

APRIL 2018—ISSUE 192

YOUR FREE GUIDE TO THE NYC JAZZ SCENE

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THE NEW YORK CITY JAZZ RECORD

**REGGIE
WORKMAN
WORKING MAN**

**JIM
McNEELY**

**JONNY
KING**

**RICHARD
WYANDS**

**EDDIE
JEFFERSON**

Managing Editor:
Laurence Donohue-Greene
**Editorial Director &
Production Manager:**
Andrey Henkin

To Contact:
The New York City Jazz Record
66 Mt. Airy Road East
Croton-on-Hudson, NY 10520
United States
Phone/Fax: 212-568-9628

Laurence Donohue-Greene:
ldgreene@nycjazzrecord.com

Andrey Henkin:
ahenkin@nycjazzrecord.com

General Inquiries:
info@nycjazzrecord.com

Advertising:
advertising@nycjazzrecord.com

Calendar:
calendar@nycjazzrecord.com

VOXNews:
voxnews@nycjazzrecord.com

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Staff Writers

David R. Adler, Clifford Allen,
Duck Baker, Stuart Broomer,
Robert Bush, Thomas Conrad,
Ken Dryden, Donald Elfman,
Phil Freeman, Kurt Gottschalk,
Tom Greenland, Anders Griffen,
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Russ Musto, John Pietaro, Joel Roberts,
John Sharpe, Elliott Simon,
Andrew Vélez, Scott Yanow

Contributing Writers

Marco Cangiano, Ori Dagan,
George Grella, Peter Margasak,
Jim Motavalli, Anna Steegmann

Contributing Photographers

Thor Brødreskift, Enid Farber,
Peter Gannushkin, Alan Nahigian,
John Rogers, Jacqueline Sailer,
Adrien H. Tillmann

Fact-checker
Nate Dorward

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While the title of our cover feature on legendary bassist Reggie Workman, who leads a band for a weekend at The 75 Club at Bogardus Mansion, is a play on his last name, it speaks to a jazz reality: very few musicians in this business ever get to slow down. Workman may have played with Coltrane but, even in his early 80s, still gigs regularly and holds down a professorship at The New School. Jazz musicians typically go straight from composing to decomposing. Another example of a workhorse is composer/arranger/pianist Jim McNeely (Interview), who has been plying his trade with various big bands around the globe for the past few decades. He returns home to lead the Manhattan School of Music Jazz Orchestra with guest Joe Lovano in two concerts dedicated to John Coltrane's A Love Supreme. And in an extreme example of never stopping working, when pianist Jonny King (Artist Feature, featured for a weekend at Mezzrow) isn't tickling the ivories, he is tickling ivory file folders as a partner in a law firm. Pianist Richard Wyands (Encore, also at The 75 Club) and late singer Eddie Jefferson (Lest We Forget, fêted at Smoke by Allan Harris) also knows/knew a thing or two about the hard work that goes into a jazz career. And before you assume all that work is selfish, read our Label Profile on Minus Zero, where all proceeds from the imprint's catalogue are donated to Planned Parenthood.

On The Cover: Reggie Workman (© John Rogers)

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SEXTET
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TUE APR 10
walter smith III's "TWIO" HARISH RAGHAVAN ERIC HARLAND

WED APR 11
manuel valera Trio HANS GLAWISCHNIG MARK WHITFIELD JR.

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ethan iverson quartet BILLY HARPER BUSTER WILLIAMS BILLY HART

WED APR 18
roxy COSS ALEX WINTZ - MIKI YAMANAKA - DAVE BARON JONATHAN BARBER

THU APR 19
mike mcginnis/art lande/steve swallow

FRI-SUN APR 20-22
mingus Big Band

TUE-WED APR 24-25
nate smith+kinfolk JALEEL SHAW - FIMA EPHRON BRAD WILLIAMS - AMMA WHATT

THU-SUN APR 26-29
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MON APR 2, 9, 16 & 30 MON APR 23

mingus Band **mingus orchestra**

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"When are musicians going to realize that THEY have the power?" This statement from trumpeter Bill Dixon has often been repeated as he was incredulous at the things musicians had to put up with from venues, record labels, promoters and the like. 54 years after Dixon co-founded the Jazz Composers' Guild, things haven't changed much—that said, when a venue like Ridgewood's H010 gets a reputation as a generally unfriendly pay-to-play spot, where improvisers are basically renting space against a sure-to-be small door charge, folks start to fly the coop. So tenor saxophonist **John Dikeman**, guitarist **Jasper Stadhouders**, bassist **Tony Piazza**, drummer **Adam Shead** and trombonist **Steve Swell** (minus the latter, the group hails from Amsterdam and Chicago and was on tour) migrated from H010 to the Crown Heights art gallery HappyLucky no. 1 (Mar. 3rd), joining up with pedal steel guitarist **Susan Alcorn** and Australian reedplayer **Jim Denley**, who were performing duo. Surrounded by a pig's breakfast of fiber, paper and jeweled artworks, the quintet tussled with one another over two shortish improvisations, Dikeman's rugged and hoarse squall mating well with Swell's economical slush and quizzical flutter, and left the space warm. Denley and Alcorn hadn't met prior and though both initially showed restraint, feeling one another out, the inevitable loosening up led to some remarkable passages of metallic prepared-horn grind and sine wave-like chordal bellows. —Clifford Allen



PETER GANNUSHKIN/DOWNTOWNMUSIC.NET

Swell/Stadhouders/Piazza/Shead/Dikeman at HappyLucky no. 1

We often need, though don't always get, reminders of what is truly 'beyond' in creative arts. I would be remiss if I didn't say that the avant garde improvisers I encounter in New York and elsewhere are mostly like me: middle-aged, white, male, straight/cis and upper-middle class. And as much as we might be politically aligned and have similar aesthetic interests, we need to check ourselves. Even if we don't have complete access to worlds that are not ours—those of people of color, women, trans and queer individuals—these are people who can effect change and the possibility of different directions. The centerpiece of **Queer Trash** at Issue Project Room (Mar. 10th; QT's Michael Foster, Richard Kamerman and Eames Armstrong are the 2018 Suzanne Fiol Curatorial Fellows at IPR) was Keijaun Thomas' "Distance Is Not Separation" (or at least part of it—the full work can be seen on her Vimeo page). The artist, nude except for undergarments, packing tape "corset" and flame-orange extensions, circled a small makeshift floor plan of cardboard, balloons, glitter, yarn and commercial detritus and recited an echo against the prerecorded performance of her written declaration "She Hard, She Q", honoring and reading black feminist icons and pop cultural figures while alternating bodily presence from supplication/objectification to taut, athletic specificity. While the venue didn't invite as much audience participation as the work could use, Thomas' dose of critical realness and transgression was decidedly necessary. (CA)

Artist/activist/vocalist Abbey Lincoln was a disrupter. As part of a series honoring '60s black female pioneers, Marc Cary, who logged 12 years as her pianist, staged **Mothers of the Movements** at Harlem Stage Gatehouse (Mar. 3rd). To help him (re)generate the disruptive spirit of his former employer, Cary enlisted veteran (but eternally youthful) bassist Reggie Workman, resilient drummer Terri Lyne Carrington, adaptable tabla drummer Sameer Gupta, pianist Randy Noel, tenor saxophonist Edmar Colón and vocalist Jackie Gage (who had the unenviable task of filling Lincoln's shoes). Besides "Driva' Man", "Tears for Johannesburg" and "Freedom Day", all from the iconic *We Insist! Max Roach's Freedom Now Suite*, the set included Lincoln's "Straightahead", "Throw It Away", "Down Here Below" and "Music Is The Magic", Cary's "Running Out of Time" (set to Lincoln's lyrics) and Mongo Santamaria's "Afro Blue". Spanning two hours, it had vertiginous peaks linked by long broad valleys. Cary and Carrington were the impetus behind many of the collective high points, each evoking animated crowd responses during solo features. Colón and Gage were equally compelling, if less charismatic. Gupta, too often drowned in the sea of notes, finally surfaced in a few places, his delicate finger-taps dancing over four tuned tablas. Some of the extended jams seemed to linger longer than necessary, though on "Down Here Below", an extended lull in the middle eventually erupted with volcanic strength. —Tom Greenland



©ENIDFARBERFOTO

Marc Cary & Randy Noel @ Harlem Stage Gatehouse

You just can't predict how **Catherine Russell** is going to sound live: she sings so many styles, all well. At Saint Peter's Church (Mar. 4th), as featured artist for the first of three Jazz Vespers services she performed this Lent season, she was in worship mode. Alternating with the pastors' readings and calls to prayer, she brought their words to life in soulful song, her resonant alto rising to fill the tall, intimate tower. Three covers—The Consolers' countrified "Don't Let Nothing Shake Your Faith", The Jackson Southernaires' delta-bluesy "Help Me Make It Through Another Day" and the Staple Singers' spine-tingling "Stand By Me"—were smoother but no less heartfelt renditions of their gritty predecessors, Russell blending her creamy, cutting alto with the empathetic vocal harmonies of Melissa Stylianou and Jason Walker, fine singers in their own right, while bassist/bandleader Ike Sturm, guitarist Jesse Lewis and vibraphonist Chris Dingman provided nimble yet judicious support. The traditional hymn, "All Night, All Day (Angels Watching Over Me)", was performed with similar brio. In a more modern vein, Russell sang Sturm's "Give Us, Lord, a New Heart" and his setting of Bret Heschel's "Listen", leading a small community choir through the jazzy chord changes with space for a few horn solos. There, in the midst of our crowded crazy city, besieged by noise and ambition, Russell could have raised her voice in rejoinder, belting out a brash protest, but she chose a quieter, most musical way to make her meaning loud and clear. (TG)

While fusion of jazz with Indian classical and traditional musics is hardly new – going back at least to the '60s with Joe Harriott, Manfred Schoof and later Miles Davis, Pat Martino and John McLaughlin – what has changed over the past decade or more is that the fusion is coming from the other direction. Now we have post-colonial indo-jazz fusion, promulgated by musicians with direct heritage, whether it is Vijay Iyer, Rudresh Mahanthappa or, as was on display at National Sawdust (Mar. 11th), **Aakash Mittal**. The saxophonist was presenting music written under the auspices of a grant awarded by the American Institute of Indian Studies, which allowed him to visit Kolkata and compose *Nocturne*, a five-section piece of music based on Hindustani evening and night ragas. The music was interpreted by Mittal's Awaz Trio, completed by Miles Okazaki (guitar) and Rajna Swaminathan (mridangam, a tuned percussion instrument). The 50-minute composition was presented *en suite*, with a shifting hierarchy, cellular repetition, moments of formality contrasted by diffuse spaciness and sections of lockstep movement. While Mittal's playing exhibits a Western tone and tonality, its edge matched well with the deep throoms of mridangam and various electric soundscapes of guitar. The rhythmic aspects were omnipresent, usually maintained by Okazaki and echoed by Swaminathan. Later in the set, Mittal invited a guest onstage, trumpeter Amir ElSaffar, equally dedicated to exploring his Eastern roots.
—*Andrey Henkin*

Multinational all-female septet **Woman To Woman** made its NYC debut at the 92nd Street Y (Mar. 2nd) with a concert confirming the prominent role of women of the world in jazz today. The group, assembled by pianist Renee Rosnes and comprising vocalist Cécile McLorin Salvant, trumpeter Ingrid Jensen, tenor saxophonist Melissa Aldana, clarinetist Anat Cohen, bassist Noriko Ueda and drummer Allison Miller, got things started with Salvant's joyous reading of "Never Will I Marry", the whole band swinging with an uplifting verve that continued through their rendition of "I Get A Kick Out Of You", which began with Salvant's a cappella delivery of the seldom-sung verse. Cohen and the rhythm section were in the spotlight on "Jitterbug Waltz", her virtuosic technique on full display as she interjected warbling tags to lyrical phrases. Jensen was out front on a medley of her own "Long" (which she played blowing ethereally into the piano strings) and Ellington's "Solitude". Aldana was featured on a lithely swinging version of Monk's "We See", adding bellowing lower register accents to serpentine lines. Salvant was back for an optimistic rendering of Bob Dorough's "Devil May Care" before the sextet closed the first half with Rosnes' potent anthem "Galapagos". The band played an exciting second set, which began stirringly with Salvant singing Jimmy Rowles' "The Peacocks" and included Wayne Shorter's "United" before closing with Billie Holiday's blues "Fine and Mellow".
—*Russ Musto*



Aakash Mittal's Awaz Trio @ National Sawdust



Renee Rosnes, Cécile McLorin Salvant & Anat Cohen @ 92nd Street Y

Just as Aristotle studied at the chiton of Plato, who in turn was a disciple of Socrates, so too did Charles Mingus tap the younger saxophonist **Charles McPherson** for his 1960-72 bands, the latter continuing the tradition decades later by having members of later generations like pianist Jeb Patton and guitarist Yotam Silberstein in his group for a stand at Dizzy's Club. For the first set of the first night (Mar. 1st), McPherson's drummer son Chuck was absent, replaced by Johnathan Blake, who has the Midas touch at the kit, joined in the rhythm section by bassist Todd Coolman. McPherson comes out of the Detroit bop tradition, then had that influence tempered by the fiery work of Mingus; as such, the Dizzy's set was a mixture of jazz standards and McPherson originals (echoing his many recordings since the '60s), presented in a fashion that didn't shake the earth necessarily but definitely warmed the rain-soaked crowd. What has distinguished McPherson is his pungent tone and predilection for unusual melodic narratives in his soloing, like contemporary Gary Bartz if from a bluesier direction. On one piece, McPherson testified as if at a Mingus-led prayer meeting, ending on a long, circular-breathed final note. "Night Fall" was written for the San Diego Ballet while "Marionette" was composed for McPherson's daughter. If a complaint needs to be made, it was there was little to no variation in solo order within the set, making the tunes most interesting when it was McPherson out front. (AH)

Women comprised the larger part of the audience for **Fostina Dixon** and Winds Of Change at the Schomburg Center (Mar. 12th). Part of the Women's Jazz Festival 2018 celebrating Alice Coltrane and Abbey Lincoln, Dixon, a mainstay of the latter's groups, began her set layering live samples of solo baritone saxophone in a soulful collage she titled "Loop de Loop". Joined by the trio of pianist Edsel Gomez, bassist Lonnie Plaxico and drummer Ronnie Burrage, the reedplayer then blew swooping, blues-drenched alto lines over the lingering fat bottom, creating a sound akin to a solo World Saxophone Quartet. Segueing into her "Rest", which began with a gospel-tinged solo piano prelude, the band blended funky R&B and fusion and interjected Herbie Hancock's "Butterfly" motif as an interlude in an episodic outing with Dixon blowing biting alto lines over an inexorable backbeat. The soulful mood continued with Dixon sticking to alto on her "Deliverance Suite", which also featured Gomez' swirling keyboards. She sang convincingly on her Marvin Gaye-inspired "Prayer For Jabez" and Lincoln's "Story Of My Father". Switching to soprano, she and the band swung lightly on her bossa "I Longed For Love" then dug in hard (with the leader on alto) for Mingus' "Fables Of Faubus". Back on soprano she played prettily on Ellington's "African Flower", sticking with it on her "Strutt'n" and "Strutt Sum Mo", alternating calypso and second line rhythms, before closing out with a racing "Caravan". (RM)

WHAT'S NEWS

The Sony Corporation and Blue Note Media Group have announced a joint effort, **Sony Hall**, a venue with a capacity "of 1,000 standing and 500 seated, with a full-service restaurant and bar...equipped with Sony's technologies, integrated throughout the 12,000 square-foot venue" to open in New York City this spring. Additionally, Sony has been named sponsor of the annual Blue Note Jazz Festival, taking place every summer. For more information, visit bluenote.net.

As part of Jazz Appreciation Month, the **Louis Armstrong House** will present two events: on Apr. 30th, there will be the first public screening of *Satchmo Plays King Oliver*, the only known film of Armstrong in the studio, at the Museum of the City of New York; and on Apr. 28th, trumpeter Bria Skonberg will present a Family Louis Armstrong Workshop at the Armstrong House. For more information, visit louisarmstronghouse.org.

The **Brooklyn Academy of Music** has named David Binder as its new Artistic Director, taking over for Joseph V. Melillo. For more information, visit bam.org.

Finalists have been named for the 23rd Annual **Essentially Ellington** High School Jazz Band Competition taking place at Jazz at Lincoln Center this May. Relatively local ensembles are Newark Academy (Livingston, NJ) and William H. Hall High School (West Hartford, CT). For more information, visit academy.jazz.org/ee.

Recipients of the first round of 2018 funding from the **National Endowment for the Arts** have been announced. Local recipients include: Aaron Davis Hall; Afro-Latin Jazz Alliance of New York; Apollo Theater Foundation; Arts for Art; BRIC Arts; Brooklyn Academy of Music; Festival of New Trumpet Music; Issue Project Room; Jazz Foundation of America; Kaufman Music Center; National Sawdust and Roulette. For more information, visit arts.gov.

The **American Pianists Association** has announced five finalists for the American Pianists Awards: Kenny Banks, Jr., Emmet Cohen, Keelan Dimick, Dave Meder and Billy Test will compete for the Cole Porter Fellowship, given every four years to an American jazz pianist and awarded in April 2019. There will be a concert featuring all five finalists at Dizzy's Club on May. 17th. For more information, visit AmericanPianists.org.

The **Seattle Women's Jazz Orchestra's** sixth annual Jazz Contest for Women Composers is now accepting scores. Winning and honorable mention composers will receive an honorarium and their compositions performed and recorded live by the Seattle Women's Jazz Orchestra during the 2018 Earshot Jazz Festival in Seattle. Submission deadline is Jun. 30th. For more information, visit swojo.org.

Guitarist **David Grubbs** will have a release event at Printed Matter Apr. 26th at 6:30 pm for his new book *Now that the audience is assembled*, a "book-length prose poem that describes a fictional musical performance during which an unnamed musician improvises the construction of a series of invented instruments before an audience that is alternately contemplative, participatory, disputatious, and asleep." For more information, visit printedmatter.org/programs/events/676.

The **Museum of Modern Art's** Modern Jazz Social, a benefit and live music performance, will honor Debra L. Lee, chairman and CEO of BET Networks, Apr. 3rd. The evening will feature performances by Cécile McLorin Salvant, Aaron Diehl and Tariq "Black Thought" Trotter. For more information, visit moma.org.

Submit news to info@nycjazzrecord.com

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



JIM MCNEELY

BY KEN DRYDEN

Jim McNeely, a superb pianist who has led recording dates with small groups and big bands, is known for his acclaimed work as a composer, arranger and conductor with large ensembles such as the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, Stockholm Jazz Orchestra, Danish Radio Big Band and the Hessischer Rundfunk Big Band in Frankfurt and has made valuable contributions to albums by Stan Getz and Phil Woods. McNeely's nine Grammy nominations attest to the respect he has earned in the world of jazz.

The New York City Jazz Record: Who were some of your mentors?

Jim McNeely: I went to a Catholic school with a big band, led by a priest named George Wiskirchen. He was the first to encourage me to write big band arrangements and comp. He was the first person I heard use comping for the piano role in a band. I was getting into it and every year the band would play at this festival at Notre Dame University. One year the University of Illinois band was playing and I said, "Wow, that's where I want to go to school", because the band was so good.

The teacher who did the most for my compositional hat was Morgan Powell, who's still around. He was composing music that combined modern big band and more contemporary classical things. John Garvey led the big band; he was a big influence on me just seeing how he would rehearse a piece and tear it apart, get it sounding good. Then there were several musicians who were finishing up Master's degrees and had a big influence on me. I got to know a piano player named Ron Elliston well. Hearing him play and seeing how he led a trio was really instructive.

TNYCJR: How did you join Thad Jones and Mel Lewis?

JM: I had gotten to know Harold Danko, the pianist in the band. There were jam sessions going on during the day in guys' lofts in Chelsea, so I got to know some of the folks in Thad and Mel's band. Harold was really nice to me. We talked a lot about music and he had me sit in on gigs. At one point, Harold called me to sub in the band. I played, Thad wasn't there, but Mel was. Then Harold called me to sub again, Thad was there and it worked out pretty well. A few months went by, Mel called me to join the band. They were going to do a 12-week tour of Europe and some of the guys were very active on the local scene and couldn't afford to be away. Harold was one of them. It opened the door for me and a couple other guys. It was a good opportunity.

TNYCJR: What did you learn while in the band?

JM: Several things. It's the greatest arranging lesson I ever had in my life to sit in that piano chair night after night, play that music and hear the inner voices, the way Thad voiced his chords and rhythmically wrote music. Also, I could always hear myself playing

with Mel. He wasn't a loud drummer but swung like crazy and supported the soloists really well. I also learned about the role of the piano in a big band. With Thad and Mel's music, there were a lot of piano solos, but most of them had a structural function in the arrangement. I think Thad got that from Basie. You think of all the solos Basie played, but they were either an intro to set up the tune or a bridge from one section of the chart to another or there'd be a big shout chorus and a little piano solo would help the dust settle before the last thing of the chart. The piano solos weren't open-ended blowing things. Seeing Thad conduct and the joy that he brought to the process was really inspiring. It's a big thing that I'll always remember. He really loved what he did and expressed that to the band and the audience and really inspired everybody.

TNYCJR: Two important chapters in your career include your time with Stan Getz and Phil Woods.

JM: The first thing I think about with Stan is his sound and his time. I learned from playing with Stan and Phil that people respond to your sound, your time and the degree to which you really believe what you're doing. People don't care if it's a flat five or a sharp nine, what they want to hear is the belief in every note you play and Stan really had that. He was the best singer I ever worked with, because the way he could play a ballad melody, it was like playing with a really great singer.

Phil's band was very different. Number one is he had remarkably stable personnel for so many years. It was like a writer's workshop. He really encouraged me, Hal Crook and Brian Lynch to write. We'd have rehearsals and write stuff for the band. After four years, I told Phil that I was going to be leaving. They had a big tour of Europe coming up and I was so busy writing that I couldn't afford the time anymore to do those kinds of tours. I told him I was leaving the band by such and such a date and he said, "Okay, we've still got all of these tunes to record, so let's do a whole CD." I was honored that he wanted to do that.

TNYCJR: Your tentet album *Group Therapy* is one of my favorite CDs. I felt like it deserved a Grammy.

JM: As the cliché goes, it's an honor to be nominated. It means enough of your peers have heard what you've done to vote for you. Once it goes to the finals, it's a lot about popularity or recognition. You learn to let it roll off your back when you lose, although I will say that every time I've been nominated and go out to L.A. and lose, that plane ride back home is a really long ride (laughs).

TNYCJR: You've probably written a lot of music that has yet to be recorded or performed, so hearing a large ensemble playing your works has to give you a thrill.

JM: It still does. Most of the time when I'm writing something, I get to the point where I say I can't wait to

hear this and then I do. That's one reason I really enjoy working with the Frankfurt Radio Band and I write probably five to six hours of big band music for them a year. It's really exciting to go over there and hear it played by a really good band. Sometimes when I write for the Vanguard Orchestra...same thing. I still get a big charge out of hearing what I've written.

TNYCJR: Do you usually write for a particular orchestra?

JM: I usually write for a specific band or orchestra, then they're usually portable enough where you can play them with other groups. A number of things I've

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 42)

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JONNY KING

BY DONALD ELFMAN

Jonny King is a busy man. He's a full-time lawyer, married and the father of two daughters and a jazz pianist and composer who performs in New York jazz clubs with some of the finest musicians. And, he notes, is writing tunes. Even as the meeting to source this article began, "I was finishing up another tune," says King. "And there are always many more in my head." King has made recordings as a leader and as a sideman and has had tunes recorded by a number of artists, including Billy Pierce, Tony Reedus and Billy Drummond. In some respects, he's under the radar in the jazz world, but there's a bigger story.

First, some background. King is a native New Yorker and his earliest memory of being drawn to music was seeing the film *The Sting* at age nine and coming home to try to pick out its ragtime melodies on his family's spinet piano. "My folks signed me up for lessons with a classical teacher but, within months, I was always frustrated with having to play music as it was written. In other words, I wanted to and started to improvise." So, abandoning the lessons, a jazz musician emerged and, with the help of a promoter friend of the family, King got to see Teddy Wilson, Earl Hines, Cannonball Adderley and more. And, in addition to listening to records, King soon started taking lessons with a "proper jazz teacher", Tony Aless, one of the pianists on Charlie Parker's *Bird with Strings*. Says King, "Tony instilled that reverence for the language of jazz—I got to appreciate the oral history of the music and find my voice."

Harvard Law School was King's next step yet he never gave up playing jazz, working with many of Boston's greats, including Pierce, Alan Dawson, John Lockwood and more. He returned to New York in 1993 and began to play at Bradley's, Sweet Basil, Knickerbocker Bar & Grill, Blue Note and more. He began work at his current law firm in 1994 but that fall was asked to go on tour with Joshua Redman and worked out a leave of absence arrangement to make that possible. So life has, since that time, been a kind of "juggling act" of family, law and music.

In 1994, King made his first recording as a leader for Criss Cross, *In From The Cold*. The players included a frontline of saxophonists Mark Turner and Vincent Herring with Ira Coleman and Billy Drummond in the rhythm section. The album introduces King's writing—seven originals with distinctly angular melodies and time signature changes (the title track shifts three times), which make for challenging listening. The players, however, are so comfortable with King and he with them that listeners can always sense the pulse and the group sensibility. "It's what makes jazz for me," says King, "that working together and being relaxed enough to try intriguing things, hearing what the other players are doing and still feel like we're working towards the same ends."

That ethos pervades his next two recordings, made for Germany's Enja Records after label founder Matthias Winckelmann heard King play in New York.

Notes from the Underground, from 1995, found the pianist in solid company with Drummond again and Peter Washington (bass), Joshua Redman (tenor saxophone) and Steve Nelson (vibraphone). Here were six more originals, including one, "Las Ramblas", which blends island rhythms, chord changes of "I Got Rhythm" and an unusual, but danceable melody. The covers are Herbie Hancock's "Blow Up" and the Fred E. Ahlert-Roy Turk standard "Mean to Me". On 1997's *The Meltdown*, Drummond is there yet again, this time in a larger group with David Sánchez (tenor), Steve Wilson (tenor and soprano), Steve Davis (trombone) and Larry Grenadier (bass). The musicians on these recordings are the ones with whom King finds his place of relaxed yet adventurous music-making.

Influences abound in King's music and playing. According to him, it's the early boogie-woogie players like Meade Lux Lewis, Albert Ammons and Pete Johnson and then, later, Wynton Kelly, Sonny Clark, Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, Keith Jarrett and McCoy Tyner. And, he says, "When I was starting to play professionally, there were so many great pianists I could see virtually every night, like Kenny Barron, John Hicks, Ronnie Mathews, Cedar Walton, Tommy Flanagan and others. And, on the younger side of the spectrum, Kenny Kirkland and Mulgrew Miller... Mulgrew ultimately became my teacher and mentor... he'd come to the house and we'd sit at the upright piano and take turns playing melodies and basslines." And it was never about technique, though King certainly has it. "I'm not schooled, not an academic. But a listener responds, really, to the music."

Lest we forget, King is a partner in a top New York firm. In fact, he had written a paper while in law school entitled "The Anatomy of a Jazz Recording", in which he discusses how a version of an old standard could include nine copyrightable elements. And speaking of writing, in 1997 King authored *What Jazz Is: An Insider's Guide to Understanding and Listening to Jazz* (Walker Books). In the introduction, he says, "... that breadth of emotional expressiveness is part of why jazz is such great music. With a little preliminary interest and willingness to listen, anyone can understand and respond to jazz." The book originally came with a compilation CD of music that King discussed within its pages.

King made his most recent recording in 2010, the stunning *Above All* (Sunnyside). The pianist is joined by bassist Ed Howard and drummer Victor Lewis, both of whom have joined King's special coterie. Now, he finds himself doing more trio gigs and pondering the challenges of recording and the future of same. "Since I write so much music, I'm opting, for new recordings, when they happen, for larger groups that could interpret that music," King reflects. In addition, he's working with his publisher, Don Sickler at Second Floor Music, in transcribing his music for educational purposes so that intimacy and sharing extends, one hopes, to new generations of players. ❖

For more information, visit jonnyking.com. King is at Mezzrow Apr. 20th-21st. See Calendar.

Recommended Listening:

- Eric Felten/Jimmy Knepper – *T-Bop* (Soul Note, 1991-92)
- Jonny King – *In From The Cold* (Criss Cross, 1994)
- Jonny King – *Notes From The Underground* (Enja, 1995)
- Jonny King – *The Meltdown* (Enja-Koch, 1997)
- Jonny King – *Above All* (Sunnyside, 2010)
- Anthony Branker & Ascent – *Together* (Origin, 2012)



REGGIE WORKMAN WORKING MAN

BY JOHN PIETARO

Reflecting on a career spanning six decades, bassist Reggie Workman speaks with subdued restraint. Adding to a remarkable resumé, Workman's history of mentoring young jazz musicians led to a long-standing Associate Professorship of the New School yet, staring down 80, he's as busy as ever. "Yes, there's a lot going on. There always is," he mused.

Born in 1937, just outside of Philadelphia, Workman was ingrained in musical activity from early on. "Many musicians lived in that community," he explained. "Lee Morgan and I grew up together. Archie Shepp lived around the corner." Others in his immediate purview were Benny Golson, Kenny Barron, Mickey Roker, Donald Bailey and Bobby Green. Workman's father, a chef, owned a restaurant frequented by musicians who often visited the family home. The addition of a piano in their living room brought about an array of jam sessions. Jackie McLean was a regular when he played the area and after John Coltrane moved to Philadelphia, he too was drawn to the scene. "And Philly Joe Jones was a conductor on the trolley that passed the house," Workman said. "He sometimes stopped his car, faking mechanical problems, just to come in and say 'hello' to the fellows."

Through the visceral drive of the music, Workman's role became increasingly active. "Archie went to college at Goddard to study drama and I continued playing the streets. We didn't have universities to teach this; we sneaked into clubs. The Showboat and the Aqua Lounge hosted Charlie Parker, Billie Holiday, they all came through. The bouncer at one of the clubs would let us in; he'd give us fruit punch and sit us in a dark corner." But by 1956, upon high school graduation, Workman began organizing performances. Once he took over the hearse his father used for deliveries, he could get to gigs out of town and transport the players. A first taste of success occurred when Workman joined the quartet of popular pianist-vocalist Freddy Cole, brother of Nat. "The music took me out of the brickyard and around the country. For me, this was also an education on the art of the ballad."

Performances with Cole centered on New York, so Workman moved his base to Harlem. "My evolution happened in New York. Many of the greats lived there. Gigi Gryce started hiring me regularly." Calls began coming in from Sun Ra, James Moody and Roswell Rudd. "I also played Minton's with Chick Corea and George Coleman and Babs Gonzales started hanging out uptown", which led to gigs with the bebop vocalist. "Then in 1958 Frank Gant and I went to San Francisco to work with Red Garland. It was a two-week gig we couldn't turn down due to his Miles association. Red wouldn't pay for plane tickets so we traveled by train." Quickly, Workman became established as a first-call bassist within the music's highest order. "Thelonious Monk was very particular about what happened on the bandstand and he expected the bass to be in a certain place, at a certain time, regardless. It was like school. That was difficult for me because I was used to a more open setting. The band's saxophonist Paul Jeffrey was a great help to me and Ed Blackwell too."

Increasingly busy—and aware of the rigors—Workman became a founder of a musicians' support and referral organization; however, the shadow of Jim Crow invaded the solidarity. "The group had conflicts because the black musicians had different problems than the white ones," Workman recalled. Collective Black Artists (CBA) grew from this reality. Artists including Amiri Baraka, Jimmy Heath, Jimmy Owens, George Benson and Don Moore became central members. "We renovated a store front to make an office and organized classes taught by Leonard Goines and Owens. Our newspaper, *Expansions*, was filled with articles and poetry." CBA also recorded an EP dedicated to Muhammad Ali featuring Gonzales' vocals and ran a concert series at Town Hall with Ornette Coleman, Max Roach and Herbie Hancock among their features.

Within Workman's tapestry, Coltrane stands out as a luminary. "It was 1961 and the band included McCoy, Elvin and Dolphy. I was working with Jaki Byard and Roy Haynes down the street from Coltrane's band and invited Eric to check us out. He brought John, but they left soon after, so I thought nothing of it. However, they were going on the road and John called to ask if I wanted in. I said: 'Is the Pope Catholic?'" After stateside shows, Norman Granz paired the band with Dizzy Gillespie's for a European tour. "We boarded the plane together but John, Dizzy and Norman sat in first class. The rest of us rode coach...the salary was miniscule and we had to pay for our own hotel rooms. Meanwhile, Granz got a suite." However, the gig cemented a powerful relationship with Coltrane, then on the cusp of ascendancy. "We recorded *Africa Brass*. So many great musicians were in Van Gelder's studio. Dolphy wrote voicings for the horns. Cal Massey did orchestration too." *Olé Coltrane* was out next and within a year *Live at the Village Vanguard* and *Impressions* hit record bins. But for the bassist, it wouldn't last. "This was a wonderful experience until my father got sick and I started going back and forth to Philadelphia. I couldn't commit, yet leaving John is one of my saddest memories," he lamented.

But by New Year's Eve 1962, Workman was on a Japanese bandstand with Art Blakey. "That version of the Jazz Messengers was historic: Wayne Shorter, Curtis Fuller, Cedar Walton and Freddie Hubbard. Everyone worked hard and Blakey made sure of that. 'Sgt. Blakey' we called him." The master drummer was dogmatic, but not as disciplined in his own life. "Buhaina [Blakey's Muslim name] would direct us to be at Blue Note's rehearsal room on 84th and Broadway at 6 pm. Then 8 pm came, no Bu. He'd sometimes keep us waiting four, five hours. He was having problems and as his marriage fell apart, so did the band."

Workman joined Shepp and Bill Dixon's politically revolutionary ensemble for their eponymous 1962 album. Commenting on the natural connection between the music and the rising Black Liberation Movement, Workman states: "Music means politics. Archie later wrote 'Poem for Malcolm', 'Scag', 'Rufus' and 'Attica Blues'. But we all spoke up. We had to. You can't put your head in the sand; that leaves your ass sticking up

in the air." In 1965 the bassist toured with Yusef Lateef's combo, hitting California during the Watts Riots. "We were being shot at as we drove from the highway so we had to stay in the hotel." Herbie Mann, then holding noted commercial success, next hired Workman. "The Middle East conflict was going on and Herbie became increasingly involved in this. He tuned his music to his own roots, but the Israeli-Palestinian conflict touched me differently as a black person. I became very vocal. It may have hurt my career, but artists shed light." Workman then joined the New York Art Quartet, an ensemble that sonically and politically realized radical culture in an urgent time. Baraka was a common addition to the lineup, threading spoken word through streams of improvisation. "I don't like the term 'avant garde'," Workman clarified. "It's about the music, not about boxes people put it in. We are Sound Scientists."

In 1970 Workman became musical director of the New Muse Community Museum, an organization of African-American arts. And with the fall of the CBA, he founded Artists Alliance, a network presenting a Village Gate concert series. However, in the harsh economic decline to follow, Workman experienced recession fallout of his own. He took a day job with a black-owned oil company and also with Crown Heights Community Service, guiding at-risk teens to college. In the '80s, he hosted a jazz radio program on WBAI-FM and led record dates with the likes of Julian Priester, Sam Rivers and Andrew Hill, before forming Top Shelf, a band sporting David Murray, Arthur Rhames, Steve McCall and others. "I'd been doing so many other people's music and decided to finally perform my own. Top Shelf played the Tin Palace, the Cooler and the 5-Spot for months at a time."

The bassist mentored young artists through the African American Legacy Project and various colleges for years, focusing finally on The New School's Jazz and New Music Program, in which he's currently immersed. Trio 3, with Oliver Lake and Andrew Cyrille, is a long-term project and Workman also anticipates the release of a '70s recording by WARM with Rivers, Priester and Pheeroan akLaff. He's also working on his biography. "There aren't enough hours for me to stop," he offered. "Besides, who's counting?" ❖

Workman is at The 75 Club at Bogardus Mansion Apr. 20th-21st. See Calendar.

Recommended Listening:

- John Coltrane—*The Complete 1961 Village Vanguard Recordings* (Impulse!-GRP, 1961)
- New York Art Quartet—*Mohawk* (Fontana, 1965)
- Alice Coltrane—*Transfiguration* (Warner Brothers-Sepia Tone, 1978)
- Sonny Fortune/Billy Harper/Stanley Cowell/Reggie Workman/Billy Hart—*Great Friends* (Black & Blue—Evidence, 1986)
- Reggie Workman—*Summit Conference* (Postcards, 1993)
- Trio 3—*Visiting Texture* (Intakt, 2016)

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RICHARD WYANDS

BY MARILYN LESTER

How fortunate we are in the 21st century to have living histories of jazz still among us. Pianist Richard Wyands, who turns 90 in July, is one of them. He not only clearly remembers the Swing Era, but was gigging at the birth of bebop and has known or played with a Who's Who of jazz musicians.

As a youngster growing up in the San Francisco Bay area, Wyands was deeply into music early on, with piano lessons beginning at seven. He was also quite attracted to drums. "My mother was not for it," he says, chuckling at the memory. "I just bought you a piano. I'm not buying you drums too." Still, he found a way to learn both, soon moving ardently into jazz studies. Wyands was attracted to jazz listening to his parents' records of James P. Johnson, Fats Waller and others. On the radio, the bands of Artie Shaw and Benny Goodman made an impression.

Around this time his mother took him to see Duke Ellington and His Famous Orchestra at the Golden Gate Theater in San Francisco. Billy Strayhorn eventually impressed Wyands, who came to appreciate him as one of his favorite composers, and his admiration for Ellington is strong. Wyands notes that on most of the trio recordings he's done at least one Strayhorn or Ellington work is included. "Duke was underestimated as a pianist," he adds. "He was a very good stride player." The Ellington connection also continued in Wyands' long-term association with guitarist Kenny Burrell, a noted Ellingtonia expert. It was Burrell who taught him about playing alongside a guitar, which he had found daunting: "I got the knack playing with Kenny."

In San Francisco, Wyands regularly went to hear other big bands that came through the area, including

Woody Herman, Louis Armstrong and the early Basie band. At 16, he became a member of a 6-piece jazz combo, playing both piano and drums. The group was accomplished enough to play professionally. "We were good!" he says emphatically. His own practice and gigging allowed him to develop a style early. He was especially attracted to the playing of Teddy Wilson and Nat King Cole, both with whom he eventually had the opportunity to play. Still impressed with Cole's artistry today, he lights up as he declares it "extraordinary". Wyands also had a passion for Art Tatum, with whom he also got to play opposite. "Tatum wasn't easy," he says, making moves on an air piano to indicate Tatum's complexity.

Over the years, Wyands learned to play most jazz genres, developing the flexible and adaptable style that has made him a highly sought-after sideman. As a solo player his proclivity is toward a more cerebral and nuanced approach, in keeping with his quiet, direct, 'let's get it done' personality. In this regard and in tone and delicate touch, he's much in the mold of departed contemporary Ellis Larkins.

In the post-WWII era, when Wyands was leaving high school and entering San Francisco State College (graduating with a degree in music in 1950), bebop came into his line of sight. Working his way through college brought him important exposure to the many groups coming through town. Upon graduating he worked with bassist Vernon Alley and became the house pianist at the Black Hawk club, a venue popular with visiting musicians.

During this time Wyands was experimenting with bop and a kind of stride piano during intermissions at the club and jamming around town. Wyands' talent and connections paid off in a three-month stint as music director for Ella Fitzgerald in 1956. He remembers Fitzgerald with great affection. "I had a great time performing with her. She was amazing." Of the many singers he's worked with over the years, he cites Anita O'Day as among his favorites.

With the Fitzgerald gig under his belt, Wyands figured it was time to move on from San Francisco, where his future seemed limited. He landed a job at a singers' showcase near Ottawa, Canada in 1957,

working with the likes of Johnny Mathis and other big names. "A lot of singers came through," he recalls. Another was Carmen McRae, who hired Wyands to go on a multi-city tour that ended in New York, the place Wyands knew he had to be. His professional life in the Big Apple was fraught at first. Union rules required a six-month residency (with no touring) before a card could be issued. Even though the gigs were limited in those months, Wyands became known around town. Fully unionized, he worked clubs in Manhattan and Brooklyn and joined saxophonist Gigi Gryce in 1958, who was organizing a band with bassist Reggie Workman, drummer Mickey Roker and trumpeter Richard Williams. "It was one of the best groups I ever worked with," Wyands says.

When Gryce left the scene Wyands began his long career freelancing. He's led his own trio for a handful of sessions, but has mainly built an astounding legacy playing and recording with the likes of Charles Mingus, Benny Carter, Zoot Sims, Freddie Hubbard, Milt Hinton, Roy Haynes, Illinois Jacquet and scores of others. His discography is in the dozens.

Looking back over what some might consider a magical career, Wyands is a satisfied and appreciative man. "I got to meet and play with incredible musicians and people I never thought I'd even speak to and I got to travel to so many places I never dreamed I'd visit." As he approaches nonagenarian status, Wyands is still gigging, further solidifying his place in the remarkable living history of jazz. ❖

Wyands is at Mezzrow Apr. 30th and The 75 Club at Bogardus Mansion Thursdays. See Calendar and Regular Engagements.

Recommended Listening:

- Gigi Gryce Quintet – *The Hap'nin's* (Prestige New Jazz, 1960)
- Kenny Burrell – *Stormy Monday* (Fantasy, 1974)
- Richard Wyands – *Then, Here and Now* (Jazzcraft Studio Recordings) (Jazzcraft-Storyville, 1978)
- Richard Wyands – *The Arrival* (DIW, 1992)
- Frank Wess Quartet – *Surprise, Surprise!* (Live at the 1996 Floating Jazz Festival) (Chiaroscuro, 1996)
- Etta Jones – *Sings Lady Day* (HighNote, 2001)

LEST WE FORGET



EDDIE JEFFERSON

BY ORI DAGAN

Jazz giant Eddie Jefferson could never have been called a crooner. Did he have the prettiest voice of all? Absolutely not. But his genius lyrics, heartfelt delivery, rhythmic mastery and contagious enthusiasm cemented him as one of bebop's most important vocal artists.

Jefferson is considered the founding father of vocalese, as his lyrics to saxophonist James Moody's 1949 saxophone solo on "I'm in the Mood for Love" constituted "Moody's Mood For Love". Sometimes dubbed "the national anthem of jazz", the timeless tune was first recorded by King Pleasure, who had a hit with it in 1952 on Prestige. Most notably, that was the version that inspired Jon Hendricks to pursue vocalese as an artform. "Moody's Mood" was later recorded by Jefferson himself, as well as Aretha Franklin (1973), Van Morrison (1993), Amy Winehouse (2003) and Patti Labelle (2017). Jefferson has not always received due credit for its lyrics, let alone royalties; the song was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame

in 2001, attributed to James Moody without the mention of Jefferson's name.

Born Edgar Jefferson on Aug. 3rd, 1918 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, he began his career as a tap dancer on the vaudeville circuit. In the late '40s he began writing lyrics to his favorite saxophone solos and recorded his first two sides in 1950 for Spotlite Records: "Bless My Soul" (Charlie Parker's "Parker's Mood") and "Beautiful Memories" (Lester Young's "I Cover the Waterfront").

Delivered with genuine admiration, many of his later vehicles were odes to their composers: Young ("Lester's Trip to the Moon"), Coleman Hawkins ("Body and Soul") and John Coltrane ("Trane's Blues"), to name a few. Mutually admired by musicians, he toured and recorded with Moody in the '50s and later with alto saxophonist Richie Cole.

The best recording to get your ears on is *The Main Man* (Inner City Records 1977), which happened to be his last. Produced by Leon Thomas and Irv Kratka, this album features a band of Cole, trombonist/arranger Slide Hampton, Junior Cook (tenor), Hamiet Bluiett (baritone), Charles Sullivan (trumpet), Harold Mabern (piano), George Duvivier (bass) and Billy Hart (drums). Vocally Jefferson never sounded better than on this album, singing and scatting with verve and clarity; it earned him a Grammy nomination for Best Jazz Vocal Performance (Al Jarreau won that year).

Following an opening night gig at Baker's

Keyboard Lounge in Detroit, Jefferson was murdered on May 9th, 1979. Search YouTube to find footage of a performance at Jazz Showcase, captured just two days before the shooting, with a band of Cole (alto), John Campbell (piano), Kelly Sill (bass) and Joel Spencer (drums). This footage captures Jefferson knocking it out of the park with the crowd going wild. How often does this happen on jazz videos you watch, let alone in audiences of which you are a part?

2018 marks Eddie Jefferson's centenary. His music will be given some attention by way of a new album from celebrated Brooklyn-born, Harlem-based crooner Allan Harris, *The Genius of Eddie Jefferson* (Resilience Music Alliance). ❖

A Jefferson tribute with Allan Harris is at Smoke Apr. 27th-29th. See Calendar.

Recommended Listening:

- Eddie Jefferson, Joe Carroll, Annie Ross – *The Bebop Singers* (Prestige, 1953)
- James Moody – *Flute 'N The Blues* (Argo-Chess, 1956)
- Eddie Jefferson – *The Jazz Singer* (Inner City-Evidence, 1959-61, 1964-65)
- Eddie Jefferson – *Letter From Home* (Riverside-OJC, 1961)
- Eddie Jefferson – *Come Along With Me* (Prestige-OJC, 1969)
- Eddie Jefferson – *The Main Man* (Inner City, 1977)

MINUS ZERO

BY GEORGE GRELLA

One word—or more—response game: think “record label” and what comes to mind? The classic era of Blue Note, which defined the sound of hardbop and postbop and became one of the great names in graphic design? ECM and the pristine clarity of its production? Tzadik and its reflection of John Zorn’s curiosity? The common factor among those three is an aesthetic organizing principle. As a listener, it’s that which has you digging into their new releases. But what about a label that’s not organized around music, but a cause?

That’s the story of digital imprint Minus Zero. The catalogue numbers 30 releases, which range from Andrea Wolper singing standards and originals; a 20-minute improvisation by punk guitarist Joe Baiza; avant garde electro-acoustic music; and a good representation of contemporary musicians working at the edge of that idiom we call jazz. It’s not the musical content that brings this all together, it’s the cause: Minus Zero donates all proceeds to Planned Parenthood.

Drummer Vijay Anderson, one of the principals (along with clarinetist Ben Goldberg and string player/vocalist Dina Maccabee), described how Minus Zero came about: “Ben and I played a benefit shortly after Trump’s inauguration and we wondered if there was anything else we could do. We were inspired by the Woman’s March and we wanted to support Planned Parenthood.” Though not a de jure non-profit, the label goes even further by passing on all the proceeds (not just

profits) and are supported by Bandcamp, which doesn’t charge them any fees (it still takes a percentage of sales).

The name Minus Zero came from Bob Dylan’s song “Love Minus Zero” and was suggested by Maccabee. And, unlike Blue Note, there’s no specific, expected sound to be found. Even with the range already available Anderson sees more ahead: “I want to have diverse genres and styles, I want to make it more musically diverse” than it is currently, adding more musicians who come out of popular genres. That’s an impressive aesthetic ambition, considering that the one commonality of the label’s cause has brought together an already disparate set of musicians. It’s the style of their politics, not what they play, that matters, though as Anderson points out the label “is not political music, it’s music from people who care about politics.”

The practicality of collecting donated work means that the label has a grab bag of music that comes out of recordings musicians have stashed away while looking for a label, live sets not originally meant for issue and rereleases of older material. Anderson collects this “through word of mouth, I just started talking to musicians to see if they wanted to donate anything.”

Bassist Max Johnson leads an improvising trio with pianist Diane Moser and clarinetist Perry Robinson on *The Small Hours*, a recording he says “we had just sitting around for some years and some labels wanted it, but then never got back to us, so I thought about self-releasing. But then Vijay asked me about Minus Zero and I thought it’s probably not going to make us any real money and if I could donate the record to help people, why not?” Moser, who also plays on *For My Mother*, a live date with Anderson, tenor saxophonist Hafez Modirzadeh and bassist Mark Dresser, says, “I’m

very excited about Minus Zero. They have provided a home for creative music and they are donating...to one of my favorite organizations. It’s wonderful to be a part of this community of like-minded folks and to be doing good in the world through music.”

The quality of those recordings means the label may seem second-hand, in a way, but there’s nothing second-rate about the material: there’s an EP from pianist Mara Rosenbloom’s trio recorded live at IBeam Brooklyn in 2014; Wolper’s *The Small Hours*, a scintillating 2005 recording originally on VarisOne. Jazz; Virg Dzurinko’s lovely solo piano album *Fun City*, originally recorded in the late ’90s and released on New Artists Records; and the remix album of Maccabee’s unclassifiable solo recording, *The World is in the Work*.

Maccabee shares Anderson’s eye towards expanding the range: “I look forward to broadening the styles of music Minus Zero offers and including as diverse a range of musical voices as possible. In this way, the drive to help others by improving access to health care in our communities will also help create a virtual, and sometimes physical—as with our recent first live festival—meeting place for artistic communities that might not otherwise cross paths.”

For more information, visit minuszero.bandcamp.com. Artists performing this month include Mark Dresser at Brooklyn Conservatory of Music Apr. 14th; Ben Goldberg at The Owl Music Parlor Apr. 26th; Max Johnson at Bar Lunático Apr. 17th; Ava Mendoza at Roulette Apr. 5th with William Hooker; Mara Rosenbloom at Roulette Apr. 5th with William Hooker, *Happy Lucky no.1* Apr. 11th and IBeam Brooklyn Apr. 12th; and Andrea Wolper at Cornelia Street Underground Apr. 25th.



The Reckoning
Goldberg/Brown/Anderson



The Small Hours
Andrea Wolper



For My Mother
Moser/Dresser/Anderson/Modirzadeh



Live At IBeam
Mara Rosenbloom



Top Of The Head
Moser/Johnson/Robinson

VOXNEWS

HOW TO WRITE SONGS

BY SUZANNE LORGE

Argentinian singer-songwriter **Sofía Rei** draws from a multitude of discrete musical sources to create her gripping, impassioned compositions. Free improv, flamenco, South American folk tunes, Klezmer, modern jazz—anything that is rhythmic and stirring and meaningful. This month, Rei will present representative selections from her manifold projects at The Stone at The New School, with a different set each evening (Apr. 24th-28th). Rei opens her run with an homage to Chilean singer-songwriter Violeta Parra, whose work she commemorated with the 2017 album *El Gavilán* (Cascabelera Records). On this duo album with electric guitarist Marc Ribot, Rei rearranged Parra’s much-beloved Latin American folk songs using looped vocals and electronic effects alongside acoustic instruments such as the *caja vidalera*, an Argentinian drum, and the *charango*, a Bolivian guitar. Where Parra’s original work is gut-wrenching in its message and impact, Rei’s interpretation of the same is healing and redemptive. It’s a masterful piece of musical alchemy.

She also devotes two of the evenings to her work with composer John Zorn, whose writing for singers tends toward the soaring: On Apr. 27th Rei will reprise

songs from the repertoire of the a cappella group Mycale, which Zorn assembled in 2010 to perform parts of his *The Book of Angels*. (In 2015 Israeli singer **Ayelet Rose Gottlieb**, Moroccan singer **Malika Zarra** and American singer **Basya Schecter** joined Rei to record Zorn’s many-layered vocal compositions, *Gomoray: The Book of Angels, Vol. 25*, for his label Tzadik Records. Gottlieb, Zarra and **Sara Serpa** will perform with Rei at The Stone.) Then on Apr. 28th Rei will sing from Zorn’s *Masada Book 3: Book Beriah*, a series of compositions based on Jewish musical traditions and to which Rei contributed original lyrics.

The title track of singer-songwriter **Kat Edmonson**’s new album *Old Fashioned Girl* (Spinnerette) first gained traction earlier this year when NPR profiled the original on its show *Songs We Love*. Musically the tune evokes a Songbook standard, tinkling piano accompaniment and all, but lyrically it is set solidly in a technology-saturated 2018. This track is only one of many ruefully humorous numbers on the recording: from “Sparkle And Shine”, a slow swing track orchestrated like a dance number in an MGM film, to “Not My Time”, a ukulele-and-voice melody about near-brushes with destiny. This is Edmonson’s signature, to keep it light—her voice, the lyrics, the approach to the melody—even when she’s singing about loss. On “Goodbye Bruce”, for instance, she warbles a short, lullaby-like vocalese against a simple piano melody, closing the tune with a 13-word final

adieu to a friend—heartbreaking, given the levity against which the lyrics play. Edmonson doesn’t return to New York until May 4th with a gig at Le Poisson Rouge, but the album releases officially on Apr. 27th.

Like Edmonson, drummer-cum-singer-songwriter **Dave Tull** approaches songwriting with humor and technology with wariness. Also like Edmonson, his music recalls an earlier time, when big band horn players blazed through syncopated arrangements and singers scatted with impeccable timing (a big general thank you to drummers who scat). On his latest release, *Texting and Driving (s/r)*, Tull shows off his agility with a witty lyric and a breakneck tempo; as a crooner he exudes bonhomie so appealing that the listener might not notice the sophistication of his chops. On this release two notable singing phenoms put in appearances: Manhattan Transfer’s **Cheryl Bentyne** on “The Date”, a languid, laugh-out-loud duet offering a much-needed antidote to the lyrics in “Baby, It’s Cold Outside”, and **Inga Swearingen** on “The Moment”, which features close harmonies, soft strings and a peek into the endearing musings of a man on the brink of romance.

Rising star gigs this month: **Paul Jost** makes his Dizzy’s Club debut as a guest of vibraphonist Joe Locke (Apr. 27th-28th); on the heels of her regular gig at 55Bar on Apr. 13th **Tessa Souter** is at Mezzrow (Apr. 17th); and trumpeter-singer **Bria Skonberg** starts the month at Greenwich House Music School’s NY Hot Jazz Camp (Apr. 2nd-8th) and finishes it at Joe’s Pub (Apr. 25th). ❖



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HEINER STADLER

BY ANDREY HENKIN



Heiner Stadler, a German-born/U.S.-based composer who made interesting contributions to mid '60s-late '70s jazz via albums released on Tomato and his own Labor Records, featuring a wide array of accomplished jazz musicians, died Feb. 18th at 75 from complications of pneumonia.

Stadler was born Apr. 9th, 1942 in Lessen, Poland (occupied by the German army at the time and part of the region known as West Prussia previous to World War II). He and his mother (his father had died during the war) relocated to Hamburg in 1947, after which time the young Stadler was first exposed to jazz via Sidney Bechet. In a 2012 interview conducted by Klemen Breznikar for *It's Psychedelic Baby* magazine, Stadler recounted that, "The big attraction in jazz for me was that it seemed to represent a completely different view of life, a different space than the confines I had experienced when growing up."

Stadler came to New York in 1965 and happened to be introduced to Miles Davis, showing him some of his early scores. The trumpeter arranged for Stadler to meet with representatives at Columbia, a connection that went nowhere as Stadler learned that he needed to record his music in order to have it considered for release. That led to long periods of rehearsal with a number of current and future jazz legends. Stadler recalled, "They were all very open, often curious and without any attitudes or negative energies. There was a very creative atmosphere that stood in contrast to the struggle ahead and the difficulties of getting any record company interested in recording my works."

The fruits of this labor were the two volumes of *Brains on Fire*, recorded between 1966-73 with such musicians as Reggie Workman, Lenny White, Tyrone Washington, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Jimmy Owens, Garnett Brown, Don Friedman and Barre Phillips and released in editions of 500 by Stadler on his newly-minted Labor Records. He would also release the fascinating *Jazz Alchemy* in 1975, a trio session with trumpeter Charles McGehee (Raasaan Roland Kirk and Archie Shepp veteran), bassist Richard Davis and drummer Brian Brake. Probably Stadler's best-known work is 1978's *A Tribute To Monk And Bird*, lengthy reimaginings of pieces by the two jazz legends released on Tomato Records and performed by Thad Jones, George Adams, George Lewis, Cecil Bridgewater, Stanley Cowell, Warren Smith, Workman and White.

Stadler continued to run Labor Records and act as a producer for music as varied as Bach to John Lee Hooker and John Cage and though he composed music, little of it was recorded, a fact he told Breznikar was due to its complexity but also "that jazz composition as a discipline was never given the kind of support contemporary classical music, a comparable discipline, has enjoyed."



ERROL BUDDLE (Apr. 29th, 1928–Feb. 22nd, 2018) The Australian reed player was credited with recording the first jazz solo on bassoon in the early '50s, was a stalwart of the Australian Jazz Quartet and Quintet, groups that made several albums for Bethlehem in the '50s, had his own albums on His Master's Voice, M7, Brook and Powderworks and credits with Jack Brockensha, Don Burrows, John Sangster and others. Buddle died Feb. 22nd at 89.



LEON NDUGU CHANCLER (Jul. 1st, 1952–Feb. 3rd, 2018) The drummer had few credits as a leader but a voluminous discography of hundreds of sessions starting in the early '70s with Bobby Hutcherson, Mwandishi, John Carter, Eddie Harris, Joe Henderson, George Duke, Patrice Rushen, middle-period Weather Report, Jean-Luc Ponty, Alphonso Johnson, Herbie Hancock, Gato Barbieri, Maynard Ferguson, Stanley Clarke, Hubert Laws, The Crusaders and numerous pop credits, including Michael Jackson's *Bad*. Chancler died Feb. 3rd at 65.



DIDIER LOCKWOOD (Feb. 11th, 1956–Feb. 18th, 2018) The French violinist was heir to the Gallic tradition of Stéphane Grappelli and Jean-Luc Ponty, recording albums for JMS, Gramavision, Dreyfus, Frémeaux & Associés and Universal-France as well as having a remarkably diverse sideman discography with Magma, Gong, Henri Texier, Jasper van't Hof, Billy Hart, Leni Stern, Michel Portal, Martial Solal, Bernd Konrad, Orchestre National De Jazz Luxembourg, Biréli Lagrène and others. Lockwood died Feb. 18th at 62.



ALAIN RELLAY (1936–Feb. 9th, 2018) The French saxophonist was a part of the avant jazz collective La Marmite Infernale and big band POTEMKINE and recorded with countrymen such as Louis Sclavis and Patrick Vollat. Rellay died Feb. 9th at 81.



ROBERT SUNENBLICK (Feb. 9th, 1943–Feb. 17th, 2018). The doctor, who was born in New York but made his practice up north in Montréal, Canada, founded Uptown Records in the late '70s with a live album by saxophonist Eddie Berger, going on to produce over 60 albums by such players as Barry Harris, Don Sickler, Freddie Redd, Kenny Barron and others to go along with archival releases from figures like Charlie Parker, Gigi Gryce, J.R. Monterose, Kenny Dorham and Oscar Pettiford. Sunenblick died Feb. 17th at 75.



UWE WERNER (Dec. 28th, 1955–Feb. 13th, 2018) The German saxophonist led his own quintet and was a part of '90s group Südpool, which was sponsored by the State of Baden-Württemberg and recorded several albums for L+R. Werner died Feb. 13th at 62.



WESLA WHITFIELD (Sep. 15th, 1947–Feb. 9th, 2018) The Great American Songbook singer's career was almost derailed by a shooting assault that left her paralyzed but she went on to record albums from the late '80s onwards for Landmark and, from 1997 on, HighNote, usually in collaboration with her pianist husband Mike Greensill. Whitfield died Feb. 9th at 70. ❖

BOREALIS FESTIVAL

BY PETER MARGASAK



Magda Mayas in Stephan Meidell's Metrics

Music festivals struggle to distinguish themselves from one another these days. Every genre seems to have its own little circuit and increasingly many of the same musicians end up hitting each other even within genre or discipline. Borealis Festival in Bergen, Norway, which makes no bones about its focus on experimental work and recently completed its 15th edition (Mar. 7th-11th), manages to stand apart in all kinds of ways, whether in actual music programmed or manner in which it's presented. Artistic Director Peter Meanwell seems intent both to satisfy a diverse array of constituents and question the very structure of the conventional music festival.

In addition, Borealis offers film screenings, panel discussions, visual art exhibitions, a family-oriented concert and temporary online radio station. There's a level of self-reflexivity in some of the discussions, such as a workshop conducted by the London-based Canadian performer and artist Jenny Moore titled "What Future? What Female?", which enlisted attendees to brainstorm and break out into groups that used discussion and art to interrogate the most basic assumptions of gender and how it's used to identify and limit artists (and people in general). A briskly programmed event at the Bergen library by avGardEns, featuring pieces by its members, deftly occupied the surroundings, using precariously stacked books in Alwynne Pritchard's "The Mechanics of Stuff" and presenting the other works in a veritable tour through the building, as the musicians—and in one case, a toy drone—led listeners up stairs and through different rooms in the space to experience the performance.

From year to year the music stretches and while the

core focus of its experimentation revolves around composed music, there's always plenty of things outside of it, whether free improvisation or club music; this year the Baltimore R&B singer Mhysa gave a fiercely confrontational performance followed by a set of Arabic-flavored tracks from Philadelphia's DJ Haram. One of the most delightfully surprising and entertaining performances was by the British visual artist Sue Tompkins. An experimental video by Luke Fowler documented her working method while an exhibition at the cozy Lydgalleriet featured recent works on paper and it was in this space where the former vocalist for indie rock band Life Without Buildings performed spoken text with disarming charisma, moving about the space as if she was hearing a melody and groove in her head and using the microphone to illustrate certain passages or to simulate a musical gesture. Her deeply energetic delivery was fueled by an infectious sense of joy and exuberance, pulling her often stream-of-consciousness writing along breathlessly.

Still, the most significant performance features new composed music. The remarkable British composer Laurence Crane was celebrated in an opening night concert at the new University of Bergen Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design by the peerless Norwegian ensemble *asamisimasa*—much of it previously featured on the excellent 2016 album *Sound of Horse* (Hubro). The performance, which also included a new piece designed for a forthcoming film by British filmmaker Beatrice Gibson—who engaged in a lively discussion with the composer the following afternoon—underlined the shimmering clarity, melodic generosity and deeply human scale of his minimalist work. The ensemble has been working with this repertoire for several years and its intimacy with Crane's writing was crystal clear in the nonchalant precision demonstrated throughout the program.

If that program was all about clarity, a new commission for Austrian composer Peter Ablinger, "REMOVE TERMINATE EXIT", was something of a celebration of collision. Bergen's BIT20 Ensemble, conducted by Ilan Volkov, performed a score transcribing some of the numerous environmental sounds collected before and during the concert—the clinking of plates and glasses from diners eating in the Brutalist Grieghallen beforehand; street sounds collected outside; and amplified drips of water from a lobby installation in which white terrycloth robes hung in long strands were regularly misted over with spray bottles. But those orchestral sounds were smothered with harsh noise produced by Lukas Nowok of the legendary German electronic music studio SWR, a pair of narrators delivering texts and screaming electric guitar lines by Stian Westerhus. The noise receded gradually, as if revealing the orchestrations like a child scratching away the black crayon from a canvas of kaleidoscopic color.

Another highlight was a creatively rendered performance by the guitarist Stephan Meidell (of Cakewalk) in a multi-roomed space within Kode 2. Collaborators from his superb 2017 album *Metrics* (Hubro)—prepared piano master Magda Mayas, hardanger fiddler Benedicte Maurseth, harpsichord player Lars Henrik Johansen and bass clarinetist Morten Barrikmo Engebretsen—rendered a series of meditative sound sculptures with gorgeous melodic fluidity. Spread out in four different conjoined rooms, the musicians were connected with loudspeakers, but the movement of audience members within the space created a totally unique mix, where the electronic projection of sound was modulated by acoustic sound bleed determined by one's position. It would have been easier to present all of the musicians on a single space, but in Borealis fashion this unusual configuration successfully challenged the conventional, using the festival platform as an experimental act as much as any single performance contained within it. ❖

For more information, visit borealisfestival.no

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Starebaby
Dan Weiss (Pi)
by Tom Greenland

Scrolling through drummer Dan Weiss' website pictures, you'll find a shot of him shirtless in black padded gloves, an executioner's hood covering his head, right arm stabbing a drumstick skywards. Right next to that, another image shows him in Indian garb, seated at the tablas while accompanying a sitar player, a meditative expression panning his face. How are we to reconcile these disparate images? We aren't. They are but two sides of a complex artist, visual metaphors for the sounds embodied in his latest project.

Weiss' Metal Jazz Quintet with Ben Monder (guitar), Matt Mitchell and Craig Taborn (piano, keyboards and electronics) and Trevor Dunn (bass) is unique for its marriage of the dark distorted surges and heavy backbeats of metal with the Byzantine rhythmic structures of Hindustani *talas*, all coated in ethereal pastiches of electronica. It is music at once complex and accessible, fractured and flowing. Compressed legato guitar is often at the melodic center, acoustic drums and piano(s) providing contrast to the various synthesized timbres, though elsewhere the considerable overlap between guitar, keyboard and electric bass tones serves to blur their identities.

The obviously difficult rhythmic structures of the songs don't sound obviously difficult, but rather flow forth with commendable power and agility. These aren't exactly headbanger beats, but close to it. Most of the riff-based tracks slowly accumulate momentum with a collective rumble and buzz—like a motorcycle gang revving, then riding—later to subside in spacious electronic washes, mellow and trance-like. Of these mood-swinging suites "Episode 8" is the longest and most tangled, featuring Weiss in the eye of the hurricane, leading the others from his drum throne, expressing his ideas with authority, clarity, intensity and complete economy of emotion.

For more information, visit pirecordings.com. This project is at Nublu 151 Apr. 1st. See Calendar.



Music IS
Bill Frisell (OKeh)
by Jim Motavalli

Guitarist Bill Frisell has released close to 50 albums since 1983. If he has a flaw as a recording musician, it's one he shares with Wynton Marsalis in his Columbia period—putting out so much product fans barely have time to digest one release before a new one comes out. If you do try and listen to it all, however, you'll be amazed by the consistent inventiveness of the music, its sense of history and its good humor. Frisell's playing has a very wide arc, including Americana, country, pop, world music, infinity and beyond.

What we have here is Frisell's first solo album since *Ghost Town* in 2000. And it's a beauty, a quiet,

reflective masterwork. *Music IS* revisits standouts in Frisell's back catalogue (including "Ron Carter", "Pretty Stars", "In Line" and "Rambler"), plus new compositions. Frisell's recent catalogue includes a lot of standard material and musical tributes—he's said that this time he wanted to stick with his own work.

Frisell is the only player, but the album uses subtle, barely heard overdubs of electronica to good effect on "Rambler", "Monica Jane" and "In Line", among others. Some of the songs are almost lullabies and many owe a debt to the folk themes that have permeated Frisell's music for years. The solo treatment of "Pretty Stars", for instance, could be a Shaker hymn. "Miss You" is poignant. "Rambler" is lovely and completely different from the quintet version on the guitarist's 1985 ECM album of the same name.

Frisell's tunes are solidly built, which is one reason they lend themselves to such different interpretations. "Made to Shine", relatively delicate here, could easily be amped up into an earworm-catchy Western TV theme. Some songs—"Kentucky Derby", "Think About It"—are mere fragments, like the medley on The Beatles' *Abbey Road*, but even those are impressive. The record doesn't sound spare, in part because Frisell plays overdubbed bass parts when the music calls for it and uses a whole arsenal of effects. Producer Tucker Martine, who also worked with Frisell on the 2007 *Floratone* album, is an understated presence (his specialty, actually).

Don't think you can skip this album because you have many of the tunes on other Frisell albums. This is a singular statement, not a greatest hits package.

For more information, visit okeh-records.com. Frisell is at Village Vanguard through Apr. 1st with Andrew Cyrille and The Stone at The New School Apr. 13th. See Calendar.



Live in Healdsburg
Anat Cohen/Fred Hersch (Anzic)
by Mark Keresman

The duo is the most intimate of musical contexts. There's plenty of room for expression, true, but a duet is like a conversation—one needs to know when to listen, speak, keep silent, interject and trade quips and asides. *Live in Healdsburg*, recorded at that California city's jazz festival in June 2016, is a near-magical matchup. Clarinetist Anat Cohen (Israel) and pianist Fred Hersch (USA) are in their own way exceedingly lyrical and both routinely express themselves in varied contexts: Cohen in swinging straightahead postbop and Brazilian choro music; Hersch in solo and small-group settings as well as composing works for voices and collaborating with classical performers. For Healdsburg, this twosome essayed a few originals, some evergreens and Ellingtonia. Cohen has a cozy, full-bodied tone and Hersch is an heir to/descendant of Bill Evans.

Fats Waller's "Jitterbug Waltz" gets taken on a spacious but especially effervescent jaunt. There are well-placed pauses and moments of near-silence but these passages never sound hesitant, Cohen and Hersch keeping a genial flow going at all times. Next is Ellington's "Mood Indigo", maintaining and playing up the bluesy ambiance further. It wouldn't be stretching things to say that Cohen and Hersch give it an elegantly bereaved tone, each with the intensity of someone watching their last friend walking out the door. Jimmy Rowles' "The Peacocks" is done in a

virtually symphonic rendition, imbuing it with subtle drama, each adding emotive lower-register work, especially Hersch with ominous rumbling, Cohen making with aching wails and elegiac, poetic playing worthy of Stan Getz or Lester Young.

What's wonderful about this set is the utter ease and economy with which this duo communicates and interacts. There are no obvious or crowd-pleasing displays; any fireworks go off with great subtlety. This is one of those albums you can put on "repeat" until you dream, baby, dream.

For more information, visit anzicrecords.com. Cohen is at Dizzy's Club Apr. 1st with DIVA Jazz Orchestra. See Calendar.

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- Duck Baker—*Plays Monk* (Triple Point)
- Samuel Blaser/Gerry Hemingway—*OOSTUM* (NoBusiness)
- Emmet Cohen—*Masters Legacy Series, Volume 2 (featuring Ron Carter)* (Cellar Live)
- James Brandon Lewis/Chad Taylor—*Radiant Imprints* (s/r)
- Hobby Horse—*Helm* (Auand)
- Johann Lindström Septett—*Music For Empty Halls* (Moserobie)
- Mopo—*Mopocalypse* (We Jazz)
- Lucas Niggli—*Alchemia Garden* (Intakt)
- Quoan—*Fine Dining* (Orenda)
- Randy Weston—*SOUND* (African Rhythms)

Laurence Donohue-Greene, Managing Editor

- Nels Cline 4—*Currents, Constellations* (Blue Note)
- Hobby Horse—*Helm* (Auand)
- Sigurd Hole—*Elvesang* (Elvesang)
- Igor Lumpert & Innertextures—*Eleven* (Clean Feed)
- Jim McNeely/Frankfurt Radio Big Band—*Barefoot Dances and Other Visions* (Planet Arts)
- Aruán Ortiz Trio—*Live in Zurich* (Intakt)
- Barre Phillips/Motaharu Yoshizawa—*Oh My, Those Boys!* (NoBusiness)
- Renee Rosnes—*Beloved of the Sky* (Smoke Sessions)
- Clemens Salesny/Woody Schabata/Raphael Preusch/Herbert Joos—*Jekyll & Hyde* (Jazzwerstatt)
- Dan Weiss—*Starebaby* (Pi)

Andrey Henkin, Editorial Director



SOUND (Solo Piano)
Randy Weston (African Rhythms)
 by Duck Baker

Although Randy Weston interspersed a few solos on his records ever since 1954, it was not until the passing of Duke Ellington 20 years later that an unplanned solo tribute at Montreux led to his focusing on solo performance with spectacular results. Within a year and a half Weston had made five solo records (in fact, eight of the nine records he made between that Montreux appearance and the 1983-89 gap in his discography were solo outings). This creative burst established Weston as one of the most convincing solo pianists in modern jazz history, though we should note that he prefers the term "African Rhythms" for the music. This was part of a trend: solo records by modern pianists had been rare in the jazz world, but this began to change around 1970: Abdullah Ibrahim, Cecil Taylor and Mal Waldron all made their first solo flights on LP between 1969-73 and they all kept right on flying throughout the mid '70s. Many of Ibrahim and Taylor's most memorable records were products of this solo piano renaissance and the same is true of Weston.

No doubt economics played a part in this trend, for concert organizers as well as for the small labels doing most of the recording. But it could hardly have seemed strange to Weston, who counts among his primary influences players never shy about solo outings: Ellington, Art Tatum and Thelonious Monk. The spirits of the latter two are always hovering in the wings when Weston sits at the piano and they are hardly alone; Earl Hines, James P. Johnson, Mary Lou Williams, Mississippi bluesmen, Jubilee Gospel Choirs and African Griots may be discerned at times. It would be difficult to explain how in technical terms, but Weston evokes myriad African traditions constantly in his playing. What might sound like filigree runs in the hands of another pianist evoke a marimba under Weston's fingers and even those Monk-like chordal stabs hit the ear as would great percussive clangs from an African ensemble of some sort. One is reminded of Stanley Dance's comment about Ellington getting the orchestra to make a SOUND that pundits could not identify. (And there is your lineage, back through the Master, Monk, and the Father, Ellington, to Grandmother Africa.)

This *SOUND* was recorded in 2001 but is being issued for the first time. Was this due to some contractual problem, some issue with a record company? "No," laughs Weston. "That's my fault. I just never got around to listening to the recording and when I finally did, I thought 'hey, that's some different sort of stuff there...'" The occasion was another Montreux date, during which Weston was approached by engineer Blaise Grandjean, who wanted to record him with some new microphones. "So we went into the concert hall, just he and I, and I sat down at the piano and when I was done, I had played what you hear on the record." The program feels very improvisational, as Weston revisits many of his best-loved themes (originals like "The Call", "Willie's Tune", "Tanjah", "In Memory Of", Sam Gill's "Solemn Meditation", Guy Warren's "Love the Mystery of Love") and previews a few that would get fuller readings later ("Blues Blues", "Royal Duke"). Nor does he neglect some of his less obvious tunes, like the delightfully bent "Loose Wig", which gets a short but completely 'flipped' reading. He even returns to the tune we know as "St. Thomas", with what seems to be

only his second recording of "Fire Down There". His first recording of this West Indian folk song came a few months before Sonny Rollins would change the title for it on *Saxophone Colossus* in 1956.

Of all the excellent solo records Weston has given us, this is probably the freest in feeling. He is captured at the peak of his powers as a pianist and also as an improviser. As with Rollins, we might think of it as 'thematic' improvisation, though in Weston's case it applies not just to melody but the harmony, voicings, arrangements and the way one tune leads to the next. Hard to not think of Ellington, again, in this regard.

For more information, visit randyweston.info. Weston is at Tribeca Performing Arts Center Apr. 3rd and Jazz Standard Apr. 5th-8th. See Calendar.



Beloved of the Sky
Renee Rosnes (Smoke Sessions)
 by Alex Henderson

Canadian artist Emily Carr (1871-1945), remembered for modernist and post-Impressionist styles of painting, lived well before pianist Renee Rosnes' time. On *Beloved of the Sky*, Rosnes, who like Carr grew up in British Columbia in Western Canada, presents music mostly written with Carr's paintings in mind played by a quintet of Chris Potter (saxophones and flute), Steve Nelson (vibraphone), Peter Washington (bass) and Lenny White (drums).

Rosnes pays homage to Carr with a variety of material, showing her more forceful side on "Mirror Image", "Let the Wild Rumpus Start" and opener "Elephant Dust" but taking a more contemplative and subdued approach on "The Flame and the Lotus" and "Scorned as Timber, Beloved of the Sky". "Rhythm of the River" has a strong Brazilian flavor while hard-swinging "Black Holes" recalls McCoy Tyner's '70s output on Milestone (at times, Rosnes and Potter's interaction hints at the '60s rapport between Tyner and John Coltrane).

"Scorned as Timber, Beloved of the Sky" was inspired by a 1935 painting in which Carr depicted some hilly, largely barren terrain in Western Canada that had lost a lot of trees because of the logging industry. Nature was a recurring theme in Carr's work, and Rosnes echoes that in her originals. "Elephant Dust" recalls a childhood experience of petting an elephant at a Canadian circus; Rosnes had a severe allergic reaction and she remembers that incident with aggressive angularity. "Let the Wild Rumpus Start", which brings the album to a passionate conclusion, gets its title from a line in Maurice Sendak's children's book *Where the Wild Things Are*.

Apart from Rosnes' originals, one of two covers is "Rosie", an affectionate waltz the late vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson wrote for his wife; Rosnes played in Hutcherson's bands extensively and Hutcherson is one of Nelson's main influences. Whatever type of song Rosnes offers, her sidemen always rise to the occasion, Potter effortlessly moving between different saxophones and flute and White's flexibility coming as no surprise given his diverse background.

In jazz, most tribute albums honor fellow musicians yet Rosnes' expansive salute to an important painter yields consistently memorable results.

For more information, visit smokesessionrecords.com. This project is at Village Vanguard Apr. 3rd-8th. See Calendar.

UNEARTHED GEM



The Treasury Shows, Vol. 24
Duke Ellington And His Orchestra (Storyville-D.E.T.S.)
 by Scott Yanow

In the '80s, Jerry Valburn and his Meritt label put out a special LP series in which he reissued all of Duke Ellington's weekly 55-minute radio broadcasts of 1945-46 sponsored by the Treasury Department, whose purpose was to sell war (and later victory) bonds but the music was often priceless. Valburn's *Treasury* series resulted in the release of 48 LPs. The last couple of LPs skipped to 1953 and consisted of some rare broadcasts from that period.

Storyville, in their *Treasury Show* series for their D.E.T.S. subsidiary, has now released 24 double-CDs containing all of the music from the Meritt series. Most include a pair of the 1945-46 broadcasts augmented with rarities (some previously unreleased) from earlier in the '40s. *Volume 24* brings back the music from the last two Meritt LPs. Featured is Ellington's orchestra on broadcasts from Chicago's Blue Note dating from Jun. 24th, Jul. 1st, 17th and 24th, 1953 and 13 minutes of music from the band's appearance at the Hurricane Club in New York City from Apr. 1st, 1944.

Historians often think of the early '50s as being an "off" period for Ellington, who was born 119 years ago this month. The end of the big band era resulted in less lucrative work, alto saxophonist Johnny Hodges and trombonist Lawrence Brown had left in 1951 to go out on their own and the orchestra was being taken for granted by many at the time, at least until the 1956 Newport Jazz Festival. But these broadcasts show that there was no decline in Ellington's music. There were still 11 major soloists in the orchestra, as opposed to three or four in a more normal band: four very different trumpeters (Clark Terry, Willie Cook, Ray Nance and high-note phenomenon Cat Anderson), trombonists Quentin Jackson and Britt Woodman, clarinetists Jimmy Hamilton and Russell Procope, tenor saxophonist Paul Gonsalves, baritone saxophonist Harry Carney and the pianist-leader were all distinctive soloists and that is not counting Nance's violin, valve trombonist Juan Tizol (who plays the melodic lead on a few of his originals), drummer Butch Ballard (on a few drum features left over from Louis Bellson's time in the band) and the occasional singing of Jimmy Grissom and Nance.

While most of the songs performed during these broadcasts are from the '40s or before ("Satin Doll", which was being used as a closing theme, was the only recent tune of significance), the orchestra sounds enthusiastic and very much in its prime, as if to ask "What off period?" Terry, showcased on "Harlem Air Shaft" and "Perdido", is as exuberant as ever, Anderson's stratospheric flights are well featured and all the other soloists get their spots.

The band from 1944 temporarily had a young Dizzy Gillespie in its lineup (in a two-week stint subbing for another trumpeter) but unfortunately he does not solo. A spirited "Blue Skies" is the best number from that brief broadcast.

Serious Duke Ellington collectors will want all of the CDs in this vast series.

For more information, visit storyvillerecords.com

GLOBE UNITY



Distant Dreams
Errol Rackipov Group (OA2)
Mulatu of Ethiopia
Mulatu Astatke (Worthy-Strut)
Walking with Mirabeau (Solo Improvisations)
Kjell Nordeson (Not Two)
 by Tom Greenland

The vibraphone is a funny instrument: percussive like a drum, lyrical like a voice and harmonic like a piano (especially when four mallets are used). And yet, in spite of this versatility and the work of Lionel Hampton, Milt Jackson, Gary Burton and others, it has retained a certain tributary status in the jazz tradition. Three releases from disparate points on the globe reveal why it merits mainstream attention.

Bulgarian vibraphonist Errol Rackipov, a mentee of Burton, recorded *Distant Dreams*, his second album, with the assistance of saxophonists David Leon and Lubomir Gospodinov, pianist Martin Bejerano, bassist Peter Slavov and drummer Ludwig Afonso. The Bulgarian influence is present in the personnel (Rackipov, Gospodinov and Slavov all hail from Sofia), song titles (“Shopeto in NY”, “Miami - Sofia (via Havana)”, “Bosphorus”, “Todora (to Dobri Paliev)”) and melodies and rhythms, which draw on Eastern European folk musics. On “The Dream of the Little Gypsy”, the 18-beat meter is tricky yet still danceable while “Shopeto in NY” has a Middle Eastern flavor. Improvising chores are mostly handled by Rackipov, Bejerano and the amazingly dexterous Slavov, solos generally restricted to a chorus or two to keep focus on the leader’s durable compositions.

Mulatu Astatke, revered progenitor of Ethio-jazz, wasn’t so well known in 1972 when he released *Mulatu of Ethiopia*, an LP many consider the first, perhaps definitive, crystallization of his unique hybrid of African pentatonic modes and jazz. Formed by his shimmering vibraphone, a small horn section (usually a tenor and alto saxophone or tenor with flute, adding trumpet on several cuts), metallic, wah-wah-pedaled keyboard, electric bass and drums (plus occasional congas), the sound is lean, transparent, each voice a vital part of the hypnotically imbricated textures. Horns and vibraphone take brief expressive solos, but the guiding ethos is groove, heard in extended vamps that drift and linger, often ending abruptly, complementing the attractive themes—“Dewel”, “Kulunmanqueleshi”, “Kasalekut-Hulu”, “Mulatu”, “Chifara”—many of which Astatke has revisited throughout his career.

Swedish percussionist Kjell Nordeson is an ethnomusicologist in both the academic and applied senses, an investigator of improvisative possibilities. *Walking with Mirabeau* is a solo effort, comprised of alternating soliloquies performed either on drumkit or vibraphone, revealing contrasting faces of his artistic temperament. The drum pieces (5 of 12 tracks) combine sticking or bare hands with bass pedal, hi-hat, bells, gongs, bowed or scraped cymbals and frictional effects, creating interest through juxtaposed timings and timbres. On vibraphone, the limited dynamic range enjoins an approach that counterpoises muted and open tones, high and low ranges, dense and sparse passages. Ironically, the strongest statements come during the final two movements, when Nordeson eschews motion for stillness.

For more information, visit originarts.com, strut-records.com and nottwo.com



Code Girl
Mary Halvorson (Firehouse 12)
 by Stuart Broomer

Mary Halvorson has previously explored the idea of song in duos with violist Jessica Pavone and drummer Kevin Shea, but *Code Girl* is designed with lyric forms in mind. Along with Thumbscrew bandmates bassist Michael Formanek and drummer Tomas Fujiwara, the quintet includes trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire and singer Amirtha Kidambi, the latter whose background in European art music, Carnatic singing and free improvisation has prepared her for the demands of Halvorson’s multi-dimensional music. With their wide intervals, angular melodies and sometimes dense harmonies, the songs belong to a sparse tradition that includes Carla Bley’s work with lyricist Paul Haines and songs of Annette Peacock.

Halvorson’s lyrics and their forms—moody, sometimes minimalist, sometimes elliptical—suggest they preceded the musical settings. Verbal ambiguity, like the title “My Mind I Find in Time”, parallels her attachment to sudden pitch bends. It’s a tribute to her talent that the longest performances are the most memorable, like the ten-minute “Storm Cloud”, its brief choruses adding a repeat to a haiku-like form, such as: “form rising from steam / exhausting one’s own choir / salty droplets cloud you / salty droplets cloud you”. The ultimate effect is the result of everything working together, from the song to Halvorson’s deft sense of structuring components to the input of the whole band, including Kidambi’s skills as an improviser.

The arrangements frequently bring new textures and moods, like bass bowed in cello range and plucked guitar introducing the stark “Unexpected Natural Phenomena” or how on “Accurate Hit” barely amplified guitar and voice create a certain initial sweetness (“pass through comforting sleep”) then a gradually darkening discord as its mood turns (“original error / terminal insides / searing body / multiple envy / internal events / break control / remove threat / independent”).

The songs are underpinned by stellar musicianship and high invention. Akinmusire is superb, sharing Halvorson’s penchant for pitch-bending and weird sonics. There are three instrumentals along with the nine songs and the trumpet-guitar duet of “Armory Beam” is a minute-long delight.

For more information, visit firehouse12.com/label. This project is at Jazz Standard Apr. 3rd-4th. See Calendar.



Chinese Butterfly
Chick Corea & Steve Gadd (Concord-Stretch)
 by Anna Steegmann

Pianist Chick Corea, 76, is one of the fathers of jazz fusion. Master drummer Steve Gadd, 72, worked with superstars like Eric Clapton and Paul Simon but remains a jazzman at heart. Gadd and Corea first recorded 45 years ago as part of an iteration of the

latter’s Return To Forever. *Chinese Butterfly*, a two-disc set, is their first joint venture.

The pair did not rest on their extensive laurels. They did not produce a “Best of...” album. Instead they recruited talented younger collaborators, tapped into uncharted territory and used their superb talents to create a stunning album. The members of the sextet are Steve Wilson (saxophones and flute), Lionel Loueke (guitar and vocals), Carlitos Del Puerto (bass) and Luisito Quintero (percussion).

CD 1 starts strong with “Chick’s Chums”, a catchy tune written by guitarist John McLaughlin for Corea’s 75th birthday. It has a ‘70s vibe and a great groove full of funk and Latin elements. “Serenity” is ethereal, sensual and meditative, a dreamy piano intro followed by structures that turn it into a Latin American-inspired rhythmical web—Loueke adds wordless vocals and Gadd and Quintero provide the pulsing beat. “A Spanish Song” starts with almost baroque magic and transforms into a spirited dance. Ephemeral piano play develops into enchanting motives, followed by speed and rhythmic precision. Corea is clearly the power center of the band.

CD 2 opens with a catchy new version of “Return to Forever” from 1971. Keyboard sounds flicker through the ether, a soft melody rises, a rhythm is found, followed by a breathtaking fireworks display of drums, bongos and rattles, funky bass and guitar runs and wild saxophone. Everything threatens to collapse, but again and again the delicate melody appears.

Chinese Butterfly offers five more excellent tunes. The listener will feel nostalgic for Corea’s music of the ‘70s yet enchanted by this new work.

For more information, visit concordmusicgroup.com. Corea is at Rose Theater Apr. 5th-7th. See Calendar.

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Power Of Love
Gene Jackson Trio NuYorx (Whirlwind)
by Anders Griffen

Drummer Gene Jackson has appeared on over one hundred recordings, but *Power Of Love* with his Trio NuYorx is his remarkable debut as a leader. The rapport of the group gives the listener the impression they can do anything. Each musician brings inspired compositions to the date, which helps change up the character of the music from piece to piece.

The set opens with Cole Porter's "I Love You", a standard that got a lot of mileage when Jackson held the drum chair in Herbie Hancock's trio. Interpretations of Monk often lead to an over-emphasis on the 'angularity' found in his music, but this group performs "Played Twice" and "Ugly Beauty" straightahead with its own personality. The collective is more angular on Jackson's "Great River" and his Ahmad Jamal-inspired "Before Then" grooves hard. "A Peaceful Tremor" is a compelling ballad by bassist Carlo De Rosa that contrasts with his brisk "Neptune". Pianist Gabriel Guerrero contributes three pieces: themes in "Land of the Free" invoke early 20th century piano music; "Lighting" is inviting with open harmony and an infectious groove over changing meters (the A section is in 9 [4+5] for three bars, then a bar of 8 [6+2] for the first ending; the first three bars repeat and then it's straight into B, which consists of a three bar phrase of 6, 4, and 6 beats respectively, repeated four times); and the hypnotic groove of "Lapso" closes the record.

While emphasizing the original creativity of this group, this reviewer is reminded of Tony Williams and his bands with Mulgrew Miller. Jackson, playful and always grooving, has a lighter touch; with relaxed urgency he is explosive when needed. De Rosa recalls Jay Anderson and Guerrero evokes classical piano tradition as well as Miller, Keith Jarrett and others. But, again, this brilliant ensemble has a sound all its own. The album is beautifully recorded and has a wonderful quality of being somehow familiar while engaging and surprising.

For more information, visit whirlwindrecordings.com. This project is at Smalls Apr. 5th. See Calendar.



Hope
Kevin Hays/Lionel Loueke (Newvelle)
by George Kanzler

When the two main instruments are acoustic piano (Kevin Hays) and acoustic guitar (Lionel Loueke), intimacy is a given. Empathy is a welcome addition, one fully on display here as the two musicians share a rapport so real and nuanced it could be called spiritual. And since Loueke hails from West Africa (the small country of Benin), he lives and breathes polyrhythms and contributes discreet hand and mouth percussion (tongue clicks, pops) to the music. That isn't all; the complete aural landscape the pair create is

also enhanced and completed by vocals, off-hand ones often delivered almost *sotto voce*, as if being tossed in conversationally like the dialogue in the background of a Robert Altman film.

The musical world created by these two is both intimate and wide. There are only eight individual pieces—three, plus an adaptation of a traditional Haitian song, by Hays, four from Loueke—yet they encompass a variety of rhythmic and melodic soundscapes. They range from the highly, buoyantly rhythmic: two Hays tunes inspired by South American singer-musicians and Loueke's clattering, sprightly "Aziza Dance" to the guitarist's softly flowing, lullaby-like title track and Hays' sumptuous closing ballad "All I Have", with its grand, arching theme that manages to suggest the grandeur of a power ballad without the pomposity.

The musicians interact with telepathic grace, trading leads and solos in ways that make the music flow as an unsegmented whole. There is a subtle virtuosity in the quickstep piano lines and snappy choked guitar chords clinging to the rushing polyrhythms of "Violeta", Hays' dedication to Chilean singer Violeta Parra. And Loueke and Hays revel in the quirky 5/4 time and dancing rhythmic undertow of the latter's paean to Milton Nascimento. Hays sings the Haitian Creole lyrics of "Feuilles-O", Loueke adding his own wordless vocals to his solo that gently fades out the track. The pair manage to mesh contrasting staccato and legato attacks fully on a pair of Loueke tunes, "Twins" and "Veuve Malienne", which employ the full range of emotions these remarkably simpatico musicians embrace.

For more information, visit newvelle-records.com. Loueke is at Iridium Apr. 5th-6th. See Calendar.

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Contrast
Josh Lawrence (Posi-Tone)
 by Donald Elfman

Diversity of color and emotion inform every note in this exquisite and absorbing new recording by trumpeter Josh Lawrence. From loss he has created poems of difference and unity.

The album is divided into two "suites". The first five tunes are inspired by paintings of Kandinsky and the relationship of music and color. "Circles on Black", a fast-paced, boppish swinger, blasts the album into consciousness with Lawrence opening the solo proceedings. He's expressive in a fiery manner, flashing on the complex changes. Saxophonist Caleb Curtis is smart and shouting and pianist Zaccai Curtis, his bassist brother Luques and inventive drummer Anwar Marshall create the rhythmic palette.

The other tunes in the first half reveal the brilliant ways in which Lawrence has scored the paintings. "Around the Circle" has a joyous theme, colored further by a richly soulful solo from trombonist David Gibson, punctuated by trumpet and saxophone. "Dominant Curve" is, possibly, more frenetic than the opener while "Accompanied Contrast" suggests classic songbook balladry with lovely use of solo trumpet (on the theme) and elegant piano. "In the Black Square"

has the pounding drive of tribal drumming.

The second suite of five is, says Lawrence, "the A(merican) Side". Here we see even more clearly the notion of contrast. "Gray" is an angry, almost violent depiction of grief at the loss of Freddie Gray, with saxophone slashing out lines of questioning rage, then contrasted by quieted muted trumpet. "Brown" is a sad ballad dedicated to the parents of Michael Brown and the people of Ferguson with poignant piano under the horns. "Agent Orange" is a fuller depiction of Lawrence's take on America with ominous chords, funereal horns and, yet, something hopeful. "Blues on the Bridge" is a funky, bittersweet street dance connecting Selma and Charlottesville. Prince's "Sometimes It Snows in April" is the final delicate statement of understanding the various events and forces in life, led by gorgeously intimate muted trumpet.

For more information, visit posi-tone.com. This project is at *Jazz Standard* Apr. 7th. See Calendar.



Echo of a Heartbeat
Tamuz Nissim (Street of Stars)
 by Scott Yanow

Tamuz Nissim was born in Tel Aviv, Israel, played classical piano as a young child and at 13 realized that

her real musical talent was as a singer. She grew up loving jazz and was performing at concerts in Israel shortly after she began singing. Nissim moved to the Netherlands in 2007 to study music, performed at a variety of festivals in Europe and Israel and in 2015 moved to New York City. *Echo of a Heartbeat* is her third CD as a leader, following 2013's *The Music Stays In A Dream* and last year's *Liquid Melodies*.

Nissim has a lovely and alluring voice that is certainly easy to appreciate. She embraces the lyrics she interprets, scats quite well and swings at every tempo while not being afraid to stretch out. On *Echo of a Heartbeat*, she is joined by pianist James Weidman, bassist Harvie S, drummer Tony Jefferson and, on two songs, her longtime guitarist George Nazos. The nine songs include three of her originals, two bop standards for which she provided new lyrics ("Fried Bananas" and "Groovin' High"), her vocalese for Charlie Chaplin's "Smile", two other jazz standards and transformation of Jim Croce's "Time In A Bottle" into a jazz waltz.

This CD is full of welcome surprises. To name a few beyond the Croce song, Weidman quotes "Yes We Have No Bananas" as an intro to "Fried Bananas", Duke Ellington's "Just Squeeze Me" is given an unusual treatment partly taken out of tempo and "Smile" fares well as a bossa nova. Other highlights include the singer's duet with bass on a scat-filled "Groovin' High", cheerful original "My World" and a conventional but hot version of "What A Little Moonlight Can Do".

In an era when there are so many talented female jazz singers, Tamuz Nissim should not be overlooked.

For more information, visit tamuzmusic.com. This project is at *Cornelia Street Underground* Apr. 8th. See Calendar.

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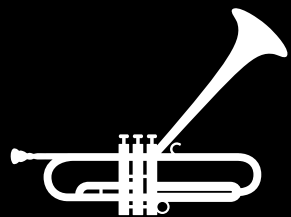
Hailed by the New York Times as "the essence of a swinging pianist", John Colianni returns for his fourth outing on the Patuxent label *I Never Knew*. In a departure from the two-guitar quintet lineups of his previous Patuxent releases Colianni shifts to a thrilling sextet format with two tenor saxophonists, Grant Stewart and John David Simon. Guitarist Matt Chertkoff, bassist Ralph Hamperian and drummer Bernard Linette complete the lineup and guarantee an alert, swinging momentum at every turn.

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Twio
Walter Smith III (s/r)
by Thomas Conrad

Based on the company he keeps, tenor saxophonist Walter Smith III can only be a badass. He was a member of Ambrose Akinmusire's groundbreaking quintet and played on *When the Heart Emerges Glistening*, one of the most acclaimed jazz albums of the new millennium. He is part of Jason Moran's epic multimedia Monk project *In My Mind*. He has also worked with Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah and Terence Blanchard. On *Twio*, his fifth recording under his own name, Smith continues to collaborate with people on the A-list. They are Eric Harland (drums) and either Harish Raghavan (from Akinmusire's band) or Christian McBride (bass). Joshua Redman (tenor saxophone) guests on two numbers.

Because Smith has often been associated with leading-edge projects, two aspects of *Twio* are surprising. First is the program: eight standards and only one original. Second is the vibe: Smith's tone is smooth as suede and he mostly tempers his aggression. But *Twio* does not sound conservative, because Smith's creative process, even when he plays softly, tends toward extravagance. He overwhelms every melody with his own content. It is exhilarating to be swept up in his momentum as ideas flood from his horn in free association. You may think of "I'll Be Seeing You" as 80 years old, under the spell of "all the old familiar places" and no longer entirely relevant. Think again. Smith rephrases it, accelerates it and flows into new ramifications of Sammy Fain's song. "The Peacocks" is a piece with its own intense atmosphere, yet even here Smith digresses freely, in fits and starts, only occasionally finding his way back to the hovering trills of Jimmy Rowles' mysterious masterpiece.

Another factor that keeps things *au courant* is the rhythm section. Raghavan and Harland rarely keep time. They fragment and scatter it. McBride's more straightforward power is felt like an underground fire. As for Redman, in keeping with the album's vibe and ambience, he stays within himself. Ferde Grofé's "On the Trail", with its two-tenor call and response, is a set of inspired entanglements, yet never shrill.

For more information, visit waltersmith3.com. This project is at Jazz Standard Apr. 10th. See Calendar.



The Planets
Manuel Valera Trio (Mavo)
by Phil Freeman

The Planets is Cuban-born pianist Manuel Valera's third album in trio format with bassist Hans Glawischnig (whose name is also spelled Glawisching and Glawschng in the packaging) and drummer E.J. Strickland. It follows 2015's *Live at Firehouse 12* and 2017's *The Seasons*. On the latter, Valera stretched himself as a composer, creating a four-part suite conceptually based on—if not directly drawn from—

Antonio Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*, balanced by a judicious selection of pop tunes and jazz standards, including Cole Porter's "What Is This Thing Called Love?" and versions of The Beatles' "In My Life" and Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah".

The Planets is the most ambitious album yet by the Valera trio. It was funded by Chamber Music America's 2017 New Jazz Works program. The pianist has come up with a multi-part, 46-minute program of music inspired by Russian composer Nicolas Slonimsky's 1947 *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns*, which was a major inspiration and study aid for Charlie Parker and John Coltrane, among many others. But beyond that, he has named each of the work's major sections for a planet (but omitting sadly downgraded Pluto), without feeling the need to borrow from Gustav Holst's *The Planets*.

Opening "Sun Prelude I" (there are three sprinkled around the album) is a gentle, soft-spoken welcome. But when thumping bass kicks off "Mercury - The Messenger", things get moving fast and stay there. Valera's style is a blend of Latin jazz and swinging, propulsive hardbop, with a lot of energy and a general flair that recalls McCoy Tyner's '70s work. Strickland is exactly the kind of hard-driving, almost rock-inflected drummer this music demands; on "Jupiter - Joyous Thunder" his assaults on the kit more than live up to that subtitle.

The album ends with two "bonus tracks": versions of Cuban singer-songwriter Marta Valdes' "Llora" and Elton John's "Mona Lisas and Mad Hatters". The former feels almost like a free-form piano excursion while the latter is a gentle blues of the Bill Evans/Brad Mehldau school.

For more information, visit manuelvalera.com. This project is at Jazz Standard Apr. 11th. See Calendar.



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Live: SFJazz Center 2016:
Music of Miles Davis & Original Compositions
SFJAZZ Collective (SFJAZZ)
 by Ken Dryden

Various collective groups have formed in modern jazz history, typically lasting for an album or two. One of the challenges is allowing equal input from members used to leading their respective bands and performing their own originals. Since its conception in 2004, the SFJAZZ Collective has managed to walk this tightrope and the ensemble has drawn appreciative audiences during their brief annual concert schedule. Now with their own dedicated venue, they are able to record live over several days in one familiar place. The 2016 series focuses on the post-1957 repertoire of Miles Davis. Each member arranged a piece for the band and there are more than a few surprises.

Alto saxophonist Miguel Zenón, the sole remaining charter member, reshapes “Nardis” into a firestorm with a number of sudden tempo changes and Middle Eastern-flavored interludes. Bassist Matt Penman’s unique arrangement of “Milestones” has a reggae groove in support of the soloists and a melody hidden until well into the performance. The inclusion of Marcus Miller’s “Tutu” may be controversial for some, as the bassist’s over-reliance on long vamps and

heavily overdubbed works written during Davis’ Warner years have not stood the test of time, but trombonist Robin Eubanks’ fresh approach reveals its possibilities in a stunning adaptation.

The second CD features original music, though these selections aren’t as compelling as the works on the first disc, as several of them take awhile to get going with overly long introductions. Penman’s humorous “Your Turn” initially puts the focus on the brass and horns sans rhythm section and they rise to the challenge of his tricky rhythm. Warren Wolf’s leisurely “In The Heat Of The Night” has a bluesy air with Sean Jones’ weary trumpet and the composer’s spacious vibraphone. The engaging Latin rhythm of pianist Edward Simon’s “Feel The Groove” is a springboard for exciting interplay between the brass and reeds.

For more information, visit sfjazz.org. This project is at Jazz Standard Apr. 12th-15th. See Calendar.



Heart Tonic
Caroline Davis (Sunnyside)
 by Matthew Kassel

Alto saxophonist Caroline Davis’ new release has the air of a Wayne Shorter album circa 1965. That’s not just because the only cover is a Shorter composition—

“Penelope”, originally recorded in 1965 but released on *Et Cetera* in 1980. It’s that this group of Marquis Hill (trumpet), Julian Shore (keyboards), Tamir Shmerling (bass) and Jay Sawyer (drums) exudes a windy, mysterious air in line with the postbop tradition extending from the middle of the 20th century. (Rogério Boccato, percussion, and Benjamin Hoffman, organ, join in on two tracks each.)

The music goes beyond that, of course. It’s possible to hear Steve Coleman in the fast, funky polyrhythms—7 laid over 4, for instance, on “Air”—or Herbie Hancock in the interplay between electric keyboard and bass guitar on opener “Footloose and Fancy Free”. There’s a lot to take in, but Davis (born in Singapore, cutting her teeth in Chicago and now in New York) collates it all with a sensitive ear. Her tunes are by turns plangent, contemplative and ethereal. Her dry tone pushes through, both on the kinetic tracks (“Ocean Motion”, “Dionysian”) and the slower, heavier ones (“Loss”, “Constructs”).

The album is so named because when Davis moved to New York in 2013, she struggled to adapt to the ebb and flow of excitement and disappointment that is life in The Big Apple. Around this time as well, she found out that her father had heart arrhythmia, which led her to do in-depth research on the physical vagaries of the human heart (Davis holds a PhD in music cognition from Northwestern University). There is not much audible to suggest influence from the palpitations of that organ, apart from undulating organ at the beginning of one song and that each track is in a particular meter, in keeping with the idea that the heart is a metronome. But there is no doubt that this album comes straight from the heart.

For more information, visit sunnysiderecords.com. This project is at The Jazz Gallery Apr. 13th. See Calendar.

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Tandem
Dawn Clement (Origin)
by Tyran Grillo

Pianist/singer Dawn Clement adapts to any musical situation in which she finds herself. On her latest effort she carves out attentive improvisational spaces for a range of high-profile colleagues, content in leading and following in equal measure across an eclectic terrain of 10 tunes. Clement's welcoming spirit is more alive than ever, as demonstrated by two dialogues with Julian Priester. "Blues for Wayne" (a Clement original) finds its composer and the legendary trombonist engaged in serious play. Clement swings with a willingness to go wherever the journey may lead, her fingers always two steps ahead. "Improvisation #3", by contrast, comes across mournfully and makes artful use of silence.

Vocalist Johnaye Kendrick joins on "I Think of You" and Clement's own "Memory". The latter's pathos leads into some meaty improvisation while the former spins the album's warmest harmonies. In both, Clement's left and right hands move like tectonic plates of emotion beneath the words, their interpretive tremors rippling throughout. Such relationships deepen in her collaborations with saxophonist Mark Taylor, whose alto graces "Ablution" (Lennie Tristano) and "Sugar Cliff" (Brad Shepik). In both, all that is

sought is found. Whether gilding the edges of a theme or adlibbing new directions, Taylor navigates every wave by keeping the North Star of Clement's accompaniment in sight at all times. The leader's deepest dives, however, are with drummer Matt Wilson. In both Thelonious Monk's "Bemsha Swing" and the concluding "Stay Awake", Wilson's cymbals shine like sunset, thus emphasizing darker shades within.

Two stand-alones round out the set. "My Ideal" is a heartfelt duet with bassist Michael Glynn while "In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning" finds Clement alone. Her voice resonates poignantly, a beacon for listeners at a time when such equalities of exchange and waste-not-want-not philosophy are all too rare.

For more information, visit originarts.com. Clement is at Baruch Performing Arts Center Apr. 13th with Jane Ira Bloom. See Calendar.



Try
Andrew Drury Content Provider (Different Track)
by Andrey Henkin

That drummer Andrew Drury calls his band Content Provider may be a wry commentary on the multivalent role of today's musician, those attempting to provide stimulation in an already over-stimulated world, all

with heady expectations of diminishing returns. Or it was simply better than the Andrew Drury Quartet.

The group's debut in 2015 was the second release on Drury's Different Track Recordings and for its follow-up, the drummer has expanded upon the palette by having Briggan Krauss play guitar in addition to his customary alto saxophone, Ingrid Laubrock complementing her soprano and tenor saxophone arsenal with autoharp and guitarist Brandon Seabrook bringing along his banjo. These are merely flourishes, as Drury's concept of jittery compositions roiled by nearly bipolar contributions from his band has not changed. The jazz cliché is that composers write for their instrumentalists; Drury could not have found three more individual players, even within the rich NYC scene, and gives them five lengthy pieces in which to ply their iconoclastic trade.

Within each composition there are varied elements and disparate group and individual textures. The opening "Diving into the Wreck" sounds just like its title and there is some subversive honkey-tonk to "The Country Between Us". More important though is the architectural bent of the album in its entirety. The latter two tunes in their wild abstraction lead into the shortest song, "Cassandra", which stretches out the space and becomes the most ethereal number, like an alien palate cleanser. And out of this valley come two more long pieces, "Ask Why" and "I'm Doing My Job, Are You Doing Yours?", which are the mirror images of the first two compositions in that they are more form-dependent. The cohesion of the band is at its highest here, made more effective by the path taken to arrive.

For more information, visit andrewdrury.bandcamp.com. This project is at Greenwich House Music School Apr. 13th. See Calendar.

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Clockworks
Patrick Zimmerli Quartet (Songlines)
by Elliott Simon

As classically trained musicians embraced the NYC downtown in the '80s-90s, technique and form frequently trumped melody and passion. Saxophonist Patrick Zimmerli's *Shores Against Silence*, recorded in 1992 (Songlines, 2016), bucked that trend, using contemporary classical techniques without sacrificing the music's soul. *Clockworks* evokes this earlier work with a greater deference to the relationship between structure and freedom and regard for the listening experience.

Pianist Ethan Iverson, a longtime Zimmerli collaborator, works perfectly to maintain compositional integrity and match the composer's more asynchronous explorations. Zimmerli's precise shifting rhythms, as on "Boogaloo of the Polyrhythmic Palindrome" and elsewhere, are reminiscent of Frank Zappa's more classically informed pieces. Drummer John Hollenbeck, another old Zimmerli associate, and bassist Christopher Tordini are charged with navigating all of this rhythmic sleight of hand and are exceptional at conveying the composer's intention. Tordini's time with drummer Tyshawn Sorey prepared him well for this session.

The suite is a symmetrical work defined by

differing statements of session closer, "A Scattering of Stars (Theme)". Leading up to the concluding theme are appropriately titled "Distension", "Metric", "Linear", "Entropic" and "Harmonic" variants. Masterfully put together, each is an increasingly less abstract deviation from the final theme across a range of content. Zimmerli uses harmony, style and, of course, rhythmic changes to make each thematic statement unique. Do not cheat and listen to the closer first but experience the evolution as it is intended.

The above variations are interspersed among five stylistically separate but interrelated compositions that define the innards of Zimmerli's musical mechanism. Save for "The Center of the Clock", which provides a soothing anchor, the pieces are related through rhythmic and polyrhythmic manipulations such as the "Boogaloo" and "Waltz" takes of "Polyrhythmic Palindrome". *Clockworks* finds a more mature Zimmerli using his early work as a touchstone while eloquently weaving a quarter-century of acumen into an elegantly structured, expressive suite.

For more information, visit songlines.com. This project is at Merkin Concert Hall Apr. 14th. See Calendar.



Ethereal Trio
Quinsin Nachoff (Whirlwind)
by George Grella

Once in a while, an album shows an unexpected influence. For this disc, led by Canadian tenor saxophonist Nachoff, it's soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy, who put out a handful of excellent saxophone-bass-drums albums featuring constant, active interplay and expressing episodic compositional thinking.

Those two things are prominent on *Ethereal Trio*. Nachoff, of course, sounds vastly different than Lacy—he's part of the current school of tenor players who combine a warm sound with a slight quiver that comes off as a feeling of self-consciousness. Eras and generations change and whereas in the '60s Coltrane would use his inner life to fuel an extroverted fire, many of today's players maintain a precarious balance at the edge of solipsism.

And that is the one real flaw on this otherwise strong recording. The opening track, "Clairvoyant Jest", grabs the listener with force. Nachoff presents his compositional idea and then runs through it with a muscular focus. Meanwhile bassist Mark Helias and drummer Dan Weiss erect one responsive, imaginative rhythmic structure on top of another. Nachoff has a touch of David Murray's articulation and approach to rhythm, individual attacks and little bursts of notes carrying surprise. There are tracks like "Gravitas", where Nachoff turns inward, brings the rhythm section with him and the energy dissipates. The issue is not playing quietly and slowly, it's playing so privately that no one but the musician himself will understand.

The album has a stimulating querulousness to it, constructive arguments between the musicians about what groove to use and where phrases should go. This is the Sonny Rollins Trio approach, in new stylistic packaging, with a leader who at his best has his eye on the horizon and looks for the route there that has the choicest scenery.

For more information, visit whirlwindrecordings.com. Nachoff is at The Stone at The New School Apr. 19th with David Buchbinder. See Calendar.



CAROLINE DAVIS HEART TONIC

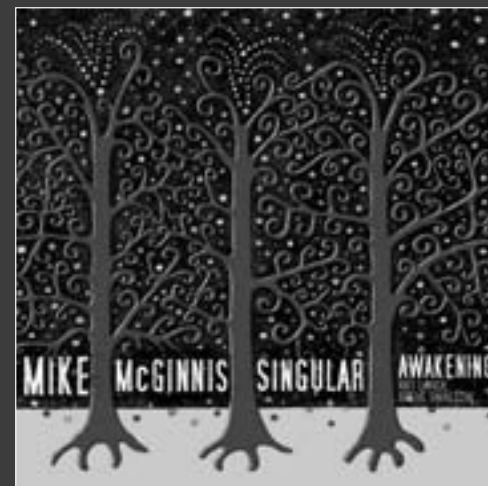
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Hear Tonic finds Davis employing more standard jazz elements than much of her previous work, including formal harmonic changes and shifting meters. To assist in the recording, Davis has a brilliant ensemble of young musicians, more aligned to swinging, straight ahead jazz, but who could also handle the challenges the composer posed for them in her idiosyncratic music.

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Live at Montreux 1975
Charles Mingus (Eagle Rock)
 by Robert Bush

There were few bands in the mid '70s more exciting than bassist Charles Mingus' quintet with Jack Walrath (trumpet), George Adams (tenor saxophone), Don Pullen (piano) and longtime collaborator Dannie Richmond (drums.) This group released two stunning studio albums for Atlantic: *Changes One* and *Changes Two*, both recorded in December 1974. In 1975, they appeared at the Montreux Jazz Festival, where this recording was made (initially released as a DVD).

The excitement of hearing this group playing that material live after substantial road work is mitigated by some low-fidelity sonics and a less than stellar performance, although there are some wonderful highlights, especially by Walrath and Pullen, who make the most of the opportunity to stretch out.

The disc begins with Adams' "Devil Blues", opening with a wicked Mingus a cappella solo performed almost entirely in thumb position. Unfortunately, the bass sound is horribly over-amplified and quite sloppy. Adams is too far off mic, reducing the enjoyment of his impassioned performance. Walrath and Pullen take the tune to a much higher level. "Free Cell Block F" comes off as a wonderfully layered, prototypical Mingus postbop celebration, despite the ominous title. Adams begins with screaming whinnies and wild altissimo in his ebullient fashion and Pullen continues with flying fingers and the occasional fist and forearm. Richmond almost steals the show with a brilliant exposition.

The magnum opus of the session is definitely the 33-minute version of "Sue's Changes", perhaps the one instance where the inherent looseness and excitement of the band manages to transcend the poor audio quality. Each band member gets several moments to themselves, beginning with Walrath's incredibly tasty essay. Pullen combines brutal and jagged rhythms with blazing articulation that references both Cecil Taylor and Bud Powell. The other solo spots are less successful.

The Mingus tribute to Lester Young, "Goodbye Porkpie Hat", adds trumpeter Benny Bailey and baritone saxophone master Gerry Mulligan to the quintet, with mixed results. Bailey delivers with a piercing bluesy bit of storytelling but Mulligan struggles at first with intonation and clarity.

For more information, visit eagle-rock.com. The Mingus Big Band is at Jazz Standard Apr. 20th-22nd and Mondays. See Calendar and Regular Engagements.



Paint
Mostly Other People Do the Killing (Hot Cup)
 by John Sharpe

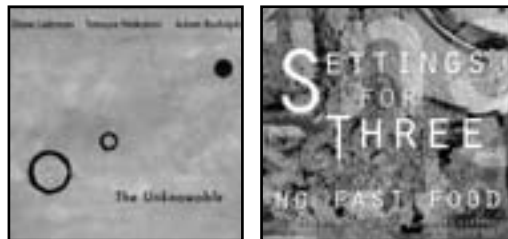
Having expanded in size to a seven-piece for *Loafers Hollow*, Mostly Other People Do the Killing veers in the opposite direction by contracting to the trio format for

Paint, the band's 13th release overall. Bassist Moppa Elliott remains at the helm, contributing all the originals named after small Pennsylvania towns, alongside long-standing drummer Kevin Shea and more recent addition pianist Ron Stabinsky. The ringer this time out is a cover of Duke Ellington's "Blue Goose", which may or may not have been titled after the town of the same name.

In spite of the changes, Elliott retains his talent for catchy tunes peppered with unlikely juxtapositions, tied up in witty arrangements with more than a touch of anarchy. Without the likes of Peter Evans and Jon Irabagon on board you might worry that some of the devil-may-care attitude has gone. But though the subversion may be less obvious, it nonetheless endures. Just listen to Shea's maverick outbursts behind the theme of the opening "Yellow House" for reassurance. On each piece thereafter, similar passages abound where someone stretches out in places where you would least expect while the others maintain the thread of melody or meter.

As Elliott's writing eschews solos unless for structural reasons, Stabinsky takes the limelight for much of the set, a feat he pulls off in entertaining style. But there is also more space for Elliott to expose his chops, reveling in melodic counterpoint with bow in hand on the affectionate rendition of the Ellington cut and taking the lead on minor key waltz "Plum Run". Stabinsky displays a virtuosic mastery of a range of hardbop tropes, taking to heart the instruction to play as many notes as possible at the start of the slow blues "Orangeville". But he doesn't default to free jazz deconstruction in the way beloved of his predecessors and as a consequence this may be one of the most accessible albums under the MOPDtK banner.

For more information, visit hotcuprecords.com. This project is at Greenwich House Music School Apr. 21st. See Calendar.



The Unknowable
 Dave Liebman/Tatsuya Nakatani/Adam Rudolph
 (RareNoise)
Settings For Three
 No Fast Food (Corner Store Jazz)
 by Robert Iannapolo

Saxophonist Dave Liebman has spent the past 50 years of his career defying categorization. He's been referred to as a fusion player, neo-classicist, neo-bopper, avant-gardist, academic and probably a few other terms. Truth is, he is all of these things and he does all of them well. Perhaps the best term would be intrepid musical explorer. He's a commanding leader and magnanimous group collaborator.

The Unknowable is an unusual session. Liebman, multi-instrumentalist Adam Rudolph and percussionist Tatsuya Nakatani had all played with each other at various points but it was Rudolph who proposed this session, thinking they might have something to say as a trio. He was correct. The two percussionists are easy to distinguish: Rudolph focuses mainly on a hand-drum set, skewing the music toward Africa, while Nakatani focuses on gongs and metallic percussion, frequently using a bow, moving the music toward an outer dimension. When Rudolph plays electronics and Nakatani bows his gongs, it's difficult to tell which is the electronic instrument. Liebman responds by switching instruments, including his beloved wooden flutes. "Present Time" is an almost perfect distillation of what this trio does. Starting with a robust, a cappella Liebman on tenor saxophone, Rudolph soon falls in

with an omni-directional conga rhythm. Nakatani adds roughly bowed cymbals, bringing an alien element that meshes perfectly with the path. The most unusual track, "The Turning", finds Liebman playing a mournful melody on piri (a Korean double reed instrument), accompanied by Rudolph playing a figure on sintir (Gnawan bass lute) and Nakatani rumbling softly in the background. It's highly effective. The recording has a flow with a beginning and end. *The Unknowable* stands out in the discography of all three of these players.

Slightly more familiar turf is found in No Fast Food. Drummer Phil Haynes formed the group but this is a trio of equals. *Settings For Three* is the third release by the band, following the superb two-disc set *In Concert*. This studio date finds the trio diving into eight Haynes compositions. Liebman (tenor, soprano and wood flute) rides above the formidable rhythm team of bassist Drew Gress and Haynes. They've been playing together for over 30 years but the music is anything but predictable. "String Theory" is scored for wood flute and arco bass, an unusual and effective combination. "El-Smoke" is a tribute to Haynes' mentor Paul Smoker first found on the 1987 *Joint Venture* LP; all three have played with Smoker so one could consider this a collective tribute. "Joy", a beautiful ballad with Liebman on soprano, opens into a free duo with Haynes, an excellent demonstration of improvisational elasticity. While *Settings For Three* may be more familiar terrain, it is no less for that. And both discs further illuminate the vast expanse of Liebman's musical universe.

For more information, visit rarenoiserecords.com and cornerstorejazz.com. Liebman is at Mezzrow Apr. 26th with Bobby Avey. See Calendar.

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Body and Shadow

Brian Blade & The Fellowship Band (Blue Note)
by Joel Roberts

Succinct is a good word to describe master drummer Brian Blade's approach to jazz with his long-running Fellowship Band, which is comprised of pianist/co-composer Jon Cowherd, bassist Chris Thomas, saxophonists Myron Walden and Melvin Butler and guitarist Dave Devine. The group has released just five albums during its 20 years together (even longer than Blade has been a member of Wayne Shorter's seminal quartet), exploring a stripped-down, economical, almost pastoral sound favoring simple, catchy grooves over lengthy, pyrotechnic solos. It's a unique vision drawing on folk, blues and gospel traditions nearly as much as jazz, reflecting Blade's roots as the son of a Baptist preacher and his associations outside of the jazz world with the likes of Bob Dylan and Joni Mitchell.

The band's new release, *Body and Shadow*, however, strips things down a bit too far. Several of the tracks are just a few minutes long, more sketches than full-fledged compositions, and the entire album clocks in at a pretty skimpy 32 minutes. The atmospheric opener, "Within Everything", for example, is a gorgeous tune propelled by quietly soulful piano, but it sounds somewhat incomplete, like a shell for a sophisticated pop ballad awaiting lyrics. Similarly, three versions of the title track, "Morning", "Noon" and "Night", come off as mere fragments, moody cinematic soundscapes that never really take off. And the gospel hymn, "Have Thine Own Way, Lord", is performed twice, first by Cowherd alone on harmonium and then by the full band. Both renditions are stirring, but at barely over a minute each, they end before they get a chance to soar.

More successful are the longer selections, like "Duality", a twisting postbop piece that affords both Cowherd and Blade their best opportunities to cut loose; and the closing "Broken Leg Days", with a patiently developing theme that leads to a powerful Butler solo. There's no denying the beauty that permeates this album and the band's distinctive viewpoint is to be applauded, but a little more fire next time would be welcome.

For more information, visit bluenote.com. Blade is at Zankel Hall Apr. 28th with John Patitucci. See Calendar.



Spectrum
Volker Kriegel (MPS)
Decipher
John Taylor (MPS)
Soaring
Don Ellis (MPS)
by Marco Cangiano

MPS Records, the brainchild of Hans Georg Brunner-Schwer, celebrates its 50th anniversary this month. Because of its high-quality recordings and respect for the artists' creativity, MPS could be considered the precursor to ECM. These reissues have a well-balanced and crystal-clear sound, all the colors in perfect balance, although they may lack the depth of earlier MPS 180-gram vinyl pressings.

German guitarist Volker Kriegel is a quintessential MPS artist: relatively unknown at the time, he was given an early chance to exhibit the full range of his creativity. 1971's aptly titled *Spectrum* can be called an early attempt at world music. It is however grounded in the blues tradition, not standard fare for a young guitar player from then-West Germany. The album kicks off with sitar-like guitar underlined by percussion in the blues-imbued "Zoom", featuring a fluid solo by Kriegel supported by Peter Trunk's bass and John Taylor's solid electric piano. "So Long For Now" is an uptempo ballad built on the close interaction between bass and Cees See's drums along with very melodic yet intricate solos by Kriegel and Taylor. "More About D" is suspenseful, evolving from alternating tempos and themes. This is followed by "Suspicious Child", an early Americana-like ballad; "Instant Judgment", a fast-paced walk into jazz-rock territory; and "Ach Kina", a lovely ballad executed in trio with dubbed guitars dialoguing with exquisite basslines. The well-rounded program is completed by "String Revisited", introduced by a guitar/cello conversation, then by Trunk's cello solo followed by Taylor's somewhat restrained solo and Kriegel's bluesy statement.

Englishman Taylor's *Decipher* (also 1971) was his second outing as a leader and finds him shifting from electric to grand piano. This trio album with countrymen bassist Chris Laurence and drummer Tony Levin reveals maturity as a composer, clearly indicating future evolution into one of the most accomplished pianists in modern jazz. Taylor's originals are quite varied: Chick Corea's influence is evident through sharp attacks and shifting tempos, providing unique dynamics within an unwavering melodic approach. Bill Evans' legacy is also present and would become increasingly evident in Taylor's subsequent development. The music is scintillating thanks to Laurence and Levin's contributions. All of this is showcased in the opening "Decipher/Wait For Me" and "White Magic", which closes the album, the trio swinging hard and playing as a very tight unit. In between these two compositions, "Speak To Me" starts as a slow waltz but is also characterized by shifting tempos and a thoughtful bass solo, whereas "Leaping" ventures into a freer territory. The lovely ballad "Song for a Child" rounds out the program. A forgotten album, whose reissue was way overdue.

By 1973's *Soaring*, American trumpeter Don Ellis' music had developed into an unique take on traditional big band swing infused with electronic instruments, strings and Eastern influences. Opening track "Whiplash", with its exciting call and response between trumpets and strings, reflects his interest in movie soundtracks, although the piece had to wait more than 40 years to be featured in an Academy Award-winning picture. Ellis' eclecticism further emerges in Milcho Leviev's Bulgarian-inspired "Sladka Pitka", sustained by a jazz-rock bass riff and Ellis' electronic trumpet intervention, ending in an ethereal coda. The music bends toward Spain with "The Devil" and back with "Go Back Home" to what could have been a typical '70s movie score featuring Vince Denham's dynamic saxophone and Ellis himself at the drums – the last time he did so according to the liner notes. Two ballads, "Maria" and "Nicole", follow, the former featuring a string section and latter Ellis' intimate trumpet – it may be time to reassess his contribution to the instrument – along with Leviev's tasteful piano. Finally, in "Invincible", Denham takes the spotlight once again, strings underlying the overall sadness of the melody and a solo building up to a climax prior to landing back on the main theme. The band is superb in handling the challenging material. This was sadly one of the last projects Ellis had the opportunity to complete prior to his untimely passing. Kudos to MPS for making this music available once again.

For more information, visit mps-music.com

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Zulu's Ball (Plays The Music of King Oliver)
Ted Daniel (s/r)
by Clifford Allen

"You start from where you are. You'll get to the rest in time." This is a quote from trumpeter Bill Dixon regarding young musicians less steeped in the prehistory of modern jazz. Many of us who have been exposed to documents of this music in the postwar era, let alone new millennial developments, may not be so keyed into the earlier forms in New Orleans and Chicago, where cornet player Joseph "King" Oliver, who died 80 years ago this month, plied his trade in the 1910s, '20s and '30s. Sure, New Orleans polyphony is mentioned as the blueprint for works like Ornette Coleman's *Free Jazz* but that music is tonally and rhythmically different, even if the spirit of the blues is a common denominator. Trumpeter and cornet player Ted Daniel, who emerged in the Loft Scene during the late '60s-early '70s, was reminded of Oliver in 2009, apparently after buying a King Oliver Creole Jazz Band 78 while on tour, and began arranging the cornet player's music for his International Brass and Membrane Corps.

The IBMC has been a going concern since 2004 but *Zulu's Ball* is their first recording and joins Daniel with tuba player Joe Daley, violinist Charles Burnham, guitarist Marvin Sewell and drummer Newman Taylor Baker. The quintet works through seven tunes by or associated with Oliver, including both full band and duet takes of "Riverside Blues". While the music is unflinchingly modern, with Daniel's effusive smears and compressed gulps cutting swaths across the charged economy of shuffling, snappy rhythms, there's a timeworn quality to the homage. The steel guitar-cornet duet that makes up the closing "Riverside Blues", a loose paean to the version with Jelly Roll Morton, emphasizes the crackle of the brusque instrument Daniel has chosen, fleet and light above the twang of strings as they engage in a detailed and floral dance. The opening ensemble version is rousing and, with the gutsy line of tuba and guitar established, takes in a dose of rockabilly with its jubilant swing. The group is remarkably balanced, cornet and violin operating in an upper and upper-middle range while guitar and tuba stairstep a bit lower and all are framed by the malleability of a modern jazz drumkit. Baker is able to move between second line drumming, stirring with an unflagging press roll and free or loose modern time—key to the IBMC's atemporal versatility. *Zulu's Ball* is creative music primed for your next social function and the group itself is not to be missed.

For more information, contact theodored_56@msn.com



Rise Up
Lakecia Benjamin (Ropeadope)
by Tom Greenland

It's especially nice when a 'home girl' makes good. Alto saxophonist Lakecia Benjamin epitomizes local:

raised in Washington Heights, a graduate of Eleanor Roosevelt Junior High School 143, Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School and The New School's jazz program, she has supported herself since 14 with merengue, R&B and jazz gigs. *Rise Up* is her third project as a leader, a role she fills naturally, delegating chores to the 22 musicians listed as collaborators. Some of them are jacks-of-all-trades, handling a variety of instruments in the studio; others, notably vocalist China Moses and trumpeter Maurice Brown, add a distinctive touch.

Less of a jazz-loaded experiment than a hard-partying foray with a serious undertone, the album is notable for catchy themes, highly engaged arrangements, strong guest vocalists and spoken word artists and an intelligently diverse repertoire, ranging from electro-metallica and slo-jam funk or pop à la Prince to industrial reggae, romping *soca* and old-school stride blues. Think: Sly and the Family Stone, Maceo Parker, Earth, Wind & Fire and *Headhunters*-era Herbie Hancock—all refried for a post-millennial New Year's Eve send-up.

However, a more serious implication, one of survivorship and self-empowerment, is evident in the opening (title) track's exhortation to live one's dream, not one's fear and in its closing quote from Grandmaster Flash's "The Message". And Benjamin? She's the eye, the calm at the center of the storming, telling tales in tones both sweet and sour, smooth or rough, just as the occasion requires. On "Flashback", "Lonely" and "Cornbread" she's warm and wistful; on "Little Children" she echoes the gritty vocals with obligatos; and on "Takeback" she builds and sustains an emotional plateau, which, even in its most climactic moments, suggests she is still holding something in reserve.

For more information, visit ropeadope.com. This project is at Ginny's Supper Club Apr. 14th. See Calendar.

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Flying Without Wings
Mamiko Watanabe Trio (s/r)
by Jim Motavalli

This is the fourth album by Berklee-trained pianist Mamiko Watanabe. She digs Latin music and her trio is completed by a Panamanian bassist (Santi Debriano) and Cuban drummer (Francisco Mela). Those are the bare facts, but they don't really convey what's in the grooves of *Flying Without Wings*. Piano trio albums rarely hit the charts these days, as they did when Erroll Garner's *Concert by the Sea* (a gold record!) and Oscar Peterson's *Night Train* were current. But this recording could stand in that company, if Americans grew big ears. Critics have evoked Bill Evans and early Herbie Hancock; also audible is Art Tatum (and, by extension, Peterson) in her approach. Monk is in the mix and the swirling "Palette" shows the master's influence.

Debriano is a big reason the album succeeds as it does. He's with Watanabe all the way and has an especially effective solo on "Different Angles". Mela is down in the mix and not as much of a presence. To be fair, the leader's tricky music is tough on drummers—pivoting on ideas so quickly it leaves skid marks. Not many of her tunes settle into easy grooves. "It Will Be" kicks off proceedings and is bright, punchy and full of start-stops. Japanese koto music is in there, somewhere,

as a deep influence. A standout is the original "Waterfall", which begins with growling bass, then changes directions when Watanabe enters with a typically twisty melody. She plays fast, but articulates every note. Debriano takes out his bow and Watanabe supports him firmly as the intensity builds.

Watanabe's approach to standards—"Caravan", "Like Someone in Love"—is equally satisfying. The latter is played uptempo, but retaining the song's inherent lyricism and it finally gives Mela a chance to shine. The former is taken solo and Watanabe really explores the structure of the song, taking chances like mad and never settling into straightforward swing. "Letter" is also solo and has the gospel overtones that comes from Watanabe's regular church gigs.

For more information, visit mamikowatanabe.com. Watanabe is at Jazz at Kitano Apr. 12th. See Calendar.



Compendium
Burton Greene (Improvising Beings)
by Mark Keresman

Born in Chicago in 1937, pianist Burton Greene was among the first generation of musicians making serious waves in New York's New Thing jazz scene. Greene resides mostly in the Netherlands now, Europe proving

more receptive to his music. *Compendium* collects 2016-17 Amsterdam performances in trio, duo and solo settings.

Greene has mellowed somewhat over the years. Take, for example, "Believe in Love" (co-written with Silke Röllig), jaunty to the point (almost) of carefree, Greene playing bright, stride-like phrases with the quirky angularity of Thelonious Monk (whose "Monk's Dream" is performed herein) while bassist Stephan Raidl and drummer Roberto Haliffi provide a slightly fractured but certain swing. Enrico Pieranunzi's "Don't Forget the Poet" begins as a lovely pensive ballad with a few judicious dissonant notes before elegantly segueing into a genteel, upbeat swinger. Herbert de Jonge's "Mirjam" is a free-ish Burton/Raidl duet in which the latter coaxes un-bass-like sounds (wheezes, buzzes, sawing, moans) from his instrument while Greene gets rhapsodic, playing single notes that aggressively ring with the presence of grand church bells; the contrast is engrossing, as if hearing two sides of a story. "New Music 1" is solo piano wherein Greene lures us in with playing that seems tentative but is driven by an inner logic. "Buddy's Bitonal Blues" is the trio of Greene, Haliffi, and flutist Tilo Baumheier; it shares more Monk influence but evolves into a march where Baumheier duets/duels with Haliffi. "Little Song Revisited" is solo Greene, contrasting morning light and restless dark.

Greene has worked aspects of a free approach into a more conventional presentation. He has a distinctive style, spare without being austere, cerebral with harmoniousness, a touch of old-school warmth. *Compendium* is a fine presentation of his still-evolving artistry.

For more information, visit improvising-beings.com. Greene is at Scholes Street Studio Apr. 2nd and First Unitarian Church Apr. 5th with Patty Waters. See Calendar.

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Use Your Imagination
Dick Oatts (SteepleChase)
by Alex Henderson

In pop culture, woodwind player Dick Oatts (who turns 65 on Apr. 2nd) is best known for contributions to '90s pop-jazz group Flim & the BBs and one of the themes from the daytime soap opera *All My Children*. He has also backed Luther Vandross, Everything But the Girl and other pop and R&B stars along the way but the Des Moines native, who moved to New York in 1977, has devoted most of his career to straight-ahead jazz and is known for his many years as lead alto saxophonist in the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra.

This solid bop outing finds Oatts strictly on alto, leading a quintet of trumpeter Joe Magnarelli, pianist Anthony Wonsey, bassist Ugonna Okegwo and drummer Chris Smith. The leader sticks to his own material except for the title track, a vibrant performance of one of Cole Porter's lesser-known songs.

Use Your Imagination ranges from exuberant to introspective: Oatts favors a funky groove on "Do Da Day", "Yesteryear" and Latin-tinged "Como Uno"; "Midwest Mideast" has more in common with Miles Davis' second great quintet; Oatts is moody on "Speaking Relative" and ballad "Loss of You".

Oatts and Magnarelli blend together perfectly in

the frontline, the former swinging with subtlety and the latter in the lineage of Lee Morgan and Freddie Hubbard, with Wonsey, Okegwo and Smith especially cohesive. Wonsey's melodic pianism serves the quintet well on both the uptempo selections and moodier ones. Oatts has been recording for SteepleChase since the '90s. Those albums have been solid mainstream efforts. *Use Your Imagination* is no exception.

For more information, visit steeplechase.dk. Oatts is at Blue Note Apr. 9th with the Purchase Jazz Orchestra, *The Django* at The Roxy Apr. 24th with Dom Salvador and *Village Vanguard Mondays* with the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra. See *Calendar and Regular Engagements*.



Yesterdays
Enrico Pieranunzi/Mads Vinding/Alex Riel (Stunt)
by Stuart Broomer

This is the first release for this Nov. 11th 1997 concert at Copenhagen Jazzhouse, recorded six months after bassist Mads Vinding's studio session *The Kingdom* (*Where Nobody Dies*) with the same trio of fellow-Dane drummer Alex Riel and Italian pianist Enrico Pieranunzi. While *The Kingdom* featured short tracks, half of them composed by Pieranunzi, this live date emphasizes expansive versions of standards with a

single Pieranunzi original, the limpidly beautiful "A Nameless Gate". Victor Young-Ned Washington's "My Foolish Heart" is the only repertoire common to both.

Pieranunzi might be the ultimate ECM musician, though he never recorded for them, a pianist gifted with an extraordinary sense of sonority who has the *bel canto* quality of the Italian piano tradition embodied by Michelangelo Arturo Benedetti. Pieranunzi first appeared with some of the quieter jazz greats in the '70s—Chet Baker, Lee Konitz—and is an absolute master of sound, achieving an almost guitar-like delicacy on Jerome Kern's opening "Yesterdays". Gary Peacock's "Vignette" has a light but dedicated propulsion. Fats Waller's "Jitterbug Waltz" is a joyous explosion of polytonal invention.

Pieranunzi's regard for Bill Evans is a matter of record—he's written a book about Evans and devoted a solo record to him—but while the influence is sometimes apparent, Pieranunzi can extrapolate at length in a way that is utterly his own. "A Nameless Gate" is filled with strings of lyric clusters while the 13-minute version of "My Funny Valentine", almost without a clear delineation of melody, is a rapid-fire invention in which the drive of Vinding and Riel comes to the fore. "My Foolish Heart" restores the lyrical emphasis, though Pieranunzi can be lyrical at high speed, with Vinding soloing at length through tapestry-light chording and telling rustle, until the pianist's vivid keyboard voice rises again. Howard Dietz' "If There Is Someone Lovelier Than You" is driven by a dense, two-handed approach, complex chording in the left hand contributing to the contrapuntal and polyrhythmic elements of the trio's performance.

For more information, visit sundance.dk. Pieranunzi is at *Village Vanguard* Apr. 10th-15th. See *Calendar*.

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Days, Months, Years
Mark Zaleski Band (s/r)
 by Donald Elfman

11 years seems ages for a band to work together, but the days, months and years have borne beautiful fruit in this new recording by the inventively evolved bassist Mark Zaleski. This is a band—whose members hail from various eras from the 30-something’s life and musical education—who sense the needs of each other due to the incisive talents of the individuals and intelligently crafted music Zaleski has written and arranged for them. And, in addition to everything else he’s accomplished here, Zaleski pulls off the feat of playing both saxophone (alto and soprano) and bass on this recording.

“Mark in the Park” is, essentially, the band’s theme song, displaying swing, groove, modern jazz, a funky backbeat and more. Zaleski opens the soloing passionately over his own basslines, going from a whisper to a scream and back, while younger brother Glenn Zaleski’s piano lead shows fluent dexterity in the moment. A smart surprise is the funky arrangement of Thelonious Monk’s “Epistrophy”. The pulse is reimaged and the guitar of Mark Cocheo (who met the leader at New England Conservatory) is ever so danceable, yet the appeal of the original tune shines

through the groove. The same can be said of the slow beat of Charlie Parker’s “Big Foot”, as bass throbs in quiet movement. “Cerina” opens with a potent glimpse into the chemistry between two truly simpatico musicians. Zaleski and tenor saxophonist Jon Bean (another connection from New England Conservatory) begin in an a cappella duet, leading into a zesty rhythmic section from the rest of the band over which the pair continue in a composed dialogue of the theme. Later we get an appealing, soft guitar interlude. All is held together thanks to the leader and powerful yet refined drumming of Oscar Suchenek (whom Zaleski met in their shared duties as part of Either/Orchestra).

This sophomore recording heartily rewards the ten-year wait.

For more information, visit markzaleskimusic.com. This project is at *Smalls* Apr. 14th. See Calendar.



Promethean
Theo Hill (Posi-Tone)
 by Scott Yanow

Theo Hill began playing the piano 30 years ago when he was 5, studied jazz piano with Lee Shaw at 12 and was playing in clubs at 16. After college, he moved to New York, where he has been a part of the jazz scene since 2004. Along the way Hill has worked with such notables as Jeff “Tain” Watts, Charles Tolliver, Wallace Roney, Jeremy Pelt, Bobby Watson, T.S. Monk, JD Allen, Willie Jones III, Chico Freeman and the Mingus Big Band. He has also recorded with many of those names plus Eddie Henderson, Nicholas Payton, Dave Liebman and Vincent Herring. In 2015 Hill released his first album, *Live at Smalls*. *Promethean* is his follow-up.

From the start of this trio outing with bassist Yasushi Nakamura and drummer Mark Whitfield, Jr., it is obvious that McCoy Tyner has made a major impact on Hill’s style along with Mulgrew Miller and early Herbie Hancock. Hill’s percussive playing includes an occasionally thunderous left hand, an intensity felt even during the quieter pieces, and consistent enthusiasm.

Promethean features mostly lesser-known songs by top jazz artists: a song apiece by Hancock, Bobby Timmons, Victor Lewis, Duke Pearson, Hale Smith and Chick Corea with two from Kenny Kirkland and Tony Williams and an original from the leader. The program begins with the only standard, Timmons’ “This Here”, which is actually closer to Miller’s version with Cannonball Adderley. Lewis’ “Hey, It’s Me You’re Talking To” is a bit catchy and almost sounds like an early Hancock piece, leading logically into Hancock’s “Finger Painting”, which is given a melodic and tasteful treatment. Other highlights include a somber rendition of Williams’ “Pee Wee”, Hill’s uptempo modal original “The Phoenix”, an exciting and somewhat intense version of Corea’s “Litha” and Hill’s solo piano version of Kirkland’s ballad “Chance”. Nakamura and Whitfield are excellent in mostly supporting roles, providing stimulating accompaniment throughout this fine set of modern mainstream piano.

For more information, visit posi-tone.com. Hill is at *Smalls* Apr. 6th with Jay Rodriguez, *Dizzy’s Club* Apr. 10th-14th as a leader and *Jazz Standard* Apr. 21st with Mingus Big Band and Apr. 28th as a leader. See Calendar.



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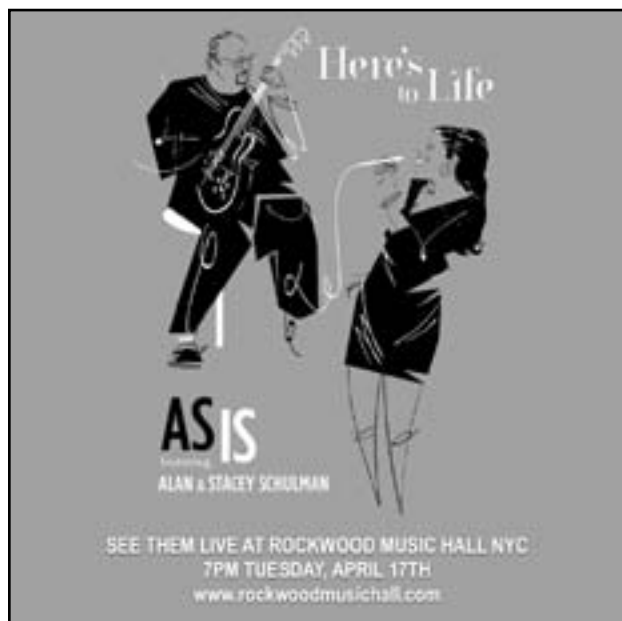


Chasing the Unicorn | The Future is Female
Roxy Coss (Posi-Tone)
 by Phil Freeman

Saxophonist Roxy Coss released a self-titled debut album in 2010, but seems to be having her moment now. After two albums with trumpeter Jeremy Pelt (2013's *Water and Earth* and 2014's *Face Forward*, *Jeremy*, both on HighNote), she signed with Origin for 2016's *Restless Idealism*, on which Pelt guested. The following year, she joined the Posi-Tone roster.

Her label debut, 2017's *Chasing the Unicorn*, is a quintet outing with pianist Glenn Zaleski, guitarist Alex Wintz, bassist Rick Rosato and drummer Jimmy Macbride. Together, they interpret tunes like Joe Henderson's "A Shade of Jade", The Beatles' "Oh! Darling", Wayne Shorter's "Virgo", Lionel Loueke's "Benny's Tune" and Willie Nelson's "Crazy", along with a half-dozen Coss originals. On the album-opening title track, she demonstrates a willingness to play around with the studio, overdubbing multiple saxophone lines in order to harmonize with herself in a fluid and lyrical manner. She switches to bass clarinet for the Shorter tune, diving into a mellow zone at the bottom of the instrument's range as the rhythm section sways gently behind her. And her tenor playing on album-closing "Crazy", with sharply strummed guitar as an equally dominant voice, is relaxed and melody-minded, with a deep blues feel.

The Future is Female is different...sort of. The band is mostly the same, except that Miki Yamanaka has taken over the piano spot and Lucas Pino contributes bass clarinet to one track. But the music is all original this time and the presentation is explicitly feminist, verging on woman-warrior. On the cover, Coss stands beneath the Brooklyn Bridge at night, wearing an outfit from the John Zorn Collection—black tank top and camouflage pants—and carrying her instruments like weapons. Track titles include "Females Are Strong As Hell", "Feminist AF", "Nevertheless, She Persisted" and the like. Still, anyone expecting the music to be equally angry will be extremely surprised. Coss' compositions are fleet, bluesy hardbop numbers with taut, bouncy rhythms and fast, melodic solos. The most surprising piece is probably "Mr. President", which features deep bowed bass drones over a martial rhythm. Wintz is often even more of a co-lead voice than he was on *Chasing the Unicorn* while Yamanaka's solos are relatively short, but thoughtfully expressed.



In a way, *The Future is Female* demonstrates the political limitations of instrumental music; you'd never be able to guess these pieces' titles just by listening to them. But they sound great. Coss deserves attention.

For more information, visit posi-tone.com. Coss' *The Future is Female* is at *Jazz Standard* Apr. 18th. See Calendar.



Currents, Constellations
Nels Cline 4 (Blue Note)
 by Andrey Henkin

In 1972, two guitarists from seemingly different worlds came together with monumental results. British jazz fusioner John McLaughlin and Mexican-American psychedelic rocker Carlos Santana recorded *Love Devotion Surrender* as an expression of their shared admiration for John Coltrane and Sri Chinmoy. It was one of those cosmic confluences that can happen when musicians find each other. Fast-forward over 40 years and a similar convergence happened with the duo recording *Room* by Julian Lage and Nels Cline. Though both Californians, the men are over 30 years apart in age and, like McLaughlin and Santana, exemplars of different traditions, yet intertwined like expert macramé. Now Cline has assembled his own *Love Devotion Surrender* moment with *Currents, Constellations*. Just as McLaughlin brought in members of his Mahavishnu Orchestra to complement players from Santana's eponymous group, Lage's regular bassist in Scott Colley is paired in the rhythm section with drummer Tom Rainey, with whom Cline has been working since the early Aughts.

But it is the spirit of an earlier McLaughlin that hovers over this release in the chunky *Extrapolation*-like feel of "Swing Ghost '59" or the dark ballad "As Close As That", which could have fit well on *Where Fortune Smiles*. There are other guitar precedents to be found: Attila Zoller and Jim Hall on the slick, boppish conversation of opener "Furtive"; Zoller and pianist Don Friedman's fabulous '60s explorations with "Amenette"; and the longest track, the two parts of "River Mouth", recalling the twin-guitar vibe of Pat Martino and Bobby Rose on the former's *Baiyina*.

Yet these are wisps of recollection rather than direct lines of inquiry. Cline wrote all but one of the eight pieces and what he is most interested in doing is continuing the rapport established with Lage. Surprisingly, given the almost voyeuristic intimacy of *Room*, the addition of Colley and Rainey actually heightens that rapport rather than stifling it; Cline and Lage are free to be freer, open to openness, knowing that there is a solid yet fluid foundation beneath them. Of note is that there are not really discrete guitar solos or, when there are, these tiptoe through the footsteps of the other guitarist's statements. So while this is Cline's album and his compositions, this becomes that most elusive of musical beasts: the fully cooperative ensemble.

It is that one outside piece that becomes the misstep. Hard as it is to say a bad word against Carla Bley, her "Temporarily" is a speedbump. Until that point, five songs had covered an enormous amount of territory in just over 25 minutes. The song itself is only five-plus minutes long itself but Cline didn't need it. Without it, this could have been a perfect 39 minutes.

For more information, visit bluenote.com. This project is at *Le Poisson Rouge* Apr. 16th. See Calendar.



West Coast Trio
Roberta Piket (13th Note)
 by Ken Dryden

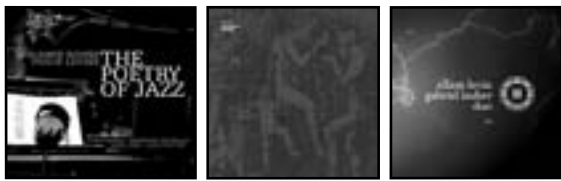
Jazz pianists can easily fall into a trap by sticking primarily to one or two styles and familiar repertoire. One great artist who resisted easy classification was Marian McPartland, changing with the times by exploring new sounds while continuing to play styles from earlier in her career. Roberta Piket, who appeared three times on McPartland's *Piano Jazz*, was appreciative of the versatility of her host's performances and paid tribute to her on her previous CD *One For Marian*. For this new release, Piket returns to leading a trio for the first time in a decade, utilizing a Los Angeles-based rhythm section of bassist Darek Oles and drummer Joe La Barbera (the latter a member of pianist Bill Evans' final trio). While their time performing as a group was limited prior to entering the studio, it's apparent that things gelled quickly.

Piket may compose on a sporadic basis, but her efforts over the past two decades have been rewarding. The harmonically rich "Mentor", inspired in part by Richie Beirach's "Pendulum", opens the session with a flourish as the band negotiates its constantly shifting landscape. Guitarist Larry Koonse is added for the haunting ballad "A Bridge To Nowhere" and he and Piket sound like old friends as they flesh out this powerful theme. The leader's breezy arrangement of Djavan's samba "Flor de Lis" adds percussionist Billy Mintz (the drummer of Piket's East Coast band).

Piket includes a few pieces deserving of wider recognition. Her rollicking setting of the late John Hicks' "Yemenja" should prod a few musicians to investigate more of his work. Walter Donaldson-Gus Kahn standard "My Buddy" is usually performed by vocalists, but Piket's whispered, spacious treatment conveys the sentiment without its lyric while Oles' brief solo adds a poignant touch. Koonse returns for a rousing rendition of George Shearing's bop classic "Conception", which features lively unison lines by the pianist and guitarist, along with fiery solos all around. *West Coast Trio* would make Marian proud.

For more information, visit thirteenthnoterecords.com. *Piket* is at *Bushwick Public House* Apr. 9th and *Mezzrow* Apr. 19th. See Calendar.

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The Poetry of Jazz

Benjamin Boone/Philip Levine (Origin)

White Dust

Yusef Kounyayaka/David Cieri/Mike Brown (Ropeadope)

Yu

Elliott Levin/Gabriel Lauber Duo (Dimensional)

by John Pietaro

The tendency of poets to break out of the two-dimensional boundary is often seen as a post-War phenomenon, yet poetry was oral long before written language emerged. The African-American jazz tradition, begotten from a brutal melding of divergent cultures, cast a certain boundlessness. The music's central swing and bop allows the poet to emote and embellish with shifts in meter, stress, dynamic, repetition and surely through improvisation.

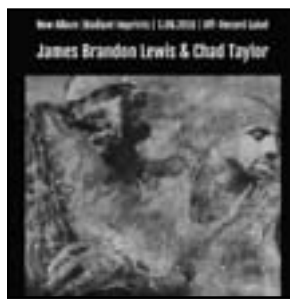
The fusing of verse and music is exhibited quite classically on *The Poetry of Jazz*. This encounter pairs Philip Levine, Pulitzer Prize recipient and U.S. Poet Laureate, with alto saxophonist and composer Benjamin Boone. The two collaborated while teaching at Cal State, the latter a musician constantly drawn to words and the former a perpetual jazz fan who grew up with the music. The album was recorded in 2012, three years before Levine's death, documenting the moment and the movement. The poetry flows through Levine's lips most fluidly. Of special note are homages to jazz heroes backed by charts embracing the honorees and poet alike. The album opens with the poet's musings on drinking gin in youth and its symbolism of adulthood's challenges. Boone's music effortlessly captures the vibe of the late '40s-early '50s, particularly the West Coast sounds. Arrangements are clean, sumptuous and driving and the album boasts an array of musicians including Greg Osby and Tom Harrell (on a gorgeous piece dedicated to Clifford Brown). Karen Marguth's vocalization tops off the melody on two cuts recreating the era anew. Oh, this is hip. But on "Making Light", Levine calls on "the blue light like no other", describing summer in the west within a cool waltz that ends abruptly, only to land upon "The Unknowable", a piece dedicated to Sonny Rollins' quest for a higher musical truth on the Williamsburg Bridge. "Singing through the cables of the bridge that were his home," recites Levine as Chris Potter's tenor obbligato becomes a solo flight and the poet wonders "how he knew it was time to inhabit the voice of the air." While most of the journey is a celebratory exercise of Levine's poetry of (and through) jazz itself, the album closes with a somber recollection of "What Work Is", here the struggle for dignity among the unemployed in painful expection and those lost in toil.

White Dust, the project of poet Yusef Komunyakaa, however, focuses on the subtlety of emotion within this chapter of the author's cultural- and self-awakening. The CD opens with the words: "I love how it swells into a temple where it is held prisoner, where the god of blame resides" and affirms his individualism as well as African heritage. Komunyakaa states: "A ghost hums through my bones like Pan's midnight flute" and later speaks of "West Africa's dusty horizon", where it seems he may have composed this piece. A Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, Komunyakaa was a correspondent during the Vietnam War and his works are politically aware and interwoven with the soaring of jazz and the blight of the unconscionable. If James Baldwin had sought a career in spoken word, this is probably what it would sound like. The quietly prideful improvisations of pianist David Cieri, bassist Mike Brown and alternating percussionists Sam Ospovat and Shahzad Ismaily carefully complement the poetry, read in a dark baritone,

static but never unmoving. Drawing on the legacy of blues as much as an ethereal timelessness, the music embraces the atmosphere as much as the words. "Dolphy's Aviary" makes artful use of space to build tension and then colors it with the waterphone and distant, Eastern-sounding vocalization of Cieri. The mix is magic. And yet the pianist, who created the score for Ken Burns' outstanding *Vietnam* series, leans into a raw, almost rural blues just as cannily (i.e., "Letter to Bob Kaufman" and "More Girl Than Boy"). Brown, Ospovat and Ismaily appear to welcome the ambience like it's another improviser. Ospovat's brushes tell the story as do Ismaily's use of found metals, percussives and Moog. Take special note of Brown's probing, searching counterpoint to all spoken and left unsaid.

Philadelphia's Elliott Levin is a monster of the tenor saxophone and flute, a musician of unique command who plunders his instruments' histories in a manifest of experimentalism. His early work with Cecil Taylor notwithstanding, Levin has left an indelible mark in the annals of the underground. But he's also a studied poet with several books of verse to his credit. On *Yu*, his duet CD with drummer Gabriel Lauber, Levin makes judicious use of both his musical and spoken word skills in this tour de force of free jazz. Lauber, a Swiss musician residing in Mexico, founder of the Dimensional record label, flawlessly reflects and expands via a barrage of skin and metal. The album is comprised of nine varied selections, with opening and closing pieces "Yu" parts 1 and 2, respectively. The first is a sonic blast, a joyously manic conversation, which leads into the subtler "Be Tasty, Be Poetry, Be Fado". Levin blows and then moves into spoken word, initially at a whispery tone which feels Ginsburg-ian. Then, with full-voiced, Kerouac-like jazz phrasing under Lauber's post-postbop accompaniment, the spoken word serves as another lead line, colored with neologism and vocalization. There is an enduring magic in this art. "Some Are of Sadness" and "Berlin Mystic Dawn" put Levin's voice at center, under which Lauber's breathless improvisation speaks to the ages.

For more information, visit originarts.com, ropeadope.com and dimensionalrecordings.bandcamp.com. April is National Poetry Month.



Radiant Imprints

James Brandon Lewis/Chad Taylor (Off-Record)

by George Grella

James Brandon Lewis is far from the first—and assuredly not the last—tenor saxophonist player to fall under the influence of John Coltrane. But what has made him the kind of musician from whom you eagerly await the next album or live appearance is how he has come out from under that influence. From the keening, classic C-E flat-F he opens with on "Reflection", the first track from his debut *Moments*, to the luscious slow jam of "Bittersweet" to conclude his last release, *No Filter*, Lewis has been broadening and deepening his sound, aesthetic palette and musical ambitions. The confident, soulful and often tough-minded blend of jazz, funk and hip-hop on his excellent albums *Days of FreeMan* and *No Filter* placed him at some distance from the master. Now with that personal seasoning behind him, he's returned to Coltrane, though in a unique way, on this duet album with drummer Chad Taylor.

Radiant Imprints is not the usual homage to a giant—Lewis doesn't play "Giant Steps" or "Naima"

or anything else Coltrane made famous. At his release concert at Spectrum last month, Lewis explained to the audience that the record came out of just that idea, a Coltrane tribute in Philadelphia in which he played. But the new album is homage not by following but by responding to him—this is the sound of Lewis interrogating Coltrane's legacy. The tenor/drum pairing sounds nothing like *Interstellar Space*—Taylor is far different than Rashied Ali or even Elvin Jones, much more centered on the beat and on pushing it forward at Lewis. The leader took some of Coltrane's material and rearranged it to his own liking, turning "One Down, One Up" into "Twenty-Four" and "Lonnie's Lament" into "With Sorrow Lonnie", accompanied by Taylor's kalimba—outlining Coltrane's shadow and then stepping out of it.

Lewis plays with the sound of seeking. Without trying to divine his spirituality, there is the constant feeling, often overt, of him blazing a path from one personal or social state to another. His phrasing and round, darkened sound have the prayerful quality of Tina Brooks. On the album, Lewis balances intensity with a delicate beauty and live he was so involved in playing pieces like "Imprints", finding so much to explore, that a few times he kept on going after Taylor (maybe keeping a closer eye on the clock) wrapped up the tune. No awkwardness with that, though, it was generous and personal. Lewis, who was warm and genuinely interested in talking with a group of young composers and musicians after the set, embraces the fundament that making music is a social activity and even as he achieves lift-off to some faraway place, there is a plainspoken directness to all his playing.

For more go to jblewis.com. This band is at The Cell Apr. 7th. See Calendar.



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Cubist

Hal Galper Quartet (featuring Jerry Bergonzi) (Origin)
by Jim Motavalli

The Cubist movement, led by Pablo Picasso, came out of Paris in the 1910s-20s and rendered the human form as a series of jagged geometric forms. The rubato approach taken by pianist Hal Galper, who turns 80 this month, on his new album embraces similar liberties. *Cubist* was recorded live before a studio audience at the Gill and Tommy LiPuma Center for Creative Arts in Cleveland, Galper enlarging his usual trio palette with tenor saxophonist Jerry Bergonzi. Joining the pair are bassist Jeff Johnson and drummer John Bishop. The whole band is heard to good effect on Galper's sole composition "Scufflin'", an uptempo charger out of Blue Note's '50s heyday.

Ellington's "In a Sentimental Mood" opens as a ballad feature for Bergonzi, whose playing is full of vibrato and smears. Galper slips in gently, playing the melody solo before Johnson steps forward. It's lovely. Four of the tunes are by Johnson. "Scene West" starts in a loping tempo, slows down and then bounces back, a sneaky little melody with lots of changes and dynamic tension. Galper is in *mysterioso* mode, with a somewhat jagged solo. Bergonzi starts moody, gets intense, and then stops abruptly.

On the title track and "Artists", Bergonzi's playing is markedly post-Trane experimental, the kind of music encouraged in a live setting. "Artists" is emotional and yearning—it should be heard emerging from a paint-splattered boombox in a painter's studio. Rounding out the program are two tunes from the repertoire of Miles Davis—"Israel" from *Birth of the Cool* and "Solar" from *Walkin'*. They're not the strongest entries here, both taken slower than the Miles originals. But the latter has great interplay between Bergonzi and Galper at the end and the former features a strong Galper solo.

For more information, visit originarts.com



Artemisia

Erik Friedlander's Throw a Glass (Skipstone)
by Mark Keresman

Cellist Erik Friedlander has built his considerable reputation via over 20 recordings under his own name as well as many recordings and performances with avant-auteur John Zorn and he's not about to rest on his laurels. *Artemisia* is the debut opus by Friedlander's band Throw A Glass, consisting of pianist Uri Caine, bassist Mark Helias and drummer Ches Smith.

Friedlander's approach is unique; at times he sounds more like a violinist. On opener "The Great Revelation" Friedlander swings with a fluidity and easy grace comparable to the late Stéphane Grappelli. Caine shines too, his solo combining spiky assertiveness with sly, amiable tunefulness. "Sparkotropic" finds Friedlander on a much more aggressive tack, cello taking on a surging, dark-hued cast that's almost horn-like, then switching gears for genuinely poetic, soulful playing, all while Helias and Smith construct a swirling, compelling, hard-swinging matrix.

Closer "Drop by Drop" is practically breathtaking. With its cyclical, near-loping construction, it straddles the line between being contemplative and ominously tense and by some means—electronics? extended techniques?—Friedlander draws out textures sounding like an organ or synthesizer. Caine's luminous, lyrical keys sparkle like raindrops yet the sun shines still. If you want to hear a cello sound simply like a cello, the title track has some of the most rapturous and rhapsodic playing you're likely to hear outside of a Yo-Yo Ma session.

Stylistically *Artemisia* blurs the seeming distinctions of/between swing, Third Stream and the avant garde. It's not just for cello fans only.

For more information, visit erikfriedlander.com. This project is at Dixon Place Apr. 11th. See Calendar.



Plus One

Dan Pugach Nonet (Unit)
by Donald Elfman

Drummer Dan Pugach has created large ensemble music expansive in scope yet revealing itself in intimate

ways, with exquisite writing and pointedly crisp solo statements. Tying this whole project together is the leader's tantalizing and refined rhythmic approach.

Pugach's originals are at the center of this exceptional collection. The album opens with the New Orleans "Brooklyn Blues", the horns working out on the second line main theme, leading to a groove-inflected trombone solo by Mike Fahie and a gritty dance from baritone saxophonist Andrew Gutauskas. Jen Hinkle's bass trombone opens the subtleties in "Coming Here" and then the ensemble plays haunting lines. Trumpeter Ingrid Jensen again demonstrates why she's so right in so many settings, playing phrases that are thoughtful and energetic at once. "Discourse This" keeps its cards hidden even as it knocks out a solid pulse.

Pugach showcases vocalist Nicole Zuraitis on a hymn-like reading of Dolly Parton's "Jolene", her singing reflecting the passion of the country roots blossoming through her own lovely arrangement, with pianist Carmen Staaf and Jensen adding individual colors to this glorious performance. Two other powerful covers with Zuraitis are a directly simple version of Chick Corea's "Crystal Silence" and sensual, bossa-ish "Love Dance" by Ivan Lins, featuring trumpeter David Smith. And then there is the raucous and riotous "Our Blues", co-written by Pugach and Zuraitis (spouses as well as musical collaborators) with sassy lyrics like "I've got some news before I kick you out / You're much more clever when you shut your mouth!"

Plus One is a vital statement about commanding arrangements, sharp solos and the powerful presence of a leader who can marshal all those forces.

For more information, visit unitrecords.ch. This project is at The Cutting Room Apr. 21st. See Calendar.



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The Happenings (The Music of Herbie Nichols)
Howard Alden/Marty Krystall/Buell Neidlinger (K2B2)
by Ken Dryden

Duke Ellington kept his band on the payroll year-round so he could immediately hear what he had written. Most artists don't have that luxury and many prolific jazz composers leave behind file cabinets packed with originals they never had the opportunity to record. Then there have been gifted musicians whose compositions are heralded today but barely noticed during their lifetimes. Pianist Herbie Nichols made a few LPs as a leader, which sold poorly for Blue Note, dying in obscurity from leukemia at 44 in 1963. The groundswell of interest in Nichols began with Mosaic's 1987 boxed set of his complete recordings for Blue Note. Since then his work, which defies easy stylistic classification, has been sporadically performed, though his friend Roswell Rudd long championed their value. CDs by Buell Neidlinger (who played with Nichols and died last month at 82) and Marty Krystall, collective The Herbie Nichols Project and Misha Mengelberg have also explored Nichols' music.

This trio session, led by guitarist Howard Alden and featuring Neidlinger and Krystall, includes some of the most fascinating interpretations of Nichols' works. The lack of piano is not an issue, as Alden's seven-string guitar enables him to create basslines to accompany his leads. The combination of Alden with Neidlinger on cello (to which he recently returned after long focusing on bass) and Krystall's adventurous flights on bass clarinet, flute and alto flute make for intriguing music. "Another Friend" is a playful waltz pairing guitar with infectious arco cello. Bass clarinet joins for the quirky, upbeat interpretation of "The Happenings", Neidlinger's inventive pizzicato line in support of both soloists. Deliciously quirky waltz "Valse Macabre" belies its name, as humor rather than death comes to mind in this whimsical performance. "The Bebop Waltz" is a magical duet by Alden and Krystall (on alto flute), but "Strange City" is the tour de force of the session as the trio (Krystall back on bass clarinet) negotiates its constantly shifting melodic line with ease.

For more information, visit k2b2.com



Floating in Winter
Jim Self/John Chiodini Duo (Basset Hound)
by Andrey Henkin

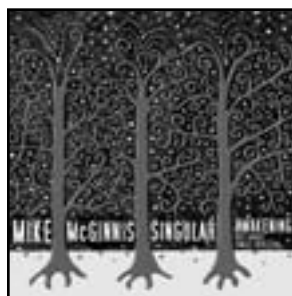
Tuba player Jim Self is one of those people you might meet at a cocktail party. Over Harvey Wallbangers and Lime Rickeys, you ask him what he does for work. He tells you he is a musician. Oh, that's nice, you say. Anything I might know? Maybe, he replies. Have you heard of Don Ellis or Mel Tormé or David Byrne or Weird Al Yankovic? Ever see the film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*? I was the voice of the mothership. Maybe my Christmas album for 12 tubas from a few years back? You chew on pretzels while he regales you

with stories of the life of a Los Angeles studio musician since the '70s. As you are about to walk back to the bar for refills, he casually mentions that he has a new album out. Jazz standards with just guitar and fluba. Fluba?, you stutter, spitting up pretzel chunks. Maybe you don't need another drink, you think.

A fluba is a tuba-sized flugelhorn. While it looks unwieldy, it has an appealing warmth born of its two parent instruments. And Self manages to make you forget the novelty aspect of it just a few seconds after the initial jarring contrast of its low bleating and John Chiodini's bright electric guitar, making it as inviting as a crackling fireplace on a winter's eve. *Floating in Winter* is 68 minutes and 15 tunes and what makes it such a fine achievement is that it never lags, never feels forced, never becomes tedious even as it stays unavoidably in a similar tonal and timbral range. It helps that the tunes are all short, ranging from 3:41 to 5:33, pithy and focused, and cover a wide range of styles and composers. Apart from the two originals that contribute to the album title, there are pieces by Jerome Kern, Frank Rosolino and Dmitri Tiompin and doubles from Antônio Carlos Jobim, Chuck Mangione, Gerry Mulligan, Henry Mancini and Thelonious Monk.

Self is remarkably nimble, sometimes recalling the vocals of Al Jolson, other times conjuring up an elephant dancing soft-shoe. And Chiodini is just as spry while avoiding even a flash of flash. The Monk and Mangione tunes, especially the latter's Spanish-flavored "Children on Sanchez" and former's "In Walked Bud", feel made for this duo while the pair have aptly chosen two of Mancini's more lugubrious songs and exult in a pair of peppy Mulligans. Chiodini's "Winter" and Self's "Floating", even separated by two tunes, work as a compound, the former a free-form ballad and the latter a folksy jaunt.

For more information, visit bassethoundmusic.com. This project is at Club Bonafide Apr. 23rd. See Calendar.



Singular Awakening
Mike McGinnis/Art Lande/Steve Swallow (Sunnyside)
by Mark Keresman

There aren't many recurring reeds/piano/bass configurations in jazz. There was a GREAT one in the early '60s: Jimmy Giuffre, Paul Bley and Steve Swallow. The latter is now part of another such trio under the leadership of saxophonist/clarinetist Mike McGinnis with pianist Art Lande. Apart from a couple of Swallow and Lande originals, the majority of *Singular Awakening* is freely improvised, but these fellows play with such awareness and unity of purpose as to sound composed.

Concentrating on soprano saxophone, McGinnis is a force with which to be reckoned. He plays with a richness of tone one might expect to hear from an alto and is never domineering, knowing when to wail and when to pull back. There's plenty of variety in this followup to the trio's previous opus *Recurring Dream*. There's the impish "Mini's Can-Do Club", McGinnis engaged in blues ambiance, swinging with New Orleans looseness. The wonderfully lyrical Lande provides hints of boogie-woogie in a slightly Monk-ish manner and Swallow lets his bass do the singing for him. Then they start bouncing bluesy ideas off each other, sounding like an easygoing jam session and exacting chamber ensemble simultaneously. "Polterginnis" is oblique, the players pushing their instruments with extended techniques to draw forth an

eerie vibe, hinting at melodies, letting judicious silences speak volumes. "For Elise" is elegiac, McGinnis taking on an oboe-ish hue, Lande dropping bereaved notes around him, Swallow undulating gently. Closer "Bite Your Grandmother" is a spunky bit of bebop, Lande swinging compellingly yet parsing out notes with great care, Swallow a one-person rhythm team.

Don't let the notion of free improvising scare you off. The trio coalesces in a mostly harmonious manner and swing is never completely out of the equation. For jazz that's a wonderful surprise, THIS is the place.

For more information, visit sunnysiderecords.com. This project is at Jazz Standard Apr. 19th. See Calendar.

IN PRINT



Vinyl Freak: Love Letters to a Dying Medium
John Corbett (Duke University Press)
by Clifford Allen

The subtitle to John Corbett's latest volume is a bit misleading. After all, the presence of LPs in the bins at airport kiosks and in Whole Foods or Urban Outfitters stores herald at least more than a passing interest in the format. Furthermore, Record Store Day, featuring limited new and rereleases, has helped to bring numbers up for quite a few independent record emporia since 2007. But with all music sales down, these are a faint lift for a sighing dedication to physical objects that disseminate sound. Corbett, critic, producer, festival curator, label honcho, onetime professor and gallery owner, contributed the "Vinyl Freak" column to *DownBeat* from 2000-12 and this book collects each column as well as linking ruminations on the subject and a fascinating coda detailing his acquisition and placement of the Alton Abraham Collection of Sun Ra (now housed at the University of Chicago)—an embarrassment of historical riches that "cured" his insatiable freakdom.

The columns emerged during the full swing of CD reissue madness and on the heels of his own Unheard Music Series (UMS) on Atavistic Records, releasing a number of exceedingly rare free music sides. Corbett still values CD reissues immensely—the label associated with Corbett Vs. Dempsey (CVD), the gallery he co-runs with Jim Dempsey, issues documents from Chicagoan improvisers as well as work not previously seeing reissue. Corbett's tastes are more diverse than one would guess from either CVD or UMS, both of which focus(ed) on the 'outside'—certainly there's a predilection for the avant garde and especially for small-label or private-pressed documents, but the columns also discuss lesser known Chicago soul jazz on Argo; standard fare with either incongruous artwork (whether on the jacket or, in one case, the inner sleeve) or discographical fascination; strange pop music asides; and significant slabs of dub reggae or stretchy electric groovers from Sub-Saharan Africa. Surprisingly, in the nearly 18 years since the column began, more than a handful of the 207 records discussed remain un-reissued. Corbett writes with both enthusiasm and a keen ear, the upshot of which is that high-dollar rarities and cheapies that shred get near-equal attention.

For more information, visit dukeupress.edu

BOXED SET



Blue for a Moment
Sven-Åke Johansson (Ni-Vu-Ni-Connu)
by Clifford Allen

Berlin-based percussionist, accordionist, vocalist, painter and poet Sven-Åke Johansson is an artist who defies categorization, even as much as European free music and "Berliner Improvisation" are handy aesthetic generalities that allow critics and connoisseurs to think that they know what they are getting themselves into. Johansson was born in 1943 in Sweden and decamped to Germany in the late '60s, gaining notoriety as a drummer with the groups of trumpeter Manfred Schoof and saxophonist Peter Brötzmann. His approach was controlled and resonant yet marked by dynamic impulses, which is why he was a logical choice for Brötzmann's trio—their first proper recording, with bassist Peter Kowald, was issued privately in 1967 and reissued as *For Adolphe Sax* on FMP. Living and working in Berlin from 1968, Johansson directed improvising orchestras and joined increasingly madcap small formations, as well as waxing the fascinating solo LP *Schlingerland/Dynamische Schwingungen*.

The latter was released on his SÅJ imprint, later brought under the FMP umbrella as a home for (mostly) non-Germanic releases. In the ensuing decades Johansson has made field recordings, explored the world of torch songs (in a suitably Bertolt Brecht-ian fashion) and engaged seriously the tonal and rhythmic imprint of West Coast jazz. But as committed as that arc has been, Johansson can place his tongue firmly in cheek: in 2009 he assembled an orchestra of 12 farm tractors, their guttural pitches and engine timing commingling and falling out of phase like a ramshackle ensemble.

Blue for a Moment is a seven-album boxed set (two of the enclosed albums are double LPs) that acts as a soundtrack, of sorts, for the Antoine Prum documentary of the same name, which premiered in 2017 (Prum has also directed superb films on British free improvisation and the late drummer Sunny Murray). Some of the performances were captured with the intent of being used in the film, but naturally they stand on their own as complete recordings; in addition to six albums of new music, one archival performance from 1978 of the duo with pianist Alexander von Schlippenbach is also included. The whole thing is a handsome package, housed in a heavy linen-bound box with a booklet containing notes by Thomas Millroth and Karl Bruckmaier, as well as a fancy fold-out shot of the 12 farm tractors being lined up for performance. The only bugaboo—and this happens often with heavy vinyl housed in similarly heavy, pretty-looking inner sleeves—is that the LPs get a bit scuffed and that can be a challenge with quiet, sparse playing of which Berliner improvisers are fond. Note to labels: include poly inners as well!

On to the music, of which there is much and

resoundingly diverse: far from merely 'lowercase', the stasis and cool ruggedness that marks this Berlin school is often marked here by a steadfast motion, something to be interrupted by flits, electroacoustic glitches, erasure and palimpsests. While trumpeter Liz Allbee and guitarist Annette Krebs fizz and ululate late in the story of *Frost*, Johansson puts on an incisive softshoe, his brushy motion linking through parallel action the furrowed distance of the trumpeter and guitarist's free play. *Lind* is a beautiful document of Johansson solo; recorded in 2010, the set presents 15 short unaccompanied works for fingers, mallets and feet, metallic warp and woof, directed voice-like growls and minuscule rattle, all carried with an earthy beat and warm, human touch. Compare this with the vocals and piano of *Hudson Songs*, warbling and with a gravelly, tart dissonance, poems and instructions delivered with pointillism and clustered harps falling somewhere between deadpan and wryly absurd (think Art & Language conceptual songster Mayo Thompson).

While most of these discs are small groups—trios with percussionist Burkhard Beins and harpist Rhodri Davies, or trumpeter Axel Dörner and piano string manipulator Andrea Neumann, for example—Johansson does present one orchestra. *Das Marschorchester* is just what it says, a two-LP set of marches played by the cream of the European avant garde, elevating banality to spirited *parkmusik* with soli that sound as if they've been superimposed. Even without film, the sound and texts of *Blue for a Moment* present a vivid, rousing portrait of one of creative music's most compelling artisans.

For more information, visit ni-vu-ni-connu.net



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ON THIS DAY

by Andrey Henkin



Plays For Fletcher Henderson
Benny Goodman (Martin Block)
April 1st, 1951



Outward Bound
Eric Dolphy (New Jazz)
April 1st, 1960



Aigu-Grave
Sunny Murray (Marge)
April 1st, 1979



The Tender Touch Of
Junior Mance/Martin Rivera (Nilva)
April 1st, 1983



Killer Ray Rides Again
Killer Ray Appleton (Sharp Nine)
April 1st, 1996

In 1950, pianist/bandleader Fletcher Henderson suffered a stroke that ended his performing career. This recording by Henderson's one-time boss Benny Goodman was made under the direction of disc jockey Martin Block at his "Make Believe Ballroom" at WNEW and released by him in a limited edition (later reissued by Columbia) presumably to defray Henderson's medical bills. Goodman, Lou McGarity, Buck Clayton, Teddy Wilson, Johnny Smith, Eddie Safranski and Gene Krupa play 10 standards for their ailing compatriot.

After mostly appearing on disc with various Chico Hamilton groups, alto saxophonist/bass clarinetist/flutist Eric Dolphy waxed his debut for this Prestige offshoot. Trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, who appeared on Dolphy's final studio recording *Out To Lunch!* (Blue Note, 1964), is here alongside Dolphy's future Charles Mingus bandmate Jaki Byard (piano), plus George Tucker (bass) and Roy Haynes (drums). In addition to eventual Dolphy staples like "G.W." and "245", the CD reissue includes the aptly-titled bonus track "April Fool".

Drummer Sunny Murray moved to Paris in the late '60s and spent the rest of his life there, dying in December 2017. This album was recorded in his adopted home with an interesting quintet: bassist Alan Silva was on Murray's 1966 ESP-Disk debut while pianist Bobby Few and Murray were both on Archie Shepp's 1970 America album *Pitchin' Can*. Completing the quintet are the semi-obscure tenor saxophonist Richard Raux and very-obscure percussionist Pablo Sauvage, playing three Murray tunes and one each by Coltrane and Barry Schults.

Bassist Martin Rivera had a sporadic career, at least on albums. He was part of late '50s band The Jazz Modes, appeared with Sal Salvador in the Newport Jazz Festival film *Jazz On A Summer's Day*, worked with Kenny Burrell in the mid '60s and finished out his career in the '80s groups of pianist Junior Mance (whose trio with Rivera accompanied Dexter Gordon at Montreux in 1970), his partner on this session. The pair play a relaxed program of jazz standards by Johnny Mandel and Ray Bryant, plus a tune each by Jobim and George Harrison.

Melvin Rhyne's "Killer Ray" may be in homage to the now-late drummer, both working with Wes Montgomery in the '50s. Appleton had a smattering of credits since, most notably with John Coltrane, Freddie Hubbard and Montgomery disciple Pat Martino. He also had albums as a leader, of which this is the first, a multi-generational septet of Slide Hampton (trombone), Charles McPherson (alto saxophone), Jim Rotondi (trumpet), John Hicks (piano), Peter Washington (bass) and Dumah Saafir (congas) on eight tunes, including one by Wes' brother Buddy.

BIRTHDAYS

April 1
†John LaPorta 1902-2004
†Harry Carney 1910-74
†Duke Jordan 1922-2006
Eric Ineke b.1947
Frank Tusa b.1947
†Gil Scott-Heron 1949-2011
Antoine Roney b.1963

April 2
†Max Greger 1926-2015
†Booker Little 1938-61
†Sal Nistico 1940-91
†Larry Coryell 1943-2017
Rahsaan and Roland Barber b.1980

April 3
†Bill Potts 1928-2005
†Scott LaFaro 1936-61
†Jimmy McGriff 1936-2008
†Harold Vick 1936-87
Linda Sharrock b.1947
Eric Kloss b.1949
Ali Jackson b.1976

April 4
†Gene Ramey 1913-84
†Buster Cooper 1929-2016
†Jake Hanna 1931-2010
†Hugh Masekela 1939-2018
Ole Kock Hansen b.1945
Ray Russell b.1947
Michel Camilo b.1954
Gary Smulyan b.1956

April 5
†Stan Levey 1925-2005
†Stanley Turrentine 1934-2000
Evan Parker b.1944
Jerome Harris b.1953
Håkon Kornstad b.1977

April 6
†Charlie Rouse 1924-88
Randy Weston b.1926
†Gerry Mulligan 1927-96
André Previn b.1929
†Art Taylor 1929-95
†Bill Hardman 1933-90
†Horace Tapscott 1934-99
Manfred Schoof b.1936
Gene Bertocini b.1937
†Noah Howard 1943-2010
John Pizzarelli b.1960

April 7
†Billie Holiday 1915-59
†Mongo Santamaria 1922-2003
†Victor Feldman 1934-87
†Freddie Hubbard 1938-2008
†Pete La Roca Sims 1938-2012
Alexander von Schlippenbach b.1938
†Bob Berg 1951-2002
Fredrik Lundin b.1964

April 8
†George Dixon 1909-94
†Carmen McRae 1922-94
†Paul Jeffrey 1933-2015

April 9
†Teddy Roy 1905-66
†Julian Dash 1916-74
Steve Gadd b.1945
Dave Allen b.1970

April 10
†Fess Williams 1894-1975
†Morty Corb 1917-96
†Fraser MacPherson 1928-93
Claude Bolling b.1930
†Barbara Lea 1929-2011
Omar Sosa b.1965

April 11
†John Levy 1912-2012
Emil Mangelsdorff b.1925
Raymond A. King b.1929
Matt Lavelle b.1970
Jakob Bro b.1978

April 12
†Johnny Dodds 1892-1940
†Russ Garcia 1916-2011
Herbie Hancock b.1940
Ryan Kisor b.1973

April 13
†Bud Freeman 1906-91
†Teddy Charles 1928-2012
†Rusty Jones 1932-2015
†Eddie Marshall 1938-2011
Simon Spang-Hanssen b.1955
John Ellis b.1974

April 14
†Shorty Rogers 1924-94
†Gene Ammons 1925-74
†Monty Waters 1938-2008
Steve Davis b.1967

April 15
†Bessie Smith 1894-1937
†Charlie Smith 1927-66
Richard Davis b.1930
Sy Johnson b.1930
†Herb Pomeroy 1930-2007
†Gene Chericco 1935-94

April 16
†Herbie Mann 1930-2003
Sabir Mateen b.1951
Jukka Tolonen b.1952
†Esbjorn Svensson 1964-2008
Junko Onishi b.1967
Landon Knoblock b.1982

April 17
Chris Barber b.1930
Sam Noto b.1930
Warren Chiasson b.1934
Han Bennink b.1942
Buster Williams b.1942
Jan Hammer b.1948
Mark Sherman b.1957
Sam Sadigursky b.1979

April 18
†Tony Mottola 1918-2004
†Leo Parker 1925-62
†Ken Colyer 1928-88
Freddy Hill b.1932
Hal Galper b.1938
Susanna Lindeborg b.1952

April 19
†Tommy Benford 1905-94
†Alex Hill 1906-37
Randy Ingram b.1978

April 20
†Lionel Hampton 1909-2002
Ran Blake b.1935
"Sonny" Brown b.1936
†Beaver Harris 1936-91
†Billy James 1936-2009
†Joe Bonner 1948-2014
Avishai Cohen b.1971
Matt Brewer b.1983

April 21
†Johnny Blowers 1911-2006
†Joe Dixon 1917-98
†Mundell Lowe 1922-2017
Slide Hampton b.1932
†Ian Carr 1933-2009
Alan Skidmore b.1942
†Peter Kowald 1944-2002
Mike Holober b.1957

April 22
†Buzzy Drootin 1910-2000
Candido Camero b.1921
†Charles Mingus 1922-79
†Tommy Turrentine 1928-97
†Paul Chambers 1935-69
Barry Guy b.1947

April 23
†Jimmie Noone 1895-1944
†Little Benny Harris 1919-75
†Ito Puentes 1920-2000
†Bobby Rosengarden 1924-2007
Bunky Green b.1935
Pierre Courbois b.1940
Alan Broadbent b.1947
Narada Michael Walden b.1952
Kendra Shank b.1958
Bryan Carratt b.1959
Chris Lightcap b.1971
Petr Cancura b.1977

April 24
†Rube Bloom 1902-76
†Aaron Bell 1922-2003
†Fatty George 1927-82
†Johnny Griffin 1928-2008
†Frank Strazzeri 1930-2014
†Spanky DeBrest 1937-73
†Joe Henderson 1937-2001
†Colin Walcott 1945-84
Stafford James b.1946
Trudy Silver b.1953

April 25
†Earl Bostic 1913-65
†Ella Fitzgerald 1918-96
†Willis "Gator" Jackson 1932-87
†Harry Miller 1941-83
†Michael Cosmic 1950-2001
Phil Musra 1950
Carl Allen b.1961

April 26
†Dave Tough 1907-48
†Jimmy Giuffre 1921-2008
†Teddy Edwards 1924-2003
†Herman Foster 1928-99
†Bill Byrne 1942-2002
Axel Dörner b.1964

April 27
†Connie Kay 1927-94
†Sal Mosca 1927-2007
Calvin Newborn b.1933
Ruth Price b.1938
†Freddie Waits 1943-89
Scott Robinson b.1959
Martin Wind b.1968

April 28
†Russ Morgan 1904-69
†Blossom Dearie 1926-2009
†Oliver Jackson 1933-94
†John Tchicai 1936-2012
Mickey Tucker b.1941
Willie Colon b.1950

April 29
†Duke Ellington 1899-1974
†Philippe Brun 1908-94
†Toots Thielemans 1922-2016
Big Jay McNeely b.1927
†Ray Barretto 1929-2006
†Andy Simpkins 1932-99
†George Adams 1940-92
†Hugh Hopper 1945-2009
Julius Tolerino b.1975

April 30
†Sid Weiss 1914-94
†Percy Heath 1923-2005
†Dick Twardzik 1931-55
Abdul Wadud b.1947
Russ Nolan b.1968



JAN HAMMER
April 17th, 1948

The keyboard player was among the wave of Czech jazz musicians to come to the U.S. like George Mraz and Miroslav Vitous (with whom he both played while still in Europe). His career has been marked by four distinct segments: work as a leader for MPS, Nemperor, Elektra and Columbia; sideman gigs with John Abercrombie, Jeremy Steig, Elvin Jones, Billy Cobham, Stanley Clarke, Frank Foster, Charlie Mariano, Rick Laird, Jeff Beck, Lenny White, Tony Williams, Al Di Meola, Glen Moore, Didier Lockwood and others; membership in and three albums with the mighty first iteration of John McLaughlin's Mahavishnu Orchestra; and work for film and television, most notably the slick theme song to '80s show *Miami Vice*. -AH

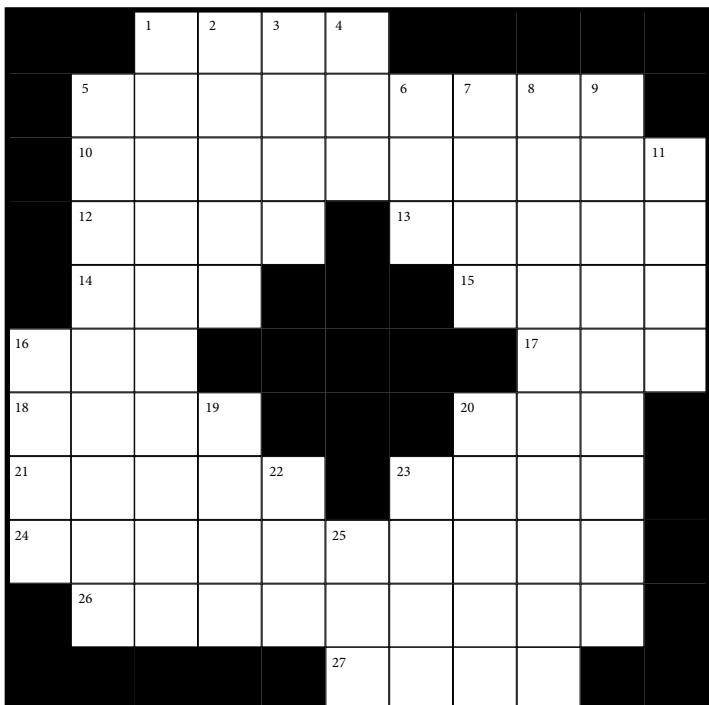
CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1988 Enja Gust William Tsilis & Alithea With Arthur Blythe album *Fire*
- Purveyor of Play-Alongs
- Local 802
- American drummer who worked with Peter Herbolzheimer, Don "Sugarcane" Harris and Klaus Weiss in the '70s, if he played in the NBA?
- 1960 film *Man Write My Epitaph* in which Ella Fitzgerald had a role as Flora
- Late '70s Japanese Arista Records catalogue prefix
- Piano Maestro?
- L'Escargot Records catalogue prefix
- Home of the Kaleidophon Fest.
- Tony Williams/Freddie Hubbard/Herbie Hancock/Ron Carter/Wayne Shorter
- Gus Kahn/Isham Jones' "It ____ To Be You"
- The 1969 Enrique Villegas/Paul Gonsalves/Willie Cook Trova album *Encuentro* was recorded in Buenos ____
- You need a zoom one of these to shoot at Carnegie Hall
- Norman Granz or George Wein
- Swedish guitarist Rune Gustafsson recorded an album in 1972 of all songs by Irish songwriter Gilbert ____
- Guitarist Ambarchi

DOWN

- Jazz Education Network president Bob Sinicrope was part of this international volunteer program
- Cairo Jazz Band bassist Esmat
- Drummer Parker or vocalist Thomas
- ____ *Guitar*, 2017 Intakt CD of Elliott Sharp with Mary Halvorson and Marc Ribot
- 1973 Phillips album with the frontline of Gary Bartz, Lee Konitz, Charlie Mariano and Jackie McLean
- ____ Ponticello
- 1969 BYG-Actual Art Ensemble of Chicago album *Reese And The Smooth* ____
- Liudas Mockūnas is one
- Booga-Lou?
- Quartet ____: Urs Leimgruber, Marilyn Crispell, Joëlle Léandre, Fritz Hauser
- "____ col jazz", tune from Italian production of *Chicago*
- Birth country of Gabriel Alegria
- French saxophonist ____ Bourde who has worked with Bernard Lubat, John Surman and others
- 1977 L'Électrobande Armonicord album *Esprits De* ____
- 1956 Zoot Sims Pablo album *Live At Falcon* ____
- ____ *Scot*, 1990 Gramavision John Scofield ballads album



By Andrey Henkin

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(INTERVIEW CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

done for the Vanguard Orchestra I've played with many different bands over the years. Some of the things I've written for the Frankfurt band are a little difficult to play other places because they have all these woodwind double possibilities, I've written things for four alto flutes and a bass flute. It sounds lovely but it's hard to find those kinds of instruments in some college big bands.

TNYCJR: Do you get to know the players well enough to write with them in mind?

JM: Oh, yeah, definitely. I remember it started when I used to write a lot for the WDR in Cologne, Germany. I realized one day I was seeing their faces on the score papers I wrote. You really get familiar with the sound of every player, their strengths and limitations. Same with the Vanguard Orchestra. Any of the bands I've spent a lot of time working for, the Stockholm Jazz Orchestra, the Danish Radio Band and the Frankfurt Band, I really write for the individual players.

TNYCJR: How does a piece evolve for you from the initial idea to the completed work?

JM: It's kind of a patchwork process, I'll start with simple ideas on two different levels: one I call the high level, that's conceptual stuff, how long is it going to be, how big is it going to be, how noisy is it going to be, how dissonant, what kind of harmonic language I'm going to use. All these general ideas and who are the soloists, what's the audience going to feel like after it ends. What I call the low level is very specific musical ideas, sometimes just a phrase or a vamp that I start playing with and expand on. I'll make notes and jot down a whole lot of things that come to me without judging if they're good or bad. It's a mistake when people start writing music and they judge an idea as stupid. When you think about it, "Bom, bom, bom... bom", Beethoven's Fifth, that's a dumb little idea. Well, look what he did with it. It's what you do with your initial idea that really makes the piece. It's not whether the idea itself is good or bad, that doesn't even come into the discussion; it's an idea, you start to work with it, play with it, expand it, that's the important part of the process.

Then I start linking things together. At that stage, it's mostly pencil and paper and piano. Finally, I start making bigger connections, then fine-tune all the decisions I made on the high level, which are the things about form and shape. Gradually it all meets in the middle somewhere, then I really start writing the piece, scoring it. Actually the first thing I do is a big sketch of the piece, then I start scoring on the computer because of the convenience.

TNYCJR: What recordings are completed or in the planning stages?

JM: A couple of things I've done are in the can. One's a big suite that I wrote for the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Frankfurt Big Band. Another project we did with [saxophonist] Chris Potter. I'm in talks again with the Vanguard Orchestra to start working on a new CD with them. Then I've always got interesting projects coming up with the Frankfurt band; I'm writing arrangements for [Brazilian songwriter] Ivan Lins in April.

TNYCJR: It's exciting to hear about your upcoming concert with Joe Lovano playing *A Love Supreme*.

JM: I've known Joe Lovano for 40 years. He's a part of the two concerts with the Manhattan School of Music [this month]. I've written several projects for him with some of the European bands and the thing I

did on *A Love Supreme* is a natural extension of all that work that we've done together. Then the way I arranged *A Love Supreme*, some of it is more writing for the band as a group improvisation rather than standard big band stuff, because I wanted to capture the spirit and energy of Coltrane's recording. Part of it is to inspire Joe to build a really exciting peak then have the band in there with him, driving him on. It's a little different writing than people would associate with me, but it's part of my old history. I used to do that when I was in college, but it's nice to get a chance to do that with *A Love Supreme*.

Part of what we did last week in Frankfurt was recording it. Also, they record the concerts. Both of them we did were really inspiring. I hope it works out with Joe's contractual obligations that it can be released, because I think it is a really powerful statement by Joe, myself and the band. ❖

For more information, visit jim-mcneely.com. McNeely is at Aaron Davis Hall Apr. 5th and Dizzy's Club Apr. 9th leading the Manhattan School of Music Jazz Orchestra with guest Joe Lovano. See Calendar.

Recommended Listening:

- Stan Getz – *Pure Getz* (Concord, 1982)
- Jim McNeely – *Live At Maybeck Recital Hall, Vol. 20* (Concord, 1992)
- Phil Woods Quintet – *Plays the Music of Jim McNeely* (TCB, 1995)
- Jim McNeely Tentet – *Group Therapy* (OmniTone, 2000)
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra – *Up From the Skies, Music of Jim McNeely* (Planet Arts, 2006)
- Jim McNeely/Frankfurt Radio Big Band – *Barefoot Dances and Other Visions* (Planet Arts, 2014)

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Theo Hill - Promethean
 Pianist Theo Hill unleashes a coruscating burst of passionate creativity on "Promethean", a hard hitting trio date that features a solid harmonic foundation.



Tomas Fujiwara at The Stone

TUESDAY, APRIL 10 / 8:30PM

Patricia Brennan (vibes), Tomeka Reid (cello), Tomas Fujiwara (drums)

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11 / 8:30PM

Amir ElSaffar (trumpet), Ole Mathisen (tenor saxophone), Tomas Fujiwara (drums)

THURSDAY, APRIL 12 / 8:30PM

Stone Edifice Trio

Walter Smith III (tenor saxophone), Drew Gress (bass), Tomas Fujiwara (drums)

FRIDAY, APRIL 13 / 8:30PM

Double Double

Bill Frisell (guitar), Mary Halvorson (guitar), Kendrick Scott (drums),
Tomas Fujiwara (drums)

SATURDAY, APRIL 14 / 8:30PM

Triple Double

Ralph Alessi (trumpet), Taylor Ho Bynum (cornet), Mary Halvorson (guitar),
Brandon Seabrook (guitar), Tom Rainey (drums), Tomas Fujiwara (drums)

Photo: Amy Touchette

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