrow, trombone; Adam Nussbaum, drums; Ted Quinlan, guitar; Kenny Rampton, trumpet; Vito Rezza, drums; Tossica in Jazz Vocal Singers; Louis Tsamou, drums.

Ordering info: chickencouprecords.com

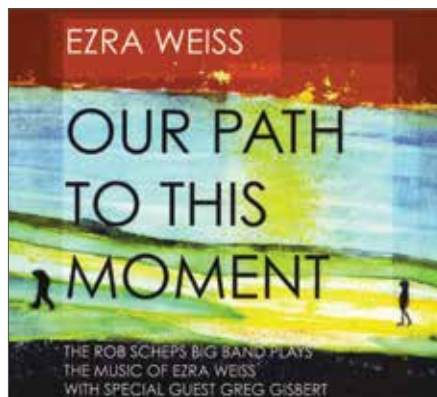


chart for the standard "It's You Or No One," deftly mixing and merging swing and Latin feels.

In general, Weiss' latest recording amply illustrates his ability to say something and go places with his ideas as composer and arranger. A prime example: "The Promise," a chart turned seven-minute micro-suite, with gorgeous voicings, a film noir-ish melodic motif veering in and out of various plot twists, but with a steady heart at the center.

—Josef Woodard

Our Path To This Moment: Our Path To This Moment; Rise And Fall; It's You Or Non One; Kunlangeta; The Promise; Jessie's Song; Wayfaring Stranger (54:18)

Personnel: Ezra Weiss, piano; Greg Gisbert, trumpet; Bob Scheps Big Band.
Ordering info: bfmjazz.com



Anat Cohen
Claroscuro

ANZIC RECORDS 0040

★★★★½

Anat Cohen is heralded for her superlative clarinet chops, bringing a new passion and expressiveness to the instrument that doesn't see the limelight as often as its larger woodwind brethren. On *Claroscuro*, Cohen's fifth disc as a leader and her first jaunt into the studio since last year's *Family* with the 3 Cohens, her sound can be demure and gentle, as on "La Vie En Rose," or ebullient and flashy ("Anat's Dance").

In a record full of fulfilling moments, the gems are the soprano saxophone tunes "All Brothers" and "Tudo Que Voce Podia Ser." Both pieces are based on intense underlying grooves. Her soprano is as pliant as ever, and she weaves a deeply resonant sound through the songs.

Cohen's effervescence transfers to the larger reeds, too—she's on bass clarinet for the rhythmic but fleeting "Kick Off," which bleeds into the celebratory dance that is "Um A Zero," written by the Brazilian composer Pixinguinha. Paquito D'Rivera joins her on this and other Brazilian tunes, as well as a haunting reading of Artie Shaw's "Nightmare." On these mostly upbeat and uptempo tracks, their clarinet lines embrace, then come apart, twisting and turning around each other.

Trombonist Wycliffe Gordon lends his subtle, warm upper range to "La Vie En Rose," perfectly playing off Cohen's serene clarinet. Gordon's ethereal performance is grounded by his gruff, playful vocal turn to close out the song. He fares equally as well on "And The World Weeps" after a multiphonic, growl-filled introduction.

Cohen finally brings out her tenor—at once breathy and robust—for Abdullah Ibrahim's "The Wedding," a medium-tempo close to a superb album. *Claroscuro*, a technical painting term that involves shading and contrasts, is a compelling example of a multifaceted woodwind player only gets better.

—Jon Ross

Claroscuro: Anat's Dance; La Vie En Rose; All Brothers; As Rosas Nao Falam; Nightmare; Tudo Que Voce Podia Ser; And the World Weeps; Olha Maria; Kick Off; Um A Zero; The Wedding. (67:29)

Personnel: Anat Cohen, clarinet, bass clarinet, soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone; Jason Lindler, piano; Joe Martin, bass; Daniel Freedman, drums.
Ordering info: anzicrecords.com



Fred Hersch Trio
Alive At The Vanguard

PALMETTO 2159
★★★★½

Nico Gori/Fred Hersch
Da Vinci

BEE JAZZ 051
★★★★½

In just under a decade, Fred Hersch has released three albums for Palmetto recorded at the Village Vanguard. His 2003 debut for the label, *Live At The Village Vanguard*, documented his trio with Drew Gress and Nasheet Waits, while last year's *Alone At The Vanguard* captured the final night of his second week-long solo stint at the venerable club.

Alive At The Vanguard features Hersch's latest trio, with bassist John Hébert and drummer Eric McPherson, which debuted on his 2010 CD *Whirl*. The single-letter addition to the title's first word is significant, denoting his remarkable recovery from a two-month coma in 2008. Since that time, Hersch has released several CDs and premiered his multimedia piece "My Coma Dreams," but its recollection in the title of this two-disc set seems particularly appropriate.

Of course, Hersch was renowned for his incisive emotionality long before his own life took such a dramatic turn, and in Hébert and McPherson he's found one of the finest units to flesh out his own profoundly lyrical explorations. The repertoire on this set, culled from the trio's week-long run at the Vanguard, spans originals, jazz standards and songbook favorites. McPherson may be the drummer who's best discovered how to accompany Hersch's delicate expressivity, demonstrating strength without force and enriching each piece with sweeping textures and evolving dynamics. Hébert's robust tones seem to swell and bloom to fill the spaces in between, maintaining a fluid time and a narrative directness. They're also able to sketch portraits of the likes of Thelonious Monk and Ornette Coleman without succumbing to imitation.

Duo performances are often likened to a

dance, but Hersch and clarinetist Nico Gori evoke that comparison with a Fred and Gingerly grace, whether on the winsome tango of "Mandevilla" or the bluesy trot of "Down Home." The pair met at the 2010 North Sea Jazz Festival, where Hersch was performing with his Trio +2 and Gori with Stefano Bollani's ensemble. They found an instant rapport that is evident in the intimate *Da Vinci*. Over the course of 10 selections, the two slide among classical, folk, and an array of jazz idioms, often within a single tune. Hersch displays his ingrained understanding of the piano tradi-

tion from stride to modernism without being showy, while Gori transitions from European classicism to dixieland swing. —*Shaun Brady*

Alive At The Vanguard: Disc One: Havana; Tristesse (for Paul Motian); Segment; Lonely Woman/Nardis; Dream Of Monk; Rising, Falling; Softly As In A Morning Sunrise; Doxy (57:59). Disc Two: Opener (For ElMac); I Fall In Love Too Easily; Jackalope; The Wind/Moon And Sand; Sartorial (For Ornette); From This Moment On; The Song Is You/Played Twice (57:42).
Personnel: Fred Hersch, piano; John Hébert, bass; Eric McPherson, drums.
Ordering info: palmetto-records.com

Da Vinci: Old Devil Moon; Da Vinci; Mandevilla; Down Home; 2-5; Lee's Dream; Hot House Flower; Doce De Coco; At The Close Of The Day; Tea For Two. (65:01)
Personnel: Nico Gori, clarinet; Fred Hersch, piano.
Ordering info: beejazz.com

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Sisters In Joy Or Distress

Lisa Biales: *Just Like Honey* (Big Song Music 23Skdoo; 46:52 ★★★½) Seven albums into her recording career, Lisa Biales, Ohio's "Belle of the Blues," sings as though her sensibility were rooted in both the blues and musical theatre. With her pitch securely under control and sounding semi-sweet in timbre, Biales' voice successfully draws out the feeling in lyrics to songs by her contemporaries Candye Kane, Bonnie Raitt and EG Kight (who produced the album) as well as her role models Memphis Minnie and Etta James. She addresses original tunes, not least the bawdy Guy Davis-inspired "Peaches," with a confident storytelling talent. Sustaining a musically consistent point of view, veteran guitarist Tommy Talton and the other even-tempered Georgia sidemen have the same winning credibility as the singer.

Ordering info: lisabiales.com

Etta Britt: *Out Of The Shadows* (Wrinkled 1674; 51:02 ★★★½) Similar in sophisticated soul-blues style to her former boss Delbert McClinton, Nashville-based vocalist Etta Britt makes a good impression on her first feature album after many years spent in backup roles. With unerring intonation and personality to spare, she digs into the romantic confusion of country great Harlan Howard's "The Chokin' Kind" then proceeds to reach rhapsodic heights of emotion testifying with guest McClinton on "Leap Of Faith." Her expressive capabilities are stilted only by two hokey songs from pop mainstreamer Michael McDonald.

Ordering info: wrinkledrecords.com

Cee Cee James: *Blood Red Blues* (FWG Records; 55:56 ★½) With Jim Gaines listed as the producer of her fourth outing, it's no surprise to find singer Cee Cee James exaggerating passion in the company of a hard-driving band that adheres to the bloated clichés of blues-rock. When not huffing and puffing in histrionics, the Oregonian can be a thoughtful singer and songwriter; still, the token ballad "Wounds" disappoints for its chilly electronic keyboards.

Ordering info: ceeccejames.com

Marion James: *Northside Soul* (Eller-Soul 1201; 58:15 ★★★½) Though her musical acumen and energy have dropped off considerably since her heyday in the 1960s, Marion James, Nashville's "Queen of the Blues," proves by her latest album she hasn't lost anything in her spirit of commitment to good-time blues, soul and funk. Aably supported by drummer-producer Tod Ellsworth and other friends in Richmond, James is at her best doing a slow study of a spoilt relationship she wrote herself, "Crushing My Heart."

Ordering info: ellersoulrecords.com



Deanna Bogart

Deanna Bogart: *Pianoland* (Flying Fish 5148; 40:20 ★★★½) A feature recording artist since the early 1990s, Deanna Bogart keeps going strong as a likable, unpretentious singer and blues-and-boogie pianist. Abetted here by bass, drums and guitar, she imparts a deep sense of jubilation or sensitivity to original material and to selections from the annals of piano jazz (Erroll Garner's "Boogie-Woogie Boogie"), Kansas City blues-jazz (Pete Johnson's "Death Ray Boogie") and Chicago blues (Willie Dixon's "I Love The Life I Live"). Over time Bogart's singing has developed a capacity for intimacy that makes her own piece "Couldn't Love You More" and her version of James Taylor's "Close Your Eyes" more than rote exercises in pleasantness.

Ordering info: blindpigrecords.com

Meena: *Try Me* (Ruf 1156; 57:35 ★½) Try me not. Meena Cryla, an Austrian recording for Jim Gaines in Memphis, doesn't sound as if she has a personal stake in what she is singing (English isn't her native language) and appears so devoid of depth she couldn't put over a three-track EP let alone this full-length album. Her songs are drab anyway, and she should have been discouraged from covering Etta James and James Brown classics. Several hot guitarists, including Eric Sardinas, Joanne Shaw Taylor and Coco Montoya, are paraded before us only to further add to the misery of listening. **DB**

Ordering info: rufrecords.de



Grant Geissman *Bop! Bang! Boom!*

FUTURISM RECORDS 2055

★★★½

If a number of the tunes on guitarist Grant Geissman's *Bop! Bang! Boom!* sound like they belong on a television show, it's merely the leader's day job seeping in. Geissman co-pens the underscores for the sitcoms "Two And A Half Men" and "Mike And Molly." Away from TV and sideman gigs, Geissman writes jazz pieces that are warm, fun and inviting.

Listening to "\$25 Stella," so named for the 1966 Stella acoustic guitar Geissman plays on the cut, one can imagine some sort of giddy get-rich-quick scheme playing out to Trey Henry's lumbering tuba, Ray Brinker's quasi-second-line beat, Geissman's funky, down-home rucs, and the twin accordions of Doug Lacey and Van Dyke Parks. The relaxed, optimistic "Take Yer Time," with its Southern rock guitar harmonies and sturdy r&b drumming, could score the title sequence from a family comedy, where in everyone is crowding around the dinner table. The joyous, swinging "Off The Grid" could almost be a "Saturday Night Live" band chart, with Geissman's guitar and Tom Scott's wide, wailing sax meeting each other on the melody. And "Q Tip (for Quincy Jones)," a grooving soul-jazz composition propelled by a combination of piano and organ, is the perfect soundtrack to a montage of capers. What really stands out, though, is "Guitarism (for Ron Purcell)," a tribute to Geissman's late guitar instructor consisting of only two overdubbed guitars, handclaps and "guitar percussion." —Brad Farberman

Bop! Bang! Boom! Boom!: The Singularity; Q Tip (for Quincy Jones); Un Poco Espanol; Go To The Window; Good Morning, Mr. Phelps; \$25 Stella; Texas Shuffle; Samba En Menor; Guitarism (for Ron Purcell); Take Yer Time; Off The Grid. (65:53)

Personnel: Grant Geissman, electric guitar (1-3, 6, 8, 11-12), classical guitar (4, 9-10), acoustic guitar (7, 11), electric sitar (5); Brian Scanlon, tenor saxophone (1-2, 5), alto saxophone (4), soprano saxophone (6), flute (9); Emilio Palame, piano (1, 3, 5, 7-8, 12), Fender Rhodes (9); Trey Henry, bass (1, 3, 5, 12), tuba (7); Ray Brinker, drums (1-9, 11-12); Alex Acuna, percussion (1, 3-9, 12); Brian Kilgore, percussion (1, 3-9, 12); Tom Ranier, piano (2, 9); Kevin Axt, bass (2, 4, 6, 8, 9), Tom Scott, tenor saxophone (3), alto saxophone (12); Jim Cox, organ (3, 12); Russell Ferrante, Fender Rhodes (4, 6); Van Dyke Parks, accordion (7); Doug Lacey, accordion (7); Albert Lee, guitar (8); Larry Carlton (8); Greg Mathieson, organ (8); Dennis C. Brown, guitar (11), harmonica (11); Chuck Lorr, guitar (11); Mike Finnigan, organ (11); Corey Allen, piano (11); Leland Sklar, bass (11).

Ordering info: futurismrecords.com



Keith Jarrett *Sleeper*

ECM 17162

★★★★

Keith Jarrett performs epics, much as Leo Tolstoy wrote them. His improvisations, solo and in group settings such as on *Sleeper*, are best appreciated in their entirety. You could cheat yourself by listening just to excerpts pulled from some random place within a Jarrett marathon. These could feel aimless, pretentious, simplistic, or just dull when pulled out from their context. Instead, take in the big picture; your patience will be rewarded.

Jarrett remains one of the most polarizing musicians out there. He is highly opinionated—but his opinions are well informed. He demands an awful lot from his audiences—and, at least in years past, had no problem expressing disapproval when they failed to meet his standards. Superbly trained, an unparalleled improviser, he sometimes seems to push himself nearly to death's door by the act of painfully spelling out a simple triad or hatching a brief motif.

These qualities are on vivid display throughout *Sleeper*. Recorded in 1979 before an oddly dispassionate audience in Tokyo, released now in a two-CD set, this music documents Jarrett's European Quartet in full power. Where his Standards Trio, with bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Jack DeJohnette, referenced familiar songs to center and challenge itself, this group set its horizons much further back. Its material is original, in this concert written by Jarrett. At times the structure of the tune is clear; on "Prism" the verses and choruses are easy to discern. Jarrett plays in his familiar style, stretching his solos into long, lyric right-hand lines, supported by spare comps. There is plenty of subtle, rather than thrilling, interaction. All of this cues listeners to focus on the composition, which the musicians serve sensitively.

This is beautifully rendered, but it's the opener, "Personal Mountains," whose impact is most memorable. Jarrett starts it alone with a stormy, almost angry-sounding extemporization. Soon bassist Palle Danielsson enters, emphasizing the syncopations in Jarrett's left-hand, open-fifths pattern. Now and then Jan Garbarek jumps in, locking with what sounds like a long impro-

vised passage by Jarrett and joining it for a while with electrifying synchronicity. This turns out to be an extended theme, written with a Middle Eastern flavor and a quick release that practically hurls the soloist into the groove. For nearly 15 minutes, the group maintains an extraordinary intensity, fanned by Jon Christensen's furious drumming. Then, with uncharacteristic brevity, it all dissolves into a dreamy passage built over a 6/8 ostinato on piano—just the fifth and augmented fifth, oscillating hypnotically.

At some point during this reverie, the next song, "Innocence," takes over, without any sense

of a new piece beginning. As the title suggests, the music becomes even simpler, with Jarrett indulging in one of those improvisations that sounds childlike and Herculean at the same time.

There is much more to savor on *Sleeper*, not the least being the encore "New Dance," which the band plays with exuberance and joy.

—Bob Doerschuk

Sleeper: Disc One: Personal Mountains; Innocence; So Tender (45:27). Disc Two: Oasis; Chant Of The Soil; Prism; New Dance (61:29).

Personnel: Keith Jarrett, piano, percussion; Jan Garbarek, tenor and soprano saxophones, flute, percussion; Palle Danielsson, acoustic bass; Jon Christensen, drums, percussion.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com


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FINE BOW, NYC, JL.COM

Get The Blessing OCDC

NAIM 170

★★★

Get The Blessing is part of a new wave of British bands—Led Bib and Troyka being among the most praised—that bring together grooves and rock elements to revitalize a genre and bring in a younger audience. *OCDC* is its third album and its appeal resides mostly in the thick bass lines that are the backbones of most of the quartet's compositions.

It gets to an excellent start with the title track, an infectious and powerful opener. It is followed by "American Meccano," a lovely ballad elevated by Robert Wyatt's guest appearance and hummed or non-lexical vocals. Both tunes testify to the band's knack for hooks and validate its concept. The streak, however, is not quite maintained. The tunes are well constructed, make effective use of the varied instrumentation and rely on a fair amount of unpredictability, but their looseness then veers excessively toward nonchalance and fails to underscore the quality of the melodies or vamps.

The foursome still manages to close with another winner. "Pentopia" is a loop-based piece that acts as a tribute to modern-day composers enamored with repetitive structures. Indeed, it suggests a bubbly Philip Glass and is complete with a nod to Steve Reich's *Clapping Music*.

—Alain Drouot

OCDC: OCDC; American Meccano; Torque; Adagio In Wot Minor; Between Fear And Sex; The Waiting; Low Earth Orbit; Pentopia. (44:25)

Personnel: Jim Barr, bass guitar, baritone guitar; Clive Deamer, drums; Pete Judge, trumpet, flugelhorn, melodica, flutes, synthesizer, effects; Jake McMurchie, saxophones, vibraphone, piano (1), effects; Robert Wyatt, vocals; Adrian Utley, guitar; Clair Hiles, piano (3); Richard Barnard, piano arrangement (3).

Ordering info: naimjazz.com

Jure Pukl Abstract Society

STORYVILLE 1014274

★★★★

The penultimate track on Slovenian saxophonist Jure Pukl's sixth CD, "The Mind And The Soul," proceeds in a series of tidal crashes and lingering dissipations, lunging unison figures dissolving into fading contrails. The piece feels like an exhalation after the eight tension-filled tunes that precede it, a momentary respite before the full relief initiated by Damián Reid's explosive drum solo at the outset of closer "7 Up (aka Trio Joy)."

The title of Pukl's latest, *Abstract Society*, is apt given the company he chooses to keep. With Reid and pianist Vijay Iyer, the Berklee grad finds sidemen who provide a connection to M-Base founder Steve Coleman and his immediate disciples, angular thinkers like Rudresh Mahanthappa and Steve Lehman. His compositions follow severe pathways, often establishing a tug-of-war with Iyer's percussive force. Pukl's soprano leaps over the avalanching rhythms of opener "Circle Mind," while his tenor climbs in Sisyphean ascents on "The Force." He builds "Waterfalls" on the contrast between an ominous honking and the lushness that relieves it, though even here Reid maintains a nervous, caffeinated pulse. "Random Logic" is a cubist kaleidoscope, furthering abstracting its Thelonious Monk-like theme through tumbling, stuttering outbursts.

—Shaun Brady

Abstract Society: Circle Mind; Waterfalls; Abstract Society; Random Logic; Intermission; Sir Dracula; O.M.; The Force; Sequence II; The Mind And The Soul; 7 Up (aka Trio Joy). (69:37)

Personnel: Jure Pukl, tenor and soprano saxophones; Vijay Iyer, piano; Joe Sanders, bass; Damián Reid, drums.

Ordering info: storyvillerecords.com



Darts & Arrows Eyes Of The Carnival

SELF RELEASE

★★★

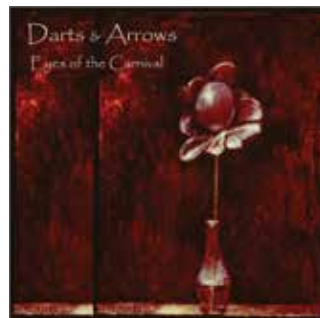
On this album by his quartet Darts & Arrows, guitarist Bill MacKay not only goes against the grain of Chicago's jazz and improvised music scenes, but he flouts much of the music created over the last three-and-a-half decades by embracing the jazz-rock sound of the mid-'70s. What distinguishes this band from those hirsute heavies of yore is an appealing sense of space and proportion. The six tunes—all but one written by MacKay—rarely get bogged down in technical excess. The rhythm section of bassist Kyle Hernandez and drummer Quin Kirchner shapes the grooves with a limber sense of swing often missing in first-generation jazz-rock. While "Outcry" suffers from an overload of zigzagging unison passages played by MacKay and electric pianist Ben Boye, most of the arrangements are pleasingly lean. The middle section is given to a pair of moody ballads: Boye's "Frequent Vacation" is a probing excursion that avoids tidy resolution. The most arresting piece is "Slipping Through My Fingers," which opens with Boye delivering distended son montuno patterns before the tune revs up with cascading arpeggios that recall something by Tortoise.

—Peter Margasak

Eyes Of The Carnival: Ivy; Outcry; Frequent Vacation; Mystic; Slipping Through My Fingers; Film Music No. 2. (32:43)

Personnel: Bill MacKay, guitar; Ben Boye, keyboards; Kyle Hernandez, bass; Quin Kirchner, drums.

Ordering info: billmackay.com



Peter Madsen's Seven Sins Ensemble Gravity Of Love

PLAYSCAPE 121911

★★★★

Pianist/keyboardist Peter Madsen has a worthy contribution to make to the Third Stream jazz tradition. He likes rich instrumental color as much as he does jazz rhythm, and

he's able to strike a balance between the two. The writing proceeds in a linear fashion with organic and often sensual movement. There's no hint of "exercise" or "sketch" in these tunes. The changing colors and the swelling and subsiding dynamics are what animates the music.

The ensemble on *Gravity Of Love* is essentially a jazz quartet with a complementary string quartet. The rhythm section is sensitive to dynamics yet it's virile, with Herbert Walser's trumpet and flugel playing lyrically or forcefully as needed. The string section usually supports the rhythm section, like the gauzy background figures that waft behind Madsen's piano on "Jealousy." Though there are numerous features, the compositions—rich in harmonic depth and rhythmic vitality—and arrangements star here. Walser's brass often plays the themes and embellishes behind the ensemble. Madsen's writing largely conveys a sense of each particular sin: The upper-register strings in "Jealousy" brood, "Rage" has a heavy bass vamp, "Excessive Desire" is rhythmically compelling.

"Overindulgence" has an eerie keyboard intro that prefaces terrific string-and-rhythm writing and playing, but Madsen occasionally indulges in some gratuitous electronic flotsam, as on "Hubris." It's the rare questionable choice that mars an otherwise impressive statement.

—Kirk Silsbee

Gravity Of Love: Excessive Love; Jealousy; Hubris; Rage; Deficient Love; Indifference; Malicious Love; Over Indulgence; Excessive Desire; Avarice; Swiss Chocolate. (64:15)

Personnel: Peter Madsen, piano; Herbert Walser, trumpet, flugel horn, electronics; Dominik Neunteufel, bass; Alfred Vogel, drums, percussion; Aleksandra Lartseva, violin; Monica Tarcsay, violin; Simon Frick, viola, electronics; Bianca Riesner, cello.

Ordering info: playscape-recordings.com



Shemekia Copeland

33 1/3

TELARC 33199

★★★

Shemekia Copeland's first new album in three years is titled *33 1/3* as a nod to her age, as well as her fondness for old vinyl.

While Copeland exhibits impressive vocal range and versatility on her second album for Telarc, the material and pacing seem designed more as a marketing exercise than a heartfelt attempt to create original art. Fans who lost track of Copeland after her lengthy stint at indie blues powerhouse Alligator would do better to try her 2009 Telarc debut, *Never Going Back*, with its politically charged themes and a sound that doesn't overreach for radio friendliness. The centerpiece is "Mississippi Mud." Copeland says the song is a warning not to become too set in your ways. But it sounds more like a declaration of musical independence from the Delta blues that young artists seem hellbent on copying. J.J. Grey duets with Copeland on the tune, on which she says about a young man singing of old juke joints, "You know he sounded sweet underneath the Delta sky, but he never even noticed the world had passed him by."

Despite that sentiment, the bouncy "Mississippi Mud" is sandwiched between "I Sing The Blues" and "One More Time," a slow blues written by her late father, Johnny Copeland. There's still a significant fan base expecting Shemekia to frolic in that mud.

—Jeff Johnson

33 1/3: Lemon Pie; Can't Let Go; Ain't Gonna Be Your Tattoo; Somebody Else's Jesus; A Woman; I Sing The Blues; Mississippi Mud; One More Time; Ain't That Good News; Hangin' Up; I'll Be Your Baby Tonight, (44:59)

Personnel: Shemekia Copeland, J.J. Grey, vocals; Oliver Wood, Buddy Guy, Arthur Nielson, guitar; Ted Pecchio, bass; Gary Hansen, drums, percussion; Roosevelt Collier, pedal steel; Jon Liebman, harmonica; Sarah Dugas, background vocals; Charlie Starr, pedal steel, background vocals; Neil Wauchope, organ.

Ordering info: telarc.com



David Reinhardt Trio *Colombe*

CRISTAL 188

★★★½

Yes, he's a member of *that* Reinhardt family. The grandson of Django, to be specific. And, of course, David Reinhardt made the rounds on the French club circuit, playing in the Gypsy jazz tradition his grandfather pioneered. Yet on his sophomore album, the young guitarist develops his own voice—or, at the least, one apart from that of his lineage. Refreshingly, Reinhardt expresses a willingness to create on his own terms without treading his relatives' legacy for easy support.

Reinhardt possesses a laid-back cool, favoring pensive restraint and melodic lyricism over flash and ferocity. In the trio setting, he's more accompanist than leader, underlining compositions with subtle phrases and tranquil fills. Strings resonate with clean, transparent fluidity; silky airiness and uncluttered arrangements contribute to the worry-free feel. Songs such as "A Fool's Errand" and the soul-jazz of "C" invoke casually strolling by open markets clustered on Parisian sidewalks. At its most animated, the music simmers, often receiving a brief jolt via an unexpected change before reverting back to the main theme. Organist Florent Gac picks his spots well, his hands pouncing on the keys like a kitten's paws batting on a stunned insect.

—Bob Gendron



Colombe: Lady; XV; A Fool's Errand; Aparecida; Me Hermano LP; Colombe; C; Love Theme; Melina's Theme; C; Here's That Rainy Day; Love Theme, (46:06)

Personnel: David Reinhardt, guitars; Florent Gac, Hammond B3 organ, piano; Yoann Serra, drums.

Ordering info: cristalrecords.com

Nik Bärtsch's Ronin *Live*



Nik Bärtsch piano

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Kaspar Rast drums

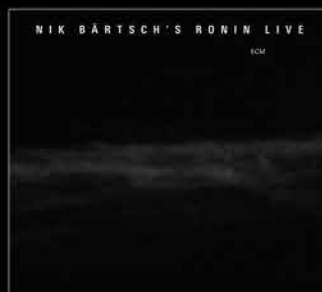
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Rich Halley 4 *Back From Beyond*

PINE EAGLE 004

★★★★

Oregon-based saxophonist Rich Halley has been turning out smart, brawny music for a couple of decades, equal parts early Art Ensemble Of Chicago, Ornette Coleman and Sun Ra. A field biologist by vocation, Halley's music has always reflected his interest in both nature and the cosmos.

Back From Beyond is redolent of primitive things, as set out in the funky backbeats on the title track and "Broken Ground." "Basalt" is bookended by a gutbucket theme and spiked with Michael Vlatkovich's growling, muted trombone, while "Opacity" develops into an off-kilter blues after a slow, anthemic head. Even his tribute to Ra speaks more of Earth than the other planets, with marching horns backed by Clyde Reed and Carson Halley's r&b swagger. This is the Ra from the streets of Chicago and Philadelphia, not the astral traveler.

The opening "Spuds" bursts out of the gate, with Vlatkovich honking under Halley's churning lead and then returning fire with a surprisingly broad, romantic line that is almost operatic in scope. The group composition "Solanum" presents the quartet's full range, combining Halley's skirling tenor, Reed's tapestried arco solo, a drum break that would not sound out of place in a swing band, and finally, ethereal wood flute.

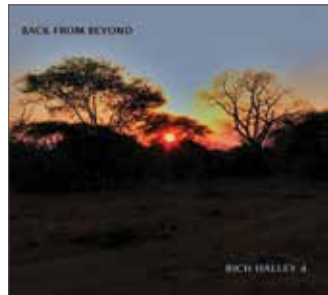
This is a group that deserves to be more than a regional treasure.

—James Hale

Back From Beyond: Spuds; Section Three; Reorbiting For Sun Ra; Solanum; Opacity; Continental Drift; Broken Ground; The Mountain's Edge; Basalt; Back From Beyond. (64:58)

Personnel: Rich Halley, tenor saxophone, wood flute, percussion; Michael Vlatkovich, trombone, percussion, squeak toys; Clyde Reed, bass; Carson Halley, drums.

Ordering info: richhalley.com



Brazilian Trio *Constelação*

MOTÉMA 93

★★★

Though its name couldn't be any more straightforward, the Brazilian Trio's music is not so easily defined. Made up of bassist Nilson Matta, drummer Duduka Da Fonseca and pianist Helio Alves, the group scored a Latin Jazz Grammy nomination out of the gate with its 2009 debut, *Forests*.

This follow-up continues in much the same vein, with Alves' elegant lyricism, Matta's robust pulse and Da Fonseca's lush rhythmic flow finding a perfect balance between the "Latin" and the "jazz." Yes, the album contains three compositions by their most revered countryman, Antonio Carlos Jobim, but also visits post-bop master Cedar Walton's Latin-tinged "Bolivia." Dori Cymmi's well-known "O Cantador" is coupled with lesser-known treasures like "Embaló" by Tenorio Jr. or Alfredo Cardim's dramatic title track. Each member of the trio contributes an original composition as well: Alves the romantic "Bebe," Da Fonseca the bright-hued "Isabella." Matta's offering is a conjoining of two pieces evincing different breeds of passion: the smoldering ballad "LVM," which erupts into the rhythmic intensity of "Direto Ao Assunto."

—Shaun Brady

Constelação: Constelação; Bebe; Embaló; O Cantador; Quebra Pedra; LVM/Direto Ao Assunto; Luiza; O Bôto; Isabella; Bolívia. (51:43)

Personnel: Helio Alves, piano; Nilson Matta, bass; Duduka Da Fonseca, drums.

Ordering info: motema.com



Michael Pedicin *Live @ The Loft*

THE JAZZ HUT 0004

★★★

Michael Pedicin has released close to a dozen albums as a leader, but *Live @ The Loft* is his first in front of an audience. He's assembled the same quintet as on last year's *Ballads ... Searching*

For Peace; on that record, as on *Live @ The Loft*, he chose to focus on other people's music. While there was a John Coltrane undercurrent to *Ballads*, Pedicin's object of worship on this new record is clear.

One of the most prominent tracks on *Live @ The Loft* is an 8:30 minute version of "Impressions," and Pedicin lets the melody pour from his saxophone. Played almost excruciatingly slow, Pedicin allows the notes to breathe. Guitarist Johnnie Valentino bleeds in fractious chords every once in a while over sparse cymbal fills and intermittent bass. It's all spaced out and ethereal—quite a contrast from the original.

Two other Coltrane tunes ("Like Sonny" and "Africa") are also infused with a new perspective, but stay modestly faithful to the originals. "Africa" has a modern swagger and an energetic bass groove, while "Like Sonny," which has only been slowed down a bit from Coltrane's version, is also more contemporary. "Theme For Ernie," which appeared on *Soultrane*, is a medium-tempo start to the disc, with Pedicin playing the A section backed only by a walking bass. His robust tone is evident, forces he keeps up even while playing on the most gentle, and slowest, ballads. Pedicin also acknowledges a more current wave of musicians by including "Midnight Voyage" by Joey Calderazzo and a tune by saxophonist Walt Weiskopf. Pedicin, in paying tribute to his inspiration, also includes tunes that keep propelling jazz forward.

—Jon Ross





Roger Davidson Trio
We Remember Helen

A tribute to his mentor Helen Keane, this album features Roger's longtime musical partner David Finck on bass, and stellar guest drummer Lewis Nash. A collection of Roger's favorite standards, the album ranges from gospel to Bill Evans, with more than one romantic chestnut thrown into the mix.

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Live @ The Loft: Theme For Ernie; Impressions; Midnight Voyage; Say It (Over And Over Again); Like Sonny; Song For My Mother; I Want To Talk About You; Africa. (57:28)

Personnel: Michael Pedicin, tenor saxophone; Johnnie Valentino, guitar; Jim Rindl, piano; Andy Lalasis, bass; Bob Shomo, drums.

Ordering info: michaelpedicin.com

Stephen Riley *Hart-Beat*

STEEPLECHASE 31742

★★★★

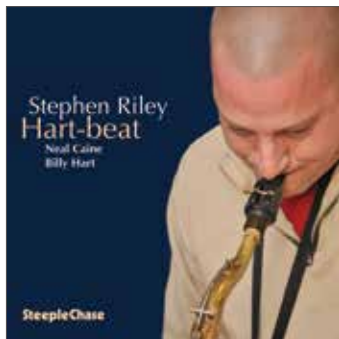
Bearing out its rather stilted title, tenor player Stephen Riley's seventh Steeplechase release is a showcase for the perennially articulate and illustrious master drummer Billy Hart, and the carefully chosen standards Riley's trio (including bassist Neal Caine) so wistfully explores. Eschewing hoary *Real Book* selections, Riley unearths rarities that the trio recasts with fresh-witted playfulness. The trio performs stock, if adventurous, versions of Joe Henderson's "Isotope" and "Black Narcissus" before lifting off. Riley and Hart are kindred souls: Riley ceaselessly finding fresh alterations in familiar melodies; Hart equally perceptive at the art of surprise, whether erupting in a mischievous two-and-four backbeat on Thelonious Monk's "Ba-Lue Bolivar Ba-Lues-Are" or elucidating wash-like, thunder sheets of sound with delicate crash cymbal accents. Riley opens the album with an unaccompanied romp through the 1929 hit "Just You Just Me," his joyous gait and airy tone a fitting tribute to Lester Young. The trio ruminates over "Lonnie's Lament," Riley sticking to John Coltrane style, while Hart goes off the reservation, glancing his cymbals for resonant, gong-like effects. "The End Of A Love Affair" is a melancholy highlight, the trio dispersing buoyancy and sadness to equal degree. Closer "All God's Chillun Got Rhythm" is the freest interpretation of the set, the trio dissecting/reframing the melody with a near Cubist approach.

—Ken Micallef

Hart-Beat: Just You Just Me; Isotope; Lonnie's Lament; When It's Sleepy Time Down South; Ba-Lue Bolivar Ba-Lues-Are; The End Of A Love Affair; Mr. Sandman; Black Narcissus; All God's Chillun Got Rhythm. (60:12)

Personnel: Stephen Riley, tenor saxophone; Neal Caine, bass; Billy Hart, drums.

Ordering info: steeplechase.dk



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Elina Duni voice
Colin Vallon piano
Patrice Moret double-bass
Norbert Pfammatter drums

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10/30 New York, NY (Drom)



Matanë Malit

Elina Duni's ECM debut explores magical Balkan songs of beauty, power, love and resistance

Donald Vega *Spiritual Nature*

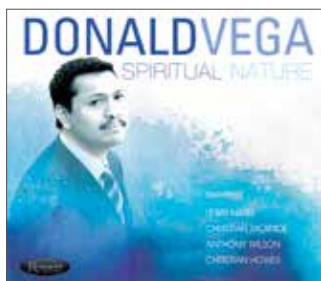
RESONANCE RECORDS 1019

★★½

Is it possible to say little with impressive eloquence? That question persists throughout *Spiritual Nature*.

Donald Vega plays with strength and assurance. So do Christian McBride and Lewis Nash. Not once does McBride's bass buzz, even on his challenging solo in the Ron Carter tune "First Trip." His fluency is breathtaking. Nash, too, is a master of timbre. On "Scorpion," trumpeter Gilbert Castellanos plays a beautifully executed chorus, marked by sharp attention to articulation and vibrato, applied slightly but expressively. Vega plays at the same level, though he does fall back on a few licks during solos. This fits the feel on "Accompong," where his crunched thirds are completely in context. But when the rhythm switches to a burning swing, he continues to lean on that figure, though he does use them to ignite some fleet single-line stuff in the right hand. Vega tends to recycle such ingredients, in particular funky thirds, which are clear in their post-bop dash through "You Never Tell Me Anything." Aside from the languorous solo piano treatment of "Falando," he expresses himself almost entirely through single lines in the right hand and comps in the left; two-handed chords are pretty much absent.

—Bob Doerschuk



Spiritual Nature: Scorpion; First Trip; River; Spiritual Nature; Accompong; Future Child; You Never Tell Me Anything; Contemplation; Etude Opus 8, #2; Falando De Amor-Tema De Amor; Child's Play; I Remember Clifford. (68:31)

Personnel: Donald Vega, piano, Rhodes; Christian McBride, bass; Lewis Nash, drums; Anthony Wilson, guitar; Christian Howes, violin; Bob Sheppard, sax; Gilbert Castellanos, trumpet; Bob McChesney, trombone.

Ordering info: resonancerecords.org



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Jamie Reynolds Trio *Time With People*

FRESH SOUND NEW TALENT 405

★★★½

Pianist Jamie Reynolds wastes no time in attempting to make an impression on his debut. The Toronto native jumps out of the gate with left-hand ostinatos on “Ideas Of North” and follows up with right-hand harmonies, balanced with nimble intervals, on “Locks (Part One).” His mates don’t slouch, either. Bassist Gary Wang lays down contrapuntal lines and fluctuating runs. Meanwhile, drummer Eric Doob lathers up the patter with skittering brushwork. Point taken: This acoustic-minded trio nails technique and methodology.

Such ambition is admirable. As is Reynolds’ vetting. He hails from a musical family and studied with fellow pianists Fred Hersch and Craig Taborn in New York. Yet scholarly discipline seldom guarantees that fare translates on emotional levels. When Reynolds loosens up and lets go of complex time-signature devices a personality begins to develop, and claustrophobic harmonic density and new-age elements even out. His brief improvisational pieces and the three-part “Locks” indicate an ability to lead from the heart rather than the head.

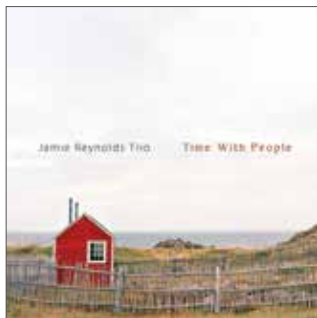
Too often, however, *Time With People* is reminiscent of a cautious recital. Practiced and polished, there’s an overlying sense of instrumentalists trying too hard and letting the music play them rather than vice-versa. Given his talent and age, Reynolds has plenty of opportunity to reverse the trend.

—Bob Gendron

Time With People: Ideas Of North; Locks (Part One); Singing School, Improvisation (View); Miel-Coeur; Locks (Part Two); Cold Spring; Improvisation (We’re All Here); Morning Sun; Locks (Part Three); Time With People; The Feeling Of Jazz. (51:15)

Personnel: Jamie Reynolds, piano; Gary Wang, bass; Eric Doob, drums.

Ordering info: jamiereynoldsmusic.com



Cory Weeds *Up A Step*

CELLAR LIVE 102811

★★★★

At his Vancouver club, the Cellar, tenor saxophonist Cory Weeds has staged tributes to Stanley Turrentine and David “Fathead” Newman. And a 2005 release from his two-tenor band, Crash, features organist Dr. Lonnie Smith. The picture is clear:

Weeds values sound, feeling and soul above innovation or flash. His *Up A Step*, is further proof. *Step* is devoted to the music of tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley, another player who was as deep as the ocean but unconcerned with high concepts. Mobley’s compositions are delivered with finesse and serious casualness. *Step* is also an homage to the organ-heavy, bass-player-less soul-jazz sound, though Mobley himself never recorded as a leader in that format. “Bossa For Baby,” originally conjured up on Mobley’s *Far Away Lands* LP, is treated to a thoughtful, soul-baring dispatch from organist Mike LeDonne and clear, nimble lines from guitarist Oliver Gannon. “Baptist Beat” struts along in a gospel vein, Weeds’ big, round tenor leading the way. “Up A Step” finds the ensemble in a playful mood, the players sneaking in snatches of “Milestones” and “Impressions.”

—Brad Farberman

Up A Step: A Dab Of This And That; Up, Over And Out; Bossa For Baby; Baptist Beat; Up A Step; I See Your Face Before Me; Straight, No Filter; Perfectly Hank. (59:48)

Personnel: Cory Weeds, tenor saxophone; Mike LeDonne, organ; Oliver Gannon, guitar; Jesse Cahill, drums.

Ordering info: cellarlive.com



Klang *Brooklyn Lines ... Chicago Spaces*

ALLOS 008

★★★★½

Lines can determine where a group’s stimuli and influences coalesce into a tremendous hybrid end product. On *Brooklyn Lines ... Chicago Spaces*, the fourth outing by Chicagoans Klang, the lines of influence function as a foundation of grander structure. Masterminded by clarinetist James Falzone, *Brooklyn Lines* is like a well-calculated, architectural blueprint. It’s motivated by Falzone’s weeklong residency in the New York borough, where he observed the function of lines down to the minutiae of sidewalk cracks, and that attentiveness to detail shows here. Falzone wrote nine of the 11 tracks, while the remaining two are free-ranging improvisational showcases. Styles do not cross hairs as much as they are masterfully textured and kept intentionally distinct. “Carol’s Burgers” evokes ice-cool New York swing, while the eerie whimsy of “Alone At The Brain” exudes a chilling variation of peripatetic free-jazz. Falzone cements the arrangements with mind-blowing altissimo. The overall construction—brought together through the voicing of vibraphonist Jason Adasiewicz and the bop nuances of bassist Jason Roebke and drummer Tim Daisy—never falters against the rip currents of an approach reminiscent of Roscoe Mitchell or straight-shooting New York undertones.

—Hilary Brown

Brooklyn Lines ... Chicago Spaces: Brooklyn Lines; Ukrainian Village; Alone At The Brain; Jazz Searching Self; It Felt As If Time Had Stopped; Ground; Chicago Spaces; Blue Jays; Carol’s Burgers; Scouridae; Chicago Spaces (coda). (52:16)

Personnel: James Falzone, clarinet; Jason Adasiewicz, vibraphone; Jason Roebke, bass/cracklebox; Tim Daisy, drums.

Ordering info: allosmusica.org



Ralph Lalama & Bop Juice *Live At Smalls*

SMALLS LIVE 0027

★★★★½

In between playing tenor saxophone in the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra and pursuing gigs as a sideman, Ralph Lalama has built a following for Bop Juice, his long-standing trio project. For *Live At Smalls*, the first commercially available recorded evidence of his trio, Lalama turns to the sympathetic bassist Joel Forbes. This disc, which captures a well-practiced but never-recorded group in an intimate setting, is a long time coming.

On Lalama’s previous releases as a leader, he’s opted for a rhythm section of bass, guitar, drums—a somewhat untraditional arrangement, but one that still gave him some chordal backing. On *Live At Smalls*, Lalama’s only held in by the bass, and the three musicians explore the disc’s six tunes with a sense of adventure and liberation. Opening with a bouncy “Lester Left Town,” Lalama establishes his substantive, concrete tenor sound, a tone that embraces the resistance between reed and saxophone but sounds smooth and effortless. Forbes’ light walking bass helps establish a buoyancy that stays present throughout the disc. His tenor is as forceful on the disc’s two ballads, Thad Jones’ “Mean What You Say” and Lalama’s own “Nonchalant.” The most engaging tune in this superb set, though, is Lalama’s tongue-in-cheek “Da-Lamma’s Da-Lemma.” After a roller coaster of a melody, Lalama steps aside for Forbes’ time in the spotlight, re-entering for his wide-ranging solo with an unbridled energy. While he’s not as acrobatic as some tenor saxophonists when it comes to technique, Lalama’s overall aesthetic is immensely fulfilling and engaging.

—Jon Ross

Live At Smalls: Lester Left Town; Mean What You Say; Da-Lamma’s Da-Lemma; Love Letters; Nonchalant; Wonderful, Wonderful. (61:39)

Personnel: Ralph Lalama, tenor saxophone; Joel Forbes, bass; Clifford Barbaro, drums.

Ordering info: smallsjazzclub.com



Sara Gazarek
Blossom & Bee

PALMETTO 2155

★★★★

The best singers always make you believe they are committed to the words they sing, regardless of whether they wrote them. In that regard, Seattle native Sara Gazarek is among the best of the new crop of jazz vocalists.

She concentrates equally on the lyrics as the music, in a bright, unafected voice. She shows scant interest in scat-singing or vocalese, concentrating on carefully articulated readings of intricate verses. Not surprisingly, Blossom Dearie is a large influence on Gazarek, which shows itself in her attraction to arch songs like “Down With Love,” “The Lies Of Handsome Men” and “Unpack Your Adjectives.” But her reading of “Tea For Two”—a Dearie mainstay—reflects her own love of unhurried pacing and brings out the best in pianist Josh Nelson and bassist Hamilton Price. Larry Goldings, who produced, adds his understated organ to four tracks, broadening the dynamics of the core band. John Pizzarelli provides a second, contrasting voice on the title track and joins Goldings on “Some Of These Days” to give Gazarek a greasy organ trio backing. Linking standards such as “Tea For Two” with smart, contemporary pieces like Ben Folds’ “The Luckiest” gives *Blossom & Bee* a breadth that few singers can handle comfortably.

—James Hale

Blossom & Bee: Everything I've Got; Blossom & Bee; Fly Away Birdie; The Luckiest; Down With Love; Lucky To Be Me; Tea For Two; I'm Old Fashioned; So This Is Love; The Lies Of Handsome Men; Some Of These Days; Unpack Your Adjectives. (55:48)

Personnel: Sara Gazarek, vocals, glockenspiel (8); Josh Nelson, piano, keyboards (3, 8); Larry Goldings, organ (3, 4, 11, 12), piano (2), melodica (2); John Pizzarelli, vocals (2), guitar (2, 11); Hamilton Price, bass; Zach Harmon, drums.

Ordering info: palmetto-records.com



Vincent Gardner
The Good Book Chapter Three: The Book Of Bebop

STEEPLECHASE 31741

★★★★½

Trombonist Vincent Gardner's *Good Book* series explores the compositions of important composers and time periods. The first installment focused on tunes by Frank Foster and pieces from Horace Silver's mid-'60s book. The second featured tunes from more contemporary musicians such as Marcus Roberts, Jeremy Pelt and Anthony Wonsey. The third chapter finds Gardner and his excellent sextet exploring canonical works from the bebop era. The performances are well executed, but they sometimes lack a certain excitement that the original recordings have.

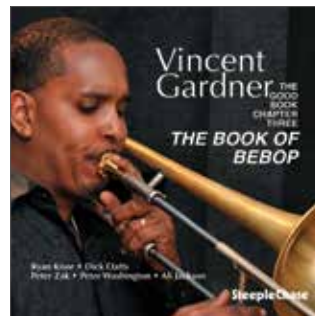
The disc is not without its sizzling moments, however. Gardner shows why he is at the top of the current crop of trombonists throughout the album. His fleet lines, which showcase his extraordinary dexterity and technique, are as fluid as it gets. Miles Davis' “Compulsion,” a jaunty bop line, features a rousing solo by Dick Oatts, who quotes Charlie Parker's recording of “Now's The Time.” Oatts' silky phrasing, sweet sound and the way his lines tumble so effortlessly from his horn are a joy to listen to. Each horn player gets a ballad feature, and it's on “Darn That Dream” that trumpeter Ryan Kisor provides the disc's most tender and poignant passages.

—Chris Robinson

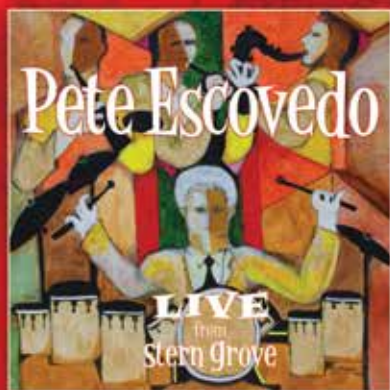
The Good Book Chapter Three: Double Talk; Another Hair-Do; I Waited For You; Compulsion; One Bass Hit; Darn That Dream; Dizzy Atmosphere; Charlie's Wig; There'll Never Be Another You; Sid's Delight. (67:55)

Personnel: Vincent Gardner, trombone; Ryan Kisor, trumpet; Dick Oatts, alto saxophone; Peter Zak, piano; Peter Washington, bass; Ali Jackson, drums.

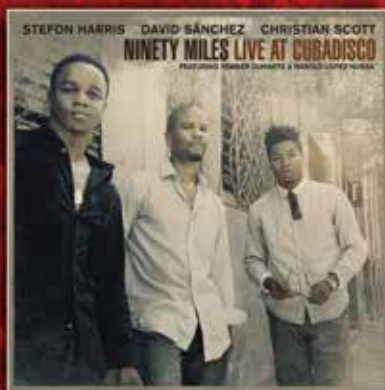
Ordering info: steeplechase.dk



CONCORD picante



Iconic percussionist **Pete Escovedo** returns with a vibrant live recording, *Live From Stern Grove*, that includes daughter **Sheila E.**, **Dave Koz**, **Ray Obiedo** and **Arturo Sandoval**. In Pete's own words: “This is as Live as it gets.”



Heralded as one of the “Best Jazz Albums of 2011” by NPR's A Blog Supreme, the critically acclaimed *Ninety Miles* cast: vibraphonist **Stefon Harris**, saxophonist **David Sánchez**, trumpeter **Christian Scott** along with **Rember Duharte** and **Harold López-Nussa**, are captured for their first & only live performance on the release that inspired the original cross-cultural project: *Ninety Miles Live at Cubadisco*.



Conguero **Poncho Sanchez** celebrates his 30th anniversary with Concord Music Group with his 25th release, *Live in Hollywood*. Recorded live at the landmark Hollywood & Highland courtyard in Los Angeles, the collection includes legendary jazz classics such as “Afro Blue” and “Mambo Inn/ On Green Dolphin Street.”



Bamako And Lusaka Vibes

Despite tough times in Mali and other parts of Africa, it's a striking fact that musicians living on or expatriated from the plateau continent have a special communion with rhythm as a positive life force. This representative bunch of artists follows the way of the heart when expanding on traditional music with Western influences.

Again, it's the season of the WITCH. Carefully organized by Los Angeles rare vinyl archeologist Egon Alapatt, the box set *We Intend To Cause Havoc! (Now-Again 5091; 74:04/66:28/46:44/39:38 ★★★½)* has all five albums and nine singles made by a Zambian rock band that carried on spiritedly in the 1970s notwithstanding a flat economy and other obstacles. Also here is a 26-page booklet detailing the fascinating WITCH story, largely drawn from the articulate remembrances of singer Jagari Chanda, the only original member alive today.

Usually singing in English and always using Western rock instruments, WITCH evolved in sound from that of a hard-core r&b garage band smitten with the pre-*Let It Bleed* Rolling Stones (Disc One) to a fuzz- and wah-wah-guitar trippiness worthy of Strawberry Alarm Clock and *Maggot Brain*-era Funkadelic (Disc Two). Still changing, WITCH then brought African melodies and rhythms to its approximation of the late organist Jon Lord's Deep Purple (Disc Three) only to change gears again in favor of Afro-rock grooves that served notice of a newfound individuality (Disc Four). Over the course of 52 tracks, Chanda's lead vocals are uneven and some song words are screwy mush, but that's just a small drag on these Zambians' sonic fun. It's also available as a six-LP set.

Ordering info: nowagainrecords.com

In the recording studio two years ago, Ghanaian singer-guitarist-songwriter Ebo Taylor investigated Fela Kuti's afrobeat, but his latest effort, *Appia Kwa Bridge (Strut 07306; 41:22 ★★★★★)*, marks a return to the jazzy horns-and-guitars highlife style of Western African music he's been a very important part of since the 1950s. In exciting cooperative interaction with the terrific Berlin-based Afrobeat Academy band and guests like venerable drummer Tony Allen, Taylor works spells to good advantage in presenting originals like "Appia Kwa Bridge" (honoring a bridge vital to Cape Coast village life) and a modernization of the highlife standard "Yaa Amponsah," plus six more tracks of similar high quality. Just a trace or two of wear exists in the grain of Taylor's yearning, resonant voice.

Ordering info: strut-records.com

On his first globally distributed album—*Saro (Studio Mali; 69:08 ★★★½)*—Andra



Andra Kouyaté

Kouyaté appears personally engaged by the stories he sings in Bambara about his family of griots. Excelling on the bass n'goni (a self-invented, deeper-sounding variant of the string instrument), this Malian contemporizes traditional music by adding reggae, funk, or blues percolations to his homages. But sometimes Kouyaté and his Sèkè Chi group of young musicians seem at once too self-conscious and long-winded about their art and craft; the album would be improved upon if it had a dozen rather than 16 tracks.

Ordering info: studiomali.com

Togo native Massama Dogo, who projects his passionate singing voice in English or Mina, puts his crackerjack Washington, D.C., eight-piece ensemble Elikeh through its paces on *Between 2 Worlds (Azalea City; 44:03 ★★★★★)*. The aural pleasure quotient stays high thanks to the rich, textured meld of Afrobeat and highlife in Dogo's original tunes. Yet there's more going on here than incitement for dancing. The bandleader shows a dignity of purpose in writing lyrics about the plight of Africans ruled by despots. He's a fighter for freedom.

Ordering info: elikeh.net

Staff Benda Bilili is a band of physically challenged ex-street musicians in the Congo whose debut album *Très Très Fort* was a surprise international hit in 2009. Their second album, *Bouger Le Monde! (Crammed Discs 81P; 52:14 ★★★½)*, furthers their glowing humanism although with changes. Three new members thicken the general jubilation of the group's rumba-rooted sound, and this time seven of them, not three, handle lead vocal duties in French or a Congolese language. Song subjects include the power of personal responsibility. The musical signature of the band remains Roger Landu's unusual tin-can-and-string guitar, sounding like a theremin operated by Harpo Marx.

Ordering info: crammed.be



Abiah *Life As A Ballad*

ABIAH MUSIC

★★★

Jeremiah Abiah has what one would call an "acquired taste" singing style. He hones an expressive, emotive voice with which he often zooms up to the falsetto range; he caps off his pithy melodies with a vibrato that suggests more hours watching the TV show "Glee" than checking out jazz singers at clubs. Abiah's singing is striking enough for him to stand out, but also a bit too pop-oriented to win over jazz purists.

On this intriguing self-released disc—a followup to his 2006 debut, *Chasing Forever* (Universal Republic)—the singer surrounds himself with a group of A-listers that includes pianist Robert Glasper, guitarist Marvin Sewell and drummer Ulysses Owen Jr. He delves into the confessional style of songwriting that aligns him with the likes of Meshell Ndegeocello, Gregory Porter and Alan Hampton. Like his singing, Abiah's songwriting and arrangements are heartfelt as he places maximum emphasis on voice and lyrics and downplays rote jazz improvisations. Refreshingly, there's not a hint of jazz scating. In fact, one might be hesitant to consider *Life As A Ballad* a jazz album. That said, it takes both a brave heart and musical moxie to refurbish Prince's classic "When Doves Cry"—here titled only "Doves"—into a late-night coffeehouse lament with shades of country music.

Abiah covers some of the same sentiments of "When Doves Cry" with his originals, particularly when it comes to affairs of the heart. On wounded songs like "September," "This Foolish Heart" and "Goodbye," he imbues the lyrics of longing and unrequited love with a vulnerability that's too uncommon among male jazz singers. His gift for melancholy melodicism is more captivating than catchy. Nevertheless, the disc makes for a humble offering with promises of better things to come.

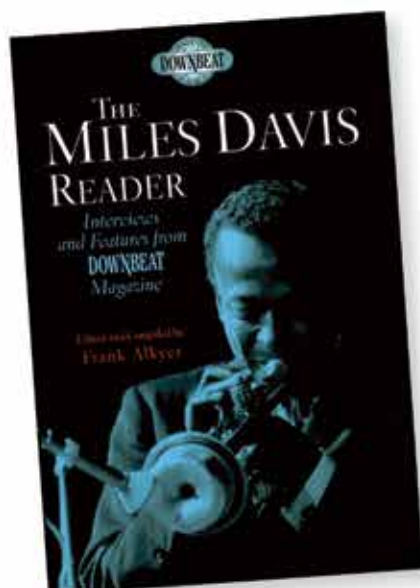
—John Murphy

Life As A Ballad: September; Doves; Foolish Heart; This Time; Goodbye; Next Time Around; Life As A Ballad; September (Reprise); Turn The Light On. (37:35)

Personnel: Jeremiah Abiah, vocals; Robert Glasper, piano; Marvel Sewell, guitar; Ulysses Owen Jr., drums; Keith Witty, bass; David Rosenthal, David Rosenthal, keyboards; John Shannon, guitarist; Chris Eddleton, drums.

Ordering info: abiahmusic.com

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Pharoah Sanders



DOWNBEAT ARCHIVE

Still Challenging the Status Quo

Since its second coming in 2005, the legendary and controversial ESP-Disk' label has been busy reissuing its whole catalog while unearthing some worthy material.

Tenor saxophonist Pharoah Sanders' *In The Beginning 1963-1964* (ESP-4069; 53:17/57:19/47:50/59:50 ★★★) is a chronological four-disc box set that fleshes out *Pharoah's First*, the only album he ever cut for the label. This initial opus presents Sanders oscillating between his bebop roots and the New Thing he was exposed to when landing in New York. More convincing are previously unavailable studio sessions he recorded with Don Cherry's and Paul Bley's groups. Even though this would not be his cup of tea, those takes are a testimony to Sanders' willingness to try new experiences. The last two discs are culled from a 1964 Sun Ra concert and complement the material released as *Featuring Pharoah Sanders And Black Harold* and reissued by ESP-Disk' in 2009. The music, while enjoyable and spirited, does not put Sanders in the lime-light since the leader and his percussion section get the lion's share of solo spaces. Each session is bookended by interviews conducted by Michael D. Anderson that help put the music in context at a time the saxophonist was still looking for his own direction.

Blues For Albert Ayler (ESP-4068; 74:37 ★★★½) is a 1974 live date from saxophonist/flutist Frank Wright at the helm of a fine quartet. The format is typical free-blowing based on a simple theme, but the leader tempers his full-on approach with some inspired and soulful playing that explains why he was nicknamed the Reverend. One of the main interests of this long searching exploration is the presence of guitarist James "Blood" Ulmer, who had already developed his signature stuttering and tangy chording take on the instrument. Wright's discography is slim, and this tribute to another great saxophonist will contribute to improve his status in the jazz pantheon.

Even more marginal than Wright, saxophonist Marzette Watts' output is a footnote in jazz history. *Marzette Watts & Company*

(ESP-1044; 37:10 ★★★★★) is a proper reissue of a session recorded for ESP where a crew of top-notch musicians gathered around Watts. The music is dense and intricate as well as solidly anchored by a rhythm section determined to challenge the status quo. The color palette also benefits from Karl Berger's vibraphone and Sonny Sharrock's guitar. Reliance on counterpoints is an indication that more planning went into the making of this record than in most ESP recordings. Still, Watts and his cohorts keep it fresh and spontaneous.

The Loweski (ESP-4066; 37:54 ★★★½) is culled from the same session that produced tenor sax Frank Lowe's *Black Beings*. The material is a bit more varied than its predecessor. Lowe starts with a wide-ranging unaccompanied solo before launching into some blistering and ferocious playing that is not for the feint-hearted. The rhythm section is more unidimensional than the J.C. Moses-Henry Grimes partnership on Watts' album, which leaves the brunt of the creation to Lowe and reed player Joseph Jarman, whose dialogue does have its moments. Raymond Lee Cheng's violin gets some space to stretch, but his contribution remains modest.

Ordering info: espdisk.com

The label is the subject of a new book by Jason Weiss, *Always in Trouble: An Oral History of ESP-Disk', The Most Outrageous Record Label in America* (Wesleyan University Press). This book collects interviews with label founder Bernard Stollman and musicians who recorded for ESP. The long interview with Stollman is broken down by themes and is disappointing because it raises as many questions as it answers. He had, in fact, little interaction with the musicians he recorded, and his recollections of encounters with other artists such as Barbra Steisand, Jimi Hendrix and Emmylou Harris provide more insights—not to mention entertainment. Much more compelling are the other interviews that underline the label's historic significance and provide enlightenment about the creative process. **DB**

Ordering info: wesleyan.edu/wespress



Hank Roberts *Everything Is Alive*

WINTER & WINTER 910 174

★★★½

In Bill Frisell's '80s quartet, Hank Roberts helped shape the guitarist's cracked country-jazz esthetic, which has since infected fellow travelers like Jenny Scheinman. (All three play in the 858 Quartet; Roberts' high-lonesome "Necklace" is right up Scheinman's dusty road.) Maybe because he was off the scene awhile, Roberts doesn't get his due as trendsetter for other improvising cellists. Like Tom Cora just before him, he got that backwoods twang into the instrument, the way Abdul Wadud put the blues in.

Now that Frisell's (Thelonious) Monkly & Western mashup is mainstream, Roberts is enjoying a second wind. The cellist and guitarist still negotiate knotty rhythms and awkward leaps as one, and will still let a long note peel slowly off pitch, into a microtonal zone where Son House's bottleneck, Buddy Emmons' pedal steel and Harry Partch's hobos meet. For "Joker's Ace," Roberts bows his scratchy jazzophone fiddle with the megaphone attachment, schmearing the tempered scale. He sings the wordless "Easy's Pocket" engagingly enough, but his strings sing better.

Roberts' amiable tunes are rarely in a hurry. No doubt who "JB" is for, even if Mr. Brown's funk breathes the country air. Kenny Wollesen tightens up that groove, but on "Open Gate"'s open gait the drummer strews fat accents around instead of locking into a pattern; he underlines the telling moments.

Perhaps because great contrabassist set a high bar, jazz has yet to fully embrace bass guitar. Jerome Harris on a big amplified acoustic model has the bases covered. Never coasting, never overplaying, the stealthy Harris lets his deep centered notes resound. His dub groove on "Sapphire" is masterful, and masterfully low-key, as it does almost nothing to call attention to itself.

—Kevin Whitehead

Everything Is Alive: Crew Cut; Cayuga; Easy's Pocket; Treats With A Blind Dog; Joker's Ace; Open Gate; Necklace; JB; Sapphire; Sapphire Blue. (54:33)

Personnel: Hank Roberts, cello, voice, jazzophone fiddle; Bill Frisell, electric and acoustic guitar; Jerome Harris, acoustic bass guitar, acoustic guitar, voice; Kenny Wollesen, drums, percussion.

Ordering info: winterandwinter.com



Peter Brötzmann *Solo + Trio Roma*

VICTO 122/123

★★★★

In 2011, German saxophonist Peter Brötzmann celebrated his 70th birthday. Several festivals—Vision in New York, Wels Unlimited in Austria, BrötzFest in Tokyo—jumped on the opportunity of paying tributes. And *Solo + Trio Roma* is a double disc documenting two sets performed at the Victoriaville Festival in Quebec.

The solo set is mainly built around long improvisational discourses. The first two begin with a melodic phrase and show more structure than one would expect. What strikes most is the saxophonist's ability to develop each piece with a disarming logic while constantly varying his tone and volume. "Frames Of Motion" features a more typical Brötzmann with highly emotional flights and an intensity that has become one of his trademarks. The encore is a special treat, a deconstruction of Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman" displaying two sides, one soft and thoughtful, the other harsh and passionate.

Trio Roma features Brötzmann along with Paal Nilssen-Love on drums and Massimo Pupillo on electric bass. The 15 initial minutes are a furious assault and tour de force and showcase the incredible stamina of the saxophonist, who does not seem to have any problems keeping up with his youthful cohorts. This opening segment is so crushing that it tends to taint the whole epic piece, which clocks at more than an hour. And it does overshadow several significant moments of respite when the musicians engage in stimulating dialogues and soliloquies. In particular, an impressive unaccompanied solo puts the spotlight on Pupillo, who gives free rein to his imagination to create a more than potent post-industrial landscape.

While Trio Roma shares the same instrumentation as another Brötzmann project, Full Blast, Nilssen-Love and Pupillo are less unidimensional, which provides for a fuller experience. Beware, though. Taking either disc in one helping will be taxing.

—Alain Drouot

Solo + Trio Roma: Disc One: Never Too Late But Always Too Early; Sunkeln To Dark Blues; Frames Of Motion; Lonely Woman (56:39). Disc Two: Music Marries Room To Room; The Turning Glory (74:55). **Personnel:** Peter Brötzmann, tenor sax, alto sax, clarinet, tarogato; Paal Nilssen-Love, drums; Massimo Pupillo, electric bass.

Ordering info: victo.qc.ca

Melody Gardot *The Absence*

DECCA 16816

★★★★

Melody Gardot may be the most musically sophisticated folk-based singer-songwriter since Joni Mitchell. She sings in any number of variations of emotional cool, and not a few ethnic varieties. Her conversational alto voice can imply as much as it states. She can hint at Edith Piaf's dark timbre, channel Weimar-era Lotte Lenya on "Goodbye," embrace a happy Rosa Passos rhythm on "Mira" and tap the deep blue well of fado on "Impossible Love." For an album not even 45 minutes long, Gardot provides a long and rewarding musical itinerary.

These are highly personal songs, usually about love and loss, with sublime longing (the Portuguese Gardot-Heitor Preia duet of *Se Voce Me Ama*) and dollops of lyrical vinegar. Like Mitchell, she overdubs her own fine-china upper register to harmonize with on "Amalia."

Heitor Preia's production is ingenious, creating a world around Gardot on each tune. Many studio hands participate in this album, yet the production is uniformly light-of-touch. The deft touches include the Andean flute intro of "Impossible Love," the smooth string underpinning to "So Long," the rhythmic strings acting as Greek chorus in "Mira," the ghostly vocal



scrim on "Mira," the Brecht-Weill patina of "Goodbye" and the Yucatan Peninsula bounce of "Jemanja." Gardot has many ingredients, and Preia has framed them extremely well.

—Kirk Silsbee

The Absence: Mira; Amalia; So Long; So We Meet Again My Heartache; Lisboa; Impossible Love; If I Tell You I Love You; Goodbye; Se Voce Me Ama; My Heart Won't Have It Any Other way; Jemanja. (41:43)

Personnel: Melody Gardot, vocal, piano, Portuguese guitar; Heitor Preia, guitar, vocal, piano, drums; Larry Goldings, piano, bandoneon; Bruce Dukov, Julie Ann Gigante, Tamara Hatwan, Philip Levy, Serena McKinney, Helen Nightengale, Alyssa Park, Katia Popov, Tereza Stanislav, Lisa Sutton, Sarah Thornblade, Roger Wilkie, violin; Brian Dembrow, Andrew Duckles, Marlow Fisher, Mathew Funes, Steve Erdody, Martin Tillman, Eri Duke-Kirkpatrick, Paula Hochhalter, Dennis Karmazyn, Armen Ksaikian, cello; John Leftwich, Nico Abondolo, Christian Kollgaard, Michael Valerio, bass; Jo Ann Turkovsky, harp; Harry Kim, trumpet; Ramon Flores, trombone; Jessica Peariman, oboe; Peter Erskine, Jim Keltner, drums.

Ordering info: universalmusic.com





Jazz?

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"Whatever he's singing he brings conviction and swing to it!" —Vortex Jazz

"He can even work modern miracles and make a bass solo sound interesting." —Jazzwise

ambit jazz www.johnlestermusic.com available at  iTunes



Bobby Sanabria Big Band

Multiverse

JAZZHEADS 193

★★★★½

Given that Bobby Sanabria was one of the main forces who fought tirelessly to get the Latin jazz category reinstated at the Grammys, it's difficult to not detect a political undercurrent on his bristling new disc, *Multiverse*. From the title to noticeable nods to French, Australian and African-American influences, Sanabria seems to want to hammer the fact that Latin jazz, particularly its Afro-Cuban variety, is not some hermetic oddity, but a thriving musical art form that engages in rewarding cultural exchanges with other genres.

The socio-political bent doesn't obscure the sweeping listening pleasure of the disc, though. Its pleasures include a dreamy treatment of "Over The Rainbow" that features Charaneé

Lionel Loueke

Heritage

BLUE NOTE 27742

★★★★

Some of the best moments on Lionel Loueke's third album for Blue Note come courtesy of unexpected juxtapositions: An anxious breath-and-percussion rhythm is soothed by insistent waves of melody on "Tribal Dance," Loueke's serrated string attacks push up against his glassy vocals on "Ife," while his jaunty, cerebral plucking on "African Ship" meets moments of deep bass funk.

Even without those moments, this album would be one of the more interesting releases of 2012. Trading his usual nylon strings for steel and inviting Robert Glasper to co-produce the album, the guitarist sails into new sonic territory here, with a new ensemble—and without sacrificing any of the rhythmic extemporizing that characterizes his sound.

Beneath the sheer beauty of compositions like the dreamy "Chardon" and rock-misted "Farafina," there's an undercurrent of synergistic joy running throughout the tracks. While Mark Giuliana turns in an admirable performance, Loueke, Glasper, Parlato and Hodge have col-

laborated over the timeless lyrics in front of a swooning orchestration of bass and strings. "The French Connection" is a driving and dramatic tour-de-force, showcasing blaring horns, infectious mambo rhythms and an intriguing dijeridoo solo from Chris Washburne. The forceful "The Chicken/From Havana To Harlem—100 Years of Mario Bauzá" is the most overtly political gesture on the disc, showcasing Caridad "La Bruja" De La Luz's passionate spoken word.

What could have been an all-over-the-place excursion is kept thematically succinct by Sanabria's rhythmic agility and by his keen bandleader skills. He allows various arrangers and soloists to burst forth and shine without the results become mere cutting contests. Still, the disc brims with bracing bravura, especially on the stunning reading of Rafael Hernandez's classic "Cachita," which kicks into overdrive during Jeff Lederer's scalding tenor saxophone solo, and on Michael Philip Mossman's majestic "Afro Cuban Jazz Suite For Ellington," where tonal colors and vibrant horn essays stretch across a dazzling son clave that shifts into elegant swing before returning to the 6/8 propulsion.

—John Murph

Multiverse: The French Connection; Cachita; Jump Shot; Over The Rainbow; ¡Que Viva Candido; Wordsworth Hol; Speak No Evil; Broken Heart; Afro-Cuban Jazz Suite For Ellington; The Chicken/From Havana To Harlem—100 Years of Mario Bauzá. (76:12)

Personnel: Bobby Sanabria, drums, percussion; Christian Rivera, congas, background vocals; Obanili Alende, Matthew Gonzalez, bongo, cencerro; Hiram "El Pavo" Remon, lead vocals (2), background vocals; Enrique Haneine, piano; Leo Traversa, electric bass, background vocals, David DeJesus, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone, flute; Peter Brainin, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Nobert Stachel, tenor saxophone, clarinet, flute; Jeff Lederer, tenor saxophone; Danny Rivera, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet; Kevin Bryan, Shareef Clayton, Jonathan Barnes, Andrew Neesley, trumpet; David Miller, Tim Sessions, Joe Beaty, trombone; Chris Washburne, bass trombone, tuba, dijeridoo (1); Caridad "La Bruja" De La Luz, spoken word (7, 10); Charanee Wads, lead vocals (4).

Ordering info: jazzheads.com



laborated over the years, and their comfort with one another is explicit here. Like on the 10-second sound that closes out the knotty "African Ship": What can only be described as a victory cry is followed by a muffled giggle. Given the disc's achievement of unearthing funk from the most cerebral of places, both exclamations seem appropriate.

—Jennifer Odell

Heritage: Ife; Obidah; Tribal Dance; Hope; Freedom Dance; Chardon; Farafina; African Ship; Gore; Bayinuh. (61:01)

Personnel: Lionel Loueke, guitar, vocals; Derrick Hodge, electric bass; Mark Giuliana, drums; Robert Glasper, piano, keyboards, Fender Rhodes (2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10); Gretchen Parlato, vocals (3, 4).

Ordering info: bluenote.com



François Houle 5+1

Genera

SONGLINES 1595

★★★★½

A longtime figure in both contemporary classical and left-of-center jazz worlds in Canada, clarinetist François Houle headed over to Hoboken, N.J., to record his latest project, and culled parties from different locales and artistic outlooks. In the quintet are Canadians-in-New York Michael Bates and Harris Eisenstadt on bass and drums, respectively, Taylor Ho Bynum on cornet and flugelhorn, Swiss trombonist Samuel Blaser and a more than casual or cameo-like "+1," the impressive French pianist Benoit Delbecq.

For this band and body of tunes, Houle cites late, great figures and bandleaders John Carter and Steve Lacy as influences in his thinking and compositional/improvisational plotting. Material-wise, Houle's writing works across boundaries and embraces ideas about voicing and structure from classical to jazz and back. On the jazz tip, he plots spiky-disonant courses and Thelonious Monk-ish lines, and the range of ideas includes the 12-minute, modular "Guanara" to the epigrammatic two-minute "Old Paradigm." Chemistry and contrasts within this particular gathering of players are partly what make the ensemble sound as intriguing and flexible as it is. At the risk of generalizing, it could be said that Houle and Blaser are "straighter" players on the front line, while Bynum and Delbecq veer more persuasively into zones where abstraction and abandon rule. Delbecq, in particular, has several captivating featured moments, tugging at the ear and brain as a strong individualist worth checking out further.

With "Piano Loop (for BD)," Delbecq—the "BD" in question—is first showcased in a spare and lyrical prepared-piano passage, into the angular ostinato "loop" portion of the program, over which dreamy washes of the ensemble float and amble.

—Josef Woodard

Genera: Le Concombre De Chicoutimi II; Essay #7; Guanara; Albatros; Le Concombre De Chicoutimi II; Old Paradigm; Piano Loop (for BD); Punctum II; Sulfur Dude; Mu-Turn Revisited. (55:31)

Personnel: François Houle, clarinets; Taylor Ho Bynum, cornet, flugelhorn; Samuel Blaser, trombone; Michael Bates, bass; Harris Eisenstadt, drums; Benoit Delbecq, piano, electronics.

Ordering info: songlines.com

Profiling Common Jazz Language

What's in your fake book? In *The Jazz Standards: A Guide To The Repertoire* (Oxford University Press), musician and historian Ted Gioia has aggregated a kind of fake book of essentials for fans and players alike. Instead of staves and chords, he offers short, informative profiles on each of more than 250 songs that he suggests form the common language of jazz—"nowadays."

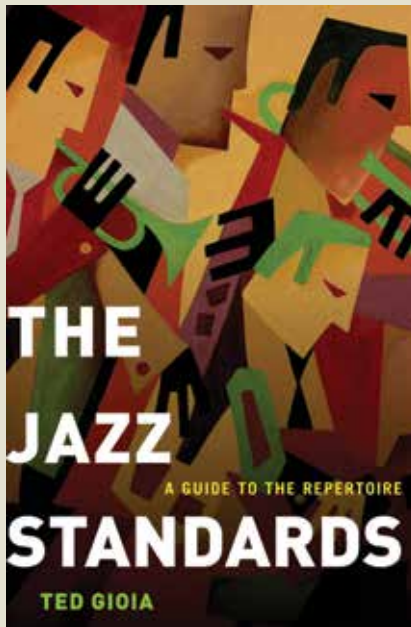
Gioia's song-ography is in the conspicuous tradition of Alec Wilder's *American Popular Song*, David Jenness and Don Velsey's *Classic American Popular Song: The Second Half Century*, Will Friedwald's more selective *Stardust Melodies* and Dick Hyman's *Piano Pro*, which had the temerity in 1992 to list 300 "tunes that everyone should know."

There is a larger thematic antecedent here, though: 25 years ago, E.D. Hirsch argued more broadly in his book *The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy* that "communication depends on shared background knowledge ... of specific information that is taken for granted in our public discourse."

But taken for granted by whom? In a fragmented and ultra-sensitive confederacy of easily offended cultural egos, it may seem arrogant for one group to stipulate knowledge—a list of songs, say—that another should be obliged to "take for granted." Yet, in jazz there seems to be a remarkable degree of consensus on this matter. In teaching a university-level jazz history class, I used two independent metrics to distance my tastes. First, the "most recorded" titles from *The Tom Lord Jazz Discography*, which favored history; and second, the Jazz Standards web site, which ranks tunes in importance from 1 to 1,000. "Body And Soul," whose life ranges from Louis Armstrong to Amy Winehouse, tops both lists.

Gioia is less specific about his methods but wisely bends toward "the jazz repertoire of the current era." So classics that loom large in history like "Runnin' Wild" and "Sheik Of Araby" are excused for lack of contemporary use to be replaced by "Airegin" and "Cantaloupe Island." Still, his list (delivered alphabetically rather than by rank) is generally in line with the others. Among the top hundred or so songs on the Jazz Standard site, only "Sweet Lorraine," "If I Had You," "September Song" and "Undecided" fail to make Gioia's roll call. He might have made room for a few more had he combined certain songs that are essentially the same. "How High The Moon" and "Ornithology," for example, each get separate essays when they might be treated together.

It says a lot about the decline of song



writing that despite Gioia's contemporary intent, the newest title in his canon is 40 years old, "The Peacocks" by Jimmy Rowles. This despite the fact that far too many musicians today still imagine themselves to be composers and persist in filling their CDs with "original" songs that no one else will ever perform. Of the many composers represented here, only a handful are even living—Hancock, Rollins, Silver, Mandel, Bacharach. Not surprisingly, old masters Ellington and Gershwin dominate with 14 songs each. Monk is next with 11, followed by Richard Rodgers (nine), Cole Porter (eight), Charlie Parker, Jobim (seven each) and Miles (six).

Working musicians have created many songs, but the composers of the American Songbook dominate Gioia's honor roll by nearly five to one. Even today, he finds, with some reluctance, the richest vein of repertoire in the '30s and '40s. Perhaps this stability is good, not only because it holds the young accountable to their predecessors, but because it permits the generations to speak to each other in a language of common reference points.

"I am troubled by how few recent compositions are discussed in these pages," Gioia writes, tossing a glance toward Bjork, Radiohead and Kurt Cobain before conceding that they're not ready for prime jazz time. The rule is that age is no excuse for not knowing a tune. As a young player, he admits, "I soon realized what countless other jazz musicians have no doubt also learned: in-depth study of the jazz repertoire is hardly a quaint historical sideline, but essential for survival. Not learning these songs puts a jazz player on a quick path to unemployment." **DB**

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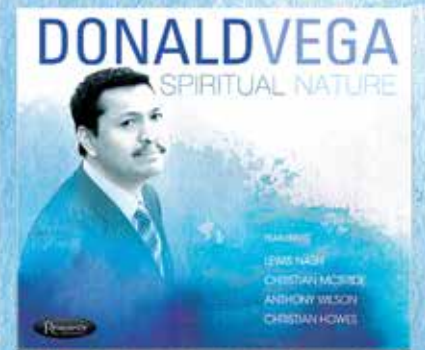


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Improving Your Music and Life Through Extended Practice

Practice is one of the most important aspects of my life. There is a spirituality I've gained through my tabla training with my guru of 15 years, Pandit Samir Chatterjee, and it's developed significantly through my relationship with practice. Many of my feelings on practice come from my intense training with the tabla. Its influence on my drum practice is undeniable.

My practice with both the tabla and drums often entails a commitment to the instrument for a certain amount of time without distractions or breaks. This requires a level of concentration that, in the past, has taken my mind to a heightened awareness, often bringing a level of creativity that I've not been able to access through other means. Committing to a specific practice for an extended period of time is a great way to train oneself to focus and be conscious of the many levels behind one simple thought.

Let's start with when and where to practice—two frequently overlooked factors. Figuring out what time of day is best for you and committing this time to your practice can help you stick to a routine. In addition, creating a space that is clearly devoted to your practice can help put you in the right mindset. Instruments, books, pictures and other items that might inspire you are highly recommended.

I'd like to share with you some practice ideas that have helped me strengthen my focus and technique.

Try playing consecutive quarter notes at

120–200 bpm with four limbs (a favorite exercise of Alan Dawson and Tony Williams) for 10–30 minutes. Place your right hand on the ride cymbal, left hand on the snare, left foot on the hi-hat pedal and right foot on the bass drum pedal. Be aware of the sounds being produced. Is it a sound that pleases you? Is it a sound that might please an audience? Be aware of the balance of the sounds. Maybe there's a way to make it more harmonious. Focus on how and where you are striking each element. Is the motion comfortable? Could there be a way that would require less effort? Be aware of which limb feels strongest and which feels weakest. Focus on isolating the weaker limb and think of ways you can make it stronger.

Playing the same thing for a long period of time can inspire different ways to look at an idea. When you're inside one specific practice idea, you might be able to see this idea from new perspectives. It's like when you watch a favorite film over and over again. The first time, maybe you came away with the basic story line and not much else. After a few viewings, you may have started to notice performance nuances or camera work. After even more viewings, maybe you noticed the set design or the tempo of the editing.

In music, if you focus on one practice repeatedly, you may begin to become aware of its many layers. For instance, if you practice the aforementioned exercise for a period of time, you may begin to develop a relationship that allows you

to notice specific details, such as nuances within the dynamics. If you find this to be the case, try maintaining the same dynamic level with three limbs and improvise dynamics with the fourth; then rotate by doing the improvisation with the rest of your limbs.

You might notice details with your coordination, at which point you could try to maintain quarter notes in three limbs while playing upbeats with the fourth. Try to make the upbeats swing. Play four measures of upbeats with the ride cymbal, then four measures of upbeats with the hi-hat. After you are comfortable with this, try to improvise just quarter notes and upbeats between the hands and feet. Again, rotate and try this with the rest of your limbs.

Next, you might find yourself focusing on orchestration. Feel free to move your hands around different drums and cymbals and different places on them (e.g., the rim, cymbal bell, etc.). Take it a step further by trying to sing while you play, perhaps a Thelonious Monk or Charlie Parker tune. Exploring this connection between the voice and your instrument will open your perspective even further.

After trying these exercises, you might find that your overall feel, sensitivity and coordination have improved. Imagine if you did these exercises every day for a year. How about five years? Begin with committing to one practice idea for an hour or two, then continue that commitment to days, weeks, months, then years. The potential for exploration is endless, and you might find that each little discovery is a major step forward in your appreciation for your instrument. I've witnessed my tabla guru practice a simple variant of a particular technique for years, every time he sits down to practice. It's humbling to see.

Playing the same thing repeatedly requires deep concentration. I've found that paying attention to my breath helps me maintain this concentration. Using different breathing techniques for different exercises is an exploration all in itself. For instance, while playing four measures of quarter notes, try inhaling for the first two measures and exhaling during the last two. You might find that it adds a subtle fluidity to what you're playing. Or, try inhaling for four measures and exhaling the next four. See how that affects the way you play. After a while, try breathing normally to get a sense of the difference. Awareness of breath in general can bring one's consciousness to the present moment, so it makes sense to incorporate this while playing music.

Chess masters have said, "Have a plan. Don't just move pieces around." I believe the same thought can be applied to one's music practice. Just like chess, if you identify your strengths and weaknesses in specific positions, you can utilize your skills in a strategic and effective way, yielding surprising results. I believe that think-

ing about one's practice as an extension of oneself can lead to a deeper, personal connection to the instrument. Approaching it like it's almost a sacred ritual might also deepen this relationship. Improving your music through focus and awareness might give you the confidence to improve other areas of your life through these same means. In other words, if you can harness this

type of discipline in your practice, you can apply it to other areas of your life. Things that seem impossible become possible, and it all starts with one's commitment and attitude. As musicians and music lovers have said, "Music is life. And life is music." **DB**

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Tommy Igoe performs with his Birdland Big Band in New York

Lessons Learned as a Bicoastal Big Band Leader

When you track just about any career path in this wacky business, you can count on one truth: It'll never be boring. The plucky escapades, the meltdowns and the juicy stories of what everyone has had to do to keep ramen on the table are often inspiring and always fascinating. Come on, who doesn't love the story of a young Art Blakey being ordered off the piano and onto the drums, at gunpoint?

A few years ago, as I started to enter a more mature phase of my career, I thought that maybe my own story was beginning to get interesting. After all, I saw and performed in amazing places around the world and witnessed jaw-dropping behavior among colleagues and patrons—guns drawn in Mafia clubs, pop stars throwing end-of-the-world backstage tantrums over a shirt, hiding in closets from marauding soccer hooligans in a Liverpool Pizza Hut—colorful stuff! But I had no idea of just how intriguing my world could get until I became a leader.

A leader of not one, but two big bands. With weekly residencies. At high-end clubs. Separated by 3,000 miles. That entails constantly overseeing the performance and happiness of 30 jazz musicians. 30. *Jazz* musicians. The gangsters with shiny 9-millimeters in full view are safer, and definitely more predictable. I doubt gangsters try a 7:15 sub-out maneuver for their 7:30 hit.

Being a leader means seeing nearly all the entertaining things you'd see as a sideman

but with an added layer of delirium caused by sleepless nights worrying about money-food-travel-backline-hotels-unions-politics-audience-catering-promoters-agents-managers-critics-advertising-insurance, not to mention delivering an awesome show. I've learned more about the business, politics and my personal musicianship in the past six years as a leader than I had in the previous 30 combined. Anyone can start a band. But to keep a band—or multiple bands, for that matter—going year after year is the true test.

My two bands are the Birdland Big Band (BBB) in New York and the Tommy Igoe Big Band (TIBB) in San Francisco. Both have weekly residencies in gorgeous clubs (Birdland and Rrazz Room) and are committed to featuring the finest musicians in their respective cities. The BBB has become a popular weekly jazz event in New York, with the club sold-out more often than not. Many overseas fans even book their vacations around ticket availability. And, this very same band is about to tour the country. We're loading up on a bus and hitting the road to play performing arts centers booked by the legendary Columbia Artist Management agency. Please, somebody pinch me. That was an unimaginable concept just a short while ago.

The BBB just turned 6 years old, and with our success and staying power, I've been asked by fellow leaders, and those with leader-ish aspi-

rations, to explain the secret of just how we turned a notoriously sleepy slot (5–7 p.m. on Fridays) into a raucous, packed event. The questions inspired me to look back on decisions I've made and examine what worked and what didn't. Many of the steps I've taken were based on decisions made from the gut; I had no idea what I was doing and took a "throw it at the wall and see if it sticks" type of approach. Only later could I step back and say, "This was smart," or "This was stupid." I've had my share of both. Here are my top six bits of advice. This is not a how-to guide; it's a simple list of the most important things I've learned that have helped me lead happy, healthy big bands with exciting futures.

1) Have a concept and aim for greatness. Throwing up charts in front of 15 musicians is not going to make it. Your band (small or large, makes no difference) should offer a real concrete concept that people can latch onto. New York, in particular, is a city full of big bands. I've played in so many big bands during my decades in New York that I can't even remember half of them. Pick a flavor: composer, genre, nostalgic, contemporary, fusion, world, arranger, acoustic, electronic, etc. They all have great players and most sound good. But only a few sound great. Really, did New York need yet another good big band? No, it did not. There was, and there always will be, room for greatness. It will be embraced.

Celebrated, even. The good will be forgotten, the ordinary cast aside. Aim high. Very high.

2) Know your audience. Are you playing for tourists, educators, old-timers, kids, nostalgia buffs, students, jazz snobs? The BBB has a mix of everything with a concentration on a high tourist factor. But in the beginning we had literally nobody. We had to start small and concentrated. I focused on educators and tourists. The educators would talk about us and the tourists would post. A win-win. I knew what would blow the educators away, and I knew what would make the tourists feel like they had a “New Yorky” kind of experience. I could connect musically and emotionally to both camps and spread out from there. It worked, and they became my all-important base. Who are you playing for?

3) Be true to your musical beliefs. The business of running a band will be the hardest thing you ever do, so stay true to your musical passions. Sometimes it’s easier to define what you *aren’t* rather than what you are. For example, there are some things about big band culture that drive me bonkers, so I knew that we wouldn’t focus on the past or do any tributes. No nostalgia. No history lessons. No standards. No heaviness. And we would break down the traditional wall between audience and band. We’d invite them inside the music, emotionally. Try to get them to be an active participant rather than a passive observer. Ask yourself, what do you believe in?

4) Hire people to do what you don’t do well. Marketing? Recording? Librarian? Logistics? Social media? Websites? Things have to look professional, so don’t try to do it all by yourself. I don’t have a manager (yet), so I’ve hired people to do the things I don’t do well. I tried handling my own website, and it looked as poor as you’d think a drummer running a website would look. If you want to be taken seriously, you have to maintain your brand seriously. So, I hired a web guy. But he does social media, too, and understands marketing and email lists. I hired him for all three. He’s a freelancer (like the rest of us) and very reasonable. There are a lot of techies out there who love to work with independent musicians. I also always have an intern. He helps at the gigs, moves the drums, stands, lights, set-up/tear-down. My intern is important to me on gig days, and the experience they get in return is priceless. Give a kid a chance to work and learn: Hire an intern.

5) Empower your musicians. The first “speech” I gave my band was about how there are 15 stars on stage—15 people who are never invisible, never waiting for their next turn to

play but rather engaged, physically and mentally, all the time. The audience sees everything. If you yawn, they see it. If you stare at the ceiling, they see it. Fumble around in your pockets, yep, they see it. My bands function on high-impact, emotionally delivered music. It takes all 15 of us to make a statement. Once I give them the permission to shine, they do, because they know I mean it. I don’t want sidemen; I want stars. They’re all incredible musicians deserving of every bit of praise they get.

6) Lead by example. Band members take their cue from you. How you act, look and behave affects everything that goes on in a band. Act like an amateur punk? I guarantee it’ll spread through the band. Also, when the inevitable time comes to lay down the law, stand by it and do not compromise your principles, ever—even if it means saying goodbye to some musicians. I have only a few rules, but the ones I do have are unbreakable. To break one means an immediate one-way ticket out of the band. No warnings. The most important rule: No cell phones on stage. There is nothing more amateurish and selfish than players who think they are entitled to have a backlit electronic device out during a show. It’s not OK, it’s not cool and if someone can’t go 90 minutes without checking their texts, then that’s a need for therapy and I’m unqualified to help. So, off you go.

But here’s the surprise: I’ve never had to fire anyone. I just make the rule known, clearly. And then every musician simply buys into the concept because deep down, they know it’s the right thing to do. No drama. Musical leaders are often uncomfortable with the idea of giving out orders, but this is not about control; it’s about a unified vision of the musical product. And in a large ensemble, everyone has to be unified before the show, or it won’t sound together on stage. So if you present band rules with a “we’re all in this together” mindset, rather than an “I say, you do” military dogma, I think you’ll be very pleased with the results you get, and everyone on your team will respect your friendly clarity and leadership.

I played for a lot of great leaders before I become one myself, and I learned something from each and every one. In fact, they helped make me who I am today. Sometimes I learned what to do, and many times I learned what not to do. Each lesson was important. Crucial, in fact. So potential leaders, keep observing those around you. Watch and learn. Every time you step out your front door, there’s a lesson to be absorbed and analyzed. The successful among us never stop taking it all in.

DB

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Bill Stewart's Drum Solo on '7.5'

A polyrhythmic drummer with extreme dynamic control, Bill Stewart has made his mark as one of the top post-modern jazz drummers. Stewart has developed a compositional style that reflects his interest in unique song forms. A noteworthy example of Stewart's playing and writing style can be found on the track "7.5" from his 1995 major-label debut as a leader, *Snide Remarks* (Blue Note).

The song "7.5" derives its name from the number of bars in the form. Stewart has written a riff-based melody over a total of seven bars of 4/4, and one bar of 2/4, creating 7.5 total measures. The melodic motif used in the first two bars is repeated in bars 3 and 4 and answered by measures 5–8 using a similar melodic arch shape. Stewart incorporates all of the band members as featured soloists, each taking a full chorus for a total of five choruses per player. Presented here are the melody and all five choruses of Stewart's drumset solo.

In his first chorus, Stewart continues his ride cymbal pattern while quoting the melody in measure 1 between the snare and bass drum and answering that phrase in measure 2. By measure 3 of the solo, Stewart moves to quarter-note triplets while using his ride cymbal to offset the rhythm and later resolve each of the three phrases with a crash. Throughout chorus 1, Stewart uses a pulsing hi-hat on beats 2 and 4; he abandons this rhythmic anchor in subsequent choruses.

Chorus 2 begins with a 3-over-4 triplet motif. This pattern is an arch melodic form moving from the high tom down to the floor tom and back in one sweeping motion. If Stewart had continued this polyrhythm through measure 3, it would have resolved itself by measure 4, but instead he introduces the resolution early in measure 3 by inserting eighth notes on the first beat. At the end of measure 4, Stewart unleashes his signature unison "press" strokes. This technique,

a favorite of Stewart's, is that of a buzz roll, only the strokes are played with unison hands. He starts these press strokes as quarter-note triplets in measure 4, placing them in groups of three and playing directly over the bar line until measure 7.

During the fourth measure of pianist Bill Carrothers' third solo chorus, which precedes Stewart's solo spot, Stewart introduces the polyrhythmic idea of 2 over 3 in 4/4 on the ride cymbal to build tension. Instead of abandoning this polyrhythm as he enters his own solo, Stewart uses this phrase to build a complex Afro-Cuban-influenced groove consisting of a dotted quarter-note rhythm in bass drum/hi-hat unison, a solo conversation between the toms and a series of steady eighth notes on the rim. Stewart continues this pattern until the end of bar 7, when he releases the tension with a simple lead-in fill.

Stewart takes the motif from measure 1 of the melody and uses it as the basis for his solo throughout chorus 4. However, instead of quoting the rhythm verbatim, Stewart re-arranges the eighth notes on the second beat of the measure into triplets, using the technique of diminution, while expanding the rhythm into the following bar. In doing this, Stewart stretches the phrase out over six beats, which he repeats four times until the seventh measure, when he brings back the quarter-note triplets to end the elastic solo.

Stewart's final chorus concentrates on dynamics and simplicity. In measures 1–2, he quotes the melody quietly on the floor tom and cymbals and repeats the quote across the kit until bars 7–8, when he raises the dynamic level with a variation of flam accents smoothly leading the band back into the melody. **DB**

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"7.5" Melody

1 $Bb7$ $Db7$

5 $Eb7$ $Eo7$ $F7$

Chorus 1:

1 2 3 4

5 6 7 8

Chorus 2:

1 2 3 4

5 6 7 8

Chorus 3:

1 2 3 4

5 6 7 8

Chorus 4:

1 2 3 4

5 6 7 8

Chorus 5:

1 *fp* 2 3 *fp* 4

5 6 7 *f* 8

Drum Key

9

High Hat Bass Drum Floor Tom 2 Floor Tom Snare Rim High Tom Ride Crash Rice

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Mapex MyDentity Drum Builder

Design Your Own Kit & Play it Next Month

Mapex has made an impressive mark on the drum marketplace with its rollout of the MyDentity Drum Builder. Now, a drummer can design his own kit from the ground up to match his personality. Made in Nashville, Tenn., the MyDentity kit has an MSRP starting at \$999 for a basic four-piece setup.

The MyDentity process goes something like this: 1) Go to mydentity.mapexdrums.com and start a new account. 2) Create and customize the kit to match your style. 3) Print out a PDF of your order. 4) Take that order sheet to your favorite brick-and-mortar drum shop for final pricing, and in approximately 30 days you will have the exact kit you designed on your doorstep.

Once you make your account, you can start with a basic drum set or begin designing completely from scratch. Then you can choose your exact sizes and add or subtract drums while experimenting with different layouts—which made me want to try a variety of designs to see what I could come up with. You can easily save all your configurations for later reference.

There is a wide range of drum sizes to choose from in each category (bass, snare, mounted and floor), and you can select maple or birch. You can also specify whether you are going to mount the toms to cymbal stands or to the bass drum. If you choose to have the tom mount attached to the bass drum, the kit ships with a double tom holder by default. If you want to have one tom mounted up and prefer a single holder, you could probably take care of that when you order the kit at your local shop.

MyDentity offers a diverse variety of drum sizes, but where the site really shines is in the choice of finishes—both shell and hardware. The shell finishes have six different categories: Solid, Sparkles, Pearls, Brushed Metals, Illusions and Wood Grain. There are more than 50 finishes to choose from in the six categories.

You can also choose from 10 different hardware finishes for your rims, lugs and spurs. The basics are there, like Chrome and Black. But there are also some unique ones, like Khaki and Lime Green, so if you wanted to order a kit that had a Satin Hot Pink Bubbles finish with Orange hardware, no one is going to stop you.

The whole kit ships with white-coated Remo single-ply heads, and you can choose what kind of front bass drum head you want for your kit. You can also add on a hardware pack if you want.



I designed a kit that had maple shells. The sizes were a 14- by 5.5-inch snare, 20- by 18-inch kick, 12- by 8-inch mounted tom, 14- by 14-inch floor tom and a 16- by 16-inch floor tom. I went with the chrome hardware but had a tough time choosing between the Red Sparkle and White Rock Pearl finish; with some input from my friends on Facebook, I opted for the Red Sparkle.

After the design was completed, I took my order down to Vic's Drum Shop in Chicago. Vic set me up, and in an amazingly short amount of time I got the call to come pick up the new kit.

This was my first experience with Mapex drums, and I didn't really know what to expect. Pulling the drums out of the boxes like a kid on Christmas morning, the first thing I noticed was the Red Sparkle finish. Looked awesome.

The second thing I noticed was the feel and look of the nice chrome hardware. The hardware is separated from the drum by black rubber bushings—making for a great visual effect and helping to preserve the resonance of the drums. The floating tom system is exceptionally well designed: It wraps around the tom lugs as opposed to being attached to the rim of the drum, so when you are changing heads, the tom can stay mounted on your kick drum or cymbal stand. You don't have to dismount the tom to change the head. That was a small but much-appreciated feature.

I also ordered Mapex's Light Duty single-braced hardware pack, a direct drive kick pedal and a comfy throne. The hardware was light

yet felt durable, was engineered with some stylish curves and seemed strong enough to last. The pedal had a smooth gliding motion but could deliver a solid punch when needed.

I chose the maple shells (seven-ply/5.8mm thickness on the toms/7.2mm on the kick) because I wanted a drum that would blend with the ensembles I was playing with, as opposed to the birch, which has more ability to project. Again, having the drums ship with single-ply coated Remo heads is a huge plus, as most drummers won't feel the need to run out and buy a whole new set of heads to go with the new kit. That saves you a couple hundred dollars right there.

I played the drums in a few different settings. In the big band setting, I had the drums tuned high and tight; listening to a recording made that night, I was pleased with the sound out front, from the audience's point of view. The drums projected but were never so loud that they were overpowering the band, even in the more intense passages.

In my small-group gigs, I tuned them down just a touch to try and take some edge off the volume level. They responded nicely, with some added warmth in the low end. And finally, just because I could, I changed out the heads and put on a set of double-ply smooth heads, more appropriate for fusion or rock. I was able to tune the heads lower and still get nice tones out of the drums, even the smaller ones. I was especially happy with the 20-inch kick, which had a huge sound when tuned lower. The kick ships with muffler rings already included on the head, and that helped accentuate that pleasing low thump.

I had a great experience creating and playing a MyDentity kit. I recently looked into ordering a custom-made guitar and was quoted 6 months lead time, so it's nothing short of amazing to me that you can go onto the MyDentity website, create a kit just for your tastes and play it in approximately 30 days—all at a price that's easy on the wallet. Log onto the site and give it a go. But beware: Even if you are not planning to purchase a kit, once you start down that road, you might find yourself looking for excuses to get yourself an early Christmas present.

—Matt Kern

Ordering info: mydentity.mapexdrums.com

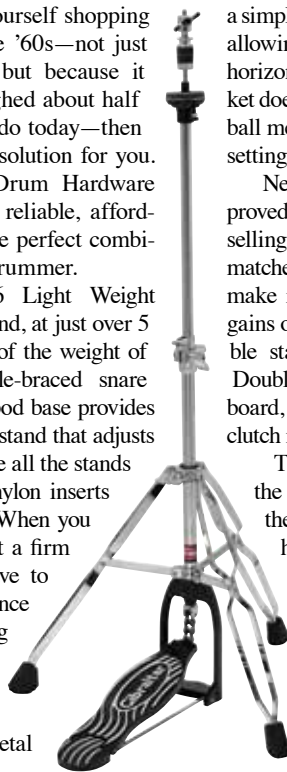
Gibraltar 4600 Series

Lightweight, Reliable Hardware

If you've ever found yourself shopping for hardware from the '60s—not just for its vintage appeal, but because it was well made and weighed about half as much as most stands do today—then Gibraltar has a modern solution for you. The company's 4600 Drum Hardware series focuses on being reliable, affordable and lightweight—the perfect combination for any working drummer.

The Gibraltar 4606 Light Weight Double Braced Snare Stand, at just over 5 lbs., is about 60 percent of the weight of some comparable double-braced snare stands. The low-mass tripod base provides a steady foundation for a stand that adjusts from 16 to 24 inches. Like all the stands in the 4600 line, it has nylon inserts at all the contact points. When you tighten the stand, you get a firm connection and don't have to worry about slippage, since metal isn't tightening against metal. The three-armed basket has nylon covers where the stand grips the drum, so metal never touches your drum.

The basket is tightened by



a simple turning mechanism located underneath, allowing a nice degree of control. The geared horizontal control that affects the tilt of the basket does not have as much position flexibility as a ball mechanism, but I was able to quickly find a setting that worked for me.

Next, the 4607 Double Braced Hi Hat Stand proved to me why it's one of the company's best-selling stands. The playability of this stand, matched with its durability and price point, make it one of the best lightweight stand bargains out there. Weighing 6 lbs., 8 oz., this durable stand played easily, with smooth action. Double-braced tripod legs, an adjustable footboard, a height-locking mechanism and a solid clutch make this stand feel rock-solid.

The 4609 Double Braced Boom Stand and the 4610 Double Braced Cymbal Stand have the same key features as the snare and hi-hat stands. Cast-hinged height adjustment, low-mass double-braced tripods and nylon bushings let you tighten these stands with no metal-to-metal contact.

Every pound subtracted from your setup is one less trip to the chiropractor's office. Gibraltar's lightweight solutions should make him start to miss you.

—Matt Kern

Ordering info: kmcmusic.com



Evans Black Chrome

Dark-Toned Drumhead

With their black-silver tint, Evans' new Black Chrome drumheads are so reflective, they could be used as mirrors. The heads have a medium attack, medium sustain and a darkened tone, making them suitable for drummers who play in fusion-type situations that don't call for coated heads.

Black Chrome heads have a two-ply design that adds plenty of body and deep tone with a controlled sustain. The two layers are 7 mil and 7.5 mil, respectively, with the top being a clear layer and the second being the black layer. By having the clear layer on top, the black coloring won't come off on your sticks and spread around the kit.

I used the heads for a rock-type track in the studio. The tones for the session were on the dark side, and I didn't need to add any extra muffling to the drums, even though they were being close-miked. The small toms' mid and lower frequencies were accentuated, and the larger floor toms had nice depth while still retaining the attack of the stick. A nice combination of tones and frequencies were produced with minimal need for EQ-ing and gaffer's tape.

I also used the Black Chromes on a small-group jazz outing (not necessarily their intended application) and was pleasantly surprised at the result. Tuned higher, the heads didn't choke and they produced a pleasant tone while keeping the volume in check. I was able to lay into them a bit more without overpowering—unlike some of the single-ply coated heads I've used in the past.

Black Chrome is worth a try if you seek a dark-toned head for a high-volume setting.

—Matt Kern

Ordering info: evansdrumheads.com



Vic Firth Artist Signature Sticks

Gregg Bissonette Backbeat, Keith Carlock Models

Drummers—check out these two new Artist Signature sticks from Vic Firth.

The Gregg Bissonette Backbeat sticks are based off the 5B, made of hickory with a 16-inch length and .590-inch diameter. Unlike the 5B, the teardrop-shaped tip of the stick is larger, the shoulder is thicker and the bottom half of the stick is coated with an anti-slip agent called Vic Grip. These sticks are designed to keep up with the loud cymbal sounds of the shoulder on the bell.

When I wanted to play loud, these sticks delivered. The beefed-up shoulder makes the sticks top-heavy, which provides a sense of security knowing you always have a little more power and volume in reserve if you need it. When playing snare backbeats, I never felt the

need to turn the stick around and play with the butt end. I was also surprised by how quick these sticks felt, considering how heavy they are.

Vic Firth's Keith Carlock signature sticks are also made of hickory, with a 16-inch length and .555-inch diameter. The compressed acorn-shaped tips brought out the ping sound in my ride cymbal and at the same time were large enough to get full drum sounds. The fast sloping shoulder helped me to play uptempo ride cymbal patterns. The shoulder near the tip is thin, so it has the advantage of a lighter stick. But the rest of the shaft is close to 5A width and heft, for more power and volume—a great combination.

—Steve Hawk

Ordering info: vicfirth.com

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PERCUSSION AMP

Carlsbro has launched its first electronic drum and percussion amplifier and stage monitor series: the EDA50 and EDA200S (pictured). The EDA50 is a two-way 50-watt amplifier with a single 10-inch low-frequency driver and 2-inch high-frequency driver. The EDA200S is a stereo three-way cabinet with 200 watts of power configured with dual 6.5-inch mid drivers. **More info:** carlsbro.com



METAL SNARES

Drum Workshop has added a black-nickel-over-brass model to its DW Collector's series of metal snare drums. The snare drum's 1mm shell includes a rolled bearing edge and snare beds. The Custom Shop drum can be ordered in chrome, black chrome, satin chrome, black nickel and 24-karat gold. **More info:** dwdrums.com

CONGA CARRIERS

Ahead Armor Cases has expanded its full line of advanced Latin and world percussion cases with conga and djembe models. The new units incorporate DX-Core dual-foam interiors with Sherpa fleece lining and a durable waterproof exterior. They also feature Tuc-Away backpack-style straps, double-stitched handles and the patented Dyna-Zip Plus design. **More info:** bigbangdist.com



HICKORY STICKS

Los Cabos Drumsticks recently unveiled environmentally friendly Red Hickory 5A and 5B nylon-tip drumsticks. Weighing a bit more than the company's average hickory sticks, the Red Hickory line is suitable for hard-hitters and drummers looking for more punch without having to compromise stick size.

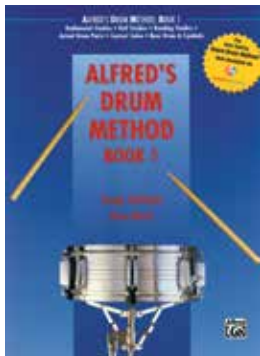
More info: loscabosdrumsticks.com



25-YEAR DRUM METHOD

This year marks the 25th anniversary of *Alfred's Drum Method, Book 1*, a classic educational publication that has sold more than 500,000 copies. Authored

by Sandy Feldstein and Dave Black, the timeless method book contains 80 pages of sequential instruction covering rudimental studies, roll studies, contest solos, and bass drum and cymbal techniques. Each page is designed as a complete lesson, with clear explanations coupled with appropriate exercises. **More info: alfred.com**



AFRICAN DJEMBES

Gon Bops has added the Mariano to its line of African djembes. Crafted from Durian wood—selected for its light weight, strength, sustainability and sonic properties—Mariano djembes feature eight lugs for high tuning capability. The djembes have a traditional African shape that blends with a lightweight, compact top ring. **More info: gonbops.com**

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If you have had trouble mastering the skill of playing through the changes on tunes with difficult chord progressions, this is the book for you!

Since most jazz education has been centered around the scale and mode approach for the past 25 years, not much information is presently available on how to develop the skill of playing through changes.

Mr. Longo, known for his long association with the late Dizzy Gillespie, has completely solved this problem for you with **'The Technique of Creating Harmonic Melody for the Jazz Improviser'**.

Sax and flute master James Moody had this to say: *This is by far the most effective approach to this kind of playing I have ever encountered. Not only do I pass on this information to young students in the clinics I do, I have found it to be a tremendous learning experience for my own playing.*

Avoid the hardship of trying to play on the changes without really knowing how!

The uncomfortable feeling of fumbling through tunes with a lot of changes will be completely eliminated through the techniques outlined in this course and you will be amazed by how much time you will save by approaching it this way.

You will be playing through changes comfortably by the completion of this course with confidence in your ability to play through the most complex chord progressions. **'The Technique of Creating Harmonic Melody for the Jazz Improviser'** will provide you with the most up to date approach to this subject available.

Be the first in your circle of friends who has acquired this special skill!

Your ability to express yourself will increase dramatically within the first few weeks of applying this technique and you will wish you had found out about it much sooner. You get twice the results with half the work contained in other methods.

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Ron Champion, professional jazz trumpeter from the south Florida area responded:

I had been looking for something like this for years. Mike Longo's course has exceeded my expectations a hundred times over! I haven't put it down since I got it a month ago!

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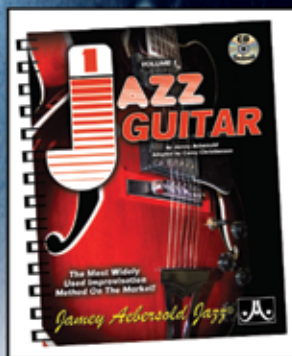
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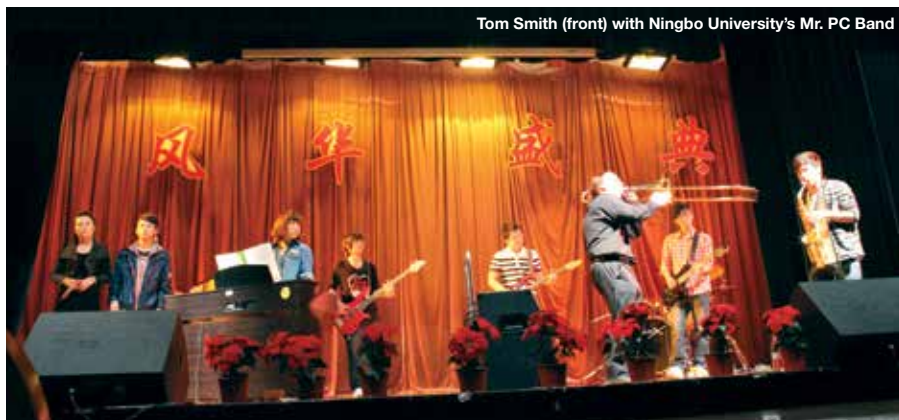
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Chinese Jazz Program Breaks Down Walls

Before his jazz education, Ningbo University student Zhe Lin had rarely seen hi-hats, much less performed with them. These days, the drummer said, “They’re like old friends that teach me this unique blending of sounds.” He spends hours engaged in drum-set practice as well as rehearsing with three different jazz ensembles.

Last year, when trombonist and educator Tom Smith founded China’s first jazz-studies major at Ningbo University—approximately 100 miles from Shanghai—he was the first full-time American music professor on the mainland. The university’s inaugural year was highly successful, with the installment of four large instrumental ensembles, adjoining combos and a 40-member jazz choir. Plans are under way for the sophomore season to include jazz appreciation classes and a world music ensemble consisting almost entirely of native Chinese instruments.

“The things I’ve learned in jazz also assist my classical studies,” said sophomore Dawei Zhang, a pianist. “It’s as if the two disciplines come together to make me a better all-around player. My jazz education here has been like a Chinese bullet train. First you build it, then you jump in and ride as fast as you can.”

Smith, a longtime jazz education ambassador and recipient of eight Fulbright scholarships, was enlisted by Ningbo when his strategy of using jazz syllables to teach English in Chinese primary schools caught the attention of Ningbo’s dean of fine arts. In the program’s early stages, Smith faced many language and scheduling barriers. Having experienced similar dilemmas elsewhere, he located a handful of English students, then equally distributed them within the various groups. Smith also adopted the common Chinese practice of assigning English names to his students.

Ensemble management was daunting because Ningbo’s music department was heavy

on vocalists, pianists and instruments commonly used for Chinese music education. The initial classes lacked the horn players necessary to form a big band. Smith said it makes for some interesting configurations; one ensemble, the student-dubbed “Georgia Brown Orchestra,” includes three violinists and an accordion player.

“I heard some Django-Grappelli possibilities and decided they should perform a more traditional repertoire,” Smith said. “We’ve become so fixed in each band’s individual sound that if a violinist were to leave Georgia Brown, I would try to replace that instrument, as opposed to reforming altogether.”

Ningbo’s jazz department received immediate financial assistance from Blue Note and Resonance Records as well as educators Jamey Aebersold and Paris Rutherford, who assisted with the university’s vocal jazz department.

“I’ve started close to 60 big bands but wasn’t nearly as experienced with vocal jazz,” Smith said. “Needless to say, we’ve been performing [Rutherford’s] arrangements almost exclusively, while Ningbo University, often in conjunction with the U.S. Consulate, has allowed me access to numerous American visitations for the purpose of helping the kids. This project especially was needful of professional exposure [because] all of the students were novices to jazz.”

Since November 2011, Ningbo students have been visited by such musicians as saxophonist Tia Fuller and pianists Burnett Thompson and David Braid.

“[Tia] asked what I wanted to do, and all I could think of was the same song,” said alto saxophonist Zhao Zhang, a sophomore. “It was terrible and wonderful at the same time. Afterward, [Smith] said that to become good, you have to first play badly in front of good people. I didn’t understand what he meant by that, until I got to play that same song for a different audience, and it was much better. He was right.” —Yu Hui

Stray Thoughts: The Music Institute of Chicago plans to celebrate the catalog of legendary pianist Billy Strayhorn with the Billy Strayhorn Festival on Oct. 26–28. The event will feature two concert performances by the Terell Stafford Quintet, as well as a panel discussion and screening of the film *Billy Strayhorn: Lush Life*. Details: musicinst.org

Class Reunion: Guitarist Peter Bernstein, harmonica player Grégoire Maret and pianist Sam Yahel were among the New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music alumni who premiered commissioned works at the NuSkuMu musical showcase on Sept. 18 at New York’s Highline Ballroom. The event also featured multiple generations of New School graduates, including trombonist Corey King with his group Taffy and the two-saxophone project Moon Hooch.

Details: newschool.edu

Spanish Classes: On Sept. 17, Berklee College of Music President Roger Brown launched the conservatory’s first series of graduate programs at the college’s new campus in Valencia, Spain. The school will now offer continuing education degrees in contemporary studio performance, scoring for film, television and video games, and global entertainment and music business.

Details: berklee.edu

Symphonic Youth: The New York Youth Symphony will commemorate its 50th anniversary with a series of concerts featuring such alumni and friends as saxophonist Phil Woods, trombonist Wycliffe Gordon and trumpeter Brian Lynch at venues across New York, including Dizzy’s Club Coca-Cola on Dec. 10 and The Allen Room at Jazz at Lincoln Center in 2013. The 17-member NYYS, which is the most awarded youth program of its kind in the nation, offers orchestra, jazz, chamber, conducting and composing programs.

Details: newyorkyouthsymphony.org

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Billy Drummond

As one of the most recorded and creative drummers of his generation, Billy Drummond, 53, has brought his skills to the full gamut of jazz expression for a quarter-century. This is his first Blindfold Test.

The Cookers

"Naaj" (*Believe*, Motéma, 2012) Billy Hart, drums; Eddie Henderson and David Weiss, trumpets; Craig Handy, alto saxophone; Billy Harper, tenor saxophone; George Cables, piano; Cecil McBee, bass.

Unmistakably Jabali [Billy Hart] on drums. His tuning. His touch. The sound of his first tom-tom and his cymbal. The way he plays around the drums—Pearl drums—and sets everything up. The way he melds together, the ostinato open-eighths feel to the swinging passages. He's one of the great drummers of our time. The pianist sounds like George Cables. I don't recognize the alto player or the trumpet player. 5 stars.

Dafnis Prieto

"The Magic Danzonete" (*Proverb Trio*, Dafnison Music, 2012) Prieto, drums; Jason Lindner, keyboards; Kokayi, vocals.

That was great drumming. The drum solo was over the bar line, a lot of chops, and I like the melding of the cowbell and woodblock with the drum set. It reminds me of the way Smitty [Marvin Smith] played with Dave Holland's group in the '80s. 4 stars.

Donald Vega

"Scorpion" (*Spiritual Nature*, Resonance, 2012) Vega, piano; Lewis Nash, drums; Christian McBride, bass; Bob Sheppard, tenor saxophone; Gilbert Castellanos, trumpet; Bob McChesney, trombone.

Great tune. Everybody was swinging. The drummer seems influenced by Lewis Nash—the fills, the happy beat, the crisp snare drum tuning—but the tom-toms don't sound like Lewis' tuning. The trumpet player has a great tone. Piano player has a nice touch. 3½ stars. [after] Lewis always plays a four-piece—snare, two mounted toms and a floor tom. I'm used to hearing him tune the first tom higher, meaning the other tom-toms are tuned higher, too. Maybe he wasn't playing *his* drums and had to deal with whatever was at hand.

John Abercrombie Quartet

"Wise One" (*Within A Song*, ECM, 2012) Abercrombie, guitar; Joe Lovano, tenor saxophone; Drew Gress, bass; Joey Baron, drums.

John Abercrombie on guitar—unmistakable sound. Joe Lovano on tenor—unmistakable sound. Joey Baron on drums—unmistakable sound, tuning, touch on the cymbals. The bass player is fantastic. Coltrane's "Wise One" is beautiful. Magnificent recording quality. I'd imagine it's on ECM. 5 stars. Joey knows how to get his sound on anything—he travels the world with a roll of tape and plays any cymbals that are supplied. Hearing him on his own drums and cymbals—I think he's been using Spizzichinos—is a beautiful thing.

Adam Cruz

"Magic Ladder" (*Milestone*, Sunnyside, 2011) Cruz, drums; Steve Wilson, soprano saxophone; Chris Potter, tenor saxophone; Ed Simon, piano; Adam Rogers, guitar; Ben Street, bass.

I liked the composition. Chris Potter on tenor? Sounded great—he developed into a frenzy, but not an uncalled-for frenzy. The guitarist is from the Metheny-Scofield school—Adam Rogers? I like the drummer's touch, that he kept it percolating in the style of Ed Blackwell or Paul Motian or Billy Higgins, with a loose, Jack DeJohnette-like sensibility. 4 stars.



Ari Hoenig

"Moanin'" (*Lines Of Oppression*, Naive, 2011) Hoenig, drums; Tigran Hamasyan, piano; Gilad Hekselman, guitar; Orlando le Fleming, bass.

The drummer was great—spot-on creating pitches and bending notes when playing the melodies, but also playing the drummer's role when it came time to swing. I'll guess Ari Hoenig. Ed Thigpen did something like this on a [1966] record called *Out Of The Storm*; so did Shelly Manne in the '50s and '60s. Gilad Hekselman on guitar? He's really good. I don't know the pianist, but I loved the development of the solo, the Erroll Garner-Milt Buckner thing with a modern slant. 4½ stars.

Strata Institute

"It's You" (*Transmigration*, DIW/Columbia, 1992) Steve Coleman, Greg Osby, alto saxophones; Von Freeman, tenor saxophone; David Gilmore, guitar; Kenny Davis, bass; Marvin "Smitty" Smith, drums.

A standard form, [based on] "The Song Is You." Greg Osby is playing one of the altos. Is Steve Coleman the other alto? I don't know the tenor player—it's not Sam Rivers, but is coming out of a similar angular approach. All of them are playing the changes, but with another slant. Wow, double bass drum at the end. Sounds like Tain [Jeff Watts], although he plays a lower-pitched bass drum; it's kind of like his cymbal beat, though he ramps it up more. Whoever the drummer is—a lot of chops, didn't get in the way but energetic, and fit the way it was played. 3½ stars.

Benny Green

"Opus De Funk" (*Source*, Jazz Legacy, 2011) Green, piano; Peter Washington, bass; Kenny Washington, drums.

I recognize Peter Washington's sound on bass. The high tuning of the mounted 8-by-12 [inch] tom-tom makes me think of Kenny Washington, and he's playing brushes with the snares on—he usually has them off. Benny Green on piano—the loping space between his eighth notes. 5 stars. The recording didn't capture Kenny's sound as well as on, say, Tommy Flanagan's *Jazz Poet* [1990], done at Rudy Van Gelder's. The ringing of the Keplinger snare drum combined with the high-tuned mono tom is his signature. It's the tuning Max Roach used when he was playing with Clifford Brown. The tension is as tight as you can get it, almost like playing on a table. There's nowhere to hide—everything has to be exact.

DB

THE "BLINDFOLD TEST" IS A LISTENING TEST THAT CHALLENGES THE FEATURED ARTIST TO DISCUSS AND IDENTIFY THE MUSIC AND MUSICIANS WHO PERFORMED ON SELECTED RECORDINGS. THE ARTIST IS THEN ASKED TO RATE EACH TUNE USING A 5-STAR SYSTEM. NO INFORMATION IS GIVEN TO THE ARTIST PRIOR TO THE TEST.

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