ERROLL GARNER: *CONCERT BY THE SEA*'S LOST HALF RELEASED!

JazzTimes

AMERICA'S JAZZ MAGAZINE

DAVE DOUGLAS & THE BUSINESS OF ART

STANLEY COWELL
A Late-Career Renaissance Begins

ROB MAZUREK
From Hard-Bop Hopeful to Sonic Explorer

JOEY ALEXANDER
A Prodigy's Plight

NOW HEAR THIS
JAMES BRANDON LEWIS
MARQUIS HILL
KIRK KNUFFKE

Artist Columns
Terence Blanchard on fusion
Terell Stafford on Lee Morgan
Steve Turre on trombone masters

\+ Delfeayo Marsalis
Ray Anderson
Reggie Washington

YAMAHA

Innovation that inspires

The new *Xeno* Series

With a careful blend of traditional and modern craftsmanship, the new Yamaha Xeno series trumpets have outstanding response; strong presence; and clear, warm tonal colors that can inspire players to explore new realms of musical expression. To learn more, scan the QR code or visit **www.4wrd.it/xenoJT2.**

THE sounds of autumn

LEE RITENOUR
A TWIST OF RIT

The GRAMMY-winning guitarist combines both new material and fresh 'twisted' versions of classic Ritenour tracks, all recorded with a personally selected 12-piece all-star band.

MINDI ABAIR AND THE BONESHAKERS
LIVE IN SEATTLE

Her very first LIVE CD! Recorded earlier this year at the famed Jazz Alley, this album features both Mindi hits with Boneshaker twists, classics, and 2 brand-new songs.

LIZZ WRIGHT
FREEDOM & SURRENDER

Five years after her critically acclaimed album *Fellowship*, Wright presents her highly anticipated new album ...her most sensual to date. Produced by Larry Klein (Joni Mitchell, Madeleine Peyroux, Tracy Chapman).

JOHN PIZZARELLI
MIDNIGHT McCARTNEY

The world renowned guitarist and singer, long hailed as one of the prime contemporary interpreters of the Great American Songbook, performs repertoire from Paul McCartney's rich musical catalog, at Sir Paul's request.

CHICK COREA / BÉLA FLECK
TWO

The follow-up to their GRAMMY Award-winning album *The Enchantment*, this double-disc set is a collection of live recordings of the duet interacting as only two players of this level can.

JEFF LORBER FUSION
STEP IT UP

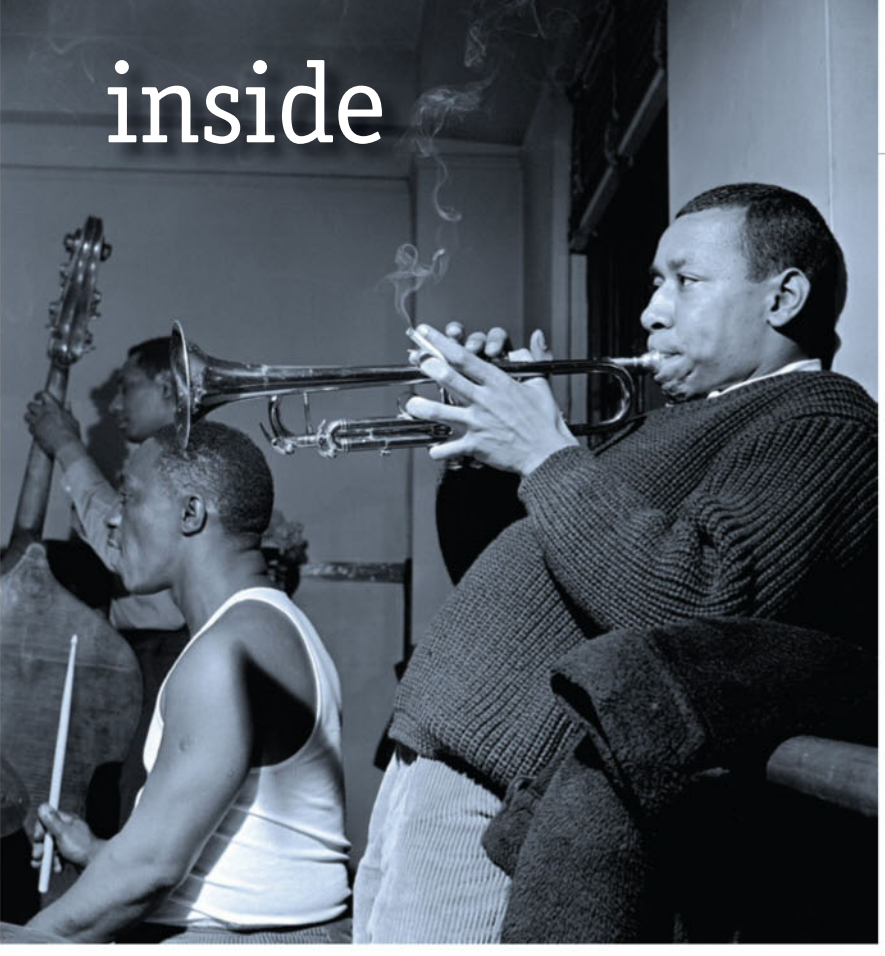
One of the founding fathers of Fusion, Lorber continues to 'step it up' by crystallizing Jazz, Funk, Rock and World music with this exciting all-new release.

CONCORD MUSIC GROUP

Order Your Copies Today amazonmusic

inside

OCTOBER 2015 VOLUME 45 | NUMBER 8



Lee Morgan multitasks at a 1961 rehearsal for Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers' *Roots & Herbs* session. (Also pictured is bassist Jymie Merritt.) To read trumpeter Terell Stafford's analysis of Morgan's playing, see p. 52.

Cover photo by John Abbott. Table of Contents photo by Francis Wolff/Mosaic Images.

outside
AT JAZZTIMES.COM

MP3s
promotions - jazz MP3s

JazzTimes Spins & Riffs, a free podcast hosted by *JT* publisher Lee Mergner + new jazz tracks

EXCLUSIVE CONTENT
articles - columns

Extensive coverage of the Newport, Umbria, San Jose, Springfield, Rockport and Charlie Parker festivals; photo galleries: John Abbott's very special Newport festival portraits, live photos of Branford Marsalis, Lee Ritenour and the Vision and Ealing festivals; song and video premieres: John Pizzarelli, Dave Douglas, Sachal, Karrin Allyson, Cécile McLorin Salvant, Erroll Garner and Robert Glasper; plus news, reviews and much more!

BLUE NOTE®

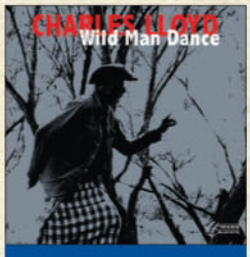
NEW RELEASES INCLUDE

JAMIE CULLUM
OUT NOW

JOSÉ JAMES
OUT NOW

MARCUS MILLER
OUT NOW

JOE LOVANO & DAVE DOUGLAS
SOUND PRINTS
OUT NOW



CHARLES LLOYD
OUT NOW

TERENCE BLANCHARD
OUT NOW

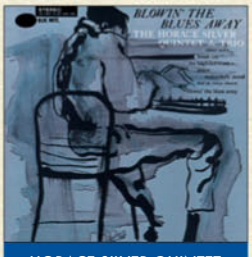
ROBERT GLASPER TRIO
OUT NOW

KENDRICK SCOTT ORACLE
OUT SEPTEMBER 25

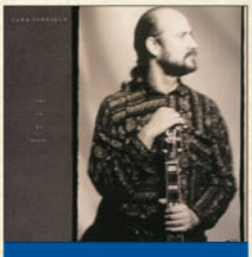
LIONEL LOUEKE
OUT OCTOBER 30

VINYL REISSUES

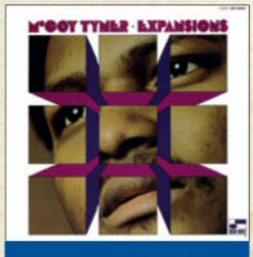
ART BLAKEY & THE JAZZ
MESSENGERS
MOANIN'



HORACE SILVER QUINTET
& TRIO
BLOWIN' THE BLUES AWAY

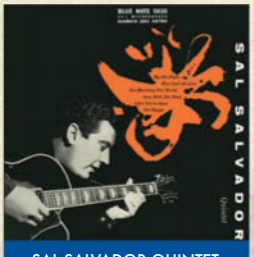


JOHN SCOFIELD
TIME ON MY HANDS



MCCOY TYNER
EXPANSIONS

MILES DAVIS
VOLUME 2



SAL SALVADOR QUINTET
SAL SALVADOR QUINTET
[10-INCH]

BLUE NOTE
BlueNote.com

Available at amazon music

[JT]Notes

Pay Attention to the Words

By Evan Haga

Language, or at least my relationship to it, is the damnedest thing. I need to set text-message alerts in order to pay my credit cards on time, but I can recall certain examples of journalism, literature and film dialogue with the clarity of a stage actor after reading or hearing them only once. The articles that appear in *JazzTimes* burrow even deeper into my memory because I've internalized them ad nauseam through the various stages of our production cycle.

I wouldn't call my skill photographic, however; the words, whether in content or style or both, have to impress me in a specific, striking way to be retained. One piece that will always remain is our October 2013 Before & After listening session with this month's cover subject, trumpeter Dave Douglas—especially his closing sentiments. After commenting on Terri Lyne Carrington's *Money Jungle* tribute album, Douglas ties a bow on the exercise: "[People get] dark about the future of the music and the future of instruments," he says, "but I feel like it's a golden age for improvised music. … There's more creative music happening now than ever, and I'm very upbeat about it. A lot of this music you played for me proves that point. It gives me even more to look forward to."

I've returned to those 60-odd words many times in my mind since I sent that column to the printer. First off, I believe the message to be true, and the fact that it's coming from someone of Douglas' peak-of-powers stature gives it validation. It also comes in handy as a morale booster, after I've read some dopey general-interest piece on why jazz is dead or is being revived by a computer musician. And it's acted as a kind of daily affirmation when I need to steer the magazine back toward the high road: a reminder that criticism and advocacy should exist in equal measure, and that lifting up the current scene is just as important as celebrating jazz tradition.

So much of the music covered in this issue reiterates how jazz is only improving. To highlight a sample: the new album by saxophonist James Brandon Lewis, with its pitch-perfect blends of melody and groove, improvisation and concept; music from trumpeter Marquis Hill, a composer who knows precisely how to employ contemporary ideas while showcasing the old-school virtuosity of his band; and vocalist Cécile McLorin Salvant, whose use of musical history is so intelligent it could count as an innovation. To borrow Douglas' phrase, you have much to look forward to. ***JT***

JazzTimes
AMERICA'S JAZZ MAGAZINE

EDITOR EVAN HAGA
ehaga@jazztimes.com
GROUP PUBLISHER LEE MERGNER
ASSOCIATE EDITOR JEFF TAMARKIN
jtamarkin@jazztimes.com
DIRECTOR, SALES & MARKETING ROBIN MORSE
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER MIENE SMITH

GRAPHIC DESIGNER LISA MALAGUTI
PROOFREADER CHRISTOPHER LOUDON

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
David R. Adler, Larry Appelbaum, Bill Beuttler, Shaun Brady, Philip Booth, Russell Carlson, Nate Chinen, Sharonne Cohen, Thomas Conrad, Owen Cordle, Brad Farberman, Colin Fleming, Andrew Gilbert, Fernando Gonzalez, Steve Greenlee, Don Heckman, Geoffrey Himes, Marc Hopkins, Willard Jenkins, Mike Joyce, Ashley Kahn, David Kastin, Aidan Levy, Matt R. Lohr, Christopher Loudon, Bill Meredith, John Murph, Ted Panken, Britt Robson, Giovanni Russonello, Sam Sessa, Mike Shanley, George Varga, Michael J. West, David Whiteis, Josef Woodard, Ron Wynn

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS & ILLUSTRATORS
Greg Aiello, Ed Berger, Skip Bolen, Stuart Brinin, Enid Farber, Ken Franckling, Peter Gannushkin, Ronnie James, Ben Johnson, Jimmy Katz, R. Andrew Lepley, Alan Nahigian, Jan Persson, John Rogers, Nick Ruechel, Detlev Schilke, Chuck Stewart, Jack Vartoogian, Michael Weintrob, Michael Wilderman

MADAVOR MEDIA

CHAIRMAN & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER JEFFREY C. WOLK
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER SUSAN FITZGERALD
DIRECTOR, BUSINESS OPERATIONS COURTNEY CARTER
DIRECTOR, INTEGRATED PRODUCTION JUSTIN VUONO
ART DIRECTOR MICHAEL O'LEARY
OPERATIONS MANAGER LAURA FINAMORE
CIRCULATION OPERATIONS SPECIALIST NORA FREW
CONTROLLER PEGGY MAGUIRE
STAFF ACCOUNTANT TINA MCDERMOTT
STAFF ACCOUNTANT HEIDIE HOGAN
STAFF ACCOUNTANT MARCIA CLIFFORD
MARKETING ANALYST CATHERINE PEARSON
SALES COORDINATOR JESSICA KROGMAN
SALES ADMINISTRATOR CASSANDRA PETTIT
PRODUCTION ASSOCIATE STEVE SANGAPORE
GM, DIGITAL OPERATIONS HEIDI STRONG
TECHNICAL PRODUCT MANAGER MICHAEL MA
NEWSSTAND NATIONAL PUBLISHER SERVICES

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER
MIENE SMITH
msmith@madavor.com; 617-706-9092
Contact *JazzTimes* advertising sales department for reprint information.

JAZZTIMES EDITORIAL OFFICE
10801 Margate Road, Silver Spring, MD 20901

Subscriptions 1-877-252-8139 | Foreign Subscriptions 1-903-636-1120

CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS
Madavor Media, LLC
25 Braintree Hill Office Park | Suite 404 | Braintree, MA | 02184
Tel: 617-706-9110 | Fax: 617-536-0102

JazzTimes (ISSN-0272-572-X) is published 10 times per year by Madavor Media, LLC., 25 Braintree Hill Office Park, Suite 404, Braintree, MA 02184, USA, Tel: 617-706-9110. Jeffrey C. Wolk, Chairman & Chief Executive Officer

SUBSCRIPTIONS: 1 year (10 issues), US $29.99, Canada $34.99, International $54.99, Digital Only $20.00

JAZZTIMES FOUNDER IRA SABIN

Intuitive Coordination: Marquis Hill

By Nate Chinen

Marquis Hill has a brawny but mellow sound on the trumpet, and an evenness of attack across the breadth of his range. His articulation, precise but unlabored, calls to mind the precedent of Clifford Brown, while his bravura phrasing suggests an equal immersion in Freddie Hubbard and Woody Shaw. All of which surely helped his cause at last year's Thelonious Monk International Jazz Competition, where he won first prize, and with it the promise of a recording contract with the Concord Music Group.

Hill's performance at the competition semifinals, which lives on as a 15-minute clip on YouTube, would seem to mark him as the latest in a succession of astute young postbop swashbucklers on the horn, like Jeremy Pelt or Sean Jones before him. Backed by a swinging house rhythm section—Reggie Thomas on piano, Rodney Whitaker on bass and Carl Allen on drums—he breezes through an uptempo "Straight, No Chaser" (the requisite Monk tune) and then finesses a standard, "When Sunny Gets Blue" (the requisite ballad). His closer is an original, "The Wrath of Lark," a flight of modal gymnastics bracketed by a hard-churning vamp; it would have sounded right at home on one of the Young Lion albums that kept Whitaker and Allen busy in the '90s.

But of course the Monk Competition is a fishbowl, and this pressurized sample of Hill's talent, while impressive, hardly captures his scope as an artist. A homegrown product of Chicago, he was mentored by the likes of pianist Willie Pickens and saxophonist Ernest Dawkins, and had early exposure to the intrepid ethos of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians. He appears in muted, brooding glory on the new album by smooth-jazz sax man Boney James.

Hill's own recorded output in recent years has engaged with hip-hop and spoken word, with contributions by Keith Winford of the Chicago rap crew Legend Haz It. *Modern Flows EP, Vol. 1,* released on Skiptone Music last year, makes the organic synthesis between jazz and hip-hop feel almost like a *raison d'être*.

That EP—like Hill's 2013 album *The Poet*, also on Skiptone—finds him leading an agile young band he calls the Blacktet. With Christopher McBride on alto saxophone, Justin Thomas on vibraphone, Joshua Ramos on bass and Makaya McCraven on drums, it's an appealingly shadowy ensemble, capable of full-tilt aggression but just as likely to make its point with chamberesque cool. Early this year I saw the band perform in the Monk-in-Motion concert series at the TriBeCa Performing Arts Center, and came away marveling at the intuitive coordination between the players, the rare level of on-the-spot composure that only a serious working band can attempt. Hill was clearly the man at the controls, even in those moments when Thomas and McCraven locked into a slanted groove, communicating on their own transmission frequencies.

Hill adheres to a pattern of stealth logic as a composer, apparently working under the premise that a tune works best when it has several gears whirring at once. "White Shadows," a highlight of the set, featured a fluttery agitation among the bass and drums, over which Hill and McBride wafted a serenely blended melody, with Thomas filling the interstitial spaces with his chiming harmonies.

Hill adheres to a pattern of stealth logic as a composer, apparently working under the premise that a tune works best when it has several gears whirring at once.

On *Modern Flows EP, Vol. 1,* a tag near the end of "White Shadows" becomes the instrumental backdrop for Winford's rapping. This is deftly done, but the more striking integration comes

CHRISTOPHER BALUWA'S, ILLUSTRATION BY THEO PULFER-TERINO

elsewhere—when, for instance, the harmonized head of a floating tune called "The Essence" becomes the loop behind Winford's verses on the following track, "Love My Life." The same happens with a stutter-syncopated line on "When We Were Kings," which resurfaces, slowed and slightly muffled, on "King Legend." It's as if Hill is mirroring the creative exchange between a jazz record and a crate-digging hip-hop producer, effectively sampling his own supply. (A similar process reigns on *In the Moment*, an excellent new album by McCraven on International Anthem, stitched together from months of live recordings, with Hill and Thomas among its personnel.)

This has been a year in which the stark old divisions between "straight-ahead jazz" and "jazz meets hip-hop," as genre constructs, began to seem downright quaint. Pianist Robert Glasper deepened his hybridizing agenda with an acoustic trio album, *Covered* (Blue Note), while saxophonist Kamasi Washington shook the ground with *The Epic* (Brainfeeder), which occasionally suggests Young Lion protocols retooled for a modern ear. Kendrick Lamar, the brilliant Los Angeles rapper, stocked his monumentally ambitious album *To Pimp a Butterfly* with a musical corps that included both Washington and Glasper, exhorting them at times to swing like mad.

Hill, who now splits his time between New York and Chicago, should fit into such a matrix. When I asked him about it recently, he said he hoped that he does. His modern trumpet pantheon includes Roy Hargrove and Nicholas Payton, who started out on the straight and narrow and eventually flew their freak flags high, and it's fascinating that Hill and his generation have felt so little pressure to conform right out of the gate. So I was a little surprised when Hill told me that his Concord Jazz debut, due out next year, will be a standards album—as if he were taking the typical trajectory in reverse.

It's not that simple, though. When I asked him for examples of the album's repertoire, Hill mentioned a couple of tunes well off the beaten path: Horace Silver's "Moon Rays" and a bop-calypso workout called "Beepdurple," by the Kansas City trumpeter Carmel Jones. He also stressed that the album would have a recognizable Blacktet slant. As for *Modern Flows, Vol. 2*, presumably a good fit for Concord, whose roster includes pianist Kris Bowers and trumpeter Christian Scott, he said it was just a matter of time. "I want to keep playing with that idea," he said, with a laugh that did little to disarm his sincerity. ***JT***

OPENING CHORUS

Stay in tune

Inside

Hamiet Bluiett conducts his Telepathic Orchestra at New York's Judson Memorial Church on July 12

MAREK LAZARSKI

From Upstart to Institution

FOR TWO DECADES, THE VISION FESTIVAL HAS FOSTERED THE AVANT-GARDE TRADITION IN NEW YORK

The Vision Festival was exactly one hour behind schedule by the time baritone saxophonist Hamiet Bluiett's sprawling Telepathic Orchestra began its hour-long closing set in New York in mid-July. No surprise there. Time has been a relative concept at the festival since its debut in 1996, with the schedule often becoming a list and order of performers untethered to a clock. Most performers and audience members know the drill, but there have been exceptions: An annoyed Jaki Byard spent part of his 1998 set conducting an impromptu lecture and banging on piano keys while chanting: "Kiss my ass!"

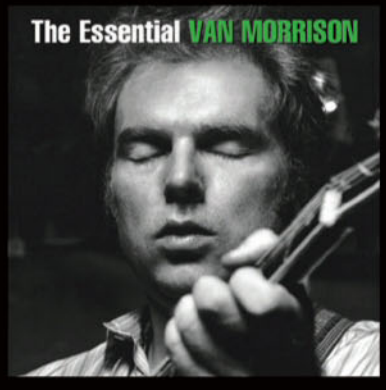
Some have thought the Vision Festival lost in time because it celebrates an avant-garde brand of jazz often closely associated with the '60s. Held in a series of synagogues, churches, theaters and funky performance spaces, the festival has indeed always been a "happening" because it includes visual artists, poets, political activists and filmmakers as well as volunteerism and grassroots commerce. "Early on, people seemed to be embarrassed by the idealism of the Vision Festival, particularly in the press," said founder and artistic director Patricia Nicholson Parker, a few days after this year's closing night. "They think of idealism as a bad thing. But what I'm trying to do, and this may be corny, is give people hope—that you can be successful doing what you really want to do."

The Vision Festival has arrived as the hopeful festival that could, and did. It operates as a non-profit, non-corporate-funded affair run by Arts for Art's Nicholson Parker, a dancer by profession but a tireless worker by disposition, along with a staff of volunteers and helpers. Few would have bet that it would be New York's only continuously run jazz festival over the last 20 years, becoming the David to such Goliaths as the various festivals presented by the George Wein-founded Festival Productions and the Knitting Factory under Michael Dorf.

The Vision Festival has even succeeded where previous grassroots festivals organized by Nicholson Parker's husband, the preeminent avant-garde bassist William Parker, and the circle of musicians in the Downtown scene, had not. "This one has survived because it's not run by musicians," he pointed out during the festival. "You need a catalyst to keep it going—someone with a vision and an idea, which in this case is Patricia. The other festivals we did were good for the year we did them.

ESSENTIAL VAN MORRISON

OVER 30 ALBUMS NOW AVAILABLE DIGITALLY FOR THE FIRST TIME



THE BRAND NEW 37-TRACK CAREER-SPANNING COLLECTION

INCLUDES

ALL VAN'S SOLO AND THEM CLASSICS

OUT NOW

SONY MUSIC LEGACY EXILE

VANMORRISON.COM LEGACY.COM

AVAILABLE AT amazon

But musicians essentially wanted to play music, get an agent and not have to produce all their own concerts."

According to Nicholson Parker, this year's festival (July 5-12) had the highest attendance numbers yet, with five nights of music filling Greenwich Village's Judson Memorial Church, which had seating for 250 with more people standing on the side and in back. There was also a day of panels at Columbia University and another of jazz documentaries and concert films at Anthology Film Archives.

➤ Vision Festival's Patricia Nicholson Parker and William Parker in July

While regulars like pianist Matthew Shipp, saxophonist Rob Brown and the Sun Ra Arkestra led by Marshall Allen returned for strong sets, newer artists like saxophonists Ingrid Laubrock and Darius Jones and Hear in Now, featuring cellist Tomeka Reid, offered lots of hope for the future. This is particularly important with the passing of festival mainstays like David S. Ware, Fred Anderson, Billy Bang, Roy Campbell Jr., Peter Kowald, Amiri Baraka and others in recent years.

Highlights this year included the world premiere of the commission "Peak/Abyss" by multireedist Roscoe Mitchell, who performed in two trios and then a combined quintet. William Parker's uplifting tribute to Martin Luther King was a consensus highlight, featuring a drummer-less sextet and five vocalists. Dressed in white and often chanting as he played, drummer Milford Graves, a perennial festival favorite, led a quintet through a set that played out like a series of duets between him and his musicians. Trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith's actual duo set with pianist Aruán Ortiz was filled with spikey notes, slurred textures and majestic declarations that achieved the best sound in the Judson space.

Judson's vaulted church ceiling was populated with an art installation of yellow beach-ball-sized balloons, as film and visional art was projected onto the wall behind the stage. It made for a visually striking setting, but was less kind to bands that played loud or included an aggressive drummer like Graves, turning the sound muddy.

But veterans of this itinerate festival could say the same for the years held at the stately but dilapidated Angel Orensanz Center, the chummy basement of St. Nicholas of Myra Orthodox Church and Old St. Peter's gym/youth center. The festival has sounded more pristine in recent years, at Roulette, the Abrons Art Center and the Knitting Factory's former Tribeca location in Manhattan, which was the festival's single foray into a nightclub.

According to Matthew Shipp, "It's impossible to pick a favorite space, but I like Judson Church for its centrality and iconic aspect of space. Roulette has that great, great piano. And the Orensanz Center has the LSD-type tripping-out aspect of the place; even if the acoustics are not the best, it always felt like a free-jazz acid trip."

Shipp is right about both Judson's history of social activism, which reaches back to the '60s, and the location—the most central yet, on Washington Square South. But Judson also has a great festival layout, with a second room downstairs from the main space where CDs, books and other merchandise as well as food and drinks were sold. It made for a great gathering space between sets, or when one simply needed a break or wanted to chat with friends. "Some people value the whole festival with its complexity, with its social-ness," Nicholson Parker said. "For them it's a community-building event. Then other people just want to hear great sound. Roulette is great for that and lots of other things. If that's what you want, then you aren't going to be happy with what it was this year. But I think you then don't value what the festival is on a more complex level, which didn't work at Roulette."

There is also an emerging sense that the festival is now an institution worthy of support and recognition. This goes beyond donors and grant givers, with the daylong academic symposium at Columbia University on the Monday before the festival drawing dozens of people this year. "Our guest speakers and panelists raised some challenging and thought-provoking issues," said University of Minnesota Music School lecturer Scott Currie, who also worked for the festival during its early years. "I don't know whether that validates the festival, or the scholarly practice that is growing up around it, but I suspect it probably works both ways."

More changes are in the offing for the festival as well. Nicholson Parker is now turning over the administrative reins to bassist Todd Nicholson, who returns to the fold after years of living in Japan. It will be his chore next year to wrestle with the concept of "Vision Festival time," but Nicholson Parker should be forgiven for letting things go late this year.

"This year was particularly bad," she admitted with a laugh. "It was a throwback to the late '90s. We went back to our bad old ways. We knew it would run late. But when it came down to it, I didn't want it to end. I had this feeling: Oh no! It's over."

TAD HENDRICKSON

FROM LEFT: EDWARD BERGER, MAREK LAZARSKI

The New Classic Album from Tony Bennett

New Album Available Now

Joey Alexander: Youth Without Youth

GEOFFREY HIMES THINKS OUT LOUD ABOUT THE PRECOCIOUSLY TACTFUL PIANO PHENOM

Joey Alexander (right) with Newport Jazz Festival founder George Wein in August

In August, the Newport Jazz Festival added a fourth venue, the 100-seat Storyville Stage, at Fort Adams State Park. It was tucked inside a brick building outside the walls of the 19th-century stone fortification. On Saturday, Aug. 1, a long line snaked from Storyville's entrance all the way to a distant row of food vendors. When I arrived, I assumed that the building hadn't opened its doors yet, but no, the venue was already full. People were standing in line for seats they would probably never get.

Who were these people so desperate to see? Joey Alexander, the Indonesian-born, now New York-based piano prodigy who had turned 12 five weeks earlier. He was still 11 when his debut album, *My Favorite Things*, was released on Motéma Records in May, an event recognized by a front-page feature story in the *New York Times*. Jazz fans may become blasé about 19-year-old virtuosos from Berklee and Juilliard—not to mention 54-year-old alumni of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers—but a 12-year-old prodigy from Indonesia? That they've got to see.

For those lucky enough to squeeze into Storyville, two things were surprising about their first encounter with Alexander. With his baby-fat face, thick mop of dark hair, black-frame glasses and white T-shirt stitched with the motto "Enjoy Being Fun," he looked closer to 9 than 12. But he was all business as he prepared for the set, giving the stage crew very specific instructions on how to position the mics within the piano.

Once he climbed onto the bench (cranked up high), his blue tennis shoes didn't reach the pedals. When he started playing, however, he was nothing like the usual jazz prodigy. We're all used to young hotshots who build a reputation on just two aspects of a musician's skill set: speed and accuracy. But that wasn't Alexander's approach at all. Though he tossed off the occasional brief flurry of velocity, this diminutive keyboardist displayed a restraint that's all too rare, even in thirtysomething musicians.

He started his trio set with "Ma Blues," the one original tune on the debut recording. A hard-bop number in the 1950s vocabulary that Alexander prefers, the pianist began by banging out the blues changes, but he quickly shifted the dynamics downward to contrast the assertive opening with a quieter passage. Soon he was comping sympathetically behind Russell Hall's upright bass solo and playing triplets with the right hand against the 4/4 chords in the left. It's this maturity, this refusal to overwhelm the listener with technique, this willingness to seduce the listener with suggestion and substitution, that make Alexander such an atypical prodigy. He understands that jazz is not an Olympic competition where the gold medal goes to the athlete with the fastest fingers, but rather an effort to convey one person's internal experience to another. And he does that.

Of course, it's the experience of a 12-year-old kid who has never had his heart broken, his pride dented by an employer or his confidence shaken by failure. So you don't get the darker emotions and lustier rhythms you hear in a more mature musician, but that's not Alexander's fault. He will have all those experiences in the years to come, and he's well positioned to incorporate them into his music, because he already knows how to build drama out of conflicting themes and temperaments on the piano.

You could hear promising hints of that at Newport. Alexander played three tunes not on the standard edition of his new album: another original called "Sunday Waltz," imbued with a Randy Newman-ish jauntiness; Wayne Shorter's "Footprints," which showcased Alexander's remarkable ability to shift dynamics, pacing and mood; and Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie's "Anthropology," which allowed the youngster to prove just how fast he could play when the situation required, especially in the climactic give-and-take with drummer Sammy Miller.

ALAN NAHIGIAN

It was a genuinely enjoyable set—which is not to say that Alexander is suddenly one of the best pianists in jazz. He has a long way to go to match the depth and invention of keyboardists such as Jason Moran, Brad Mehldau, Lafayette Gilchrist and Kris Bowers (though one could argue that Alexander has already surpassed the likes of Hiromi and Robert Glasper). But Alexander has gotten further at his age than any other jazz pianist ever documented, and if he keeps growing at the same rate, he could be ahead of his generation for decades to come.

The arts, of course, are littered with tales of prodigies who made a big splash but never fulfilled the hype. So many things can stop a teenage artist's growth: celebrity, self-satisfaction, intoxicants, money, bad managers, bad lovers, bad advice and bad decisions. So how can Alexander stay on the right path?

He seems to have level-headed parents and a safe harbor within Jazz at Lincoln Center (Wynton Marsalis championed him early on—they also share management—and JALC's programming director, Jason Olaine, produced the debut album). But to continue to grow as an artist, Alexander needs to explore music outside the canon of midcentury swing; he needs to hear everyone from Muhal Richard Abrams to RZA. He needs to serve his time as a sideman to as many older artists as he can—even if that means sacrificing some income during his adolescence.

WE'RE ALL USED TO YOUNG HOTSHOTS WHO BUILD A REPUTATION ON JUST TWO ASPECTS OF A MUSICIAN'S SKILL SET: SPEED AND ACCURACY. BUT THAT WASN'T ALEXANDER'S APPROACH AT ALL.

Most of all, he needs to follow the example of Julian Lage, who seemed to do everything right in negotiating the path from prodigy to adult success. The jazz guitarist was the subject of a 1997 documentary while still in elementary school, performed on the Grammy Awards TV show at age 13 and joined the faculty of the Stanford Jazz Workshop at age 15. But Lage bided his time and played in the bands of Gary Burton, Taylor Eigisti and David Grisman before releasing his debut solo album at age 22, in 2009. Lage's refusal to fast-forward his career paid off in music remarkable for the breadth of its influences and the depth of its emotional power. Someone should give Alexander Lage's phone number, so the two can have a chat. ***JT***

The Frisson of Fusion

TERENCE BLANCHARD MEDITATES ON THE JAZZ-ROCK THAT INSPIRES HIM

A picture periodically reappears in my Facebook newsfeed of a memo that producer Teo Macero wrote to the executives at Columbia Records on Nov. 14, 1969. It reads:

"Miles just called and said he wants this album to be titled: 'BITCHES BREW' *Please advise. Teo"*

Someone, who has no idea how record companies work, posted in response, "I think it's safe to assume that the advice reluctantly given … was essentially, 'Let Miles Davis call his next album whatever he wants.'"

Uh, no. Not by a mile.

In fact, after Teo handed in the album, I'm pretty sure the same guys who got the memo, and probably most of the marketing department that had pushed *Kind of Blue* up the charts as a pop album, were shitting bricks.

There was nothing like this, ever. Miles had worked out some ideas through the recording of *In a Silent Way*, but the music on *Bitches Brew*, the title, the in-your-face, psychedelic, sexualized cover art by Mati Klarwein … Add your own colorful language, because it was just that! The shit. Unique. A one-of-a-kind performance and album.

When *Bitches Brew* was recorded, the walls were tumbling down and revolution was in the air. Just three weeks after Teo's memo was written, the infamous Altamont festival, headlined by the Rolling Stones, signaled the end of hippie idealism. It was two years after the Summer of Love and a year following the Summer Olympics in Mexico City, where Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised their clinched fists in solidarity with other African-Americans; that same year, Arthur Ashe became the first African-American man to win a Grand Slam singles title in tennis, and Shirley Chisholm became the first African-American woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.

And over in pop and jazz? "Dizzy," "Sugar, Sugar" and Elvis' "In the Ghetto" were floating on the radio waves. The Temptations' "I Can't Get Next to You" reached No. 1 on the pop charts. Jazz was ruminating in the basement of "out there" with Sun Ra, Ornette Coleman, Don Cherry, Pharoah Sanders and the Art Ensemble of Chicago. But nothing was as intense as the boundaries that were being pushed to their limits by the unyielding creativity of Miles and company. Macero edited the shit together to find new possibilities in composition, flipping the end to the front or the middle to the end, or clipping out a whole section and having that become a track by itself ("John McLaughlin"). It was as Miles wanted, so to speak; as Miles would say to Teo, "I thought you'd do that."

What came after *Bitches Brew* was the music that excited and captivated me when I was in my pre-teens: *fusion* in all its rock-jazz glory, filling amphitheaters with a young fan base jazz hadn't seen in decades. But you can't get to the era of fusion without

HENRY ADEBONOJO

going through *Bitches Brew*, because many of the leaders of the fusion bands participated in those sessions: Chick Corea; John McLaughlin; Joe Zawinul; Wayne Shorter; Lenny White, who headed over to Return to Forever with Chick; Airto Moreira, who played with both RTF and Weather Report; and Bennie Maupin, who joined up with Herbie Hancock's Headhunters.

Those who played on the *Bitches Brew* sessions—and all who heard the album—were influenced by the approach that Miles and his band took to harmony. It made room for everyone to stretch from a single tonal foundation, with no harmonic limits. Freeing up the form or solo structure was something Miles brought over from his jazz quintet period, and it served this music well by allowing it to be shaped by the movement of the ensemble rather than by a preplanned structure. All of this was colored by a minimalist approach to melody.

Take a listen to the solos again. The musicians are not showing off; this is not a display of how fast or how high they could play. It's about what was on their minds—another facet of the word *Brew*, perhaps. More important, this recording put soul back into the form; motivation and essence were key elements in finding a way through the music.

There is no doubt this album started a movement. All of the guys mentioned above, along with Freddie Hubbard, have taken things from that music and used it in their own way. Hubbard's intro to "Red Clay" can be seen as being influenced by Coltrane and Miles; the rubato intro has the openness of "Bitches Brew" and was recorded four months later in January of 1970, with Miles alumni Lenny White, Herbie Hancock and Ron Carter. And while more rhythmic, Chick Corea and Return to Forever's *Where Have I Known You Before* has elements of *Bitches Brew* in its sonic palette. Even though that album was released in 1974, you can see how it was part of the initial movement to plug in and turn up.

Mainstream jazz fans walked out of fusion concerts the same way people walked out when Dylan went electric at Newport and Stravinsky premiered *The Rite of Spring*. (Stravinsky, Prokofiev, Wagner, Satie and other classical mainstays were once as radical as what Miles created with *Bitches Brew*.) This always happens when the foundation is chipped at and the house sways while being rebuilt.

When I was in the Jazz Messengers, Art Blakey used to tell the audience: "You blew Bird. You blew Monk. Don't blow these young musicians." Get it now or regret it later, basically.

•••

"When music created controversy without lyrics."— ad copy for a fusion CD compilation released in 1992

By the '90s, there was cause to look back and celebrate fusion, which had long since been coopted. As usual, when something is good and making money—Return to Forever, Weather Report and the Mahavishnu Orchestra played arenas and sold "product"—commercialism starts sniffing around. Fusion, almost as soon as its first year, was churned into albums in order to pay the record companies' bills, not create sparks. (A formula still in practice today, by the way.) The intent of the fusion I loved was to create something new, not to be just another piece of vinyl sold at the Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price.

In New Orleans in my teen years, I enjoyed all types of music from all different genres. Whether it be Mandrill, Parliament-Funkadelic, the Headhunters, Return to Forever, Miles Davis' jazz quintet, John Coltrane's quartet or Jimi Hendrix, they all forced me to expand my thoughts about what music could become or mutate into. "Sly," on the *Head Hunters* album, was a definite, and pointed, hat tip to Sly Stone. The funk that you basically breathe in the air down here was being whipped up into this other thing; it made its way into your consciousness by combining infectious grooves with complex jazz harmonies and highly specialized improvisation.

My first intention behind starting a group like the E-Collective was to not only have some fun with some great guys, but to create instrumental music that would inspire a whole new generation to check out this jazz thing. What gave me a shot of excitement, the thrill of going over the edge, was fusion; the frisson of fusion, if you will. There is a time and a place for pulling tunes out of the archives and laying in the footnoted solos, but music should also make you experience something you haven't quite felt before; show you something of yourself you've never quite understood before; help you off your ass to go way past the comfortable and push you into the thrilling.

E-Collective members are lovers of all types of music. You name it and it's probably been through our headphones. Taking the open form of *Bitches Brew* as a starting point and inspiration, and allowing—needing—the solos to expand from the soul, has given us the foundation to build just about anything. This understanding and spirit is allowing us to bring all of our collective experiences together to form music that is both exciting to listen to and fun and challenging to play.

We recently did an East Coast swing with Ravi Coltrane. When the E-Collective would walk out onstage, you could tell that some of the fans had no idea what was in store for them. They were waiting for *Magnetic* or even *A Tale of God's Will*. And this scenario was the same throughout the entire tour. During the first two songs, I could see some fans had a look of bewilderment on their faces, all while tapping their toes. By the fourth tune, those who chose to stay were fully engaged. The younger members of the audience knew where we were coming from; they got it from beat one. Then, unfortunately for those who left, Ravi came out and offered his musical genius with a groove-based philosophy that is shared by the E-Collective. Music can never stand still. Because while you think you're standing still, the earth is rotating. ***JT***

WHEN I WAS IN THE JAZZ MESSENGERS, ART BLAKEY USED TO TELL THE AUDIENCE: "YOU BLEW BIRD. YOU BLEW MONK. DON'T BLOW THESE YOUNG MUSICIANS." GET IT NOW OR REGRET IT LATER, BASICALLY.

Since his arrival on the scene in the early 1980s, Terence Blanchard has been one of jazz's top trumpeters. He is also renowned for his film-scoring work in collaboration with Spike Lee. His most recent album is Breathless *(Blue Note), featuring his band the E-Collective.*

Lessons From Ornette

CORNETIST KIRK KNUFFKE ON JAMMING WITH THE FREE-JAZZ GIANT, COMING UP IN COLORADO AND THE JOYS OF FIRST TAKES

It's notoriously difficult to capture pure collective improvisation on a jazz studio album, but cornetist Kirk Knuffke's *Arms & Hands* (The Royal Potato Family) achieves the combustible energy of a live set without any audience interaction. The album was recorded in one day at Acoustic Recording in Prospect Heights, Brooklyn, with drummer Bill Goodwin and bassist Mark Helias forming the core trio and tenor and soprano saxophonist Jeff Lederer, alto saxophonist Daniel Carter and trombonist Brian Drye adding texture. Knuffke's 15th album as a leader or co-leader harks back to an earlier era, when studio sessions required alacrity and risk-taking trumped finesse. Two years after Knuffke, Goodwin and Helias took their maiden voyage as a band, they still haven't rehearsed.

"I'm a big fan of very few takes. There isn't a song on that record that we did more than two takes of," says the 35-year-old cornetist, sitting down recently at his cozy walk-up in midtown Manhattan, where he lives with his wife. "Even though there were only two at the most, half of them were first takes." Longtime collaborator Drye was accustomed to Knuffke's penchant for spontaneity and compositional vagaries. "I showed up and sight-read the tunes in one take and left. He writes in a way that allows for that to happen," Drye says. "Still, I didn't know what to expect."

Knuffke facilitates the unexpected, starting with the collage-style handwritten sheet music. "Atessa" takes up two staves; the rest of the page consists of a black-and-white print of a cantilever bridge. "Next" fills three staves, juxtaposed by an orange dental diagram. "Tuesday," marked "through composed," is the freest, consisting entirely of retro emoji; Kirk is "blissful," Mark "suspicious" and Bill "surprised." The atonal result somehow swings. "Every time we play is like the first time," Goodwin says. To Goodwin, Knuffke's sound is as forward-thinking as they come, but steeped in a long tradition of melodic improvisation. "Kirk reminds me of a pure melody player, like Bobby Hackett or Ruby Braff, Warren Vaché perhaps—beautiful sound, tone production and a melodic gift," he says. "It's straight from the heart."

Arms & Hands evades the standard conventions of a tribute album, offering a more oblique hat-tip, and not to his cornet forebears. There is only one cover: country crooner Ernest Tubb's twangy "Thanks a Lot," a stylish reinvention consistent with the Sonny Rollins school of repertoire selection. Yet the album pays subtle homage to Knuffke's many saxophone totems: "Bright Light" for Daniel Carter; "Root" for Cecil Taylor saxophonist Jimmy Lyons; "Pepper" for Jim Pepper; "Use" for Art Pepper; "Chirp" for Steve Lacy, the inspiration for baritone saxophonist Josh Sinton's Ideal Bread, of which Knuffke is a member. "Safety Shoes," "Elevator" and "Bonderizer" spring from the pages of Studs Terkel's 1974 oral history of industrial life, *Working*, interspersing the album with a mechanistic pulse.

However, its clearest debt is to Ornette Coleman, notably absent from the potpourri, but whose polytonal approach to what he called harmolodics suffuses every track. Knuffke plays in Goodwin's Orntette, a tribute band, with saxophonist Adam Niewood and bassist Chris Higgins. Despite his reputation as a straight-ahead player with Phil Woods and Art Pepper, Goodwin's range extends far beyond the parameters of bebop. Helias collaborated with former Coleman bandmates Ed Blackwell, Dewey Redman and Don Cherry. Knuffke, for his part, never performed publicly with Coleman, but got to know the free-jazz progenitor well in his final years.

Several years ago, Knuffke attended what turned out to be Dewey Redman's final show, and after the set he got up the courage to approach Coleman, who was also in the audience. Coleman invited him to Central Park and then to his apartment. "The very first time I went over, he said, 'Come on in and have a seat.' Then he said, 'I've got to go to the bank.' And he just left," Knuffke says. "As he was going out the door, he said, 'If you need to take a nap, take a nap.'" While Coleman was out, Charlie Haden called and left a message. When he returned, Coleman showed Knuffke his inner sanctum, a

MADELEINE VENTRICE KNUFFKE

practice room with leopard-skin carpet, original album art from his back catalog adorning the walls, the ideal backdrop for an intimate duo jam. When they finished, Ornette gave Knuffke a standing invitation to come over. For several years, he went at least once a month.

"Just playing with him changed who I am and how I play. There was something about being so close to his sound that was really informative," Knuffke recalls. He absorbed a lot by osmosis, grazing through the sheaf of papers on Coleman's desk, myriad lists of melodic lines, mostly diatonic. Some began, unconventionally, on B sharp; one such list was eventually bequeathed to Knuffke. Surprisingly, though, none of Coleman's lead sheets had any rhythm specified. Melody was chief, rhythm had to be felt out. "He'd say, 'I don't remember how it goes until I play it a few times,'" Knuffke says. "Even though it was super rhythmic music, it was all about the line."

Knuffke grew up in Fort Collins, Colo., and began playing the trumpet at 12; by 14, he knew he wanted to be a professional musician. Largely self-taught, he learned by listening to Al Hirt, Lester Bowie, Bill Dixon, Graham Haynes and Chet Baker. After high school, Knuffke completed one year at the University of Northern Colorado, then moved to Denver, where he cut his teeth in blues and funk bands. He had two prominent Colorado-based mentors: pianist Art Lande, who educated him in the fundamentals of jazz theory and improvisation, and trumpeter Ron Miles. When he was 25, Knuffke moved to New York.

He has since become one of the most in-demand sidemen, performing with the Matt Wilson Quartet, Helias' quartet with saxophonist Tim Berne and drummer Mark Ferber, Allison Miller's Boom Tic Boom and groups led by Butch Morris, Michael Formanek and Uri Caine, appearing on more than 60 albums.

Soon after joining the Wilson quartet in 2009, Knuffke began taking annual trips to Denver on tour. During his first homecoming, he offhandedly floated the idea of switching to cornet to Ron Miles. Knuffke had given up the more subdued horn after high school in favor of the trumpet, which he considered more marketable. Miles invited him to his house to try out his cornet collection, including the Monette 900 Series horn that Miles had played on Bill Frisell's *Blues Dream*. "Ron said, 'All right. Dave [Monette] says take care of it.' And he just gave it to me," Knuffke says. Specific instructions from Monette himself followed by e-mail several days later. Knuffke has played it ever since.

"When I was a kid, and would get together and play free improvisations with this drummer friend of mine, I would play cornet. I just felt freer on it for some reason," Knuffke says. "When I moved to New York, it was pretty obvious that I wasn't getting any work because I was a trumpet player. I was only getting work because I was me." **AIDAN LEVY**

Groove Continuum

JAMES BRANDON LEWIS CONNECTS CLASSIC HIP-HOP TO TIMELESS TRIO INTERPLAY

When tenor saxophonist James Brandon Lewis decided to recontextualize '90s hip-hop in a free-jazz-leaning saxophone/electric bass/drums setting, he wanted the results to sound organic and honest. "I didn't want to over-synthesize the music and have a bunch of backbeats with bebop vocabulary," he says. "My biggest challenge with this record is to not be the jazz musician who has the backbeats while giving love to hip-hop."

The finished product, entitled *Days of FreeMan*, is Lewis' second release for the Sony-owned OKeh imprint. The 33-year-old Buffalo, N.Y. native talked about his journey to the golden age of hip-hop while explaining his methods of refracting that urgent sound into his own musical language.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO MAKE THE THEMATIC LEAP FROM SPIRITUALS ON YOUR 2014 DISC, *DIVINE TRAVELS*, TO HIP-HOP ON *DAYS OF FREEMAN*?

It's all a continuum. It's all music coming from the African-American tradition, whether we're talking about spirituals or work songs or hip-hop. It all really speaks to what was happening in our environment when it was created. In a sense, all the music involved "having a voice."

TALK A BIT ABOUT THE TITLE. FROM A CURSORY GLANCE, IT SEEMS RELATED TO THE BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT.

I grew up on Freeman Street in Buffalo. But, of course, when coming up with a title, not only was I thinking about a street, I was thinking about all the other types of conversations that the title could spark. I also have a song on the disc called "Wilson." Wilson, N.Y., is a place my parents used to take me as a kid to go fishing. But, of course, [using "Freeman" and "Wilson" today], I could also be talking about Darren Wilson [the police officer who shot and killed Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo.].

I'm not the type of person to be in your face about discussing what's going on in society. But I'm definitely conscious of it. I don't exist in a place of creating art that's separate from everyday living. Whether I want to be political or not, the world lets me know who and what I am as soon as I step out the door.

OTHER THAN CHILDHOOD MEMORY, DID YOU DIG DEEPER INTO '90S HIP-HOP TO GIVE YOUR MUSIC HISTORICAL WEIGHT?

Yes. I scoured YouTube for hours, watching different documentaries like *Freestyle: The Art of Rhyme*, where I discovered people like [freestyle rapper and album guest] Supernatural and learned how he prepared his rap improvisations by studying the dictionary. Then I checked out KRS-One's

ASH ARNETT

JAMES BRANDON LEWIS

DAYS OF FREEMAN (OKeh)

Tenor saxophonist James Brandon Lewis, along with bassist Jamaaladeen Tacuma and drummer Rudy Royston, delivers a taut, street-smart set, rooted firmly in hip-hop ancestry yet crafted to honor the tenets of inspired jazz improvisation. References to venerated elders from diverse genres permeate both the music and Lewis' written narrative, including shout-outs to historic hip-hop groups and rap-music forebears like A Tribe Called Quest, Digable Planets and Lee "Scratch" Perry. To make an even larger point about the grand scope of African-American heritage, interspersed throughout are recorded excerpts of Lewis' grandmother, Pearl Lewis, ruminating on such topics as freedom, faith, family and the power of gospel music.

Unlike some more self-conscious forward-looking players, neither Lewis nor his compatriots sound as if they're condescending or slumming. Lewis segues effortlessly from rich melodicism to caustic split tones and multiphonics; his lines are challenging, sometimes audacious, but focused and well honed. Royston is funk-toughened yet deftly attuned to texture and color; Tacuma, a veteran of Ornette Coleman's Prime Time, uses his electric bass both as rhythm instrument and font of melodic and harmonic exploration. The musical references to hip-hop are implied, not imposed. Even the hard-rock interlude in "Lament for JLew," featuring Tacuma summoning stentorian bombast from his bass as Lewis soars above and Royston stokes volcanic fires below, sounds unforced. Although some may find Lewis' insistence on the connection between his music and hip-hop to be a bit overstated, his overall message is undeniable: As the AACM would put it, this is "Great Black Music: Ancient to the Future," and these musicians purvey it with integrity, grace and spirit. The music here bespeaks a dedication to uplift and truth-seeking that's absent from much contemporary pop, hip-hop included. **DAVID WHITEIS**

"I DIDN'T WANT TO OVER-SYNTHESIZE THE MUSIC AND HAVE A BUNCH OF BACKBEATS WITH BEBOP VOCABULARY. MY BIGGEST CHALLENGE WITH THIS RECORD IS TO NOT BE THE JAZZ MUSICIAN WHO HAS THE BACKBEATS WHILE GIVING LOVE TO HIP-HOP." —James Brandon Lewis

40 Years of Hip-Hop, *Scratch* and *The Art of 16 Bars*. I also checked out a lot of [jazz-oriented] albums that proceeded me in doing this type of approach—stuff like Russell Gunn's *Ethnomusicology*, Don Byron's *Nu Blaxploitation* and Branford Marsalis' *Buckshot LeFonque*.

Not only was I watching a lot of hip-hop documentaries, I listened to rappers like Common, Talib Kweli and Mos Def [now Yasiin Bey]. When listening to a lot of those classic '90s hip-hop albums, you'll discover that there were a lot of interludes—at least on albums by A Tribe Called Quest, Leaders of the New School and Lauryn Hill. So that inspired me to have that layered conversation with my grandmother on the disc.

HOW DOES HIP-HOP INFORM YOUR IMPROVISATIONS AND MELODIES?

When checking out the rappers, I started listening to all of their cadences. In my rehearsal sessions, I start out verbalizing my saxophone lines. So when I picked up my sax, I had the cadences inside of me to make it easier. No matter what notes I chose, I had that rhythmic flow. I know it's a lot to ask from listeners to just isolate the rhythms on the disc, but if you listen to them closely, you'll notice that they are all hip-hop rhythms, even in the saxophone solos. They all have a speech-like lyricism to them.

TALK ABOUT WORKING WITH BASSIST JAMAALADEEN TACUMA AND DRUMMER RUDY ROYSTON ON THE DISC.

I needed people who could play all genres. Rudy has played just about every kind of music; the same thing can be said about Jamaaladeen. Knowing all [the musicians] they played with collectively, by the time we got to recording "Lament for JLew," when I said, "I need a rock joint on this record," or "Bird of Folk Cries," and we need that gospel shout-music feel, there weren't any problems going there. They did an amazing job.

It was cool to have open dialogue with them about things I was trying to do on the record. And it was challenge for me to keep up with these two monsters of musicians. They brought my music to life. They made the sheet music feel real.

JOHN MURPH

Chasing Rainbows

BASSIST REGGIE WASHINGTON LIFTS UP THE LIFE AND WORK OF LATE GUITARIST JEF LEE JOHNSON

When the guitarist Jef Lee Johnson died from complications related to pneumonia and diabetes in 2013, at age 54, many in the music community mourned the loss of this gifted leader and prolific sideman who'd combined jazz learning with the psychedelic blues of Hendrix.

Reggie Washington decided to channel his own grief. The electric and acoustic bassist, now 53, was a longtime colleague and admirer of Johnson's and felt that his friend never received the widespread recognition he deserved. For about a year Washington mulled over the idea of recording an album of Johnson's compositions. He ultimately spent the next year recording *Rainbow Shadow: A Tribute to Jef Lee Johnson Vol. 1*, released in June on Washington's own Jammin'colorS label.

Besides their musical compatibility, both Washington and Johnson shared knowledge of great sorrow—Johnson lost his wife in 2001 and Washington's first wife was murdered. Despite those tragedies, and the loss of Johnson himself, *Rainbow Shadow* is in no way a funereal album. Washington went into the project wanting to honor his friend's spirit, which meant there would be plenty of uptempo funk as well as reflective numbers like the pensive "Black Sands" and the pure-soul "Morning." Even while nodding to Johnson's influence, the album connects various other threads of Washington's musical self.

"[When he died,] I had been playing with Jef in my trio for a couple of years, and we had a friendship over a 30-year period," Washington says. It took some time for that trio, fleshed out by drummer Gene Lake, son of saxophonist Oliver Lake, to come together; schedules were always conflicting, and while Johnson was based in Philadelphia, Washington had moved to Brussels, the home of his second wife and business partner, in the mid-2000s. In 2012 the trio released *Freedom*, Washington's second album as a leader, following 2006's *A Lot of Love, Live!*

When the band began working together, "I wanted Jef to do more of his tunes. I've always been a fan. But he never wanted to," Washington says. With Johnson's passing, Washington received the blessing of Johnson's family and got busy. He recruited a team of musicians, anchored by

Bassist Reggie Washington and (inset) the late guitarist Jef Lee Johnson

guitarist Marvin Sewell (playing Johnson's own instruments) and drummer Patrick Dorcéan, and began laying down tracks in studios in France and the New York-New Jersey-Pennsylvania area.

Rainbow Shadow, which Washington produced, draws its title from a nickname, Rainbow Crow, that Johnson bestowed upon himself, taken from a Lenape Indian legend. The album's leadoff track, "Crow's Rainbow," is a meditative solo bass piece composed by Washington. "I thought, 'Let me just say it now,'" Washington says. "Then we can get on to the festivities."

Those "festivities"—other than a workup of Ellington's "Take the Coltrane" and the few originals—encompass 10 tracks that explore the range of Johnson's compositional skills. In addition to the core band, Deejay Grazzhoppa brings turntables and sampling to several tracks, and a handful of guests, among them saxophonist Jacques Schwarz-Bart, trumpeter Wallace Roney and keyboardist Jonathan Crayford, join in at various points. Johnson's voice and guitar are also sampled, and lyrics that he wrote but never used are incorporated into several songs sung by Washington—who'd never before sung on one of his albums. "Ah, man. When folks find out that you can do that, you have to do that," he says with a laugh. "There is no turning back. I always wanted Jef to do some of these tunes and he said, 'Why don't you do it yourself?' So I started transcribing. It's an incredible body of work."

Originally from Staten Island, N.Y., Reggie Washington is the younger brother of the great drummer Kenny Washington. Reggie, who played cello before switching to bass, learned much from observing and playing with Kenny, from their big-band-loving father and from the guests that often came by the house: Jimmy Knepper, Dizzy Gillespie, Jimmy Owens, Reggie Workman (with whom Washington has been confused on more than one occasion). Washington also cites bassist Marcus Miller—who convinced him to play electric bass—and the late drummer Chico Hamilton as important mentors. Extensive work with saxophonists Steve Coleman, as a member of his Five Elements, and Ravi Coltrane pushed his playing to a higher level.

"I absorbed everything," Washington says. "I had a photographic memory and perfect pitch, so whatever I would read and play through one time, I would just remember. I tried to be as expressionistic and emotional as possible. Sometimes these legendary musicians can show you what not to do too. Chico taught me to be appreciative of where you go, the audience, the music that you're playing, to be respectful. Let's not be drunk and ugly because that's not being appreciative of the people who come out to listen to you. Humble yourself. Don't be arrogant. Act like a black man with dignity in a different world. I will take all of that to the grave with me." **JEFF TAMARKIN**

DAVID CRUNELLE, INSET BY MARK STEHLE

Farewells

John Taylor, a British pianist who was a major figure on the European jazz scene for more than four decades, died July 17. He suffered a heart attack while performing at the Saveurs Jazz Festival in Segré, France. He was 72. Taylor was renowned for his long association with trumpeter Kenny Wheeler, who died last year.

Howard Rumsey, a bassist best known as the leader of the Los Angeles-based Lighthouse All-Stars during the 1950s, and as a club owner, died July 15 in Newport Beach, Calif. He was 97. The cause was pneumonia. Rumsey also played in bands led by Stan Kenton, Charlie Barnet and Barney Bigard. During the 1970s and '80s, Rumsey owned and operated a club called Concerts by the Sea in Redondo Beach, Calif.

Harold Ousley, a journeyman saxophonist and flutist who worked in the hard-bop and soul-jazz realms, died Aug. 13 of an undisclosed cause. He was 86. In the '50s, Ousley played with Gene Ammons, Miles Davis, Billie Holiday, Brother Jack McDuff, Howard McGhee, Bud Powell, Clark Terry, Dinah Washington and Joe Williams. He began recording as a leader in the 1960s, with the *Tenor Sax* album on Bethlehem. In the '70s, Ousley played in the big bands of Count Basie, Duke Ellington and Lionel Hampton.

Garrison Fewell, a guitarist, author and educator who began his career in straight-ahead jazz and later became a proponent of the avant-garde, died July 5 in Boston. The cause was cancer. He was 61. Fewell taught in the guitar department at Berklee College of Music for 38 years and authored two textbooks on jazz guitar. He also recorded more than a dozen albums as a leader or co-leader.

Ettore Stratta, a conductor, producer, pianist and composer who worked in both the jazz and classical realms, died July 9 in New York City. He was 82, and had suffered a heart attack and stroke. Stratta worked with jazz artists including Tony Bennett, Al Jarreau, Hubert Laws, Paquito D'Rivera, Dave Brubeck, Stéphane Grappelli, Lena Horne, Dave Grusin, Ramsey Lewis, Nancy Wilson, Hank Jones, Toots Thielemans, Dick Hyman and Michel Legrand.

Vic Firth, a musician and educator who founded the drumstick manufacturing company that bears his name, died July 26 in Boston. The cause was pancreatic cancer. Firth, who also served as the principal timpanist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra from 1956 to 2002, was 85.

News from JazzTimes.com

The New York-based Birdland Jazz Club has formed AB Artists, a management and booking company. In August, Birdland also announced the spring 2016 opening of the Birdland Theater, a 100-seat venue that will occupy the lower level of the club and feature jazz as well as cabaret, theatre, dance and comedy.

Club Bonafide, a new jazz venue, has opened on East 52nd Street in Midtown Manhattan, the headquarters of the city's jazz scene during the bop era. The club is co-owned by bassist Richard Bona. Also new is the Steve Getz Music Hall at Lehman College in the West Bronx. The hall opened in September with a tribute to the proprietor's father, tenor sax great Stan Getz.

National Sawdust, a new performance venue in the Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn, will open in October. The space's opening month includes festivals dedicated to Terry Riley and John Zorn, as well as performances by keyboardist Leo Genovese, vocalist Theo Bleckmann and the duos of Magos Herrera and Javier Limón and Yuka Honda and Nels Cline.

DELFEAYO MARSALIS

FAMILY CANDOR

By Jennifer Odell

Walking into trombonist and producer Delfeayo Marsalis' home in Uptown New Orleans is a little like stepping into a hyperbaric chamber of creative stimulation. A piano peeks out from beneath sheet music and a dozen or so awards. Books like John McCusker's *Creole Trombone: Kid Ory and the Early Years of Jazz* sit on the coffee table and line the wall space not adorned with art, while trombones and horn parts battle for space in the corners. It's a fitting home base for an artist whose creative output has long been characterized by big-picture thinking that aims to provoke as much thought as it does enjoyment.

The latest example of that work came in 2014 with *The Last Southern Gentlemen* (Troubadour Jass), an homage to the essential human element of jazz and his first full-length recording with his father, Ellis Marsalis. (Delfeayo is now 50, three years younger than his brother Wynton, who is a year younger than their brother Branford.) And while the trombonist's acclaimed production skills have taken a backseat to performance lately, his producer's hat is always on—a point he made abundantly clear while offering insights on the following selections.

1. American Jazz Quintet

"Never More" (*In the Beginning*, AFO). Alvin Battiste, clarinet; Warren Bell, alto saxophone; Harold Battiste, tenor saxophone; Ellis Marsalis, piano; Richard Payne, bass. Recorded in 1956.

BEFORE: On the heels of the passing of Mr. Harold Battiste, you're playing a song that features my father and Alvin Battiste, and if I'm not mistaken it's called "Never More."

In every town, used to be there'd be the set of musicians and the cats could play. In Pittsburgh, these guys ended up on *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. Those guys could play. And in Detroit it was Marcus Belgrave and his boys. So that's how it sounds to me. It sounds like a group of musicians that if a traveling musician were to come to town and say, "Hey, we need some cats who can play," they'd call this group. If it is my dad, I'm not used to hearing him sound that way.

AFTER: A lot is said about my dad and his influence on musicians, but to be honest, that's just the New Orleans way. There are so many teachers, like Harold Battiste, Alvin Batiste, Kidd Jordan, John Longo, John Fernandez, Danny Barker, [a guitarist, banjoist and singer who] taught the whole traditional

KEITH MAJOR

New Orleans crew that's playing [today], the guys who are now in their 50s and 60s. You know, [trumpeter] Leroy Jones and [trombonist] Lucien Barbarin.

These are all musicians who love the music so much that they've given up much of their time and many hours of their lives to help the younger musicians grow.

2. Abdullah Ibrahim & Ekaya

"Calypso Minor" (*Sotho Blue*, Sunnyside). Ibrahim, piano; Andrae Murchison, trombone; Cleave Guyton, alto saxophone, flute; Keith Loftis, tenor saxophone; Jason Marshall, baritone saxophone; Belden Bullock, bass; George Gray, drums. Recorded in 2011.

BEFORE: Immediately I can tell, just from the sound quality, that this is more recent. I don't know who it is immediately, but the bass has that dreaded bass direct sound, a rubbery kind of sound. I would have edited out the bass solo. Sorry, bassist, whoever you are. It's a pretty long bass solo compared to the other solos.

It sounds good. It's well presented, but it doesn't have a certain kind of bite that I like. But it's good music. I like that it doesn't sound like the guys are just runnin' a bunch of patterns. They're trying to talk, and to me the gauge of a great soloist is how much he or she sounds like they're talking as opposed to running scales or patterns [that sound] like gibberish.

AFTER: Oh! OK. … I actually realized that some of my early harmony understanding came from playing with [Ibrahim]—even though I didn't realize it as I started to compose.

It's from a French film he scored called *No Fear, No Die*, from 1990.

Again, interesting; I can see now that it's for a soundtrack. Maybe the design for the soundtrack is a little different. It probably worked out perfectly.

3. Elvin Jones

"Tintiyana" (*Midnight Walk*, Atlantic). Jones, drums; Thad Jones, trumpet; Hank Mobley, tenor saxophone; Dollar Brand (Abdullah Ibrahim), piano; Don Moore, bass. Recorded in 1966.

BEFORE: I can tell it's an older recording. Have no idea who it is. Seems like they got this song in the studio, because they're not really owning the song but they're playing it and sometimes that's a great part of the experience. … I feel similarly about this as I did with the Abdullah Ibrahim song, where it doesn't really seem like it gets to a climactic spot. That may be because they're trying to figure out what is going on with the song. Just from a sound standpoint I would say that has to be something from the '60s.

It was actually written by Abdullah as Dollar Brand.

AFTER: Are you kidding me?! Man, that was a tame day for Elvin. But the other part of that is these musicians, they performed and recorded so much. I remember asking Elvin about the *A Love Supreme* session and he just said, "You know, we just went in and did what we did every day." And that's how they approached it. Now we look at that recording like, "Oh, it's such a thing." So that's kind of what that song sounds like: These guys came in and they played. I'm sure they got that song at the date and they're just trying to figure out what to do with it.

4. Preservation Hall Jazz Band

"Rattlin' Bones" (*That's It!*, Sony Legacy). Mark Braud, trumpet, background vocals; Charlie Gabriel, clarinet, background vocals; Clint Maedgen, tenor saxophone, background vocals; Ben Jaffe, banjo, background vocals; Rickie Monie, piano; Ronell Johnson, sousaphone; Joe Lastie, drums; Freddie Lonzo, vocals. Recorded in 2012.

BEFORE: Ha! That's an old riff. Oh, the big fat booty! Oh yeah, this is a contemporary recording. … The trumpet player's playing is more modern than what you would [normally] hear in that style. Trumpet's got good strong chops. I'm not sure exactly who that is, reminds me of a couple of different people in a couple of different instances. Tuba is good; vocal is a little loud. The band sounds like they're in the background, but that might work for the kind of sound that they were trying to get. This is a good song. I think it really captures that New Orleans feeling in the way the musicians like to play spontaneously.

AFTER: Is that my cousin on trumpet, Mark Braud? Yeah. I was thinking Andrew Baham was playing trumpet. Mark's [playing here] is similar to the way I've heard Andrew Baham play. They bring that modern sound, some of the things that Wynton did, and they bring that into the traditional sound. Branford isn't always a fan of that, but I like it. Mark had good strong chops. I'm gonna call you for a gig, cousin!

The vocal may have also been overdubbed. If you overdub any instrument it's hard to recreate the balance; it's either gonna be too loud or too soft. For some reason, when you have a group of instruments and then you do an overdub it's almost impossible to make it sound like it's in the same room at the same time. Or they had [the vocalist] isolated and the rest of the band was in the same room. That's just something I know from having done overdubs. You can come close but it's very difficult to balance.

5. The Curtis Fuller Sextette

"Kachin," (*Imagination*, Savoy). Fuller, trombone; Thad Jones, trumpet; Benny Golson, tenor saxophone; McCoy Tyner, piano; Jimmy Garrison, bass; Dave Bailey, drums. Recorded in 1959.

BEFORE: Curtis Fuller. It's such a distinctive sound. Hmm. Yeah. Three or four notes and you know immediately. Ha! Yeah, this is early Curtis. It's from the late '50s, huh? This has the kind of intensity that I like.

"*THE GREAT KAI & J.J.* YOU GOTTA BE KIDDING ME. NOTHING AGAINST KAI, BUT WHATEVER. COME ON, MAN. IT'D BE LIKE *THE GREAT CHET BAKER & MILES*, YOU KNOW?"

Oh, that's one of the records with Benny Golson. I don't know this record. Sounds like Van Gelder's studio, too. [Ed. note: *He's correct regarding the studio.*] I couldn't hear it with Curtis playing but I can hear it now that Benny Golson is playing. This might be the early '60s too. It's either late '50s or early '60s; if I had my headphones I could tell. Oh, this is one of Curtis' tunes. He liked to write tunes where the harmony moves a certain way.

This is like an inspirational preacher. It's like, you know about Martin Luther King, you know "I Have a Dream" and we know about "I've Been to the Mountaintop." But there were hundreds, if not thousands, of other speeches that were that inspiring, and that's the way it is to hear Curtis. It may not be one of the classic songs that we're familiar with, but he knew how to tell a story.

AFTER: Thad again! It's an elusive sound. It's just somebody I'm not as familiar with.

6. John Ellis & Double-Wide

"Booker" (*Charm*, Parade Light). Ellis, tenor saxophone; Alan Ferber, trombone; Gary Versace, organ; Matt Perrine, sousaphone; Jason Marsalis, drums, cymbals. Recorded in 2014.

BEFORE: Nicely articulated. Again, it's a pop kind of recording. You don't get the sense that the guys are in the same room. It's a different emotional feeling.

Is that my little brother, Jason? And Rick Trolsen? It doesn't really sound like Rick but I'm trying to think of other trombone players that he played with. Jason did some stuff with John Ellis. I could see it being John Ellis on tenor. The trombone was good, well articulated. Trolsen's got a little more grease in the stew.

I like to hear what they sound like together and here everybody's isolated. You hear what they're playing but it's a different sensitivity.

AFTER: It's good. They got the New Orleans feel. I like a little more of the street sound, a little bit more of that edge on it—like from that Curtis [track]. It's a different time period, but you know what I mean. That's what I personally like when I hear the New Orleans groove. … Yeah, it makes sense that it wouldn't be Trolsen, 'cause, yeah, he got grit.

7. Kai Winding & J.J. Johnson

"Trixie" (*The Great Kai & J.J.*, Impulse!). Winding, Johnson, trombones; Bill Evans, piano; Tommy Williams, bass; Art Taylor, drums. Recorded in 1960.

BEFORE: That J.J.? Yeah, J.J. It's an older recording. Is it Kai Winding? Is it J and Kai? Yeah. The '60s. I can tell by the panning of it, it's the '60s.

J.J. was really important because of his insistence on precision. And Kai Winding developed a lot playing next to J.J. over the years. You hear early Kai Winding and he sounds rough. But playing next to somebody who insists on precision, it's almost like the way Wynton plays—it has to affect you when you play. J.J., he's really clear with his thinking. That's really important as a soloist, to be as clear as possible with your thinking. He can be safe when you hear enough of his recordings, but again, everybody can't do everything. This is much more safe than the Curtis we heard. But where J.J.'s like, "I know how to swim but I'm not sure what's in these waters," Curtis is like, "Man, hell with it—let's find out what's in the waters!"

[Impulse!] also put out a record called *The Great Kai & J.J.* Aha! Racial awareness of the times. The white guy's gonna sell the records. I mean, come on, man. Kai Winding wouldn't have said that. They got Kai Winding all in the front on the cover and J.J.'s all in the back. It's just what it is. Sign of the times. Couple of the J.J. records, they would put white folks on the covers, like a white girl holding the trombone [*J.J. Johnson's Jazz Quintets*, on Savoy]. We've always had to deal with the race thing. We're always going to have to deal with that. It's just a question of how do we deal with it.

I think this was probably recorded at Van Gelder's too. Yeah, definitely Van Gelder's. [Ed. note: *He's correct.*] When was it from, like '63 or '64?

AFTER: OK, this is that record! I have it somewhere. *The Great Kai & J.J.*! I don't think so, buddy. Yeah, here it is—Kai is in the front, J.J.'s in the back. And in the alphabet, J comes before K. It should have been J and Kai. Those doggone Marsalises, they're always looking for any little thing. … *The Great Kai & J.J.* You gotta be kidding me. Nothing against Kai, but whatever. Come on, man. It'd be like *The Great Chet Baker & Miles*, you know?

8. Ron Carter

"Ten Strings" (*Uptown Conversation*, Embryo). Carter, basses, composer; Sam Brown, guitar. Recorded in 1969.

BEFORE: This is a modern bass kind of thing. I don't like that particular sound, but there's something to be said about it. With an electric sound, you could play faster in a certain kind of way better than you could with an acoustic sound. But, to me, [Scott LaFaro] was the one who did this. Bill Evans,

knowing that he couldn't possibly compete with Oscar Peterson and Wynton Kelly to create his own trio sound, I think he said, "We're gonna go more to that European thing," which is like the symphony orchestra, where you don't have any string sound. You don't have anything that would be kind of aggressive.

There's another great record [featuring LaFaro], *The Arrival of Victor Feldman*. I saw the record cover when I was at Berklee. It's like three white guys on a beach with loud colors and I was like, "*Pshh*, I gotta buy this record." I love playing it for bass players 'cause only one, Delbert Felix, knew that it was Scott LaFaro. They're not used to him playing that aggressively.

So Bill Evans was the guy who decided, "We're gonna play the acoustic bass more like a guitar—no string sound, nothing aggressive." And a lot of people have followed suit. Personally, I like, you know, you're playing bass. It's masculine. I don't like that feminine kind of a bass sound.

AFTER: The bass direct is important for various reasons. This is not indicative of the classic bass direct sound. But for the type of mood that Ron Carter's trying to set, I think this was good for that. … Ron Carter is such a master of the instrument he can pretty much do whatever he wants to do. He's hittin' some bass tone here. Ron Carter, man. And that's '69? Wow.

9. Baby Dodds Trio

"Buddy Bolden Blues" (*Jazz a' la Creole*, Circle). Dodds, drums; Albert Nicholas, clarinet; Don Ewell, piano. Recorded in 1951.

BEFORE: This is clearly old. "I Thought I Heard Buddy Bolden Say," right? I have to guess it could be Jelly Roll Morton on piano. The clarinet … I know that sound. It sounds like somebody who played with Frog Joseph on these Sidney Bechet records. That sounded like it's from the '40s or the '30s.

AFTER: Albert Nicholas, yes! That's the thing he played on the Sidney Bechet recording. What year was it?

1951. You quoted Baby Dodds in the liner notes for *The Last Southern Gentlemen*, in reference to his willingness to play softly when the vibe of a room required it.

Yeah, and it's interesting because you can hear the sense of humor that Baby Dodds had. That's what sticks out with me, the changes he's making throughout the course of the song. It's not at all like some of the jazz drummers you hear who play one particular way. But this has a lot of great variety to it in the way that he's changing it up. I didn't even miss the bass. But that's that joy that comes with New Orleans music. ***JT***

RAY ANDERSON

ABSOLUTE RESOLVE, IN LIFE & ART

By Ted Panken

On Father's Day, trombonist Ray Anderson, whose children are grown, celebrated with a door gig at the 55 Bar on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village. It was just past 6, and perhaps 10 patrons were present, including a gentleman with a pile of Anderson's LPs and CDs for the leader to autograph later. Among them was *Every One of Us*, a 1992 date with Simon Nabatov, Charlie Haden and Edward Blackwell, which contains Anderson's "Kinda Garnerish," the evening's kick-off number. After Anderson's florid opening cadenza, bassist Mark Helias and drummer Tommy Campbell hit a funky groove, propelling an epic, swinging trombone solo; Anderson executed fast passages with trumpetistic clarity and brightness, and juxtaposed them to extravagantly vocalized bottom-register effusions.

"We're warmed up now," Anderson said. "Might as well move on to the abdominals." He lit into "Right Down Your Alley," the title track of a 1984 release with Helias and drummer Gerry Hemingway, still a collaborative unit called BassDrumBone. Anderson nailed the theme—fast, octave-leaping postbop passages, a jump-cut to a slow blues, another jump-cut to postbop—and launched chorus upon chorus of fresh ideas at a supersonic tempo, goosed by Campbell's instant responses and Helias' in-the-pocket basslines. Helias' half-chorus lowered the volume to a subtone, introducing an open section. Campbell tone-painted harmonics on the cymbal; Anderson wove multiphonics and overtones into the flow with *didgeridoo*-like tone, telling the story with precisely calibrated roars, yowls, snorts, moans, squiggles, jabs and swoops.

Anderson recorded "Cheek to Cheek" in 1990, on *Wishbone*. Here, as the beat feel morphed from slow-medium to foxtrot to Latin, he excitedly traversed the horn's entire range without losing sight of the melody, interpolating quotes from, among other references, "I Cover the Waterfront" and "I Got Rhythm." On a way-up "Bohemia After Dark," which Anderson covered on his 1985 album *Old Wine—New Bottles*, with Kenny Barron, Cecil McBee and Dannie Richmond, he waded into the swamp with his plunger, quoting generously from the Ellington trombonist Tricky Sam Nanton, an association that perhaps inspired Anderson to conclude the set by singing "I'm Just a Lucky So-and-So."

A FEW DAYS LATER AT A TEAHOUSE IN THE VILLAGE, Anderson, 62, traced his anything-goes sensibility to his formative years in Hyde Park, on Chicago's South Side. There, during his impressionable teens, he attended concerts presented by the then recently formed AACM. "I saw the Experimental Orchestra, which was jaw-dropping," he recalled, before citing a duo concert by Roscoe Mitchell and Joseph Jarman at University Church, across the street from the University of Chicago campus. "These cats were surrounded by instruments, including all these bells and gongs, a Theremin and every reed you could imagine, just moving through this space making this beautiful sonic sculpture, and then all of a sudden they go, *Vommm! ... Bupp-ba-peckadadee*—playing [Mitchell's] 'Nonaah' or something. It blew my mind. The AACM blazed a path that allowed you to do everything. You can play that sonic sculpture like Boulez, and go into a reggae tune. You can play bebop, but play it any way you want. I don't do what they do, but I took that reality to heart."

Anderson had to rebuild his embouchure after a severe case of Bell's palsy in 1983. But on 13 leader recordings and five with BassDrumBone between '84 and 1999, he delivered that inclusive aesthetic with promethean chops and a charismatic personality that generated extensive accolades from the jazz press. And he averaged, by his estimate, six months a year on the road. But that chapter of his career ended when his wife was diagnosed with Stage-4 breast cancer, which she battled for three years until her death in 2002. As the single parent of two children, Anderson scaled back and assumed a close-to-home position as professor of jazz studies at Stony Brook University, where he is still employed.

Out of the public eye over the ensuing timespan, Anderson endured a second bout with Bell's palsy and a fight against laryngeal cancer. Exacerbating his struggle was a diabetic condition that emerged in 1974, a year after he moved to New York following a period in California. That his creative juices never stopped percolating is clear from three excellent CDs on the Intuition label, most recently *Being the Point*, on which the Organic Quartet (Campbell on drums, Stony Brook colleague Steve Salerno on guitar and Gary Versace on organ) improvises with efflorescence on seven originals. *Hear You Say: Live in Willisau* documents a 2009 quartet concert co-led with reedman Marty Ehrlich, while *Sweet Chicago Suite*, recorded in 2010 and titled for the six-part opus that begins it, features Anderson's Pocket Brass Band, comprising the late trumpeter Lew Soloff, sousaphonist Matt Perrine and drummer Bobby Previte.

ALAN NAHIGIAN

"Each piece is about formative experiences growing up in Chicago [that became] very much part of my ongoing personality," Anderson said of *Sweet Chicago Suite*, which he premiered at the Chicago Jazz Festival in 2002, 12 days after his wife's death. Imbued with the workshop sensibility that defined Windy City musical expression during the turbulent '60s, Anderson constructs a self-portrait that references the influence of the AACM ("Magnificent Mistifiyo"), Willie Dixon (the slow-drag "Chicago Greys," built on a refrain evocative of Ellington's "The Mooche"), Lee Morgan and Horace Silver (a boogaloo soul-jazz number called "High School") and James Brown and Sly Stone (the brisk, funky, inside-to-free "Going to Maxwell Street"). On the hymnal "Some Day," Anderson pays homage to the black church as embodied by the Reverend Jesse Jackson's historic weekly sermons for Operation Breadbasket. "My father taught at Chicago Theological Seminary, and Jesse Jackson was a student of his," Anderson said. "My dad would say, 'He never did finish, because he had way more important things to do,' which he did."

The blend of ivory tower and street culture that defined the Hyde Park experience was a heady environment for a child, as was the University of Chicago Lab School, where George Lewis was a classmate. "In fourth grade, we were the only two kids who selected the trombone," Anderson recalled. Early on, he dug the "sly-dog humor" of Vic Dickenson and "tone quality" of Trummy Young; as time progressed, he appreciated the "incredible fleetness" of J.J. Johnson, Curtis Fuller, Carl Fontana and Frank Rosolino. "When I started listening to the Ellington trombones, it was all over," he continued. High school music teacher Dean Hay, a trombonist, introduced him to Roswell Rudd, then making his presence felt with the New York Art Quartet and with Archie Shepp on *Live in San Francisco*.

From the beginning, Anderson incorporated elements from all these sources in constructing a tonal personality. "I never made anything even resembling an innovation on the trombone by deciding to do it, or tried to figure out how to play faster or higher from an intellectual vantage point," he said. "You try as hard as you possibly can to express what you're feeling inside, which is very powerful if you allow yourself to actually feel it, and let that energy explode out of the horn. You sometimes feel that you want to play every single note there is, all at once, now. What does that sound like? That's what drives technique."

In 1978, Anderson emerged on the international stage after Lewis recommended him as his replacement in the Anthony Braxton Quartet. "Before Braxton, my career was mostly Latin bands, which wasn't going to result in Ray Anderson groups or records," Anderson said. "When I got the gig, we rehearsed in Chicago for a few weeks, and I spent eight hours a day in the basement of my parents' house trying to learn to play this shit, which was kicking my ass! The intensity of the creative demand forced you to find different stuff, to make a different sound as well as develop the ability to move around the horn and articulate. I made huge leaps.

"I'd try to figure out what to do to play with what Braxton was doing, and either support it in some kind of contrapuntal way or get in there with the same type of energy or sound. One day Braxton told me, 'Ray, I'm over there playing my thing. You stay over there and play your thing.' That was highly educational. Everything is related, but it doesn't have to be in a tight way. You could argue that's a real Chicago perspective, a way of making the canvas bigger, getting a wider focus, like pulling back the movie camera and seeing not only the lovers embracing under the palm tree but that Krakatoa is about to go off."

In following that "big-canvas" aesthetic, Anderson has sought "to represent all the different aspects of what a given band is doing" on his recorded corpus. An exception is the self-produced duo recording *Love Notes*, from 2009, on which Anderson and Salerno explore 10 standards that address the subject of love from various angles. Adjectives like "loud," "aggressive," "boisterous," "brash," "blustery' and "wild and wooly"—those descriptives are culled from mainstream press accounts of Anderson's work of the '80s and '90s—decidedly do not apply.

"For many years I wanted to make an album of romance that is a unified work of art," Anderson said. "It's a tighter focus. There's considerable variation, but it inhabits an area. I was thinking about the lyrics, and the way I feel about these songs made me play in a way that's not as wild. There's a lot of grief in that record, too. Guess what? I'm not one-dimensional." ***JT***

JACEK GANCARCZYK

The ART of BEING HEARD

DAVE DOUGLAS REFLECTS ON THE FIRST DECADE OF HIS GREENLEAF MUSIC COMPANY

BY NATE CHINEN

Dave Douglas has always, it seems, been a musician ideally suited to the art of multitasking. A tirelessly prolific trumpeter, composer and bandleader working within and beyond the jazz mainstream, he runs the Festival of New Trumpet Music, a nonprofit New York City institution now in its 13th year. He's also the founder and owner of Greenleaf Music, an independent label and music company that celebrated its 10th anniversary last spring.

A concert at the Manhattan venue SubCulture in May showcased the breadth of the Greenleaf roster, with performances by Catharsis, a pugnacious postbop band led by the trombonist Ryan Keberle; Sun Pictures, a chamber-esque vehicle for bassist Linda Oh; and the Donny McCaslin Quartet, a hard-nosed fusion outfit led by its namesake saxophonist. Had the lineup been a little more comprehensive, it would also have featured groups led by drummer Rudy Royston, bassist Matt Ulery, alto saxophonist Curtis Macdonald—and at least a few led by Douglas himself.

His next album, out in October, will feature his acclaimed quintet with Royston, Oh, saxophonist Jon Irabagon and pianist Matt Mitchell. Titled *Brazen Heart*, it bears a dedication to Douglas' older brother, who recently died of cancer. "It's a record of resilience and love and compassion," the trumpeter says. And in certain respects it will form a companion to two other Greenleaf releases: *Be Still*, a 2012 memorial for Douglas' mother, and *Mountain Passages*, released in 2004 in tribute to his father. "It's driven home for me how personal the music is," he reflects of these albums, "and given a profound new meaning to the work that I do."

As for Douglas' most recent album, *High Risk*, it's an assuredly sleek outing made with Shigeto, a prominent young electronic artist who happens to be a former jazz drummer. One day after its release this June, on the cusp of a North American tour, Douglas, 52, sat for an interview about the trajectory of Greenleaf Music—with ample digression about the state of the industry—at a riverside park in the New York commuter town of Croton-on-Hudson, where he lives.

MY UNDERSTANDING IS THAT GREENLEAF MUSIC BEGAN LIKE MANY ARTIST IMPRINTS, IN THAT YOU WERE SIMPLY LOOKING FOR A WAY TO GET YOUR OWN MUSIC OUT. IS THAT ACCURATE?
At that time I had recorded for a lot of different independent labels, which opened up pathways for me, because each had its own unique distribution and promotional channels. Then around '99, when I got signed by RCA Victor, I made it a part of the deal that I could make records at a certain pace, and that each one would be a very different project and vision.

DID YOU RECEIVE PUSHBACK ON THAT POINT?
Not at the initial signing. The problem was that I was there five years, and during those five years there were seven different presidents of the label. And the label kept changing names, too. It was a period of rapid change in the industry, and consolidation. I completed the seven records that I was under contract to do, and it was as the last record came out that RCA got bought by Sony. And I knew that I wasn't going to get the same deal again, that I had lucked out getting it in the first place. So I started Greenleaf because I didn't want to think of a new project and have to justify it to somebody. And I wanted to keep ownership of the music. Also, with the way the industry was just beginning to change—this was in 2004—having ownership of a small company that was quick on its feet was a good idea.

YOUR FIRST ALBUM ON GREENLEAF, *MOUNTAIN PASSAGES*, WAS VERY PERSONAL. I REMEMBER THINKING THAT TO START THE LABEL ON THAT FOOTING IS A STATEMENT OF SOME KIND.
It's funny that you say that now, because at the time I felt like that was an odd record to start the journey with. It was such an anomaly: clarinet, tuba, cello, trumpet, drums. I had wise advisers around me saying I should do a really straight-ahead, mainstream-type release as my first. But *Mountain Passages* was a suite commissioned by the Sounds of the Dolomites festival, which is this festival in Northern Italy that invites you to come and hike up to the locations. My father was an amateur musician, and the guy who got me started in music. And he was a mountain trail runner. So with this commission, and my father's love of folk music, that's what I wrote, and I dedicated the suite to him. He never got to hear it; he passed just as we were going to do it in Italy. His middle name, and my brother's middle name, was Greenleaf, and I was looking for a name that felt like growth, that felt like continuity and a rebirth of something.

IT'S A SERENDIPITOUS NAME IN THAT REGARD.
I guess it is. It didn't occur to me until that moment. And of course when I announced the name, people thought I was talking about weed. And we're still not selling marijuana, 10 years later.

WELL, THERE'S STILL TIME.
We're thinking of opening a Colorado branch. [*laughs*]

CAN YOU RECALL WHAT THE LEARNING CURVE WAS FOR YOU? WHAT FACTORS PRESENTED THEMSELVES AS CHALLENGES FOR A BRAND-NEW LABEL HEAD?
I didn't anticipate how it would impact the creative outlook of me as an artist. I think about what I'm doing differently, because now I'm a part of the whole package from the beginning to the end: from the genesis of an idea to playing the gigs with the band, producing

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: EVE TROJANOV, G. CAVULLI, JACEK GANCARCZYK

Clockwise from top: The current Dave Douglas Quintet, featuring Linda Oh, Rudy Royston, the leader, Matt Mitchell and Jon Irabagon (from left); in the Dolomites of Northern Italy in 2003, Douglas and company perform music that would become *Mountain Passages*, the first Greenleaf release; Shigeto, Mark Guiliana, Douglas and Jonathan Maron (from left) play music from *High Risk* in Poland in April

the recording session, generating the graphic design and coming up with a plan to put it out. Dealing with the good reviews and the bad reviews, getting the CD around worldwide.

IT'S REALLY A FARM-TO-TABLE APPROACH.
It is, and as I'm doing each one, the next ones are on the horizon. Very early on, I knew that I didn't want it to only be Dave Douglas records. I was looking to find musicians who wanted to be on a team, and who wanted to play, get out there and fight for the music. So in the midst of putting my first record out, I called Shane Endsley, who's one of my favorite trumpet players, and asked if he had a project. He said, "Well, I play in this band called Kneebody," and that became our first non-Dave Douglas album. Then I also had my working quintet, which had recorded with RCA, with [pianist] Uri Caine, [tenor saxophonist] Donny McCaslin, [bassist] James Genus and [drummer] Clarence Penn. I went to the engineer Joe Ferla, my friend and co-conspirator over many years. We found a studio to record in, and made the record *Meaning and Mystery* under these new Greenleaf Music circumstances.

THAT QUINTET WAS ALSO INVOLVED IN ONE OF YOUR RISKIER BUSINESS DECISIONS: THE DOCUMENTATION OF A WEEK AT THE JAZZ STANDARD, WITH DOWNLOADS OF EACH SET AVAILABLE THE NEXT DAY.
It was incredibly psychically taxing on the whole band to know that we were going out there every night, and that it was going up overnight: available the next morning, every note that we played. And it was a summary for that band. We recorded, I think, 50 different songs. It's not like we did the same set every night. Every tune we ever played was coming up for review.

"YOU'RE ASKING ME ABOUT STREAMING, BUT I FEEL LIKE THE QUESTION IS, TO PEOPLE WHO ARE HALF MY AGE, WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO DOCUMENT AND RELEASE RECORDED MUSIC? MAYBE THE CORPORATE STREAMING PROBLEM ISN'T THE REAL CRUX OF THE ISSUE."

IT WAS LIKE A RETROSPECTIVE BOX SET THAT UNFOLDED OVER THE COURSE OF A WEEK.
We played 12 sets. It went up every day, and the momentum was incredibly inspiring. This was in 2006. Every day you would see the downloads coming in, and where they were coming from: people in Moscow, people in Japan, waiting for it to come up and grabbing it.

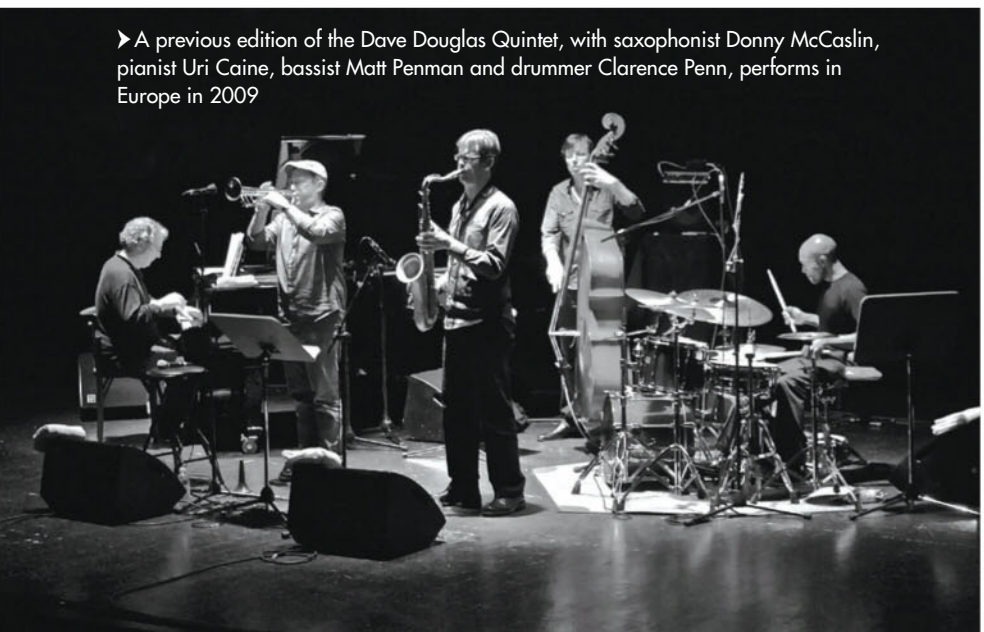
THIS WAS JUST A YEAR INTO THE LABEL, AND IT WAS A PRETTY AMBITIOUS UNDERTAKING.
Well, the Internet was changing things. I felt like part of the excitement of the label was being able to get things to the listeners with immediacy. It's why we love live music so much, because you're actually there in the room as it's happening. So that was the feeling of that release. But there were songs in that batch that hadn't been on a CD before, so we ended up collecting them on a physical two-CD box called *Live at the Jazz Standard.*

WITH YOUR LABEL ROSTER, YOU'VE TAKEN SOME OF YOUR COLLABORATORS AND GIVEN THEM A PLATFORM.
The first record that came about that way was with Donny McCaslin. I felt like Donny was making these great records but not getting the attention he deserved. He's a great composer, and he was doing these large-ensemble records. And I said, "Donny, let's make a record where we just put you out front as a player." That was *Recommended Tools.* I think that record still holds up as one of the great tenor trio records from the last decade or so. The biggest joy for me is that on the heels of that record, Donny's been out there nonstop, playing.

WHEN WE TALK ABOUT THESE RELEASES THAT AREN'T YOUR OWN ALBUMS, WOULD YOU SAY THAT THEY ADD UP TO AN IDENTIFIABLE GREENLEAF AESTHETIC?
That's a good question, and I don't know if I have an answer, because I feel like I'm just going day-to-day, and following my ear and my heart and my head. I think there is [an aesthetic], but it would be hard for me to put my finger on exactly what it is.

WITH ARTISTS LIKE BASSIST MATT ULERY AND SAXOPHONIST CURTIS MACDONALD, WHO AREN'T ON THE SCENE IN NEW YORK OR PART OF YOUR IMMEDIATE CIRCLE, WHICH COMES FIRST—IS IT THE PLAYER OR IS IT A PROJECT?
I think first and foremost it's the music itself. I had heard Matt Ulery in a band that went on either before or after me in Chicago. I remember thinking, "Here's a guy with a sound." When you see a musician who's really raising everybody up, it's always memorable. Then Matt came to me with these tapes. They're orchestral, they're huge, and he does it with very good taste. It's a hard fight for us to get that music out there, but I believe in it. That's the aesthetic, for me. It's the whole package: the person, and the repertoire, and the sound, and the approach.

IT'S QUITE A DIFFERENT LANDSCAPE FOR THE RECORDED MUSIC INDUSTRY THAN IT WAS 10 YEARS AGO. HOW WOULD YOU CHARACTERIZE THE DIFFERENCE IN PRACTICAL TERMS?
Well, it's a sea change, and actually, at this very moment I feel like we're on the cusp



A previous edition of the Dave Douglas Quintet, with saxophonist Donny McCaslin, pianist Uri Caine, bassist Matt Penman and drummer Clarence Penn, performs in Europe in 2009

COURTESY OF DAVE DOUGLAS/GREENLEAF MUSIC ARCHIVES

of the next big change. I'm just finishing a quintet record, which will come out in October. And as I'm producing it, I have the feeling, "Wow, this may be the last CD I ever produce." Probably not, but the way the music is coming out, and being encountered by listeners, is changing quickly.

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT THE BUSINESS OF STREAMING, BOTH AS AN ARTIST AND A LABEL HEAD?

Obviously I've given this a lot of thought, but I feel like these issues are really at the corporate level. And a lot of artists are now releasing their work on Soundcloud or Vimeo or YouTube. So the deeper question is, what does it mean to put out an album? I talk to a lot of young musicians who are incredibly talented, and I say to them, "When are you going to make your record?" And they go, "What do you mean?" You're asking me about streaming, but I feel like the question is, to people who are half my age, what does it mean to document and release recorded music? Maybe the corporate streaming problem isn't the real crux of the issue.

IT'S INTERESTING TO THINK OF GREENLEAF, WHICH IS ESSENTIALLY A RECORD LABEL, GRAPPLING WITH THIS EXISTENTIAL QUESTION: WHAT IS AN "ALBUM" IN THIS DAY AND AGE?

And that's why I called the company Greenleaf Music. Because I think of it as a music company and not as a record label. I think the record label aspect is a part of what we do, but the meaning of the enterprise is in the whole picture: supporting the touring, and sheet music, and podcasting, and education events. The whole world being in touch with all the aspects of what we do. So for me, that makes the meaning of releasing recorded music a little different. We still sell a lot of CDs, don't get me wrong—especially at gigs, but also through our distributor, eOne. CDs are still in demand by people who listen to our music, and also, I would suspect, a lot of other jazz artists and labels. But I think it is changing.

DID YOU LOOK AT ANY POINT TO LABELS RUN BY YOUR PEERS? TIM BERNE HAD SCREWGUN RECORDS, AND TZADIK, JOHN ZORN'S LABEL, IS OBVIOUSLY A SHINING EXAMPLE.

CREATIVE CONTROL

EIGHT MORE MUSICIAN-RUN JAZZ RECORD COMPANIES EXPLAINED

DEBUT RECORDS (est. 1952)
One of the earliest attempts by jazz musicians—and, at least as significantly, African-American artists—to wrest control from the major record labels came with the founding of Debut by Charles Mingus and Max Roach. While it only lasted five years and a couple of dozen releases, Debut issued LPs by its founders and their contemporaries, including Bud Powell, Miles Davis, Oscar Pettiford, Kenny Dorham, Thad Jones and Paul Bley (his first album as a leader).

REPRISE RECORDS (est. 1960)
A decade into his career resurgence, Frank Sinatra decided to make a play for moguldom by starting the Reprise label, which provided a home (and creative say-so) for his Rat Pack cronies and other artists he admired, including Bing Crosby and Rosemary Clooney. The imprint lasted only three years under Sinatra's leadership before low sales forced him to sell to Warner Bros., which steadily skewed its releases toward rock acts like the Kinks, Jimi Hendrix and Neil Young.

A&M RECORDS (est. 1962)
Founded by Tijuana Brass trumpeter and bandleader Herb Alpert and his business partner, Jerry Moss, A&M became one of the world's largest independent record companies by embracing the spirit of 1960s eclecticism. Along with Alpert compatriots like Burt Bacharach and Sérgio Mendes, the label featured crossover jazz (Wes Montgomery, Chuck Mangione), soft rock (the Carpenters, Captain & Tennille), British rockers (Joe Cocker, Free) and comedy (Cheech & Chong), among many other genres, before being sold to PolyGram in 1989.

GRP RECORDS (est. 1982)
Keyboardist Dave Grusin and producer Larry Rosen parlayed their skill as a production team into the founding of GRP, moving out from under the umbrella of Arista Records in 1982, after four years. Always dedicated to digital recording technology, the label was among the earliest and most ardent adopters of the compact disc. It also set the stage for the smooth-jazz boom of the 1980s, counting among its artists Yellowjackets, the Rippingtons and Spyro Gyra, in addition to fusion pioneers like Chick Corea and Billy Cobham.

TZADIK (est. 1995)
Founder John Zorn's prodigious output would be more than sufficient to ensure that Tzadik maintains a steady and wide-ranging release schedule. But over its 20-year history the label has accumulated an impressive stable of sonic adventurers to complement the composer-saxophonist's relentless invention. Tzadik provides a home for Zorn's Radical Jewish Culture explorations, including his ever-expanding Masada catalog, as well as imprints for women in experimental music, Japanese underground artists and archival releases, all dedicated to representing "the artists' vision undiluted."

SCREWGUN RECORDS (est. 1996)
Saxophonist-composer Tim Berne inaugurated Screwgun as an outlet mainly for his own multifarious recordings, maintaining it as his primary platform until his signing with ECM in 2011. Though it occasionally featured a CD by one of Berne's collaborators (Marc Ducret, Michael Formanek, Julius Hemphill), Screwgun's catalog was largely populated by his ever-changing bands, including Bloodcount, Hard Cell, Big Satan and Science Friction. The CD packages are characterized by the dynamic artwork of Steve Byram, pairing frantic imagery with jumbled-typeset puns, musings and the occasional recipe.

MOTÉMA MUSIC (est. 2003)
Singer-songwriter Jana Herzen intended Motéma to be a short-lived vanity label, an expedient means of releasing her own debut album, *Soup's on Fire*, and her friend Babatunde Lea's all-star record *Soul Pools*. A dozen years and more than 100 releases later, Motéma boasts a diverse roster of established masters (Geri Allen, the Cookers, Monty Alexander, Joe Locke) and rising stars (Joey Alexander, Charenee Wade, Pedrito Martinez).

INNER CIRCLE MUSIC (est. 2008)
Named for his own 2002 Blue Note release, Inner Circle was created by saxophonist Greg Osby as an outlet for innovative young artists, many of whom also served apprenticeships in Osby's bands. The label has helped launch the careers of fresh talents including saxophonist Melissa Aldana and vocalist Sara Serpa. **SHAUN BRADY**

Tzadik is just amazing. He's one of my closest friends, and I still don't know how he does it. It's a miracle. I also used to talk to Greg Osby a lot [the saxophonist who founded Inner Circle Music], and Tim Berne was an example for me. And I read a lot about Charles Mingus' label, and what Charles Tolliver and Stanley Cowell did with Strata-East back in the day. And Max Roach, and Mary Lou Williams. When I was touring with Horace Silver in 1987, he had a label of his own called Silveto, and he was schlepping the records on the road. To me, the model that intrigued me the most was where there was actually a team in place to support the artists, where it wasn't a service-for-hire situation.

HOW HAS SOCIAL MEDIA CHANGED THE REALITY FOR THE DISTRIBUTION AND RECEPTION OF THE MUSIC?

For independent artists, there are a lot of good things about this new realm. There's a freedom to have your voice heard on platforms that didn't exist before; to respond to criticism; to tell your own story your own way. What's interesting is this combination of music and personality, people developing a way of thinking about what they do.

***A NOISE FROM THE DEEP*, YOUR PODCAST, IS INTERESTING TOO, BECAUSE IN MANY CASES IT DOES NOT SERVE ANY DIRECT PROMOTIONAL FUNCTION. WHAT ROLE DOES IT PLAY FOR GREENLEAF MUSIC?**

I see the podcast as a chance to let musicians talk about their work and process in a way that they aren't often asked to do. My cohost is [bassist and composer] Michael Bates, and we go back and forth with lists of people who would have something interesting to say.

DO YOU HEAR FROM PEOPLE WHO ARE SPECIFICALLY LOYAL TO THE PODCAST?

Oh yeah, a lot. They also give us suggestions. The first suggestion was, "Can you get Kenny G on the show?" And I thought, that would be great. I don't think Mr. G would do it, but boy, I would welcome that opportunity.

WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE TO YOUNGER MUSICIANS ENTERING A WORLD IN WHICH YOUR CAREER TRAJECTORY—RECORDING ON A MAJOR LABEL AS WELL AS INDEPENDENTS—IS NO LONGER MUCH OF A POSSIBILITY?

What I would say is something that'll probably never change: You should always take the attitude that you'll have to do everything for yourself. You're not going to find a manager or a booking agent or a record label who's going to make everything happen for you. I don't know that it's any different than it's ever been. But now there are more components, and to turn that into a survivable existence is harder. It's easy to lose sight of the music being the number-one priority in all of this. I think that the current environment of this creative art form is one in which there are challenges and there are opportunities. People are releasing their music all different kinds of ways, and monetizing it in different ways, and it's being heard. ***JT***

NEVER TOO

A CELEBRATED CAREER AS AN EDUCATOR NOW BEHIND HIM, 74-YEAR-OLD PIANIST-COMPOSER **STANLEY COWELL** READIES FOR A LATE-CAREER RENAISSANCE AS A JAZZ PERFORMER

Stanley Cowell at home in Maryland

NATALIE ELLIOT

LATE

I am standing at the long, black grand piano in the living room of Stanley Cowell's Southern Maryland home, watching as he comes alive. The 74-year-old pianist and composer is showing off his digital sound-design system, called Kyma, which he used during his just-ended weeklong stint in New York in June. "You can see I have a folder called 'Village Vanguard,'" he points out on his tablet screen. "These are the sounds I chose for the performance." He selects one, and a heavy church bell tolls in the standup speaker next to us. Cowell picks out the opening lick of "'Round Midnight" on the keyboard, and another set of bells play along.

We've just spent two hours conversing in his basement. He's been gracious and forthcoming, but also been cerebral and soft-spoken—not cold, but reserved. That fades during his 10 minutes at the piano. As he transforms "'Round Midnight" into "an upside-down version," demonstrates another effect with his own melody "St. Croix" and tools around with phrases from his new solo recording, *Juneteenth* (Vision Fugitive), his eyes light up and his voice gains volume and merriment. "Now to do all that in *rhythm*!" he exclaims, and lets out a throaty chuckle. "It was cool. People wanted more of it!"

If music animates Cowell, the reverse is also true, and his incorporation of the Kyma, which he's used for nearly 20 years, is living proof. "Stanley's always been an inspiration because he's not a stagnant artist," says drummer Nasheet Waits, who worked with Cowell in the 1990s. "He's always exploring, coming up with new ways to express himself."

Cowell is no stranger to tradition, either. His initiation into jazz came at age 6, in his Toledo, Ohio home, where he watched his father's friend Art Tatum play the family's spinet piano. In the ensuing decades, a deep understanding of the jazz lineage mingled with Cowell's innovative spirit and came to define his music. By the early '80s he boasted an unimpeachable résumé, including sideman work with iconic leaders, his own powerful recordings and even co-ownership of a game-changing label. All of which added to the loss the jazz scene felt starting in 1981, when Cowell largely shifted his focus from performing to educating. He began teaching fulltime that year and continued for the next 32, first at CUNY's Lehman College, then at Rutgers University in New Jersey.

But his 2013 retirement from Rutgers has brought him back onto the bandstand, culminating in his week at the Vanguard. "Part of my bucket list!" Cowell says proudly. "It took 74 years to get there. So don't give up!"

COWELL'S BUCKET LIST HAS TO BE A SHORT

one, considering the number of accomplishments he's already checked off. He graduated from Oberlin college in 1962 and arrived in New York in the summer of '66, working first with saxophonist Marion Brown and other "out" players. But in 1967 he passed an audition for Max Roach's quintet. The legendary drummer's band also included the young trumpeter Charles Tolliver, with whom Cowell bonded immediately. "We just had the right vibes, the right affinity," Tolliver says. "We bonded … from the start," he continues, and he remains Cowell's closest friend today.

Roach's band was really "the beginning of everything," Cowell says. From there, the pianist got a call to tour with Miles Davis, and joined the Bobby Hutcherson-Harold Land Quintet as well. In 1969, he toured with Stan Getz's quartet, and made his first two albums under his own name.

BY MICHAEL J. WEST

The 1970s are often dismissed as meager years for jazz; for Stanley Cowell, they were bullish. He and Tolliver left Roach in 1970 to form Tolliver's quartet Music Inc., which in November 1970 made its first studio recording, *Music Inc.* After getting no takers among the labels, Tolliver and Cowell decided to put it out themselves. "This was part of [Nguzo Saba], the seven principles of African Heritage," Cowell explains. "Kind of a rebuilding thing, coming out of the need to take over our own resources. But it moved from a racial idea to an entrepreneurial idea."

Two of Cowell's friends from Michigan had formed a corporation called Strata. "We told them that we were going to issue this new recording. They said, 'Well, why don't you guys become the Eastern leg of our thing?'" Tolliver recalls. "To make a long story short, I decided that we would not become a part of the Strata Corporation but would definitely use the name Strata-East." It would become one of the most important independent jazz labels of the decade [*see sidebar*].

Cowell also cofounded the Collective Black Artists, in another outgrowth of Nguzo Saba's principle of self-determination. "We decided that we wanted to bring African-American artists more to the fore, in presentation and recording and so forth," he says. "We did a lot of concerts, took music into prisons, into schools. It survived a long time."

Throughout it all, Cowell's musical career was blossoming. Between 1973 and 1981, he recorded nine albums. Two found him leading an ensemble called the Piano Choir—a seven-keyboard ensemble that blended acoustic and electric pianos, organ, harpsichord and an array of synthesizers. He was also a prolific freelancer, touring and recording with bassist Richard Davis, drummer Roy Haynes and saxophonist Art Pepper, among others. So prolific was he, Cowell notes, that Tolliver was left to operate Strata-East. "I got so busy performing," Cowell says, "I thought that Strata-East was gonna run by itself."

Among his sideman gigs was a roughly decade-long one as pianist for the Heath Brothers—the only member of the quartet who was not a family member. "Stanley Cowell was the adopted and well-respected *other* Heath Brother," laughs Jimmy Heath, the saxophonist and middle brother of the group.

It was in '81, while working with the Heath Brothers, that he was invited to explore a fulltime opportunity at Lehman College in the Bronx. "They wanted someone to come in and chair a program," he says, "and it was a very interesting program because it fielded older musicians, professional musicians, from the union." Cowell taught a jazz history symposium and ensembles, eventually attaining tenure and full professorship. Then, in 2000, he won the retiring Kenny Barron's position as professor of piano at Rutgers University. This time he entered with full professorship and tenure, and rose to become the chair of the jazz studies department.

TEACHING WASN'T THE ONLY THING THAT

distanced Cowell from active performance. The smoke that accumulated in the jazz clubs was a major irritation, especially on tour. "The Japanese and the French used to come and gang-smoke!" he says. "It'd be a mushroom cloud of smoke all over the place!" In addition, he'd married and had a daughter, and in 1988 the family moved to Upper Marlboro, Md., about 45 minutes outside D.C., though they bought a second home in New Jersey to ease Cowell's commute to Lehman.

From left: Cowell underneath the awning at the Village Vanguard. The pianist led a band there for the first time in June; Cowell works with the digital sound-design program Kyma at home

FROM LEFT: JANETTE BECKMAN/COURTESY OF THE ARTIST; NATALIE ELLIOT

But none of these were obstacles to his creativity. Cowell continued to develop as a musician and composer, to develop and innovate, and now he was assisted by the resources of academia. For one thing, he had access to student ensembles, and not just in jazz. Cowell began building an impressive résumé of orchestral works: short pieces for solo or small ensemble as well as long-form sonatas, concerti and suites. "I used their symphony, wrote for their brass choir, wrote for their woodwind quintet and combined jazz soloist with those ensembles—either myself or, on one piece, the *Asian Art Suite*, the whole faculty." Cowell is particularly proud of the *Asian Art Suite*, a three-part, seven-section composition for orchestra, percussion and jazz sextet that he premiered at Rutgers in 2009. "It's a fun piece," he says. "It's based on a commission from the Philadelphia Museum of Art, inspired by their Asian collection." (It has never been issued as a recording, although excerpts appear on his 2012 album, *It's Time*, on SteepleChase. That prolific but low-profile Danish outfit was Cowell's label of choice during the '90s. After not recording for over a decade, he returned to the fold for *It's Time* and 2013's *Welcome to This New World*, a quartet date featuring guitarist Vic Juris.)

While writing his first orchestral piece in the early '90s, Cowell, using a boxy IBM computer, began learning "a very early, unstable version of the notation program called Finale." The long process of composing allowed him to become quite practiced in the program. "I got into electronic music, experimenting with that," he says, "[enough that] in '97 I took over the electronic music class at Lehman."

Much of the equipment was still analog, but Cowell steered it toward digital, and it was in this capacity that he began working with the Kyma. "I got a grant to [purchase] it," he says. "I used it at a concert when I started teaching the electronic course." He began incorporating the system into his orchestral work as well: A piece commemorating the Emancipation Proclamation was composed for concert band, chorus and Kyma. "He's just that kind of person: open always to new happenings," says Heath. "We went to Japan, and I bought my first keyboard, and he had it all figured out by the time we got home. He taught me a lot about the computer over the years, too."

EASTERN PROMISE

TRUMPETER CHARLES TOLLIVER ON THE FOUNDING OF STRATA-EAST, HIS AND COWELL'S HISTORIC RECORD LABEL

Stanley Cowell and Charles Tolliver founded Strata-East Records in 1971 as a two-artist label. But when its first release, *Music Inc.*, plugged them into the nationwide network of independent distributors, tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan (a member of the album's big band) was intrigued. "When he saw what we did with that first record—because he was on that first record—he said, 'Well, you know, I've already recorded a lot of musicians,'" says Tolliver, 73. "'And since you guys have already gone this far, how about putting my stuff out?'"

Cowell and Tolliver at "Strata-East Live" in London in March

Jordan released five productions through Strata-East, including Pharoah Sanders' *Izipho Zam* and his own classic *Glass Bead Games*. With his involvement, producers were suddenly knocking on Strata-East's door. "I set up a conduit system," Tolliver says. "If it looked like it would be something that would fit … we added it." Strata-East handled manufacturing and distribution, and the artists were responsible creatively for their recordings.

The music was diverse, ranging from funk-fusion (Charlie Rouse's *Two Is One*) and soul-jazz (Shirley Scott's *One for Me)* to postbop (Billy Harper's *Capra Black*) and avant-garde (Brother Ah's *Sound Awareness*), in addition to Cowell and Tolliver's projects.

In 1974, Strata-East issued Gil Scott-Heron's *Winter in America*, the poet's commercial breakthrough, but the album's success ultimately led to the label's undoing. "Sometimes a good thing can be *not* such a good thing," Cowell acknowledges, "when you're dealing with accounts-payable against accounts-receivable, and trying to stay on top of everybody who wanted that record. The other part involved some disgruntled producers who felt that they should be making more money as they saw Gil's record catapulting upward. So there were two lawsuits." (One of these was dismissed in federal court; the other was settled.)

These issues slowed Strata-East's output, and after 1976, save for occasional releases, it became inactive. It still exists as a catalog, however, managed by Cowell and Tolliver, and just last year, Mosaic released a box of Clifford Jordan's Strata-East sessions. **MICHAEL J. WEST**

PHOTOS BY PAUL WOOD, CONCERT POSTER BY BEN CONNORS

Clockwise from above: Cowell gigs in NYC in 1977; in his hometown of Toledo, Ohio, at age 3; with the Park Lane Trio, featuring future Roland Kirk bassist Vernon Martin, c. 1959

Further, Cowell hadn't completely abandoned live performance. In fact, whereas he had rarely led bands in earlier years, in the mid-'90s he formed a real working quartet: Bruce Williams on alto saxophone, Dwayne Burno on bass and Keith Copeland on drums. Copeland was soon replaced by Nasheet Waits, who has known Cowell since the pianist was a neighbor of Waits' father, drummer Freddie Waits, in New York's Westbeth Artists Housing complex. "The music was challenging and engaging," Williams recalls. "We would hook up every couple months, at the minimum three times in the year, for a weeklong stint. For a working New York jazz band, that's kind of a lot unless you're on the road."

COWELL'S FIRST MAJOR ORCHESTRAL WORK, completed and premiered in 1992, was his *Piano Concerto No. 1*, a tribute to Art Tatum. As a native of Tatum's hometown of Toledo, Cowell was more captive to his influence than most jazz pianists—many of his mentors were Tatum's contemporaries and protégés—not to mention the effect of witnessing a performance of "You Took Advantage of Me" in his own childhood living room. When Cowell recorded his 1969 debut as a leader, *Blues for the Viet Cong*, he included a rollicking solo stride rendition of that same tune. "Somewhere that just came off the top of my head," he says. "I didn't know why. I realized later, 'Well, that's where that came from.'"

Cowell's version didn't really sound like Tatum. Nor did the rest of his early recordings. His sound was based instead on Bud Powell, Phineas Newborn and '60s innovators like McCoy Tyner and Herbie Hancock. As the '70s progressed, he took on polyrhythmic West African influences and became skilled on the *mbira*, or thumb piano. But during the '80s, perhaps as a side effect of teaching jazz history, Tatum came creeping back in; his rhythmic and harmonic signatures are prominent, for example, on Cowell's 1983 album *Such Great Friends*.

In 1990, the master asserted himself in a big way. "I never wanted to play like Tatum, but the Charlin Jazz Society kind of steered me in that direction," he says, "by offering me a grant to develop a concert of Tatum's transcriptions and whatever I could ape, so to speak. So I did 22 of his pieces in the concert. Some of them

1977 PHOTO BY TOM MARCELLO, OTHER PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

were transcriptions and the others were close interpretations of the songs that he played." Shortly afterward, he began the concerto. "I had already isolated quite a few of Tatum's ideas, and kind of sprinkled them about, as one reviewer said, into the piano concerto."

From then on, Tatum was simply another element in the nuanced tapestry that is Cowell's music. *Juneteenth*—a "reduction" of his piece on the Emancipation Proclamation, now applied more broadly to the struggle for civil rights—never overtly addresses Tatum, but it does abstract and, yes, sprinkle his conception throughout, along with ideas from other historical jazz pianists. That blend is filtered through an approach to voicing and space that is Cowell's alone, and as a result those influences are subsumed into his sound. Indeed, *Juneteenth* may be the most distinctly Cowell-ian of all his albums, particularly on the improvised closing track, "Juneteenth Recollections." "His music is unique. It's not like anyone else's that I know," says Heath. "He's not strictly a bebopper, and he's not strictly from the Tatum school. He's got his own voice in this world. He has things as avant-garde as Ornette Coleman and that era of music. The whole spectrum of African-American classical music. And he never forgets the history of African-American people, and he tries to do everything he can to better our position in the world."

THROUGHOUT HIS TIME AS AN EDUCATOR, Cowell took a few sabbaticals to work on his music. He embarked on one of these breaks in 2013, he says, "and then just decided to stay out. They had me come back for graduation and commencement that year, and treated me lovely." At 72, he was finally retired.

Which gave him the opportunity to come out of his quasi-retirement from live performance. Jazz clubs around the world had adopted smoke-free policies, which Cowell relished, and he made his way into concert halls, including London's prestigious Barbican. In March, he reunited with Tolliver, singer Jean Carne, tenor saxophonist Billy Harper, bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Alvin Queen to tour the U.K. as the Strata-East All Stars. "The Brits, like the Japanese, are forever in love with the Strata-East happening," says Tolliver. "And a world-famous DJ there [Gilles Peterson], who grew up on Strata-East, found out that we were alive and well. He put it together."

Then there was the weeklong bucket-list stint at the Vanguard. Cowell's friends in the music visited throughout the week, among them Heath, Waits and Tolliver. Bruce Williams played in the quartet, along with bassist Jay Anderson and drummer Billy Drummond, and found that after more than two decades the pianist still found ways to inspire and teach. "The mentoring in jazz a lot of times is not like sitting at a desk with someone at a blackboard, it's more like real-life experience," Williams says. "It's always a challenge, but a beautiful thing. … Stanley's clearly one of the best there's ever been."

"Now he's coming back out here, and I wish him all the best," says Heath. "He deserves it." ***JT***

Sound Affects

FOR THE PROLIFIC CORNETIST, COMPOSER AND BANDLEADER ROB MAZUREK, SONICS ARE A MATTER OF THE HEART

"I HAVEN'T REALLY TALKED ABOUT TRUMPET. You want me to talk about Kenny Dorham or something? I'm just so much more interested in the idea of projecting a sound where you can't even say what the instrument is."

The question and mission statement come from Rob Mazurek toward the end of an hour-long conversation. The cornetist has spent the time discussing the various elements that have driven his many different musical projects. To name a few: his longstanding Chicago Underground Duo (formerly Orchestra and, at various times, Trio), wherein he and percussionist Chad Taylor create outsized ambience using a Spartan format; Exploding Star Orchestra, which serves as something of a who's who of Chicago-based improvisers; and São Paulo Underground, which combines experimental jazz with dub grooves and Brazilian melodies. There was also the post-rock/jazz group Isotope 217, and Mazurek has given solo performances on cornet filtered through an array of electronics to create a sea of sounds ("tsunami" might be the more accurate metaphor). On top of that, personnel in some of his bands has been mixed and matched to form hybrid groups, and heavyweights such as saxophonists Pharoah Sanders and Roscoe Mitchell and the late trumpeter Bill Dixon have guested with Mazurek's units.

Mazurek's mention of trumpeter Dorham sounds like a wisecrack meant to mockingly connect his instrument to a tradition. But it's easy to believe that he can bring the same level of conviction to a discussion of Dorham's *Una Mas* that he brings to his original concepts. It wasn't long ago that Mazurek was devoted to the canon of bop. While the concepts and aesthetics have evolved over the years, one thing hasn't changed: his warm yet delicate tone.

By Mike Shanley

COURTESY OF CUNEIFORM RECORDS

Mazurek and Exploding Star Orchestra record half of *Galactic Parables: Volume 1* live at the Chicago Cultural Center, October 2013

FOR MOST OF THE SUMMER OF 2015, MAZUREK LIVED IN Marfa, Texas, the contemporary-art oasis with a population of less than 2,000. From 2000 to 2005 he called Brazil home, and he's lived abroad in other countries too—a nomadic habit he sees as a way to keep his creative juices flowing. "I think people can get so wound up in their immediate environment and their immediate mind that you have to have different ways to open that up," he says. "Some people do it with drugs and alcohol. My drug is going to some strange destination and pulling things from the environment, the spirituality of a place."

was kind and generous and treated me like an equal, although I was so young and green. He gave me lessons every day for a week."

Upon graduating from high school, Mazurek moved on to Chicago's Bloom School of Jazz, where he learned to shape a solo while transcribing and listening intensely to Miles, Coltrane and Mingus. He also spent time at the New Apartment Lounge, sitting in on jam sessions hosted by saxophonist Von Freeman. For a year he lived with saxophonist Lin Halliday, soaking up his musical knowledge.

"[ART FARMER] SAID I PLAYED JAZZ JUST FINE, BUT IT WASN'T GOOD ENOUGH TO JUST IMITATE THE MASTERS," MAZUREK SAYS. "HE REALLY SCOLDED ME ABOUT THIS, AND ENCOURAGED ME TO DIG DEEPER AND FIND MY OWN WAY OF PROJECTING SOUND."

Today, Mazurek, 50, is primarily based in Chicago. He was born in New Jersey but grew up in the suburbs of Chicago, frequently making his way into the city. Wayne Segal of the Jazz Showcase took notice of the teenaged brass player and frequently let him into the club to experience weeklong engagements by Wayne Shorter, Art Farmer and Pharoah Sanders. In the early '80s, he approached the up-and-coming Wynton Marsalis and asked him for lessons. "Wynton's group at that time—Jeff Watts, Kenny Kirkland, Branford, Robert Hurst—was playing all of Ornette Coleman's music from *The Shape of Jazz to Come*," he recalls. "Wynton told me to buy that record, which I did the next day. Wynton

Drummer Chad Taylor was only 15, eight years younger than Mazurek, when he got a call for a gig with the cornetist in 1989. Of the years leading up to the Chicago Underground projects, Taylor remembers power suits and straight-ahead playing. "It was the whole Wynton thing. He was playing bebop," Taylor says. "I always thought he sounded good, not great. It just wasn't his thing, but he was definitely convincing."

Guitarist Jeff Parker, who would also become a part of the original Chicago Underground group, met Mazurek a few years later. The music sounded pretty reverent, but he could see a personality emerging as well. "It was a very particular Blue Note bag: a lot of boogaloos, a lot of blues," he says. "He

LAUREN DEUTSCH/COURTESY OF CUNEIFORM RECORDS

was really into lyrical, swinging trumpet players. It's Rob, so it was very conceptual, much more than 'I'm going to play jazz.' He was very specific in the stuff that he was referencing—much more specific than what anyone was doing at the time."

Mazurek landed a contract with the Hep label, based in Scotland, and released three conventional albums between 1994 and '97, with small groups including saxophonist Eric Alexander, pianist Randolph Tressler, bassist John Webber and drummer George Fludas. He also took lessons from one of his straight-ahead heroes, Art Farmer, and the experience gave Mazurek a new sense of purpose. "He said I played jazz just fine, but it wasn't good enough to just imitate the masters," Mazurek recalls. "He really scolded me about this, and encouraged me to dig deeper and find my own way of projecting sound."

While in high school, Mazurek had listened to the Art Ensemble of Chicago, Sun Ra and electric Miles, and Farmer's directive inspired him to reexamine this music. He soon landed a Sunday afternoon engagement at Chicago's Green Mill, which became something of a workshop for composers. Knowing guitarist Parker had connections with the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), the cornetist got back in touch with him, as well as with Taylor. "The original intention, the way I remember it, wasn't 'Let's do avant-garde music or free jazz'; it was 'Let's play some tunes,'" Taylor says. "But it just happened that the tunes Jeff was bringing in were more on the experimental side. And that started influencing Rob a lot, and he started bringing in some different-sounding stuff. Then I would bring in some stuff. It evolved into what eventually came to be Chicago Underground."

▲▼▲▼

AS MAZUREK MOVED AWAY FROM MUSIC BUILT ON conventional chord changes during the late '90s, his focus leaned more toward sound itself. (In 2009, he even titled a quintet album *Sound Is*.) He once described it using the phrase "psychedelic illumination drones," a term he still approves of, though he admits "drones" implies specific and predictable consequences.

To hear Mazurek explain it, it sounds less like a throwback to the Summer of Love and more like his own expression of Sun Ra-ian philosophy. "It's all [based on] that projection of trying to find the frequency that best corresponds to this positive energy flow," he says. "And by positive energy flow, I don't just mean playing something happy; I mean waking people up to the idea of a higher understanding. I know it sounds very—whatever, I don't know what the word is, even. But I mean it sincerely."

However it reads, a substantial example of the concept can be heard on last year's *Return the Tides: Ascension Suite and Holy Ghost* (Cuneiform), credited to Mazurek and Black Cube SP. The hour-long suite was recorded shortly after the death of the cornetist's mother, Kathleen, which influenced the music as well as the cover art, a collage designed by Mazurek. Rather than mourn the loss of a loved one, he says the music acts as transference of "Mother energy. For me, it was kind of an immediate real-

JT ESSENTIALS:
ROB MAZUREK

CHICAGO UNDERGROUND DUO
Boca Negra (Thrill Jockey, 2010)

Following releases by the Chicago Underground Orchestra (a quartet!) and Trio, Mazurek and drummer Chad Taylor are left to their own devices on *Boca Negra*, and therein lies the intrigue. The record begins with a free cornet/drums duet, and the musicians go on to evoke spy films, noodle with electronics and cover Ornette Coleman. Throughout, Mazurek's strong brass tone acts as a determined guide, even during the spaciest moments.

STARLICKER
Double Demon (Delmark, 2011)

After the Chicago Underground Duo, a trio of vibes, cornet and drums shouldn't sound unusual, but the thrust of Starlicker's album still comes from a unique and inspired source. Drummer John Herndon (Tortoise) and vibraphonist Jason Adasiewicz work together to give Mazurek's compositions a surprising fullness—especially essential given the lack of a low-end instrument. Herndon's use of the entire kit and Adasiewicz's sustained harmonies deftly underscore Mazurek's inventive melodies.

SÃO PAULO UNDERGROUND
Três Cabeças Loucuras
(Cuneiform, 2011)

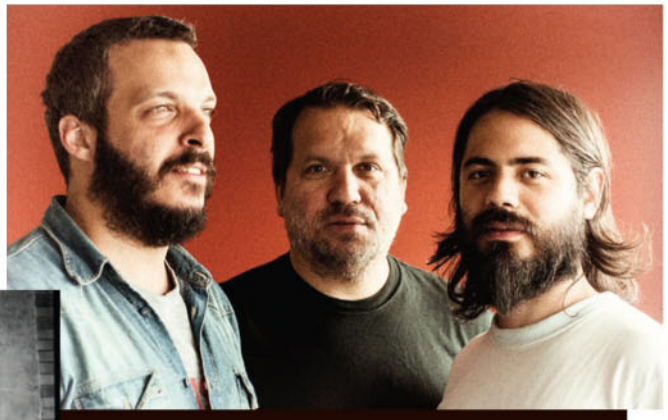
Mazurek met drummers Mauricio Takara and Richard Ribeiro and keyboardist Guilherme Granado while living in Brazil, and the group has recorded several strong albums of dreamscapes that combine tropicalia and experimental jazz, wrapping in production effects with the swirling effect of dub reggae. This album includes the trippy "Pigeon," based on Brazilian *maracatu*, and "Jagoda's Dream," a hybrid of tense drumming and lush cornet long tones.

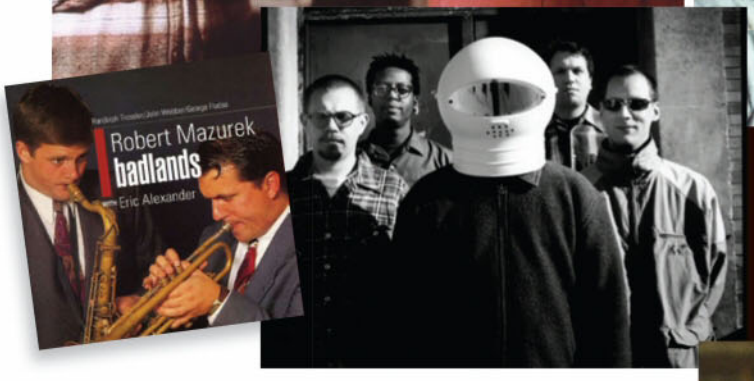
ROB MAZUREK PULSAR QUARTET
Stellar Pulsations (Delmark, 2012)

With avant-oriented players Angelica Sanchez (piano), Matthew Lux (bass) and Herndon joining him, it's surely a stretch to call this album Mazurek's return to his hard-bop roots. But it does include one-chord vamps and shows off his skill at Harmon-muted balladry, and the rubato "Spiritual Mars" has the fire of Coltrane's Classic Quartet.

ROB MAZUREK EXPLODING STAR ORCHESTRA
Galactic Parables: Volume 1
(Cuneiform, 2015)

As Damon Locks begins his oration on disc one, a voice interrupts him, asking, "Are you spotless?" It's not a heckler or a bandmate, but Sun Ra via a sampler. Recorded at Sardinia's Sant'Anna Arresi Jazz Festival and again a few months later in Chicago, this large-scale piece takes Mr. Blount's interstellar perspective and builds on it, with stunning performances by flutist Nicole Mitchell, guitarist Jeff Parker and the leader. Combinations of spoken-word and jazz often get didactic or pretentious, but not this one. MIKE SHANLEY





Clockwise from above: Mazurek flanked by Guilherme Granado and Mauricio Takara in São Paulo Underground; with trumpeter-composer Bill Dixon in 2007; with guitarist Jeff Parker (both at back) in Isotope 217, c. 2000; with Eric Alexander on the cover of 1995's *Badlands*; with drummer Chad Taylor in the Chicago Underground Duo, c. 2000

ization of her being physically gone. But I also felt an absolute physicality coming back at me, this kind of feeling that she was rising. She was sending this energy back to me in order to do *that* work. And to continue to do what I'm doing," he says. "I would imagine that would be one of the best feelings to have from someone that you love passing."

In a concert in April at Pittsburgh's Andy Warhol Museum, the energy was visceral, as Mazurek—along with Thomas Rohrer (on the *rabeca*, a Brazilian fiddle; and soprano saxophone) and São Paulo Underground bandmates Guilherme Granado (keyboards) and Mauricio Takara (drums)—unleashed a loud, swirling sound that combined electric Miles, free improvisation and textures that recalled prog and krautrock bands like Can. Mazurek emitted intense blasts from his cornet, in addition to playing wood flute and manipulating electronics, with occasional vocalizing. The energy never relented.

On the same tour, the group played at Loyola University in New Orleans, in a performance that also included video projections. Mazurek remembers how one audience member claimed to have something of an out-of-body experience. "Afterwards, this student, a freshman, came backstage and he looked *stunned*," Mazurek says. "He was just standing there, staring wide-eyed, and I said, 'Dude, are you OK?' He said, 'I've never heard anything or seen anything like that before.' He was trying to put it in words and he started stuttering. I thought, 'Just take it easy, man. Enjoy what just happened because we shared that together.'

"He was just so grateful. And it's very touching to know that you've done something important for someone, and that it's not just some dumb, trivial concert."

▲▼▲▼

IN MAZUREK'S WORK, EVEN THE SMALLEST SOUND CAN have a ripple effect on what follows. In addition to his jazz influences, he cites equally weighted inspiration from sources as far-ranging as composer Morton Feldman and experimental noise musician Merzbow. "I use a lot of 12-tone technique and different synthetic chord structures in a lot of my music," Mazurek says. "The reason for me doing that isn't to be clever. [I'm] trying to find the right frequencies to give the instruments personalities to really make the thing blow. That's the music I want to hear.

"So if you hear the most amazing chord that Feldman just made, next to the most amazing noise, like the skull-splitting sound of Merzbow, that's the sound and the type of thing that I'm interested in: the spaces between *that*."

All six of the albums released under the Exploding Star billing have sought to connect interplanetary transmissions with a free-flowing orchestral sound. With the recent *Galactic Parables: Volume 1*, Mazurek gets closer to his ideal than ever before. The double-disc set features two complete live performances of the titular piece, with slight variations in instrumentation and order of the piece's movements. Damon Locks' spoken-word passages have become a staple on Orchestra discs, and his orations frame music that blends Sun Ra (who appears via a phantom voice sample), AACM eclecticism and the thoughtful post-rock that guitarist Parker performs in the band Tortoise.

The Orchestra sounds loose, but it sounds that way by design. "The only real direction [from Mazurek] is that he wants

SÃO PAULO UNDERGROUND BY JASON MARCK/COURTESY OF CUNEIFORM RECORDS, *BADLANDS* RELEASED BY HEP JAZZ, OTHER PHOTOS COURTESY OF THRILL JOCKEY RECORDS

the energy level to be really high. He wants it to be explosive," says Parker. "You have a lot of freedom within what he's asking you to do. You really put yourself into it."

Considering the challenge of corralling Orchestra members (some of them live outside of Chicago; all are busy working musicians), Mazurek uses Duke Ellington's approach of writing for specific musicians, and takes it to a logical extreme. "It's not like he says, 'Oh, I need a third trumpet,'" Parker says. "If I can't make it, he might get somebody who plays trombone to replace me. If the trombone player can't make it, he might get somebody to play vibraphone to replace him. It's always geared toward specific musical personalities."

While Mazurek's skills as a leader and conceptualist are fairly well recognized, Parker laments the lack of attention directed toward his chops and tone on cornet. "I can't think of any trumpet player now who has a more beautiful sound than Rob. He has a great sound that's always kind of reminded me of all the cats he checked out: Miles, Lee Morgan, Kenny Dorham, Art Farmer … a list of fat, beautiful trumpet sounds," he says, adding, "He knows how to play inside. He doesn't just play on top. He can play underneath or within the music."

Drummer Taylor marvels at his partner's consistency throughout his voluminous discography. "I'm only on a handful of stuff that he's done," he says. "But I keep on waiting for him to mess up, to make a record that's not happening. And it's never happened. Every record I hear is very original. It's difficult to do as many records as he does and not mess up once in a while. Not Rob. Every one is a gem." That includes Pharoah & the Underground's *Spiral Mercury*, a 2014 summit that brought together the Chicago and São Paulo Underground bands with tenor giant Pharoah Sanders wailing over their groovy backgrounds. Taylor wasn't happy with the performance and didn't want it to be released; Mazurek insisted and Taylor became upset—but only until he actually heard the album. "It just shows you that he's always hearing something that you might not be necessarily picking up on," Taylor says.

▲▼▲▼

BEFORE 2015 IS OVER, MAZUREK WILL AGAIN HAVE released documents of an array of different projects. This fall brings *Some Jellyfish Live Forever*, a set of duets with Parker on the RogueArt label. There's also *Vortice of the Faun* (Astral Spirits), a solo cassette of intense electro-acoustic sound experiments that reveal compositional structures as the sounds bounce from channel to channel.

Whether the subject is his early neo-bop days, the current era of Exploding Star Orchestra or a work-in-progress called "Marfa Loops, Shouts and Hollers"—which will involve country singer Ross Cashiola—it's clear Mazurek has never been a dabbler. "I think it's a continuum. The first record is as important as the last record I put out, as far as what I'm trying to project as a human," he says. "I'm a big fan of continuity and using past materials to understand something new as well.

"I want to try to do something unique and interesting that's based on a vocabulary I've built up over years, making these records and doing these concerts. To get that one kid who comes backstage and has his mind blown—then I'm happy." ***JT***

"Listening Room" to Go

A NEW GENERATION OF ADVANCED PORTABLE MUSIC PLAYERS PICKS UP WHERE THE IPOD LEFT OFF

FiiO X1

By Brent Butterworth

After a decade and a half of forcing the world to think about music in new ways, the iPod is gradually being retired. Last year Apple discontinued the iPod Classic, the closest available product to the original player launched in 2001. You can still purchase the Nano, Touch and Shuffle models, but the line has lost its tab on Apple's homepage. Most people use a smartphone or tablet as their portable music player, so they don't need an iPod.

But with the decline of the iPod has come the rise of something much better: the high-resolution portable music player. These devices combine a music player, a digital-to-analog converter with high-resolution playback capability, and a high-quality headphone amplifier. Perhaps the best known is Neil Young's PonoPlayer, introduced to great fanfare (but mixed reviews) earlier this year. Yet audiophiles caught on to high-res players long before Pono arrived, via brands including Astell & Kern, Calyx, Cowon, FiiO, HiFiMan, iBasso, Sony and TEAC.

PonoMusic PonoPlayers

What's the Difference?

Essentially, a high-res portable differs from a conventional MP3 player in that it can handle high-resolution files and formats. Most play files in WAV (uncompressed) and FLAC (lossless compression) formats in addition to compressed formats such as MP3, Ogg Vorbis and WMA. Almost all can handle standard PCM digital files (the format used on CD) with word depth up to 24 bits and sampling rate up to 192 kilohertz—much higher than the 16 bits and 44.1 kilohertz resolution offered by CD. Some also play the Direct-Stream Digital (DSD) format, now an audiophile favorite.

Most, perhaps all, high-res players use digital-to-analog converter (DAC) chips that are similar or identical to the chips found in separate high-end DACs and CD players; in other words, they'll deliver most of the detail, delicacy and drive you hear in a big high-end audio system. Portable high-res players typically offer expandable memory using easily removable SD or microSD memory cards. Even if you've been collecting jazz sides for decades, you can use multiple memory cards to carry all the music you own in your pocket. You can also connect these players directly to a stereo system.

> Perhaps the best known portable high-res device is Neil Young's PonoPlayer, introduced to great fanfare (but mixed reviews) earlier this year.

Headphone enthusiasts have taken to these players because they tend to use separate high-quality amplifier chips devoted solely to driving headphones. In smartphones and tablets, the headphone amp is usually built into a single low-cost chip that handles most or all of the audio functions. Thus, high-res portables can typically deliver much higher volume than phones and tablets can. This isn't a concern with typical mass-market headphones, but many audiophile-grade headphones demand more power than a smartphone or tablet can supply. (However, even mass-market headphones tend to sound better when driven by a high-res portable player instead of a smartphone.)

The Nice Price

High-res portables cost as much as $2,500, but you can get a solid one for just $100: the FiiO X1. The X1 plays files in resolutions up to 24/192, and works and feels much like an iPod Classic. It has no internal memory, but it accepts microSD cards up to 128 GB, so plan on spending an extra $10 to $100 depending on how much storage you need. With a 128 GB card installed, you can carry about 400 CDs—and that's in full resolution, using the FLAC format.

If you want something flashier and more capable, check out the $399 PonoPlayer, which supports PCM in resolutions up to 24/192 as well as the DSD format. Onboard memory is 64 GB and you can add 64 GB more with a microSD card. Pono's triangular shape—think a Toblerone chocolate bar—isn't pocket-friendly, and its battery life is just barely enough to last through a cross-country flight. Its saving grace is its

Astell & Kern AK Jr

sound, tailored by the engineers at high-end audio company Ayre Acoustics, which has earned acclaim from audio critics.

Astell & Kern's $499 AK Jr looks and works like a phone, the obvious difference being its handy side-mounted volume knob. It offers 64 GB of onboard memory and can take another 64 GB on a microSD. The AK Jr plays files in resolutions up to 24/192, and also plays DSD files, although it converts them to PCM for playback. Its internal amp delivers about a tenth of a watt of power into a typical set of headphones—which may not seem like much until you consider most headphones get pretty loud on just a thousandth of a watt.

If you're *very* serious about headphone sound but too restless to sit at home, the $1,499 HiFiMan HM901s might be the perfect player for you. Its amplifier section is built onto a card that can be changed out for one that better suits your headphones. Currently the company offers three cards for standard on- and over-ear headphones, one optimized for in-ear headphones and a fifth with balanced output, a feature many headphone experts believe delivers superior sound. The HM901s plays PCM digital files in resolutions up to 24/192 as well as DSD files. While the price may seem extravagant, it seems more reasonable when you consider

HiFiMan HM901s

the HM901s replaces a high-end digital-to-analog converter, a headphone amp, a CD player and a computer.

There's one last advantage to these high-res players we haven't discussed. No matter which player you choose, you'll get a benefit no phone or tablet can match: the ability to silence the outside world and concentrate 100 percent on *A Love Supreme*, *Saxophone Colossus* or whatever you've chosen for your day's listening. ***JT***

Sound advice

GearHead

XO Professional Brass 1632RGL-LT Lead Trombone

New York-based trumpeter, composer and bandleader John Fedchock is enjoying something of a banner year in 2015: In March he released *Fluidity*, a stellar live quartet record, and more recently his big band returned with *Like It Is*, which is reviewed (very positively) in this issue. This year has also seen the release of XO's Fedchock-designed lead trombone, a pro-level instrument that prides itself on its light weight, tonal and stylistic versatility, top-notch craftsmanship and special features like a handcrafted 7.5-inch custom-annealed bell, a custom mouthpiece and unique bracing. Rose brass bell, MSRP: $2,625; yellow brass bell, MSRP: $2,795. **xobrass.com**

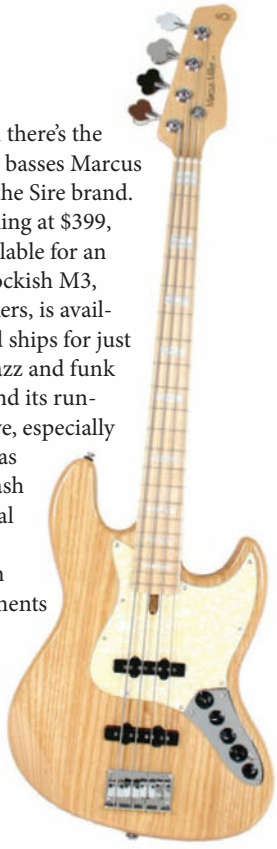
Meinl Byzance Dark Big Apple Ride Cymbal

For drummers looking to capture the *spang-a-lang* of their favorite hard-bop records, Meinl recently released this unlathed 22-inch ride. Featuring period-specific short sustain, it's dark and raw in sight and sound—like an old Blue Note LP. $419.99 online. **meinlcymbals.com**

Radial Engineering Bassbone OD Preamp

Radial's Bassbone OD Preamp offers a bunch of must-have live and studio functions in a single pedal. It's a direct box; it's a bass overdrive stompbox with drive, mix and tone controls; and it's a sort of bass mixing board with two switchable inputs, each with designated low, mid, high and gain knobs. In addition, Channel-A features a button that, when activated, boosts the signal by 10 megohms—excellent for the sort of piezo pickups used to amplify a double bass. And Channel-B boasts Drag Control, a type of "load correction" that helps lower-output vintage axes get the most out of whatever amp or interface they're being fed into. The two channels can be blended in the case of a dual pickup system, and silent tuning is possible via a tuner output and mute footswitch. Silent practice is also a breeze using the Bassbone's built-in headphone preamp. $349.99. **tonebone.com**

Marcus Miller by Sire Basses



There's "affordable," and then there's the new signature line of electric basses Marcus Miller has released through the Sire brand. The J-bass-inspired V7 is selling at $399, with a five-string option available for an additional $100. The more rockish M3, equipped with two humbuckers, is available only as a four-string and ships for just $299. Miller fans and most jazz and funk players will opt for the V7, and its rundown of features is impressive, especially given the price: The model has a body crafted from swamp ash (pictured, à la Miller's original Fender) or North American alder; a signature bridge with old-school J-bass design elements plus a heavy-mass saddle; and an inventive electronics setup with three-band EQ, a pickup-blending pot, middle boost/cut control and active/passive toggle. **sire-guitars.com**

Sound advice

Chops

NaturaLee

TERELL STAFFORD ON THE SOULFUL TECHNIQUE OF TRUMPET GREAT LEE MORGAN

I came to jazz very late, in my second year of graduate school at Rutgers University. I thought pursuing it would make me a better classical trumpet player. When I first started I heard Lee Morgan, Clifford Brown, Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis; it was Miles who really taught me the vocabulary. But after grad school I started working in Philadelphia, where I was saturated with Lee Morgan.

I was working with the great organist Shirley Scott, who would talk about Lee Morgan and his playing and tell me stories. Then I met Jimmy Heath, who would do the same. When saxophonist Tim Warfield and I played together—he was the one who actually taught me a lot about jazz when we were learning to play—we played a lot of Lee's tunes.

I think Lee Morgan's sound came from what was in his head. Everyone who told stories about Lee all said the same thing: He was an extremely *natural* player. Not very schooled, but very natural. Nevertheless, the intellectual part of the music was there, because he was extremely bright. He had a great mind, just like Clifford, in the sense that Clifford was very mathematical. Lee was too: It wasn't something he learned in a classroom, but you can hear it inside of his playing.

The other thing that Lee shared with Clifford is that both of them had incredible articulation. They both loved to play marches; that's where that staccato in both guys' articulation came from. A march is just so much articulation—double- and triple-tonguing, fast single-tonguing. Lee, especially, used that triple-tonguing when he would play, bringing extra sass and excitement. Shirley Scott used to call it "spitting" the notes; she always said that articulation is how you define yourself as a player. When you hear Lee Morgan, within the first two seconds you can tell from his aggressive tone and his articulation who it is.

Lee Morgan in 1963

That, and his vocabulary. The phrasing concept that I identify with Lee is the aspect of speech. His phrases were built the same as phrases you would use when you were having a conversation with someone. The space that he would use, the way he would build a solo, that would help with the storytelling part. Think about a great storyteller, or some guys who are fantastic joke tellers. When you hear them speak, they may not be conscious of the space they leave, but the space they leave brings about excitement in the story they tell. The same thing with a really great joke teller and the space they leave: It builds anticipation and sometimes creates the laugh all by itself. I think it's the same with a great improviser: The space they leave is as fascinating as the space they play. That's an element I consciously adapted from Lee Morgan.

I dig the way Lee navigates through harmony as well. It's always said that those who know the most harmonies can make them sound the simplest. So when you listen to Lee Morgan harmonically, you hear the story, you hear the soulfulness; you're not hearing him struggle through any of the harmonic sequences, and I find that really attractive. It's spectacular when he's working an uptempo tune, but I also love the way Lee plays ballads: I love how he emotes.

I can't close this column, though, without talking about his compositional chops. They are astounding. The rhythmic complexity of a tune like "Yes I Can, No You Can't" is remarkable. The best improvisers are the best composers, because you can hear composition in their playing, and vice versa. You can hear, in Lee's compositions, that he wrote around the style of his playing, which I'm a huge fan of. I think "Ceora" is one of the most beautiful compositions ever written. That's my benchmark as far as jazz composition.

The thing that attracted me the most about Lee wasn't technical at all: It was his spirit of conviction. Every time he played, you could tell it was a hundred percent from his heart. That soulful aspect was overpowering for me. There was no way you could just sit and listen to a Lee Morgan solo and chill out; at some point, you're gonna jump up and shout or scream. That's what excited me. As a professor of music at Temple University, I can say that is something that can't be taught. ***JT***

[*As told to Michael J. West*]

Terell Stafford is a trumpeter and educator whose new album, BrotherLee Love: Celebrating Lee Morgan, *is available now from Capri Records.*

FROM LEFT: PHILIPPE LÉVY-STAB, FRANCIS WOLFF/MOSAIC IMAGES

Get the Most from Your Tenor Sax

Make the music your own with RG by Otto link. Want to create soft and mellow sound, or maybe you want bright and edgy? RG's uniquely designed parabolic chamber offers it all. Available in a choice of tip openings and three finishes: hard rubber, satin stainless-steel, or special order in gold plating. The RG by Otto Link, another jj Babbitt exclusive.

Visit jjbabbitt.com

jj Babbitt
jjbabbitt.com

MOUTHPIECES FOR ALL CLARINETS AND SAXOPHONES

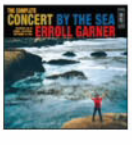
Reviews

"Classy, classical-infused style and joyful approach": Erroll Garner, c. 1946

WILLIAM P. GOTTLIEB/COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

ERROLL GARNER

THE COMPLETE CONCERT BY THE SEA (Legacy)



Concert by the Sea, the recording of Erroll Garner's Sept. 19, 1955, performance in Carmel, Calif., immediately became and remains one of the best-selling albums in jazz. But one always suspected that Garner's trio played more music that day than the 41 minutes committed to record. The initial CD reissue, a slapdash job that came out in 1987, was serviceable but muddy. Now, finally, 60 years after that historic concert, we get what is purported to be the concert in its entirety, along with improved fidelity via a new mastering.

The amount of music has doubled. Eleven of the 22 tunes were previously unreleased, and announcements and an interview with the trio are included in the three-CD *The Complete Concert by the Sea*. (The full concert program, as it occurred, unfolds over the first two discs; the third presents the previously released 11 songs in the order they appeared on the original *Concert by the Sea*.)

Garner's classy, classical-infused style and joyful approach made him one of the most popular pianists of his day. He was a unique figure, too: Though he didn't read music he was a technical marvel, able to operate his hands independently of one another, often playing two melodic lines, a tricky task for even the most accomplished pianists. Yet while he had no trouble winning audiences, he didn't win over every critic. Unlike contemporaries such as Thelonious Monk, Ahmad Jamal and Bill Evans, Garner had zero tolerance for silence, filling every space with note upon note. Whereas the beboppers played single-note runs with the right hand, he used fancy chords on the melodies. In other words, Garner was a practitioner, not a visionary or innovator. Still, there is no disputing his dazzling dexterity or his role in maintaining jazz's status as a popular American music in the R&B and rock-and-roll eras.

With all that in mind, there's no argument that *The Complete Concert by the Sea* is anything but perfect. Garner is ebullient, and bassist Eddie Calhoun and drummer Denzil Best bring their A game. Most *JazzTimes* readers have heard *Concert by the Sea*, so there's little point in treading that ground. The 11 new selections, however, show that whittling the concert by half must have been a herculean chore 60 years ago. Every tune is a gem. Garner gives "Night and Day" a regal solo and a shuffling rhythm driven by Best's brush work and Calhoun's steady bass. "The Nearness of You," taken slowly and delicately, acquires a glossy sheen thanks to Garner's heavy use of trills, as does the trio's majestic treatment of "Laura." "Lullaby of Birdland," always a happy tune, bounces along with more effervescence than ever (you can hear Garner smiling); same with "'S Wonderful," which chugs along as fast as you've ever heard it. "Caravan" gets the most inventive treatment, Garner's left hand serving up unexpected chords and a fresh rhythm while his right toys just enough with the melody and timing to make it his own. **STEVE GREENLEE**

JD ALLEN

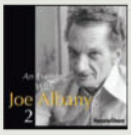
GRAFFITI (Savant)

Throughout *Graffiti*, saxophonist JD Allen's music creates a strong sense of familiarity: a rubato melody driven by rolling drums and impassioned Trane-like tenor; a snaky Rollins-esque riff; even some folk qualities that acknowledge Ornette Coleman. But, per usual, it's all in the delivery; for Allen, that means creating a signature sound by moving too fast to rest on any one of these strong influences. His longtime bandmates, Gregg August (bass) and Rudy Royston (drums), contribute to the singularity of the ensemble by both accentuating the leader and creating resistance.

Although the high-energy performance should appeal to anyone with open ears,

JOE ALBANY

AN EVENING WITH JOE ALBANY 2
(SteepleChase)



It has been a good year for jazz films: *Whiplash*. *Sound of Redemption: The Frank Morgan Story*. *Low Down*, a gritty biopic about Joe Albany.

The best way to experience *Low Down* and *An Evening With Joe Albany 2* is back-to-back. The film contains Albany's original recordings in flashes and quick interludes. If you only watched the film, you might wonder why his story of addiction and self-betrayal matters. The CD reveals why.

It is the second release drawn from a solo performance at the Jazzhus Montmartre in Copenhagen in 1973. Albany, a shadowy figure of myth and legend, was present at the creation of bebop and played with Charlie Parker. His repertoire at the Montmartre is classic stuff from the Songbook, but his chordal extensions and angular, highly syncopated phrasing are pure bop. Albany usually lands on the offbeat. Yet his digressions into stride, and his ability to reharmonize standards on the fly, are more Art Tatum than Bud Powell.

He was a hard, percussive, lavish, orchestral pianist, with a unique concept of lyricism, unforgiving as granite. He liked medleys. There is a headlong, ecstatic four-song Jerome Kern set, and a slow-burning ballad trilogy centered on 50 passionate seconds of "My Ideal." "Over the Rainbow" (a few bars of which appear in the film) is overwhelmed with vast arpeggiated decoration. "Lush Life" also occurs briefly in the film. In the Montmartre, its towering architecture keeps ascending for five minutes. Albany buries "Jitterbug Waltz" in new content, yet Fats Waller's song is always there, in a hundred guises.

The recording is odd. The sound quality is marginal, and there is no evidence of an audience. But Albany was a major jazz pianist all but lost to the world. This album rescues one bright night in his dark life.

THOMAS CONRAD

COURTESY OF A.J. ALBANY

"A unique concept of lyricism, unforgiving as granite": Joe Albany in Los Angeles, 1959

VARIOUS ARTISTS

LOW DOWN: ORIGINAL MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACK (Light in the Attic)

When you consider how difficult it is to get any film produced and into distribution these days—let alone one about a jazz musician—it's quite something that *Low Down* made it to the finish line. Joe Albany is hardly a household name, and his story isn't a feel-good tale: Starring John Hawkes as the pianist and Elle Fanning as his daughter Amy-Jo (on whose book it was based), it centers largely on Albany's tragic struggle with drug addiction—not exactly date fare for the multiplex.

The soundtrack, stripped free of the film's plotline, attempts to tell a different story, one of Albany's mastery and significance. Of its 15 tracks, fewer than half are actually attributed to Albany; the rest are divvied among Ohad Talmor, who composed the film's original score, and Albany's contemporaries and influences, including Thelonious Monk, Max Roach, Coleman Hawkins and a Ben Webster/Jack Teagarden pair-up on "Big Eight Blues."

Given the relative dearth of Albany's music available currently, a full set devoted to his own work would have served as a more useful introduction (or, better yet, one Albany disc and a second for the score). Nevertheless, there's enough here to make a case for Albany as a sadly neglected figure in jazz, from a slightly off-kilter, bluesy reading of "Angel Eyes" to the melancholy "The Nearness of You."

Those vintage recordings sync fluidly with the four featured tracks from Talmor's Large Ensemble, among them a languid, dusky "'Round Midnight" spotlighting pianist Jacob Sacks, and "Free Couples," two minutes of bassist Matt Pavolka and drummer Dan Weiss involved in a skittering chase. "AJ Blues," the soundtrack's outro, borders on the shambolic, a battery of horns (Talmor himself and several others) and the rhythm players giddily going any which way they please.

The set's somewhat erratic nature is exacerbated by wildly dramatic shifts in sound quality: Some of the older tracks are distant and muddy, as if recorded from the next room with a cheap cassette machine; others, including the frolicsome "Barbados" and a monumental solo take on "Lush Life," as well as the Talmor music, are crisp and contemporary. Here's hoping for a proper Joe Albany retrospective set. **JEFF TAMARKIN**

Allen provides notes explaining each track. "Disambiguation" might sound merely like an alternate take of the earlier "Jawn Henry," but the saxophonist includes the former to downplay the melody and emphasize the trio's interaction in the halftime-to-double-time foundation. "G-dspeed, B. Morris" pays tribute to the late conductor and composer Butch Morris but keeps things inside, with a solo that is at once spirited and deeply pensive. Even in calmer moments like this, Royston's elastic rolls and crashes fill the space without overwhelming the group sound. August is always at the ready, adding strong double-stops for color.

In "Sonny Boy," inspired not by Rollins but by John Lee Hooker, Allen sticks closely to a call-and-response riff that burns from start to finish. And by keeping his tunes on the economical side—only one surpasses seven minutes, one clocks in under three—he distills his ideas down to their best elements. This is one of his strongest sets in an already prolific discography. **MIKE SHANLEY**

STEFANO BATTAGLIA TRIO

IN THE MORNING: MUSIC OF ALEC WILDER (ECM)

Alec Wilder (1907-1980) was a composer equally at home in the worlds of stage, film, opera/classical and popular song. Because he spread himself out to such a degree, he is not often celebrated to the extent of many of his contemporaries who focused exclusively on contributing to what is now known as the Great American Songbook. Still, his work has been interpreted by artists as diverse as Dave Liebman (who devoted an entire album to Wilder), Miles Davis, Marvin Gaye and, especially, Frank Sinatra, who called Wilder a close friend and a favorite composer.

On the live *In the Morning*, the Italian pianist Stefano Battaglia, along with his trio of Salvatore Maiore on bass and Roberto Dani playing drums, takes on seven of Wilder's pieces, with four of the interpretations exceeding 10 minutes. That Battaglia and company take their time to examine the music so comprehensively is a testament to Wilder's melodic gift; his work gives a musician plenty of wiggle room. The title track leads things off, casual and almost cautious until a third of the way in, when Battaglia puts the theme aside and heads to a darker, foreboding place. If the tone of the music strikes some listeners as cinematic in its suggestiveness and subtlety, that's a nod to the composer's ability to create large-scale aural portraiture while maintaining an understated presence. "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" is so vaporous as to seem fleeting; Dani's reliance on cymbals and Battaglia's minimalism on the keyboard create what must have been an eerie pall throughout Torino's Teatro Vittoria.

Not all is quite so sedate. Both "River Run" and "Where Do You Go?" are spirited romps, and the closing "Chick Lorimer," although it takes several minutes to get there, ends the set with a rush of sound that approaches rock spirit in its unbound fury. **JEFF TAMARKIN**

RAN BLAKE

GHOST TONES: PORTRAITS OF GEORGE RUSSELL (A-Side)

Veteran pianist-composer Ran Blake includes original music, a few standards and interpretations of some of George Russell's most important recorded pieces on this tender but ultimately bracing tribute to his longtime friend and colleague. A serene, almost autumnal feel permeates this set, but there's no sentimentality; the music resonates with clear-eyed affirmation of life's complexities and ambiguities.

In addition to his work in the Third Stream, Russell was an early electronic music visionary, and several of these tracks reflect this. Blake explores both the contrasting and complementary aspects of synthesized and organic instrument sounds, and over the course of the disc, no fewer than 12 instrumentalists appear in varying contexts and combinations along with Blake. In most cases, the synthesized effects create a context in which the organic sounds can thrive and grow. They also heighten and deepen the music's emotional thrust, as on "Alice Norbury," in which the romanticism implied by the wafting synth-string backing is countered by a palpable emotional tautness, complementing and challenging the serenity of Blake's sonic landscape.

Among the Russell compositions recast are "Living Time" (from the 1972 Bill Evans/George Russell LP of that title), a movement from *Vertical Form VI* (Russell's pioneering electronic music LP, recorded in 1977) and several selections from Russell's landmark 1957 debut, *The Jazz Workshop*. As ever, Blake can reimagine even familiar material so thoroughly, yet remain so true to the spirit of the original, that the results can be almost unrecognizable yet oddly familiar. Blake's own contributions, some co-written, are aural vignettes paying tribute to events, places and people in Russell's life, delivered with grace, artistry and deep feeling unburdened by bathos. **DAVID WHITEIS**

THE DON BRADEN ORGANIX QUARTET

LUMINOSITY (Creative Perspective)

Soul-jazz, if nothing else, was all about the deepest of sticky grooves, solos that sometimes took tunes in surprising directions and, maybe above all, a joyful exuberance that was easily felt and heard by listeners. That's the kind of cannonball, no pun intended, that saxophonist Don Braden launches with the engaging and aptly titled *Luminosity*, on which he's joined by longtime associates Kyle Koehler on organ and Cecil Brooks III on drums, and ace guitarist Dave Stryker.

The music jumps from the get-go, with Stryker diving right into a brief spin at the start of "Luminosity (First Steps)," its melody hinting at "Giant Steps." Braden then gets his first showcase spot, plunging his gritty but clean-sounding tenor into a long, pirouetting improvisation before handing the solo space to Koehler, Stryker and Brooks. The four take a similar tack on other Braden-penned tunes, including the fast-percolating "Jive Turkey," built on old-school R&B rhythms, the more laidback "The Time We Shared" and "Walkin' the Walk." The leader pulls out his alto flute for the lovely, stately ballad "Do Love Me Do."

Braden and crew mix it up to a greater extent on tunes by other composers, cooking up a swinging take on Chick Corea's "Bud Powell," featuring one of Stryker's most impressive solos of the session, and adding trumpeter Claudio Roditi for some refreshing two-horn harmonies on a bossa-fied version of the Rodgers and Hart standard "I Could Write a Book." Braden turns in a gorgeous unaccompanied reading of Billy Strayhorn's "Chelsea Bridge," and brings alto man Sherman Irby into the fold for the closer, their two saxes meshing smartly on tangy unison and harmony lines before each delivers a bracing solo. Call it a rousing finish to a fully satisfying sonic meal. Seconds? **PHILIP BOOTH**

TERRI LYNE CARRINGTON

THE MOSAIC PROJECT: LOVE AND SOUL (Concord)

Love and Soul is a natural, if not as satisfying, sequel to *The Mosaic Project*, the 2011 release that won drummer and bandleader Terri Lyne Carrington a Best Jazz Vocal Album Grammy the following year. That maiden entry found Carrington steering an all-star, all-female cast (Esperanza Spalding, Cassandra Wilson, Geri Allen, Dianne Reeves and many more) through 14 tracks that hewed largely to contemporary and traditional jazz. *Love and Soul*, as its title suggests, moves significantly and determinedly into R&B rhythms and vocal styles, although not to the extent that jazz devotees will feel wholly alienated.

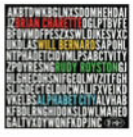
Again, Carrington, who produced and arranged the album, has assembled a formidable group of women contributors. The twist this time is that several tracks pay tribute to male artists who've inspired Carrington, and a few feature spoken-word from actor Billy Dee Williams. Frank Sinatra, George Duke, Nickolas Ashford, Bill Withers and Luther Vandross are among those Carrington honors here, with an A-list of frontwomen including Chaka Khan, Nancy Wilson, Ledisi and Lalah Hathaway giving voice to those tunes and several penned by Carrington herself.

Like many of the tracks here, Natalie Cole's reading of Ellington's "Come Sunday," which leads things off, is built atop a fierce dance rhythm, and Carrington populates the track with dexterous instrumentalists—alto saxophonist Tia Fuller and keyboardist Amy Bellamy turn in particularly robust performances. At the other end of the spectrum, the ambrosial Withers ballad "You Just Can't Smile It Away," with Regina Carter on violin, Linda Taylor playing guitar and Linda Oh on bass, features a soaring, affecting vocal lead from Paula Cole.

Several tracks, including those sung by Lizz Wright, Wilson and Carrington herself (her own "Can't Resist") straddle stylistic lines easily: Jazz changes meet soul-pop dance beats and vocal performances. But there's no denying that this second entry in the *Mosaic Project* franchise offers an acutely different vibe than its predecessor. **JEFF TAMARKIN**

BRIAN CHARETTE

ALPHABET CITY (Posi-Tone)



Organist Brian Charette mingles jazz, old-school soul and psychedelia on *Alphabet City*, his ninth recording as a leader. Joined by guitarist Will Bernard and drummer Rudy Royston, Charette presents a dozen original compositions that groove and soothe about as often as they challenge and provoke the ear.

As writer and instrumentalist, Charette is at his best when giving sway to mellower inclinations, and a breezy vibe marks "West Village" and "Avenue A," the latter an especially fine showcase for Bernard's warm, robust tone. "White Lies" has a slow-drag pathos with just a tinge of country, while "East Village" shuttles along at a gallop, Charette at his most inventive. The trio also brings some serious funk on the hard-cooking "They Left Fred Out" and the deep groove of "Sharpie Moustache," which blossoms into a gorgeously anthemic bridge powered by Charette's choir-like block chords and Bernard's just-twangy-enough lines.

Charette also indulges a taste for space-age freak-out sounds with the rough-edged "Not a Purist," with dizzying every-key-on-the-organ runs, stinging fuzz-rock interjections from Bernard and crackling circuit-bent synthesizer interludes. This bizarro mood continues on "Hungarian Major," with its tense minor-keyed Eastern European scales; Charette's playing here sometimes recalls creepy organ parts from a Saturday-night *Chiller Theatre* horror show. These tunes, along with the congenial "Split Black" and its Zappa-esque Bernard breaks, sometimes sit uneasily alongside the more straightforward soul-style tracks. But they do provide the album's strongest moments from Royston, galvanized by the airy spaces of the rockish arrangements into bursts of thunder.

Many listeners will find themselves skipping *Alphabet City*'s outré tracks for the more directly communicative material—and vice versa. But the album itself shouldn't be missed. It's a solid addition to both Charette's discography and the classic organ-trio tradition. **MATT R. LOHR**

PAQUITO D'RIVERA & QUINTETO CIMARRÓN

AIRES TROPICALES (Sunnyside)

This disc features works by Paquito D'Rivera as well as a variety of other Cuban composers; it testifies to the saxophonist/clarinetist's ongoing love for the rich (and too often underappreciated) Cuban classical-music tradition. He is complemented by Quinteto Cimarrón, a string quintet consisting of Cuban expats now living in Spain.

The music here, though recognizably "classical," is characterized by an unforced meld of diverse traditions and genres. In "Wapango," for instance, the second movement of D'Rivera's *Aires Tropicales* suite, contrapuntal passages intermingle with elements of call-and-response, befitting the Afro-European cultural collusion on display. D'Rivera's clarinet blends seamlessly with the strings; when he finally solos, he adds a bluesy tinge with his slurs and bends. The fourth movement, "Afro," is likewise enlivened by counter-rhythms and textured layers that reflect the Africanist theme of the title, even as its melodic and harmonic conceits hew closely to standard European classical forms.

The disc's other selections reflect a similar unselfconscious eclecticism. The jubilant "Tamborichelo II: La Cubana," by contemporary composer Eduardo Cana Flores (who also arranged the contrabass part for *Aires Tropicales*), is gaily danceable, yet the lack of percussion instruments ensures a kind of stately elegance even when the music is at its most energetic—exemplified as well in the sprightly "Contradanza," which concludes with a jubilant foot-stomp. "Longina" sounds more modernist, with its initial taut chordal arrangements dissolving into a lushly romantic melody. Here, as elsewhere, D'Rivera's solo work adds depth and color without undue flash. Perhaps inevitably, his application of classical technique to jazz-influenced improvisation, especially on clarinet, summons echoes of Benny Goodman. Listeners familiar with him in a purely jazz context will delight at his work here, with its clear-toned eloquence and understated yet wide thematic scope. **DAVID WHITEIS**

AL DI MEOLA

ELYSIUM (Valiana)

Al Di Meola has always been a guitarist's guitarist, hailed for his facility on both acoustic and electric instruments. This kind of guitar-god persona, however, can tempt instrumentalists to let sheer prowess overshadow everything else about their music. It's a gamble Di Meola takes throughout *Elysium*, his latest recording as a leader.

This album is all about chops. Its 14 tracks, all but one written by the guitarist, are rough sketches for Di Meola to flesh out with fast-fingered fireworks, sometimes overdubbing as many as three guitars per track. Di Meola slickly harmonizes nylon-string and steel acoustic on the yearning-yet-potent "Adour." "Stephanie" embraces the listener with 12-string warmth before coarsening into ineffable menace, and "Esmerelda," an acoustic duet with Moroccan percussionist Rhani Krija, has a crisply picked Gypsy exoticism. On the electric front, Di Meola growls and squeals with authority on the blistering "Tangier," and the finale of the title track bathes the listener in richly impressionistic prog-rock textures.

But Di Meola seems so intent on pyrotechnics that his compositions find little breathing room. Few songs build front-to-back atmospheric consistency here; the mood darts and shifts as Di Meola's virtuosity dictates. His fellow instrumentalists manage only an occasional peek from behind the wall of guitars. Krija stands out thanks to his showcase duets with Di Meola, most notably the finger-bruising "Monsters." On "Babylon," keyboardist Philippe Saisse, a longtime Di Meola collaborator, deftly negotiates fanciful unison arpeggios with the guitarist, and on his sole composition, album-closer "La Lluvia," Saisse's marimba sweetens the island-style brew.

Still, though engaging in the moment, *Elysium* offers little takeaway other than the already well-known fact that Di Meola is a prodigious guitarist. Here's hoping his next effort foregrounds the music as much as the raw skill of the man playing it. **MATT R. LOHR**

ENRICO RAVA QUARTET WITH GIANLUCA PETRELLA

Editor's Pick

WILD DANCE (ECM)

At 75, trumpeter Enrico Rava, Italy's most famous jazz musician, has a new band. Over the years, Rava ensembles have introduced young Italian musicians who have gone on to important careers, like trombonist Gianluca Petrella and pianists Stefano Bollani and Giovanni Guidi. All three of Rava's new sidemen could join this list: subtle bassist Gabriele Evangelista, volatile drummer Enrico Morello and, most notably, guitarist Francesco Diodati.

Rava has rarely worked with a guitarist, and it is striking how a guitar changes the atmosphere of a Rava ensemble. There is much more open space. Diodati does not so much accompany Rava as array shifting backgrounds containing strands of independent thought and pools of light. Rava is clearly inspired. The opening piece, "Diva," is introduced by Diodati's resonant sustains and Evangelista's slow, intermittent bass. Rava is willing to be one more hovering voice. His lines are like no other trumpeter's. He thinks in seemingly autonomous fragments, but then finds relationships among them and juxtaposes them into large designs. The next track, "Space Girl," is also mysterious and rapt, an insistent melody within which Rava finds revelatory variations. Diodati's solo is an obsessive circling that he strums his way out of. "Sola" and "Overboard" reveal how Rava and Diodati together can expand a simple melodic figure into an encompassing sonic domain.

Most of the other tracks are short, and bring in trombonist Gianluca Petrella, a longtime Rava collaborator. Rava loves to duel with him, in loose unisons and cacophonous contrapuntal joint ventures. But collective improvisation, exciting when used judiciously for contrast, is limiting when it is overdone. It precludes the strong soloists here from truly soloing. It prevents Rava from fully exploring the potential of his new relationship with Diodati. Petrella is one of the best trombonists in jazz, but this album would have been more interesting without him. **THOMAS CONRAD**

▸ **"An encompassing sonic domain":** Enrico Rava, Francesco Diodati, Enrico Morello and Gabriele Evangelista (from left)

JOHN ELLIS & DOUBLE-WIDE

CHARM (Parade Light)

If you're curious what marvels await you on John Ellis & Double-Wide's *Charm*, consider the title, along with the fact that this is the quintet's third album. Tenor saxophonist/clarinetist Ellis' latest is a heady stew of unparalleled musicianship and melodic inspiration.

The bulk of *Charm*'s tracks were written by Ellis during a Make Jazz Fellowship at Santa Monica's 18th Street Arts Center, and his West Coast sojourn produced 10 exhilarating compositions. "Snake Handler," driven by Ellis' tenor, Alan Ferber's trombone and Gary Versace on organ, slithers like its namesake reptile. "Barbed Wire Britches" is all bite, while "Horse Won't Trot" lopes along at a woozy yet dignified pace, abetted by Jason Marsalis' clip-clopping drums. "Old Hotel" blends the cabaret lamentations of Versace's accordion with a rolling, funeral-march cadence from Marsalis, and the funky "Booker" serves up a melody you'll happily find stuck in your head for days.

As an instrumentalist Ellis is assured, his solos clean yet structurally unpredictable. Ferber, on his first outing as a full-fledged Double-Wider (he guested on the band's 2010 album, *Puppet Mis-*

LUCA D'AGOSTINO/ECM RECORD

chief), locks in with Ellis like a Siamese twin, and Marsalis and sousaphonist Matt Perrine offer precise yet playful rhythm support. On the hard-chugging "High and Mighty," Perrine solos with the surprising agility of a trumpeter, and he finds a bold showcase on the wacky "International Tuba Day," which plays like a long-lost Raymond Scott recording (Versace's organ breaks here are genuinely hilarious).

But make no mistake: John Ellis & Double-Wide are as serious as your life, a fact made clear by album-closer "Yearn." Its church-inflected lines swell with unfulfilled desire; the unresolved coda sends the listener out on an ambiguous footing. Like the strange hat-and-suited creature on its cover, *Charm* is a rare beast: an authentically artful grand old time. **MATT R. LOHR**

AMIR ELSAFFAR

CRISIS (Pi)

The music on *Crisis*, the third album from the conceptually driven, multitalented Iraqi-American trumpeter Amir ElSaffar and his Two Rivers Ensemble, was commissioned for and debuted at the Newport Jazz Festival two summers ago. Its viscerally haunting mix of jazz and Middle Eastern music earned a standing ovation that afternoon. Now the studio album, recorded earlier this year, is among the most notable releases of 2015.

ElSaffar's ensemble—Ole Mathisen, tenor and soprano saxophones; Nasheet Waits, drums; Carlo DeRosa, bass; Tareq Abboushi, *buzuq* (a long-necked lute); Zafer Tawil, oud and percussion; the leader on *santur* (a hammered dulcimer) and vocals in addition to trumpet—is first rate. But it is ElSaffar's composing for the seven-part *Crisis Suite*, a commentary on recent Iraqi and Middle Eastern history, that shines brightest here. Waits' drums open "Introduction—From the Ashes," which builds to ElSaffar's evocative *maqam* vocalization of lines by the great Ottoman poet Abdul Ghafar al-Akhras. This bleeds into "The Great Dictator," whose militaristic swagger is successively interrupted by Abboushi's pensive buzuq and Mathisen's frenzied tenor. Then ElSaffar's unaccompanied trumpet lamentation "Taqsim Saba" sets up what follows: "El-Sha'ab (The People)" starts with bass and drums, as if cautiously emerging from a nightmare, becoming folkloric and increasingly hopeful as it builds to ElSaffar's Miles-ian trumpet solo. The slow, exquisite "Love Poem" features an abridged poem by the 13th-century Sufi mystic Ibn Arabi; in copious compositional notes, the piece is aptly described as conveying "beauty, vulnerability, tenderness, longing." "Flyover Iraq" includes Chicago-style horns piloting a Turkish/Ottoman melody above energetic strings, concluding with a bass solo as "the foundation crumbles."

The suite-closing "Tipping Point," circling back with references to "The Great Dictator" and "Flyover Iraq," is a 13:40-minute highlight, complex and appropriately climactic. The epilogue "Aneen (Weeping), Continued" references ElSaffar's 2007 *Two Rivers Suite* and the 1258 fall of Baghdad, and an unabridged version of "Love Poem" concludes this exceptional album. **BILL BEUTTLER**

ORRIN EVANS

THE EVOLUTION OF ONESELF

(Smoke Sessions)

Some jazz pairings seem all but inevitable until they prove stubbornly elusive. So it's great to see two of Philly's best, pianist Orrin Evans and bassist Christian McBride, finally collaborate on a CD—and an audacious one at that, featuring drummer Karriem Riggins in an equally prominent role.

The Evolution of Oneself isn't a concept album, strictly speaking, but it has recurring themes and brief hip-hop interludes devised by Evans' teenage son, Matthew. Jerome Kern's "All the Things You Are" receives three reprises, and whether you view the tune as a personal favorite or an overworked warhorse, you'll appreciate the group's unwaveringly imaginative interpretations: The melody and core harmonies consistently reveal new colors and dimensions, amid sharp rhythmic displacements and sur-

prising shifts in mood and tempo. Ultimately, the tune inspires the album's two-part coda featuring guest vocalist JD Walter's resonant baritone. Now and then, too, the trio is augmented by guitarist Marvin Sewell, who helps boldly transform the hoary "Wildwood Flower" into a 21st-century elegy. Sewell also adds the requisite finesse to Grover Washington Jr.'s "A Secret Place," a tribute to its late composer, the great Philly reedman.

Nothing, though, is more evocative than the soul-jazz excursion the trio takes on "Sweet Sid," the Jonathan Michel-penned homage to the late Philly pianist Sid Simmons, or more warmly lyrical than Evans' "Ruby Red," a ballad dedicated to his godmother. The latter offers a dynamic contrast to the muscular attack and sleek propulsion the trio reveals on "Tsagli's Lean" and several other delights. **MIKE JOYCE**

JOHN FEDCHOCK NEW YORK BIG BAND

LIKE IT IS (MAMA)

Two of the leading figures in orchestral jazz have released new albums in 2015, Maria Schneider (*The Thompson Fields*) and now John Fedchock. For both, it is their first large-format jazz recording in eight years. The economics of big-band jazz are forbidding, yet the two orchestras have sustained relatively stable personnel for over 20 years. They share five musicians. New York's big-band players are a tight community.

Schneider uses her ensemble for musical autobiography. Fedchock uses his as a high-level laboratory. *Like It Is* is comprehensive. It encompasses both classic big-band scale and detail (in Fedchock's impeccable arrangements) and postmodern dissonance (in liberties taken with tunes like "You and the Night and the Music"). Many bases get covered. There are two Latin numbers, Cedar Walton's headlong, reharmonized "Ojos de Rojo," and Fedchock's "Havana," a snaking, sensual *bolero*, both driven by guest percussionist Bobby Sanabria. A Fedchock original, "Just Sayin'," sounds vaguely familiar, like a notion Wayne Shorter might have conceived, broken up and flung around. There is the title track, Fedchock's funk digression just for fun, and two seriously pensive standard ballads. "For Heaven's Sake" has a long, flowing, luminous flugelhorn solo by Barry Reis, and "Never Let Me Go" presents the nuanced expressiveness of Fedchock's trombone playing.

The most ambitious piece is "Ten Thirty 30," assembled from Clifford Brown compositions and solos. As themes fly by, Fedchock's chart opens spaces for his own agile trombone, Allen Farnham's ringing, raining piano, Scott Wendholt's ecstatic, swerving trumpet and Rich Perry's tall tenor saxophone architecture, erected on an odd little rhythm-section vamp. (Other solid solo work comes from Gary Smulyan, Mark Vinci, Walt Weiskopf and the late Dave Ratajczak.) This album is a diversified, in-depth status report on the big-band jazz art form as of 2015. **THOMAS CONRAD**

BENNY GREEN

LIVE IN SANTA CRUZ! (Sunnyside)

Benny Green conveys exalted inspiration without showboating or pretentiousness. Even his most subtle and complex offerings go down with such ease that it may take several listens for the depth of that subtlety and complexity to become truly evident.

This set, recorded live at the Kuumbwa Jazz Center in Santa Cruz, features the pianist in a trio setting with bassist David Wong and drummer Kenny Washington. The opening number, "Certainly," sets the tone. It kicks off with hard-charging, full-bodied swing and never lets up; Green's percussive block chords and lightly executed but sharply focused single-note lines complement his bandmates' impetus, combining rhythmic thrust and textural complexity. Wong is both timekeeper and font of bottom-range improvisation; Washington deftly exploits the melodic *and* rhythmic capacities of his instrument. The three toss ideas among themselves, each riffing and vamping a while before handing off to the next player, often juggling several concepts at once.

The nine selections are relatively brief—most under five minutes—allowing for plenty of creative play but no self-indulgence. Nonetheless, it's an ambitious journey through shifting emotional landscapes—joyful, mysterious, mournful, affirming, irreverent and solemn in turn. The closer, "Anna's Blues," a funky soul-jazz anthem, doesn't break any new ground, but that seems to be the point: Its paradoxical blend of familiarity and freshness evokes a family reunion or a church social, where the old jokes and stories are trotted out and celebrated as shared heritage, not merely entertainment. It's a fittingly old-school, good-timey conclusion to a set resonant with both seriousness of purpose and jubilance of spirit. **DAVID WHITEIS**

CHARLIE HADEN AND GONZALO RUBALCABA

TOKYO ADAGIO (Impulse! import)

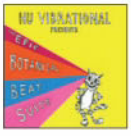
If you're ever inclined to wonder what Bill Evans' 1961 Village Vanguard recordings might have sounded like sans Paul Motian's drums, this live set by bassist Charlie Haden and pianist Gonzalo Rubalcaba, recorded at the Blue Note in Tokyo in 2005, provides one possibility. Bass and piano is a challenging duet set-up, but opener "En La Orilla Del Mundo (The Edge of the World)" serves immediate notice that two masters have entered forth in dialogue. Haden solos with a quiet placidity suggestive of warm wind in low grass, for apparently the edge of this world is one of gentle climes.

There is swing here, but it is a swing of sounds germinating at their ease. The version of David Raksin and Johnny Mercer's "My Love and I" highlights Haden's impeccable control. He hears well and has the confidence to let each note suggest the next, even when they're spaced apart as if he were channeling the ethos of Ahmad Jamal. Rubalcaba's recourse, then, is to create precise trilling figures that move the song forward as Haden simultaneously leaves it hanging in space.

The cover of Ornette Coleman's "When Will the Blues Leave" seems to ask and answer its own query: after the first movement, let us say, when bass and piano commence a kind of lock-step reel. Haden's own "Sandino" has some of the lowest, most sonorous bass notes on the album, with rich, ringing chords emanating outward, indicative of the dappling that warms this entire set. **COLIN FLEMING**

HU VIBRATIONAL

THE EPIC BOTANICAL BEAT SUITE (Meta)



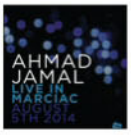
The Epic Botanical Beat Suite aims to blow your mind. Its songs are named after the resin of cannabis ("Charas"), and hallucinogens that you eat (the cactus "Hikuli") and rub into your scalp ("Kwa-shi"). Its liner notes feature a quote from Tommy Chong, of the baked comedy duo Cheech & Chong: "When you hit a groove, it's not you; it's the spirit world."

The spiritually intoxicating grooves of Hu Vibrational are the brainchild of Adam Rudolph, who calls them "Boonghee Music"—a cascade of world-inspired beats from Africa, Asia and South America, mixed with jazz, hip-hop and electronica. Rudolph initiated Hu Vibrational with his fellow percussionist Hamid Drake and producer Carlos Niño for a couple of albums beginning in 2002, but this fourth Hu outing, the first in nine years, has him as the lone original member of an 11-piece band. The rhythmic fulcrum comes from Rudolph and the six other percussionists borrowed from his 36-piece Go: Organic Orchestra, yet the beats from this hefty contingent are restrained in their speed and density in favor of an evolving arc of texture and contrast. Along with the usual array of percussion, there are drums shaped like goblets, boxes and picture frames, the cowbell-like *gankogui*, the seeds-in-a-basket *caxixi* and, most prominent, the bottom-toned resonance of *udu* clay pots played by all seven percussionists. Among those helping to put the "epic" in these botanical beats are intrepid electric bassist Bill Laswell and his longtime arranger James Dellatacoma, the Norwegian electric guitar maestro Eivind Aarset, Alex Marcelo on Fender Rhodes and Steve Gorn on *bansuri* flutes.

The result is music that thrives on the balance of simultaneously reaching backwards and forwards in time. It soothes and reorients, yet feels like the opposite of somnambulant new-age massage tapes. It's a holiday in hedonism. **BRITT ROBSON**

AHMAD JAMAL

LIVE IN MARCIAC: AUGUST 5, 2014 (Jazz Village)



Recorded at Jazz in Marciac, one of the music's signal European venues, pianist-composer Ahmad Jamal's latest live offering, a CD/DVD package, is an effervescent feast. Jamal may be 85, but this set's energy and creative range suggest that his ability to bend time to his will extends far beyond the piano.

Joined by bassist Reginald Veal, drummer Herlin Riley and percussionist Manolo Badrena, Jamal offers a program, consisting mostly of original compositions, that exudes fluency and verve. "Sunday Afternoon" provides one of Jamal's catchiest hooks and a strutting introductory solo from Veal. "Dynamo" pits the pianist in a shimmering, lightning-fast race with Riley and Badrena; Jamal deploys pounding block chords and glittery arpeggios while the drummer works every inch of the skins to create an urgent, unfaltering tempo.

The impressionistic, near-fragmentary structure of "The Gypsy" offhandedly evokes French classical traditions, and a pair of tracks pays homage to fellow pianist and composer Horace Silver, who died two months before this performance was recorded. "Silver," a gritty-yet-sophisticated Jamal original, finds the pianist tackling an ever-shifting melody with some of his most robustly insistent playing. The band also takes on the lightly exotic Silver composition "Strollin'," Badrena's whimsical chimes and Veal's buoyant bridge building a vivid sense of celebration. Jamal further illustrates his skills as a melodic deconstructionist on "All of You" and "Blue Moon," breaking the well-worn standards into glistening bits without betraying their spirits.

The accompanying DVD of the concert makes the musicians' joy in collaboration doubly palpable. Jamal's decades of expertise are evident as he guides his instrumentalists with the point of a finger, and it's marvelous to witness everyone's surprise when Badrena, on "The Gypsy," throws in a bluesy vocal exclamation enhanced by a fanfare from a handheld electronic gizmo. The disc also includes a performance not featured on the CD, a rendition of Jamal's "Morning Mist" that is largely a solo showcase for Veal. The bassist thwacks at his strings with such force you fear he may snap off a finger, but the persuasive results evolve into a tenderly evocative unison statement from the quartet. The encore, "Autumn Rain," finds Riley laying down a funky-as-you-want-it backbeat, his tongue-in-cheek smirk underlining the seeming ease with which he and his bandmates conjure such glorious sounds. These two discs combine to form an eminently worthy addition to the live discography of one of jazz's undisputed masters. **MATT R. LOHR**

THE GARY MCFARLAND LEGACY ENSEMBLE

CIRCULATION: THE MUSIC OF GARY MCFARLAND (Planet Arts)

There is a coterie of devoted people working to make sure Gary McFarland is not forgotten. It includes family, friends, musicians, colleagues and film director Kristian St. Clair, whose documentary *This Is Gary McFarland* became available for purchase late last year. In the DVD package is a CD with a previously unissued McFarland gig from 1965. Now there is *Circulation*, with 11 new interpretations of McFarland tunes. The band is vibraphonist Joe Locke, saxophonist Sharel Cassity, pianist Bruce Barth (who did the arrangements), bassist Mike Lawrence and drummer Michael Benedict (who was married to McFarland's late widow, Gail).

McFarland was a gifted composer-arranger who died in 1971, at age 38. From a career of only 10 years, he left behind a portfolio of songs unique in their cool melodic grace. "One I Could Have Loved" makes you wonder why his best pieces haven't become standards. Like all great ballads, it sounds preordained. It might have fallen, fully formed, from

the sky. It is quintessential McFarland, a bittersweet alchemy of hope and melancholy. Barth's fresh arrangement pieces it out so patiently. Cassity, on alto saxophone, releases it in gentle waves.

All ballads are in good hands with Locke. He does "Last Rites for the Promised Land" alone, soulfully, in lush two-mallet swirls and sweeps, extended by vibrato. McFarland's notes linger forever in the air.

There are also very early compositions like the fast "Notions" and the slow "Summer Day." They already possess a certain off-hand elegance that identifies their origins. Blues were not really McFarland's thing, but "Why Are You Blue" and "Blue Hodge" are perfectly suave and erotic. Both were originally recorded by Johnny Hodges. Cassity holds her own, no mean trick for an alto player. **THOMAS CONRAD**

ODED LEV-ARI

THREADING (Anzic)

This disc's title is appropriate in more ways than one. Melodic lines interweave in deft counterpoint, segueing into contrasting tempos and rhythmic patterns; the various instruments engage in a swirling dance, now one voice predominant, now another. Anat Cohen's clarinet, Nadje Noordhuis' trumpet and flugelhorn, Brian Landrus' low-end reeds and Will Vinson's alto and soprano saxophones are particularly notable, as is the steady but subtly shifting melodic base provided by pianist and leader Oded Lev-Ari, a Tel Aviv native now long based in New York.

The music itself also "weaves" aural portraits, limning landscapes of shifting images and colors, often darkened by brooding melancholy. The result may be a bit too stately and reserved to meet some definitions of "jazz," but the jazz sensibility is nonetheless strong. On "Lost and Found," blues and cool influences intermingle; Vinson and Landrus contribute solos that sound like a cross-generational/cross-genre summit meeting among Ben Webster, Lester Young and Paul Desmond, while Lev-Ari channels Brubeck and Ellington in turn. Two versions of the Gordon Jenkins standard "Goodbye" are offered, the first featuring vocals by Alan Hampton, who affects a gender-melding vulnerability reminiscent of Little Jimmy Scott. A full-bodied horn declamation helps keep bathos at bay, as does Cohen's upward-bound clarinet solo on the second take.

"Voices," after a solemn introduction, abruptly kicks up the intensity for several bars, then dissolves again into introspection and sparseness, featuring Levi-Ari's piano in dialogue with clarinet and single-string guitar leads from Gilad Hekselman, at times forward-thrusting, at times almost stationary, but never lifeless. Hampton returns on "The Dance," along with co-vocalist Jo Lawry, and some may find that track's lyrics' new-agey sentiments ("Let me fly … let me shout, let me feel") to be cloying. The wordless interplay between Lawry and Vinson's soprano sax sounds more fully realized and genuinely dramatic, as does the final vocal/instrumental counterpoint choir. **DAVID WHITEIS**

WILLIAM PARKER

FOR THOSE WHO ARE, STILL (AUM Fidelity)

Bassist, composer and bandleader William Parker is a bottomless well of creativity, and his endless run of superb recordings continues with *For Those Who Are, Still*, a three-disc box of four previously unissued long-form works, one of them dating back 15 years.

The four pieces, by four ensembles, are very different from one another; the only unifying theme is that they had been in the vault. "For Fannie Lou Hamer," a 28-minute tone poem honoring the late civil-rights leader that was recorded in 2000, begins as a droning, unmusical storm but changes form several times. The 10-piece house band at the Manhattan arts space the Kitchen performs the composition, along with Parker's favorite vocalist, Leena Conquest; Parker himself doesn't play. Conquest sings beautifully and delivers spoken word, spurred on by stringed and wind instruments, plunky percussion and freely blown brass. Freedom, structure and groove coexist peacefully. Conquest returns, 10 1/2 years later, for the nine-movement "Vermeer," a stripped-down event with saxophonist Darryl Foster, pianist Eri Yamamoto and Parker on bass and bamboo flute. It's a tasteful, refined affair, drawing equally from the realms of free improvisation and chamber music, with vocals that hint at the operatic. It's quite lovely.

"Red Giraffe With Dreadlocks," as the name implies, is a pan-global work, betraying roots in Asian, African, Caribbean and American music. It was performed in Paris in 2012 by an octet featuring longtime Parker associates and newcomers alike: drummer Hamid Drake; pianist Cooper-Moore; reedists Rob Brown, Bill Cole and Klaas Hekman; Senegalese singer-musician Mola Sylla and Indian vocalist Sangeeta Bandyopadhyay. Parker wrote the six-part work specifically for them, and it is an epic beauty, starting with the vocalists trading anguished lines that sound like calls to prayer in a period film. Particularly evocative is the 20-minute third section, "The Giraffe Dances," which opens with a three-minute unaccompanied bass saxophone solo by Hekman; it suddenly acquires a Middle Eastern accent and leads to a heated exchange with Drake that gives way to a pitched battle by the superb rhythm section of Drake, Parker and Cooper-Moore. Eventually everyone is in on the action, and the wild vocals combine with the aggressive instrumental sounds to create music unlike any you've heard before.

"Ceremonies for Those Who Are Still," recorded in Poland in 2013, has the largest scale of any composition Parker has ever attempted, and it features the National Forum of Music Symphony Orchestra and eight members of the NFM Choir, along with Chicago drummer Mike Reed and saxophonist/pianist Charles Gayle. Dedicated to a late Russian bassist named Rustam Abdullaev, it's dramatic and unsettling, with movements that soar and swoop. It's not quite jazz, it's not classical and it would be an oversimplification to label it something like Third Stream. It is, however, bold and unflinching. Ending the set is a 25-minute live improv, "Escapade for Sonny," that the trio of Parker, Gayle and Reed performed right before the premiere of "Ceremonies." Parker and Reed are on fire, but Gayle sounds uncharacteristically bored and uninspired. In the greater context of the magnificent *For Those Who Are, Still*, it's a tiny complaint. **STEVE GREENLEE**

THE RODRIGUEZ BROTHERS

IMPROMPTU (Criss Cross)

The Rodriguez Brothers, trumpeter Michael and pianist Robert, are exponents of a brand of Latin jazz that incorporates multiple strains of the genre's rhythms and textures, meshing Afro-Cuban styles with *bolero*, Brazilian, postbop and other varieties. Underappreciated despite stellar performances at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola and other venues, the two make another convincing showing on their fourth recording as co-leaders. They're joined by frequent collaborators: bassist Carlos Henriquez, drummer Ludwig Afonso and percussionist Samuel Torres.

These eight tunes, originals except for one and ranging in length from 6:13 to 9:11, are impressively cohesive. They also allow for the players to take their time with extended melodies and opened-up solos, starting with Michael's title track, built on a tumbling, driving piano-and-bass groove and a zippy, elongated melody marked by quick twists, tonal shifts and sudden falls. Michael's trumpet solo is alternately fluid and brittle, artfully constructed of short phrases and long lines, and boosted by the rhythm section's pushing and pulling. Robert's piano improvisation, initially more subdued, builds in intensity before

dropping out for Henriquez's beefy but agile bass declarations.

The album is similarly interactive throughout, including on Robert's bop burner "La Guaracha," titled for the Cuban rhythm of the same name and capped with an incendiary back-and-forth between the siblings; Robert's rumba-charged "Fragment"; Michael's starting-stopping "Descargation," inspired by lessons learned from Palmieri and boasting a barnburning solo by Henriquez; and Robert's easy-flowing "Love Samba," bolstered toward the end by a vocal chorus featuring all the musicians.

Michael's "Latin Jacks," named for the way the Rodriguez's grandfather, Roberto, pronounced "Latin jazz," again relies on an intriguing, hopscotching long-form head. And the brothers' Miami-based father, drummer Roberto Rodriguez, guests on Robert's bouncy, almost pop-inflected "Minor Things." All in all, a striking outing from a band worthy of even wider recognition. **PHILIP BOOTH**

FRANK VIGNOLA & VINNY RANIOLO

SWING ZING! (FV)

Where precisely does swing give way to zing on this collection of mostly guitar duets? Look no further than those performances that demand virtuosic technique from veteran guitarist Frank Vignola and his well-matched compatriots. Vignola and fellow guitarist Vinny Raniolo, his longtime duo mate in a stage show that matches fretboard fireworks

Editor's Pick

VARIOUS ARTISTS

REVIVE MUSIC PRESENTS SUPREME SONACY VOL. 1 (Revive/Blue Note)

In recent years, the multiplatform New York brand Revive Music has had a high-powered ally in Blue Note Records, whose current m.o. of postbop shot through with hip-hop and R&B, and vice versa, couldn't have come to pass without Revive's influence. This diverse, entertaining mixtape of sorts, released in partnership with the venerable label, acts as a Revive manifesto and showcases its family with tact and discipline. (In other words, marquee Blue Noters, Robert Glasper included, sit this one out.)

Despite Revive's next-generation mission statement, this is music with a shallow learning curve. Players like trumpeters Igmar Thomas, Maurice Brown and Keyon Harrold, and saxophonists Marcus Strickland and Jaleel Shaw, would have also killed in 1995 or 1955, and Strickland and singer Christie Dashiell's take on the Janet Jackson single "Let's Wait Awhile" is a very potent example of a very popular kind of jazz-assisted neo-soul.

The ground begins to break around "Water Games—Ravel Re-Imagined," where pianist Eldar's classical training meets strings that conjure Bernard Herrmann. And harpist Brandee Younger seems primed for a higher profile, on a track that reimagines the '70s epoch when commercial soul-jazz had some edge and sex to it. In a successful bid to bind the proceedings, producer Raydar Ellis remixes the music in interludes spread throughout the program, tweaking hip-hop's golden-age strategy by crafting beats from new jazz rather than classic. Elsewhere, the presence of Gen-Xers old enough to have absorbed that golden age firsthand—Marc Cary, Chris Potter, Jeff "Tain" Watts, James Genus—argues how Revive is less an untouched frontier than it is a continuation of a good fight. **EVAN HAGA**

Stellar musicianship, remixed or not: Marcus Strickland

DENEKA PENISTON

with cabaret charm, are equal to task, and the several guest artists add both zest and soulfulness to a procession of familiar and not-so-familiar tunes. Nowhere is that more evident than when Finnish guitarist Olli Soikkeli adds to the propulsive thrust that makes "Joseph Joseph" such a rousing showstopper.

Some of the album's most engaging performances, though, are unhurried and unabashedly sentimental, including a take on "All the Things You Are" that dreamily features vocalist Audra Muriel, bassist Gary Mazzaroppi and the great jazz guitar elder Bucky Pizzarelli. The album's closer, a strolling, Bucky-abetted medley of "Peg O' My Heart" and "I'm Confessin'," is similarly pitched. "Whispering," which features Gene Bertoncini on nylon-string guitar, is far more spirited and intricately arranged, and yet it's a wonderfully melodic treat all the same. Rising-star guitarist Julian Lage turns up, too, playing lead on a warmly evocative rendition of "Sleepy Time Gal," with Vignola on rhythm. Then Vignola is out front again, adding fresh luster to "Stardust" and all the zing he and Raniolo can muster to a compelling medley of "Tico Tico" and "Djangomania."

MIKE JOYCE

Editor's Pick

ALBERT HEATH
KWANZA (THE FIRST)
BARRY HARRIS
PLAYS TADD DAMERON
JIMMY HEATH
PICTURE OF HEATH
AL COHN & JIMMY ROWLES
HEAVY LOVE
SAM MOST
FROM THE ATTIC OF MY MIND
AL COHN/BILLY MITCHELL/DOLO COKER/ LEROY VINNEGAR/FRANK BUTLER
NIGHT FLIGHT TO DAKAR/XANADU IN AFRICA (Elemental)






A decade before the Marsalises triggered a bebop revival, seminal producer Don Schlitten was giving beboppers a recording outlet with Xanadu Records. A veteran jazz record producer who'd worked for RCA, Prestige and Muse, among many other labels, Schlitten founded Xanadu in 1975 and operated it with his wife Nina. (The label ceased issuing new recordings in 1990, though it was revived for a brief spell in 2009.) It quickly became a haven for the stars of the bebop era—Al Cohn and Barry Harris were prolific—to keep that music alive in an era when fusion, the avant-garde and Afrocentrism were jazz's dominant aesthetics.

It was Schlitten who allowed a substantial number of artists to keep their head above water long enough to enjoy the 1980s jazz renaissance. Elemental Music's Zev Feldman and Jordi Soley have this year made arrangements to celebrate Schlitten's accomplishments with the release of the Xanadu Remaster Edition series: 25 of the label's most essential releases, remastered and repackaged with new liner notes by English jazz writer Mark Gardner.

Which makes it interesting that the oldest of the first batch of six reissues, Tootie Heath's 1973 sophomore effort *Kwanza (The First)*, wasn't originally issued by Xanadu at all. It was a Schlitten production for Muse Records. (Xanadu acquired the rights in a legal settlement and reissued it on CD, under the title *Oops!*, in 1990.) It mixes the classic bebop sound with the

"Joyful and defiantly timeless": Jimmy Heath in the mid-'70s

TOM MARCELLO

then-contemporary sounds—e.g., funk rhythms on "Tafadhali," Kenny Barron's Fender Rhodes on "A Notion" and "Dr. Jeh"—associated with independent labels like Strata-East. It's something of a sore thumb, but it's also the first-ever recording of all three Heath brothers (Percy on bass, Jimmy on flute), eliminating any doubt as to its "essential" status.

The other remasters are of a piece with Schlitten's vision. While flutist Sam Most's *From the Attic of My Mind*, recorded in 1978, has cover art that's as *au courant* as its title, its only departure from the hard-bop milieu is the gentle bossa "Breath of Love." *Heavy Love*, tenor great Al Cohn's 1977 match of wits with pianist Jimmy Rowles, bears down on the Songbook, evincing surprisingly hard-hitting tones from both players (even on ballads) that only intensify on the extemporaneous blues "Bar Talk." And pianist Barry Harris, a bebop ideologue, beautifully maintains his Monk-and-Bud fundamentalism as he assays "Lady Bird," "Soultrane" and other compositions of Tadd Dameron.

The best of the lot are *Picture of Heath*, Jimmy Heath's 1975 quartet date with Harris, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Billy Higgins, and the double-shot *Night Flight to Dakar* and *Xanadu in Africa*, two albums drawn from a 1980 Cohn-led quintet concert in Senegal. Both the Heath and Cohn sessions are high-energy, intensive bop sessions, joyful and defiantly timeless.

Timeless, that is, except in their use of the bass-direct microphone, that most unfortunate (and ubiquitous) trend of 1970s jazz recordings. But don't let that detract from the worthy Schlitten achievements that are being honored with these correspondingly worthy reissues. **MICHAEL J. WEST**

by Christopher Loudon

MARK FITTON

› **"Brilliant at synthesizing a century's worth of influences":** Cécile McLorin Salvant

CÉCILE MCLORIN SALVANT

FOR ONE TO LOVE (Mack Avenue)

Though it was actually her second full-length release, on the strength of one album, 2013's *WomanChild*, Cécile McLorin Salvant vaulted from Miami-born Monk competition victor to the world's most celebrated female jazz vocalist. It's mighty tough to follow so massive a critical and popular hit. Given, however, the depth and breadth of Salvant's musical gifts, it's hardly surprising that *For One to Love* is even more impressive.

Sly and sensuous, partial to featherlight flights yet solid as oak, Salvant is preternaturally brilliant at synthesizing a century's worth of influences—shades of Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday and Blossom Dearie are clearly evident—while remaining her mesmeric self. And in pianist Aaron Diehl, also featured on *WomanChild*, she has found an ideally simpatico partner. Joining them are bassist Paul Sikivie and drummer Lawrence Leathers.

Salvant satisfies her penchant for Clarence Williams tunes with a bluesy "What's the Matter Now?" and her predilection for all things French with singer-songwriter Barbara's pensive "La Mal de Vivre." (Her mother is from France, father from Haiti.) The remaining tracks are split between cunning covers—Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Stepsisters' Lament," Sondheim and Bernstein's "Something's Coming" and, in her effort to survey the full panoply of relationships, even Bacharach and David's coy yet sexist "Wives and Lovers"—and insightfully personal originals. All of her compositions, ranging from the parked-on-the-sidelines heartache of "Look at Me" and "Left Over" to the ensnaring desire that drives "Fog" and the undulating "Monday," are superbly crafted—sharp, intense and profound.

KARRIN ALLYSON

MANY A NEW DAY: KARRIN ALLYSON SINGS RODGERS & HAMMERSTEIN (Motéma)

Why do jazz singers embrace so many songs by Rodgers and Hart yet so few—save the Coltrane-blessed "My Favorite Things"—by Rodgers and Hammerstein? While Rodgers' music is accepted as consistently top-drawer, Hart's lyrics are widely considered sharper, wittier and more intellectual than Hammerstein's. Which is, in a word, hogwash. Yes, Hammerstein's lyrics are often brighter and frillier, but they are in no way less skillfully crafted nor less sophisticated either in sentiment or structure. (Hammerstein's work with Rodgers has also been tarnished with that most toxic of brushes, immense commercial success.)

At last, the Hammerstein portion of the Rodgers canon is getting serious, full-length appreciation, and Karrin Allyson, one of the finest jazz interpreters around, is at the helm. Accompanying Allyson is the similarly adroit duo of bassist John Patitucci and pianist Kenny Barron. It's a heady feast, extending from the sweet lilt of "Many a New Day" to the embittered anguish of "You've Got to Be Carefully Taught," and from the playful sauciness of "I Cain't Say No" to the sage tenderness of "Hello Young Lovers." There's no room on this album for splashy solos or virtuosic grandstanding. The focus is squarely on sensitive, intelligent arrangements shaped around Allyson's unique sound—slightly parched and gently tremulous—expressly built to exalt a spectrum of instantly familiar yet largely underappreciated gems. An exquisitely thoughtful trio album, it's also an important one.

ABBEY LINCOLN

SOPHISTICATED ABBEY: LIVE AT THE KEYSTONE KORNER (HighNote)

Anyone who knows Abbey Lincoln's history is aware of the sizable recording gap—a barren stretch from 1962 to 1972 followed by close to two decades of very sporadic live and studio sessions—that preceded her vibrant comeback in the early '90s. Any unearthed Lincoln material from that fallow period is a welcome find. This 54-minute date, captured at San Francisco's Keystone Korner in 1980, is a particularly great discovery.

A month prior, Lincoln had been in Paris, where she also made a live recording (released as *Golden Lady*, since re-released as *Painted Lady*), working with a quintet anchored by saxophonist Archie Shepp. In San Francisco, Lincoln narrows her accompaniment to piano (Phil Wright), bass (James Leary) and drums (Doug Sides). Wright, with whom she'd frequently collaborated in the late '50s, dominates throughout. In fine voice, her debt to Billie Holiday fully evident, Lincoln paves a circuitous musical path. She carries over just two tracks—her own "Painted Lady" and Stevie Wonder's "Golden Lady"—from the Paris set list. She adds standards, including a medley-leading "Sophisticated Lady," her then relatively new melting-pot anthem "People in Me," the Perry Como hit "It's Impossible" sung in English and the original Spanish, and nods to two heroes: Holiday, with a mellow "God Bless the Child"; and Oscar Brown Jr., with a muscular, Sides-driven "Long as You're Living." This stellar addition to the Lincoln canon is made all the more precious by flawlessly clear sound quality.

LONDON, MEADER, PRAMUK & ROSS

THE ROYAL BOPSTERS PROJECT (Motéma)

Five years in gestation, this boplicious project serves as both the introduction to a terrific new vocal foursome and as a living tribute to five of jazz singing's foremost pioneers. The idea was ignited in 2010 when Amy London and Holli Ross paid a visit to an ailing Mark Murphy. A year later, they invited Murphy to join them for a concert at the New School in New York City. (Also featured was a student vocal choir including Dylan Pramuk.) The concert's success sparked an album concept. With London's soprano, Ross' alto and Pramuk's bass, all they needed was an alto. Enter New York Voices' Darmon Meader. Then, they reasoned, since their intent was to

honor the vocalese greats, why not invite those legends along? So, in addition to Murphy, Jon Hendricks, Sheila Jordan, Bob Dorough and Annie Ross joined the fray.

From the first four bars of "Music in the Air (Wildwood)," it's clear that the four younger participants are as tight, as smooth and as creatively dynamic as the Voices or Manhattan Transfer. Their choice of material is nothing short of perfection: classics like the elder Ross' "Let's Fly" and Dorough's "Nothing Like You Has Ever Been Seen Before" alongside sage re-workings of "Basheer's Dream," "Chasin' the Bird," "Boplicity" and "Red Clay," plus a double-dip into the Horace Silver songbook for "Peace" and "Señor Blues."

If this disc featured just the quartet, it would be sensational. The addition of the icons, showcased once each (with Murphy provided wider presence) and all in remarkably fine form, escalates it from valuable to priceless, from piquant to landmark.

NEW WEST GUITAR GROUP

SEND ONE YOUR LOVE (Summit)

The math is simple: three guitarists; 10 tracks; and five vocalists, each exploring two love songs, one vintage and one more contemporary. The three players—Perry Smith, Jeff Stein and John Storie, collectively know as New West Guitar Group—have been together for a dozen years with six previous albums and one concert DVD to their credit. By now they're masters of their caressing, cascading sound, best categorized as chamber jazz. Their overarching mellowness (dexterously peppered, now and again, with Gypsy fire, flamenco zest and steel-string twang) suits their quintet of world-class guests—Tierney Sutton, Becca Stevens, Gretchen Parlato, Sara Gazarek and a lone male, New York Voices' Peter Eldridge—just fine, providing deftly constructed beds for their vocals.

Parlato opens with a breathy "Send One Your Love," later returning for a tremulous "Like Someone in Love." Stevens shapes a gorgeously befogged "Detour Ahead" and, against near-baroque backing, a gently swirling interpretation of Elliott Smith's "Waltz No. 1." Gazarek delivers a stunningly spare "I Fall in Love Too Easily" and a sweet, loping "Secret o' Life." Sutton livens the pace with a deliciously fervid "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To," then settles into the ruminative folds of Randy Newman's "When She Loved Me." Eldridge, always such a privilege to hear solo, travels from a magnificently jagged, storm-clouded "Black Crow" to a dreamily becalmed "My Ship." Yes, the math is simple, but the results are immensely greater than the sum of their parts.

JOHN PIZZARELLI

MIDNIGHT MCCARTNEY (Concord)

The same week that the Beatles' "Can't Buy Me Love" hit No. 1 in *Billboard* in April 1964, Ella Fitzgerald recorded her version. Lennon and McCartney compositions have remained a vital part of the vocal-jazz repertoire ever since. But you'd be hard pressed to name many, if any, jazz versions of post-Beatles McCartney tunes. Sir Paul himself decided it was time to rectify that. McCartney called up John Pizzarelli, whom he met during the 2010 sessions for *Kisses on the Bottom*, the rock icon's estimable collection of mostly standards, and not only suggested the idea but even provided the title. Pizzarelli, who had crafted an album-length Beatles' tribute back in 1996, jumped at the invitation.

While McCartney's solo work will likely never reach the iconic status of his collaborations with Lennon, his songbook is not only richly multihued but prime for reinterpretation, as Pizzarelli ably demonstrates. With wife Jessica Molaskey as co-producer (she also provides vocal backup) and brother Martin on bass, he rounds out the core rhythm section with pianists Larry Goldings and sharp up-and-comer Konrad Paszkudzki.

Though the disc's 13 tracks include cashmere readings of "Silly Love Songs," "My Love," "No More Lonely Nights," "Warm and Beautiful," "Some People Never Know" and "Junk" (featuring John's father, Bucky Pizzarelli, on rhythm guitar, and saxophonist Harry Allen), the set's not all midnight lace. Indeed, lovely as everything wrapped in Pizzarelli's trademark silken lilt is, the more adventurous selections are more interesting. Among them: a spirited "Heart of the Country"; a breezy, midtempo "Coming Up," featuring an excellent vocal pairing with Michael McDonald; a bluesy, Wes-worthy, horns-embellished instrumental take on "Hi, Hi, Hi"; a dazzling "Let 'Em In" driven by Martin's Ray Brown-inspired bass figure; and, as a bonus, a cleverly samba-ized "Wonderful Christmastime."

LUCIANA SOUZA

SPEAKING IN TONGUES

(Sunnyside)

Though its title is borrowed from *Corinthians*, referencing how an unfamiliar language speaks not to man but to God, Luciana Souza's outstanding *Speaking in Tongues* also aligns with another Old Testament reference. For, in its synthesis of varied cultures and mixed influences, it seems the anti-Babel: demonstrating how multiple musical languages can come together in audacious harmony, creating an entirely unique yet universal dialect.

Produced by Souza's husband, Larry Klein, the album unites the Brazilian singer-pianist-composer with four artists she'd never previously worked with: from Benin, guitarist and vocalist Lionel Loueke; from Switzerland, harmonica virtuoso Grégoire Maret; from Italy via Sweden, bassist Massimo Biolcati; and from Texas, drummer Kendrick Scott. Together they weave a capacious tapestry, crafting seven wordless poems—four written by Souza, one by Loueke, one by Scott (with Mike Moreno) and one by Gary Versace. Their varied hues are as bold as they are vibrant. Among them: the hushed glory of "Hymn," the meditative sanctity of "A Pebble in Still Water," the joyous cacophony of "At the Fair," the tribal-cum-barnyard-cum-space-orbit clamor of "Filhos de Gandhi" and, with its powerful African underpinnings, the explosive, euphoric "Straw Hat."

The two remaining tracks feature actual lyrics. Souza reasoned that if she was going to incorporate real words, she needed to seek an esteemed source. So, fitting music to two Leonard Cohen poems, she amplifies *Tongues* with the surreal, bilateral romanticism of "Split" and dark disconsolation of "No One to Follow." ***JT***

Clockwise from above: Sarah Vaughan and Bunnies at the Chicago Playboy Club in 1961; Hugh Hefner and Louis Armstrong; Hefner, Tony Bennett and friends film *Playboy After Dark* in 1968

PLAYBOY SWINGS: HOW HUGH HEFNER AND PLAYBOY CHANGED THE FACE OF MUSIC

BY PATTY FARMER, WITH WILL FRIEDWALD

(Beaufort)

For *Playboy* magazine founder Hugh Hefner, music, specifically the jazz that he adored, was always part of a greater game plan. From the start "Hef" envisioned his venture defining a total lifestyle, of which the flagship magazine and its nothing-to-the-imagination centerfolds were never the whole story. *Playboy*, since its 1953 inception, published quality prose, and music journalism and jazz-focused readers' polls were part of the mix. The very first issue—the one offering then-scandalous, now-epochal nude photos of Marilyn Monroe—included a feature article on the Dorsey brothers, and in subsequent issues writers and critics regularly weighed in on the pros and cons of current jazz, recommending with authority the LPs that every hip *Playboy* reader should spin at his next cocktail party.

The 320-page *Playboy Swings*, by Patty Farmer with contributions from jazz writer Will Friedwald and an introduction by Newport festival impresario George Wein, tells the story of the Playboy enterprise's love affair with jazz, and explores the idea of the music as an integral component of a swanky branded lifestyle. Monty Alexander, the Jamaican-born pianist who found lucrative work at the New York Playboy Club, one of many Hefner would open up as his empire expanded, immediately understood what Hef and his associates were after: "The message was, if you're a playboy, you've got to have a beautiful motor car, a convertible with the top down; you've got to smoke the best pipe; and you've got to have a good jazz album collection."

It wasn't long after *Playboy* magazine took off that jazz artists and their handlers caught on to the gift Hefner had handed them. (Tony Bennett was an early fan and became a close friend.) By 1959, Hefner was ready to test out the idea of a Playboy Jazz Festival, staging the initial event in Chicago, the company's first home base. It would be another two decades—by which time the now-massive Playboy brand had long since expanded to television and other media—before he'd give it another shot, moving it to the Hollywood Bowl. This time it took, and the Playboy Jazz Festival has been held there annually ever since.

Farmer's exhaustively researched and breezily voiced volume leaves no doubt that Hefner and the Playboy crew took their commitment to the music seriously. In addition to the annual festival, Hefner's clubs, beginning in 1960, provided quality bookings for musicians, treating them with a level of respect they didn't always find elsewhere, in venues that trumped the dives many were accustomed to.

None of this occurred in a vacuum, of course, and Farmer deftly weaves in the role of the Bunnies (and the *de rigueur* sexism to which they were exposed); the comedians, actors and other celebrities who populated the Playboy world; the utter surrealism of it all (imagine, if you will, Ravi Shankar playing a Playboy Club—it happened); and issues related to race. The author, whose previous book was *The Persian Room Presents*, details the opening of the New Orleans Playboy Club in 1961, where "Black Bunnies were out of the question, as were black entertainers, no matter how talented or well known. … The application process was designed to discourage black members, and those who showed up with a key were refused admission." But elsewhere the company broke racial barriers. At the Chicago club, also in '61, Hefner requested that comedian Dick Gregory perform as a replacement for Professor Irwin Corey. The evening led to a lengthy and successful stand, exceedingly rare for an African-American performer at a predominantly white nightclub.

One more note: It would be negligent not to at least mention Bill Cosby, who hosted the Playboy Jazz Festival from 1979 through 2012. There is no reportage in the book of recent allegations against Cosby—his accusers include a former Bunny—nor does this reviewer believe there should be. (Farmer has said that Cosby declined to be interviewed, and one former Playboy employee is quoted as saying the comedian "worked for the clubs out of loyalty to Hef," forgoing his usual fee.) The book was likely completed prior to the recent media explosion, but either way, Cosby had left his emcee position before most of the allegations became public, and his history with the festival was an important factor in its success.

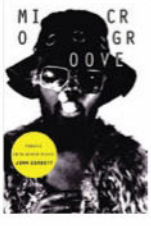
JEFF TAMARKIN

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: REX USA, ISAAC SUTTON/EBONY COLLECTION VIA AP IMAGES, COURTESY OF PEI

Author John Corbett (left) and saxophonist Steve Lacy in 1997

MICROGROOVE: FORAYS INTO OTHER MUSIC

BY JOHN CORBETT (Duke University)



John Corbett's *Microgroove: Forays Into Other Music* is a sprawling meander through the multi-tiered world of "alternative" musics, encompassing jazz, rock, blues, avant-classical and literary and visual art forms whose materials and methods comment on aspects of musicality. The far-ranging scope of the 53 essays and interviews collected in these nearly 500 pages, dating from 1993 to just last year, reminds us that even within music's commercially neglected fringes complex gradations of sub-genre exist, separating the hardcore avant-garde devotee from one who thinks they're down because they own a copy of *Space Is the Place*.

Corbett is a record producer (his credits include rereleases of works by seminal AACM saxophonist Fred Anderson and Swiss free-jazz duo Voice Crack), co-owner of Chicago's Corbett vs. Dempsey art gallery and a critic and essayist whose work has appeared in *DownBeat*, *The Wire*, the *Chicago Reader* and numerous other publications. But first and foremost he is a devotee of challenging and outré sounds, and his essays are most compelling when he dives headfirst into his chronicles with a fan's enthusiasm and verve. Among the standout pieces in this vein are a diary-style breakdown of an early-2000s U.S. tour led by free-jazz saxophonist Peter Brötzmann; "Six Dispatches From the Memory Bank," in which Corbett draws on deep personal memories of a half-dozen singular performances from "protean, gritty" Chicago-based saxophonist Ken Vandermark; and "Discaholic or Vinyl Freak?," a lengthy investigation of Corbett's record-buying habits, conducted by the Thing saxophonist and fellow record hound Mats Gustafsson. These pieces beautifully balance serious musical scholarship and critical analysis with the kind of collar-grabbing, "give-this-a-listen" excitement that draws us all to music in the first place.

The interviews collected here are largely presented in an unadorned Q&A format, the better for Corbett to bring the character and idiosyncratic thought processes of his subjects to the fore. A tandem chat with pianist-composer Carla Bley and bassist Steve Swallow, who have been married since 1991, captures the couple's easy rapport and deep understanding of one another, musically and otherwise; when Corbett asks Bley about a comment she once made about the Beatles' influence on her music, Swallow interjects, "Watch out, she's going to deny it now. That's the way she is." Another joint conversation, with pianist-composer Misha Mengelberg and drummer Han Bennink, both founders of the ICP Orchestra, displays such intuitive chemistry that the two collaborators frequently finish one another's sentences. Corbett also chats with alto saxophonist Ornette Coleman, who is in full enigmatic flower; his comments sometimes seem to barely graze a musical theme while simultaneously illuminating his work in profound fashion. It's hard not to be moved when Coleman, who died in June at the age of 85, comments that "you have to start with life. It don't end there; it starts there. The only thing that ends is time."

Corbett's curiosities reach beyond the stylistically diffuse world of jazz. *Microgroove* features two separate tandem conversations with mid-'90s alt-rock darling Liz Phair: one, also featuring Sebadoh's Lou Barlow, in which they touch on the dangers of record-industry pigeonholing and the pros and cons of the "low-fi" aesthetic; and another with Sonic Youth's Kim Gordon that finds the artists tackling the trials of womanhood in the rock universe and grappling with Corbett's query about whether the all-female Lilith Fair tours represented a form of "ghettoization." Corbett also includes a 1994 paean to blues queen Koko Taylor (she passed away in 2009), who freely blasts commercial radio for treating blues "like they're looking down on garbage." And Corbett explores such curious topics as the aesthetics of cartoon soundtrack scoring; John Cage's "conceptual Orientalism"; and, in collaboration with cultural critic Terri Kapsalis, the uses and meanings of female orgasmic sounds in popular music. These latter essays, however, fare the worst in comparison to those surrounding them, since their dry, polysyllabic preaching to the academically inclined purges Corbett's prose of its inspired-fan edges. It's there that the bulk of his literary powers reside.

MATT R. LOHR

FRED BURKHARDT

jazzdirectory

instruments

acoustics & audio

advertising

CLASSIFIED AD INFORMATION:

Email Miene Smith at msmith@madavor.com. You can also mail ad copy along with check or credit card information (name on card; account number; expiration date and 3 digit security code) to JazzTimes Classified Advertising Department, Madavor Media, 25 Braintree Hill Office Park, Suite 404, Braintree, MA 02184

instruments

buy/sell jazz lps/cds

recordings

study/instruction

recordings

Dicky Wells in New York City, c. 1947

DEFINITIVE TROMBONE VOICES

BY STEVE TURRE

These musicians changed jazz trombone in various ways: technically, expressively, harmonically or rhythmically, or combinations of the above. They are also people who affected me profoundly. Even though I may not play like them, my appreciation for them and their contributions runs deep.

Sidney Bechet

"IN A SENTIMENTAL MOOD" (Vic Dickenson, trombone)
Concert a l'Exposition Universelle de Bruxelles
(Collection Sidney Bechet, 1958)

Rahsaan Roland Kirk played this for me, and I listened to how Vic Dickenson was using the slide. It sounds kind of loose, which it is, but it isn't sloppy; it's very controlled and deliberate and nuanced and articulate. I really appreciate his intonation and his phrasing, and the way he uses the slide for expressiveness.

Dicky Wells

"DICKY WELLS BLUES"
Dicky Wells in Paris
(His Master's Voice, 1955; recorded in 1937)

The technical finesse that Dicky Wells played with was unbelievable. Here, he uses the slide coming out of the way Vic did, but with more sophistication, and he has a much greater range and incredible flexibility. Django Reinhardt plays guitar on this track.

Jack Teagarden

"BODY AND SOUL"
The Golden Horn of Jack Teagarden
(Decca, 1964; recorded in 1953)

There are a couple of dozen recordings of Jack Teagarden playing "Body and Soul." But this one—which also has his brother Charlie playing trumpet—is the cream of the crop. His chops are all the way on; he's at the peak of his form. His harmonic sense is ahead of its time. He has tremendous flexibility in his own unique way.

Lawrence Brown

"ROSE OF THE RIO GRANDE"
Slide Trombone (Clef, 1955)

Lawrence Brown was a master of ballads and the blues. This cut is surprising because it's very modern yet it has the feelings and elements of earlier styles in there too; the harmonic and rhythmic things he plays are almost bebop but not quite. He leads the rhythm very much the way J.J. Johnson does.

Dizzy Gillespie

(Al Gray, trombone)
"DIZZY'S BLUES"
At Newport (Verve, 1957)

Besides being the grandmaster of the open horn plunger, Al Gray was also a grandmaster of the open horn. We all know him from Basie's band, but on this cut he's playing with Dizzy, so it's very modern. He's swinging hard and he's got a big, powerful, full sound. He's not one of those guys who whispers and puts the mic inside the bell. On this live recording, he's just standing up in his section and blowing over the band.

Frank Rosolino

"ALL THE THINGS YOU ARE"
Fond Memories Of…
(Double-Time, 1996; music in recorded 1973, '75)

Just about anything Frank Rosolino did was a gem. I chose this track because it's readily available and is really incredible. It's a good example of him. Frank had his own voice, and his flexibility was unique and unparalleled. It was effortless for Frank to play with this kind of flexibility and to play in the upper register.

The Jazztet

"IT'S ALL RIGHT WITH ME" (Curtis Fuller, trombone)
Meet the Jazztet (Argo, 1960)

All the guys I'm talking about are masters, but nobody can play fast like Curtis Fuller. He's playing the rhythm, not just playing notes fast against the rhythm. This song is a reflection of his style. You say, "Goddamn, is that a saxophone?" No, it's a slide trombone! It's clean and smooth and the lines make sense. His articulation is clear and precise. He's playing scales and arpeggios.

J.J. Johnson

"TEA POT"
Dial J.J. 5 (Columbia, 1957)

"Tea Pot" is based on "Sweet Georgia Brown." For any of the naysayers who don't think J.J. Johnson could play fast, this will put that to rest. A lot of guys play fast, but they play real soft, with a little wimpy sound and unclear articulation. J.J. is super clear. He has great range on this too. It's all in there.

J.J. Johnson

"BLUES WALTZ"
Proof Positive (Impulse!, 1964)

What I appreciate about "Blues Waltz" is how J.J. leads rhythmically. He doesn't just follow and float—he defines. His tone is robust and resonant and as perfect as the greatest orchestral trombone players, yet he doesn't sound like an orchestral trombone player. What he's doing harmonically is very sophisticated. He uses space. Most of his improvisations are more melodic than linear. It's not speed for speed's sake. ***JT***

[*As told to Jeff Tamarkin*]

Steve Turre is a renowned trombonist and a virtuoso of the conch shells. His most recent release is the quintet album *Spiritman* (Smoke Sessions).

FROM LEFT: WILLIAM P. GOTTLIEB/COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; JIMMY & DENA KATZ


Woodwind & Brasswind
Boutique Store
Shop for unique, hard-to-find and specialty products from brands like
Antoine Courtois, Schilke, JodyJazz, Theo Wanne, Keilwerth and more.
SAVE 10% OFF
select single items $99+
Use code: JAZZTIMES10
GIANT
WWBW.com/BoutiqueStore | 800.348.5003
Some exclusions apply. Visit WWBW.com/jazztimes for more info.

A NEW | COOL RECORD

S T E R E O

YAMAHA
ENTERTAINMENT
GROUP

BOB JAMES

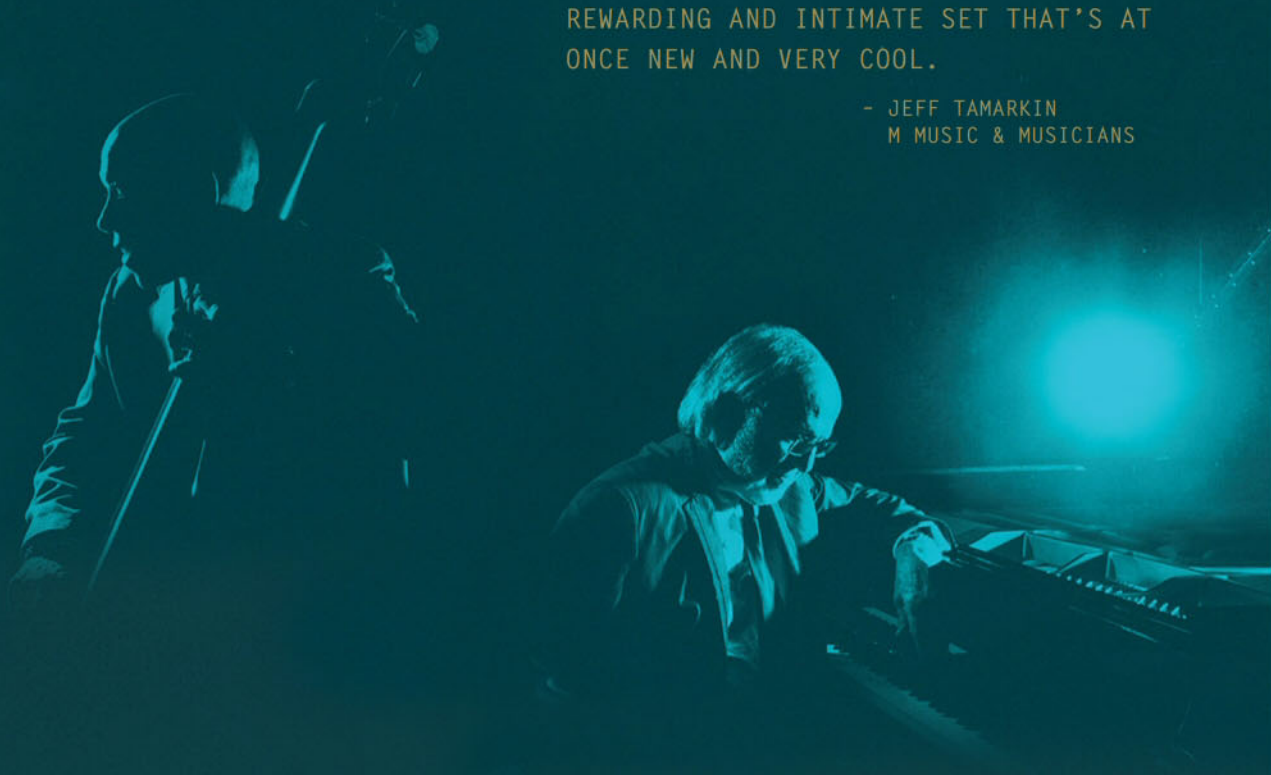
THE NEW COOL

NATHAN EAST

THE NEW COOL IS AN EXPANSIVE ACOUSTIC OFFERING CENTERED ON SCHOLARLY JAZZ PIANO AND BASS DUETS AND IS THE FIRST COLLABORATION BY FOURPLAY'S GRAMMY® RECOGNIZED FOUNDING MEMBERS BOB JAMES AND NATHAN EAST.

THESE JAZZ MASTERS SERVE UP A WHOLLY REWARDING AND INTIMATE SET THAT'S AT ONCE NEW AND VERY COOL.

- JEFF TAMARKIN
M MUSIC & MUSICIANS



THE NEW COOL WILL BE PROUDLY RELEASED ON SEPTEMBER 18, 2015 ON YAMAHA ENTERTAINMENT GROUP AND FEATURES 11 NEW SONGS INCLUDING CRAZY FEATURING VINCE GILL, PLUS TURBULENCE, THE NEW COOL & CANTO Y LA DANZA

PRODUCED BY CHRIS GERO, BOB JAMES, NATHAN EAST AND BRYAN LENOX
ENGINEERED AND MIXED BY: BRYAN LENOX

YAMAHA ENTERTAINMENT GROUP OF AMERICA

THENEWCOOLALBUM.COM
YAMAHAENTERTAINMENTGROUP.COM

AVAILABLE FOR SALE ON 9/18/15 AT BARNES&NOBLE BN.COM