FRED HERSCH
EMBRACING IDENTITY

REGINA CARTER  MICHAEL LEONHART  BARBARA DANE  JIMMIE BLANTON
Jazz is, of course, a music of history. Every reissue, every discovered album, points backwards while informing forwards. And that history is colored by the context of the struggle around it: politically, socially, intellectually. What should not be forgotten is that each musician carries their own history in each note played, that every player’s thread brings a particular hue to the jazz tapestry. Pianist Fred Hersch (On The Cover)’s career has been affected not only by his musical influences and peers but also his sexual orientation and health, the latter transmuted to great effect in his art. Hersch is at Village Vanguard for a week. Violinist Regina Carter (Interview) has devoted numerous albums to her history, whether it be the influence of Ella Fitzgerald, youth in Detroit or songs of her grandfather’s era. Carter has a four-day run at Jazz Standard. Trumpeter/composer/arranger/bandleader Michael Leonhart is a scion of a musical family, weighty history to be sure, yet transmutes that with his work with players like Nels Cline and his own projects, the latter at Jazz Standard for a pair of evenings. And vocalist Barbara Dane (Encore) and bassist Jimmie Blanton (Lest We Forget), the latter a recent inductee into the Jazz at Lincoln Center Ertegun Hall of Fame (speaking of history), have lived their own history as performers of influence, whether it be for decades or only a few years.

On The Cover: Fred Hersch (Martin Zeman, courtesy of the artist)

Corrections: In last month’s CD Reviews, apparently Grant Green’s late Blue Note albums were big sellers and his dearth of recordings after 1972 was due to issue with royalty payments. In the Mika Pontecorvo review, he calls the name of his guitar style “skumble-tronic”. And in the Recommended New releases, the name of the ABIAH album is ABIAH Sings Nina.
JAZZ STANDARD

“VENUE OF THE YEAR” 2017—NYCR ★ TOP 10 VENUES IMPACTING NY MUSIC SCENE TODAY—NY MAGAZINE

**SUN JULY 1**
grant green: evolution funk
GRANT GREEN JR. • DONALD HARRISON JR. • MARC CARY • KHRAG SIMMONS • MIKE CLARK

**TUE JULY 3**
Steve Kroon Septet
RON BLAKE • IDAR ATALITA • DONALD NICKS • BRYAN CARROLL

**WED-SUN JULY 4-8**
george coleman
JEB PATTON (EXCEPT 7/4) • BERNARD CANNON • GEORGE COLEMAN JR.

**TUE JULY 10**
matt penman
MARK TURNER • WILL VINSOM • AARON DOLBERG • OBED CALVAIRE

**WED-SUN JULY 11-15**
Lonnie Smith
JONATHAN KREISBERG • JONATHAN BLAKE • ALICIA OLAMA

**TUE-WED JULY 17-18**
michael leonhart orchestra
PHILIP DIZZACK • DAVE BUEY • CARTER YASUTAKE • HAY MASON • JOHN ELLIS • JON HENDRICKSON SMITH • JASON MARSHALL • JASON SCHENDEICK • PAUL KIM • ERIK FRIEDLANDER • RICHIE GOODG

**THU-SUN JULY 19-22**
pat martino trio+
PAT BIANCHI • CARMEN INTORRE JR. • ADAM NEWWOOD • ALEX NORMAN

**TUE JULY 24**
Bill O’Connell & Latin quartet
CRAIG HANDY • LINCOLN GOINES • CLIFF ALMOND • ANDRE BRACHFIELD-DAN CARILLO

**WED JULY 25**
posi-Tone’s “new faces”
JOSH LAWRENCE • ROXY COSI • BERNHARD BLECHER • THOM HILL • PETER BRENDLER • VINNI SPERRAZZA

**TUE JULY 31**
regina carter
ADAM BIRNBAUM • CHRIS LIGHTCAP • ALVESTER BARNETT

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- Michael G. Nastos, All Music Guide

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Last time fleet-fingered pianist Makoto Ozone played solo in New York was at Town Hall in 1985, so his concert at Japan Society (Jun. 7th) was a rare chance to hear him alone at the keys. An unusual amalgam of jazz and classical sensibilities (he got in trouble with a symphony conductor for stomping his heel to the beat while performing Mozart) his music is both conservative and adventurous. On the first set, which included his tunes “Cygnus Lyrurus,” “Bouncing in My New Shoes,” “Fairy Dance,” “Sol Azteca” and “Time Thread”, closing with Ray Bryant’s “Cubano Chant”, he lived up to his billing as “jazz virtuoso” by showing impeccable command and encyclopedic grasp of the piano, moving seemingly effortlessly through myriad textures and techniques with never a false step. Like hero Oscar Peterson, he remained relaxed, articulate, even at fearsome tempos. The second set began with refined readings of Ravel’s “Le Tombeau de Couperin” and Piazzolla’s “Laura’s Dream”, followed by a stride romp over “Do You Know What It Means (To Miss New Orleans)?”, one of the evening’s most viscerally satisfying moments. Two more originals, “Mirror Circle” and “No Siesta”, were accompanied by conguero Taku Hirano. Ozone now even more animated, bouncing off the bench, right heel kicking back, reaching for (and grasping) the most ambitious musical ideas. For the encore, protégé Rina Yamazaki joined him on the bench for a four-handed dance to Wayne Shorter’s “Footprints”.

A truism in jazz is that a good bass player is on everyone’s speed-dial. So many people dial D for Dezron Douglas it is not surprising he doesn’t have that much time to lead his own projects. Those usually fall under the Black Lion moniker and at Korzo (Jun. 5th), it was a trio hit with alto saxophonist Darius Jones and drummer Curtis Tormian (the latter playing much of his musical craft as a teacher in the Connecticut public school system). In a nicely programmed 50-minute set, Douglas began in the past, with Ornette Coleman’s “The Blessing” and Richard Davis’ “Deja Vu Monk”, followed by a pair of originals. The covers were particularly illuminating: the trio recalled Coleman’s Golden Circle Trio, Douglas filling the David Izenzon role nicely, while Davis, more so than Ron Carter or Reggie Workman, could be considered Douglas’ direct forebear. The bassist introduced three of the four pieces unaccompanied, once in a ’60s spirit (20 minutes) and at Korzo (Jun. 12th), vibraphonist Joel Ross and alto saxophonist Immanuel Wilkins, followed by trumpeter Peter Evans and pianist Cory Smythe. In addition to matching durations, another similarity was palpable physicality. Ross smacks his vibraphone like a frustrated office worker might abuse a jammed photocopier while Evans never ceases to surprise with the manner in which he can produce sound from his instrument. If Smythe and Wilkins were perhaps more introverted visually, the former’s explorations within the piano and the latter’s circular breathing were wonderful complements to their partners’ statements. Wilkins is part of Ross’ groups and both are members of bassist Harish Raghavan’s quintet, so they are well acquainted and thus, as a duo, particularly fluid, recalling the old partnership of Marion Brown and Gunther Hampel. Evans and Smythe, also collaborators of long-standing, were celebrating their new release Weatherbird, which includes the Louis Armstrong title track. Satchmo would surely flush that big grin at his young, distant progeny.

- Andrey Henkin
“We’re here celebrating the music and the spirit and the life and the contributions of the great Geri Allen,” drummer Ralph Peterson announced to the audience at Jazz Standard on what would have been the late pianist’s 61st birthday (Jun. 12th). The newest edition of Peterson’s trio Triangular with Orrin Evans (piano) and Luques Curtis (bass) opened the Tuesday night second set reprising the reharmonized version of the standard “Just You, Just Me.” Allen had recorded on the band’s first album 30 years earlier, displaying a similarly free-flowing equilateral shaping of roles, blurring the lines between soloist and accompanist. Peterson offered a broad tonal palette, moving between brushes, sticks and mallets, then expanding further with cowbell and clave block interjections on Walter Davis, Jr.’s rhythmically charged “400 Years Ago Tomorrow.” The unit forged ahead, swinging explosively on Evans’ jaunty “Don’t Fall Off The Lyr,” then dynamically switched gears to explore trumpeter Marcus Belgrave’s Allen-associated “Space Odyssey.” Peterson’s instrumental and compositional prowess were highlighted in three originals: melancholic “M.O.M.,” on which he played stirring crotchet; funky “Freight Train,” which had him back on drums laying down a soulful back beat; and “Beauteous,” a pensive piece showcasing his painterly brush work. Alto saxophonist Caleb Curtis showed his mettle sitting in on Peterson’s energetic “Princess,” before the trio closed out with Allen’s “Feed The Fire.” — Russ Musto

The audience at Greenwich House Music School filled the space (Jun. 15th), bristling with enthusiasm for the late Connie Crothers. The linger of the pianist’s essence held court as eight female vocalists took the stage with songs of significance, from standards to free-reining tone poems. Crothers mentored a legion of improvisers but vocalists had a special affection for her concepts, developed under Lemmie Tristano. More so, Crothers’ vision forged a creative community rooted in humanism and her progressive credo. With her 2016 passing, concerts celebrating her life were established as she had done in honor of Tristano), with vocalists Linda Satin and Doris Levine at the helm. Legend Sheila Jordan headlined with a segment that transported the room back through decades, deftly supported by bassist Adam Lane and pianist Tom Thordur. At 89, her swinging, bop lines carry the verve and cool we’d thought were lost with smoke-filled rooms. Other standouts included Jay Clayton, hip veteran of non-traditional vocals with the uncanny ability always to be on pitch. Her duet with bassist Ken Filiano expanded Ornette Coleman’s “Lonely Woman” into quite moving realms. Filiano was also present for Andrea Wolper’s bossa-filled set with pianist Carol Liebowitz; others included Cheryl Richards, Alexis Parsons, Lynn Bongiorno and the event’s producers. There’s not enough space to give proper due to the breadth of wonderful sounds, but, suffice to say, Crothers, looking down, must have been most pleased. — John Pietaro

Finishiing an engagement at the Blue Note, The Bad Plus (with Orrin Evans now in the piano chair, joining bassist Reid Anderson and drummer Dave King) assuaged any concerns regarding the groundbreaking trio’s continuance, as further corroborated by the title of its latest effort, Never Step II. Opening up the final set (Jun. 3rd) playing a pair of pieces from that date, Anderson’s “Seams” and Evans’ “Commitment,” the group immediately exhibited the bold freewheeling spirit for which it is known, with both songs beginning with measured hymnal solemnity before modulating into unrestrained abandon. Evans seamlessly melded classically-tinged, boppish and freeform motifs into exhilarating personalized statements around Anderson’s warm lyrical lines and King’s dynamic accompaniment, the latter moving from Keith Moon-tinged “Dirty Blonde,” to sprawling Sunny Murray-like rhythmatism. Reaching back into the band’s book the threesome let loose on Anderson’s wildly marching “Salute Spain” and Manning’s “Scrambling”. A medley of past and present, two older hard-hitting King favorites, “Wolf Out” and “1972 Bronze Medalist,” bookended the new record’s rhythmically energized “Lean In The Archway.” Two more Anderson songs ended the set, the dramatic tome “Safe Passage” and lovely ballad “Pour For Pound,” the optimistic tone of the latter pointing to the revamped unit’s bright future. (RM)

Here’s a find: a burning electric blues band from upstate New York powered by Southern Black Gospel tradition. And that’s not all; these guys aren’t afraid to take on the iconic work of modern jazz’ reigning deity. “We are honored to play John Coltrane’s seminal A Love Supreme,” explained Phil Campbell, the Campbell Brothers’ guitarist and frontman. “He was reaching to a higher power when he wrote it and we relate that to our own spiritual journey.” The Brothers set Joe’s Pub on fire (Jun. 11th) with searing R&B enrapuerted with spirit, even before playing a note of Trane. From the opening, funky “Wade in the Water” (you’ve never heard it like this) through their arrangement of “Summertime,” the singular frontline of both pedal steel and lap steel guitars, played without compromise by Chuck and Darick Campbell respectively, commanded the stage. The instrument’s Eastern-sounding voices, particularly in such masterful hands, would have been appreciated by Coltrane, whose sojourn into African, Middle Eastern and South Asian music was vital to his development. They played with boundless tonal energy and the house was practically vocalizing along with the second theme. Phil’s B.B. King-drenched guitar took flight on improv sections and in transitions his son Carlton’s pulsating second-line drum solo was compelling as was the solo statement of bassist Daric Bennett. By the time the Campbell Brothers erupted into the ‘joyful noise’ of free jazz, Joe’s Pub had been reborn. — John Pietaro

WHAT’S NEWS

The latest inductees into Jazz at Lincoln Center’s Ertegun Jazz Hall Of Fame have been announced: bassist Jimmy Blanton and pianist/vocalists Nat “King” Cole and Nina Simone. The newest members will be celebrated in curated sets at Dizzy’s Club Jul. 17th-19th. For more information, visit academy.jazz.org/hall-of-fame.

Venerable studio Systems 2 waxed its last session of thousands last month after 44 years of recording jazz. Owners Joe and Nancy Marciano are retiring through Mike Marciano, Joe’s younger brother and a longtime engineer at the studio, will keep the name for a new studio in an as-yet-to-be-determined location.

Last month marked the end of an era as Dorothaan Kirk worked her last day at WBGO after 40 years. Known affectionately as Newark’s First Lady of Jazz, Kirk is the widow of famed reedplayer Rahsaan Roland Kirk but distinguished herself for years as a promoter of events, including the Dorthaan’s Place series at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center as well as numerous events around Newark, and tireless jazz advocacy.

Violist Regina Carter (see Interview Feature on pg. 6) has been named the Artistic Director of New Jersey Performing Arts Center’s All-Female Jazz Residency, held in partnership with the Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers-Newark, assuming a role previously held by the late Geri Allen, who also founded the program in 2013.

Bobby McFerrin’s annual weeklong workshop Circlesongs will take place Aug. 17th-24th in Rhinebeck, NY. Instructors will include David Worr, Judio Vinar, Rhiannon, Joey Blake and Christian Karam. For more information and to register, visit eomega.org/workshops/circlesongs-full-circle.

Milford Graves Full Mantis, a film by Jake Meginsky and Neil Young about the legendary drummer (review on pg. 29) will open at the Metropolitan Theater in the Lower East Side Jul. 17th. For more information, visit fullmantis.com.

Trombonist George E. Lewis was one of seven recipients of honorary doctorates from Harvard University.

Two more city jazz venue closures to report: Caffe Vivaldi in the West Village and Legion in East Williamsburg.

Summer Jazz at the Institute, a program of Jazz Power Initiative designed for “teachers, musicians, dancers, writers, actors, professors, college or graduate students interested in understanding more about jazz and teaching it,” will take place at Lehman College Jul. 14th-29th. For more information and to register, visit jazzpower.org.

It has been reported that noted pianist/vocalist/activist Nina Simone’s childhood home in Tryon, NC has been purchased by the National Trust’s African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, the Nina Simone Project and several unnamed artists with plans for preservation. For more information, visit savingplaces.org.

The second annual Jazz Congress will take place at Jazz at Lincoln Center’s Frederick P. Rose Hall Jan. 7th-8th, 2019, a partnership between Jazz at Lincoln Center and JazzTimes. Early Bird Registration opens Aug. 1st. For more information, visit jazzcongress.org.

Jhiverse Rose was awarded the Charlie Parker Jazz Composition Prize and Manny Albam Commission, as judged by Darcy James Argue, Alan Broadbent and Ed Neumeister, at the 30th Annual BMI Jazz Composers Workshop Showcase Concert last month. Lee will receive $3,000 and have her commissioned piece performed at next year’s showcase. For more information, visit bmi.com.

Vocalist Mary Stallings and reedplayer Michel Portal will receive the 2018 Donostia Jazzaldia Award, as given since 1994 by Donostia-San Sebastian, Spain’s Heineken Jazzaldia Festival, during this year’s 53rd edition. For more information, visit heinekenjazzaldia.eus.

Submit news to info@nyjjazzrecord.com
I play a little sample of the original, then they remember the tune, which is nice.

**RC:** Right. I feel like we’re supposed to try and move the music forward. What’s the point of doing a tune exactly the way Ella recorded it? She’s already done it. We have boundaries, it’s on them—not me.

**TNYCJR:** Speaking of Detroit, another thematic album you did was *Motor City Moments* in 2000.

**RC:** That was a special record for me. It’s so much fun to do. You have so many different influences on Ella: *Accentuate the Positive*. We talked about that in our interview. You have to stay focused when you make a record. The R&B influence on *All My Life* is a departure from the swing version Ella performed with Teddy Wilson’s band in 1936.

**RC:** Yes, that was guitarist Marvin Sewell. Great arrangement. Marvin arranged that and “Judy”.

**TNYCJR:** On “I’ll Chase the Blues Away”, you really get into a southern-influenced, Mississippi country blues type of sound.

**RC:** (laughs) We were in rehearsal and just kind of playing around. We just started jamming. Marvin did something with the slide guitar and I put this melody on top of it. That was a group arrangement. It all just came together organically.

**RC:** When I first heard Ella’s voice as a youngster, she always made me feel so good, so uplifted. There was love coming off of those records. And I always knew her songs; they were very singable melodies. As a kid, you just remember the melodies. But as an adult, I realized what an incredible musician she was. I loved her melodies and so I wanted to play those melodies and celebrate her. Ella’s music is always so joyful and gives hope. And it’s honest; you always get a sense of honesty in her music. I felt like the stage and music was Ella’s safe space.

**TNYCJR:** Ella Fitzgerald’s legacy was the focus of *Ella: Accentuate the Positive*. In what ways has her music inspired you as a violinist?

**RC:** Not exactly the way Ella recorded it? She’s already done it. There will never be another Ella. So here I am, an instrumentalist—not a vocalist—doing these tunes. And listening to Ella, I found a lot of tunes that I wasn’t familiar with. I thought, “Oh, this is cool. This will be like her B-side record. I’ll do some tunes that maybe people aren’t familiar with or maybe they’ve forgotten about.” One of those tunes is *“Crying in the Chapel”*. People don’t necessarily remember the title, but when

**RC:** Speaking of Detroit, another thematic album you did was *Motor City Moments* in 2000.

**RC:** Right. Honoring my city, which I love. And I was really blessed to have the great trumpet player Marcus Belgrave and my cousin [saxophonist] James Carter join me on that record—and the great pianist Barry Harris. That was a special record for me.

**TNYCJR:** Your album *Southern Comfort* acknowledged the musical culture of the southern U.S. (CONTINUED ON PAGE 38)
“Greetings from lovely Austin, Texas,” says Michael Leonhart of McDonald’s All-American High School Band. Leonhart entered the national stage as featured soloist, demonstrating remnants of teenage excitement. On the plane ride home from that gig I was flanked by fellow ensemble led by bassist Rufus Reid. “On the development brought him to the attention of Justin DiCioccio, then teaching at the “Fame” high school on Manhattan’s west side, LaGuardia, and leading the All-City High School Jazz Band. Though only 13, he became the All-City trumpet soloist and then worked with DiCioccio once of age to attend LaGuardia. Also, he continued practicing piano and quickly developed an ear for advanced harmony and unique voicings as well as improvisational skills on both instruments. The young Leonhart’s rapid development brought him to the attention of Justin DiCioccio, then teaching at the “Fame” high school on Manhattan’s west side, LaGuardia, and leading the All-City High School Jazz Band. Though only 13, he became the All-City trumpet soloist and then worked closer with DiCioccio once of age to attend LaGuardia. Over the next few years, Leonhart was drafted into the All-State Jazz Band and then a select quintet drawn from that ensemble led by bassist Rufus Reid. “On the plane ride home from that gig I was flanked by [fellow trumpeters] Clark Terry and Lew Soloff,” he recalled, demonstrating remnants of teenage excitement. Leonhart entered the national stage as featured soloist of McDonald’s All-American High School Band. Attention garnered from this earned him the very first Grammy awarded to “an outstanding high school musician” in 1992, presented by Henry Mancini. Leonhart was just 17. There was no turning back.

1996 saw Leonhart hit the road with Steely Dan for the first time and his role has only increased with the passage of time. His arrangements of The Nightfly, bandleader Donald Fagen’s first solo album, will premiere on this current tour. Steely Dan is the preferred rock act of discerning jazz fans, a highly-coveted gig leading to a wide array of work, from the musical Fela to Yoko Ono, The Roots, Randy Newman, Mark Ronson, Bruno Mars, John Barry, Brian Eno, Todd Rundgren, Mos Def, Thurston Moore, David Byrne and many others. “99% of the music I play, I love,” Leonhart clarified. “I’m very fortunate to make a living and enjoy it, but I still identify as a jazz trumpet player and always come back to Clark Terry and Clifford Brown.” Though he’s played the full range of the art form, from swing to free to fusion, Leonhart holds a special place for the players of jazz’ earlier periods. “The older artists are almost vocal, like they’re singing through the horn. On its face it looks simpler but it is so profoundly deep. It’s timeless. One clarion note from a trumpet can stop traffic.”

This affection for older sounds made Leonhart the perfect musical director and orchestrator on guitarist Nels Cline’s critically-acclaimed Blue Note Lovers album, released in 2016. “I had to tap into this wide variety, ‘30s-40s style of arranging, but with points of a minimalist ‘60s film score kind of thing. The orchestration was vital to that project.”

These days, he’s working on arrangements for Cline’s new piece, which celebrates Philadelphia’s jazz, soul and R&B traditions with homages to The Delfonics, Sol Kaplan and Benny Golson, among others. Topping off the stage and studio work, Leonhart’s standing as a film composer has also grown. A notable example is Song of Lahore, the score of which includes Meryl Streep reciting poetry over Leonhart’s music with a Wynton Marsalis’ trumpet obligato.

And then there is his own ensemble. “I started the Michael Leonhart Orchestra [MLO] because I so enjoyed writing the arrangements for Nels. I got to tap into these lost sounds; colors and timbres have always been important to me. I realized I need to do this.” Once his charts became a reality, Leonhart booked the MLO into Rockwood Music Hall for a residency to develop the concept. “Though I couldn’t pay the musicians well, there’s a core group that keeps coming back.” The Orchestra recorded The Painted Lady Suite for Sunnyside last year, but Leonhart has an endless list of ideas. There are early plans being laid for an OKeh album of cover songs featuring guest stars, among other concepts, and the ensemble also has performance dates. “I’m used to working fast so I am always ready, he added, sounding absolutely unfazed. “I’m ready to go through this for the next 40 or 50 years.”
I told pianist Fred Hersch I was reading his 2017 autobiography, Good Things Happen Slowly (Crown/Archetype), and had reached the part where he’s relaxing at his Pennsylvania summer house with the man of his dreams and reflecting on his good fortune.

“Keep reading,” he said. “There’s a lot more drama ahead. You haven’t gotten to my coma yet.” Hersch’s book—and his life—are unique in the annals of jazz history. His story (in collaboration with the great music writer David Hajdu) is not only about a life in jazz and his apprenticeship, it’s also about a life—knowing he was gay from an early age, but unable (in part because of the profession he chose) to embrace that fact fully. And it’s about AIDS, too, because Hersch has been living as an HIV-positive man since 1986. He’s the living embodiment of the fact that a diagnosis is not a death sentence.

“It’s not a book for jazz nerds,” Hersch says. “It’s for people who want to read about my arriving in New York in the ’70s, coming to terms with my sexual identity, coping with health issues. I think I’ve lived long enough to deserve a memoir. My memory is intact and I have a multi-faceted story to tell.”

Yet jazz nerds will actually enjoy it, because it has far more great and intimate material about making music than most celebrity bios. You don’t need to know about Hersch’s life to embrace his highly diverse musical output, but knowing him as a person will help you have a richer interaction with it.

“I was not part of the Young Lions circling around Wynton Marsalis,” he told me. “I missed that feeding.”

Fred’s been a mentor, a collaborator and a dear friend. I sang at his wedding and stood at his bedside when his was sick and he has been there for me in times of joy and sorrow. And always there is the music. He has invited me to sing in many different situations with him over the years and has given me so much encouragement, classical teachers always getting after him for not sticking to the text as written. Study at New England Conservatory with the great pianist and Charles Mingus alumnus Jaki Byard followed. “Just hanging out with him was great, because he was a raconteur, an amazing pianist and a virtual encyclopedia of jazz,” Hersch said.

New York was inevitable and Hersch got established by being—in his words—fairly pushy about sitting in with name musicians (especially at noted pianist spot Bradley’s) and hiring such luminaries as bassist Sam Jones—with whom he became close—on trio gigs. “I wheedled and cajoled my way into the circle of A-list jazz soloists,” Hersch writes. Soon he was living the journeyman jazz life, working as a sideman, most memorably with saxophonist Joe Henderson and flugelhorn player Art Farmer, the latter with whom he made five albums.

“I wasn’t totally out in the ’70s,” Hersch said. “People who knew me were aware I was gay, but I don’t know what they thought at clubs like the Vanguard or Bradley’s. When Sam Jones died I felt badly that I wasn’t able to tell him directly about my life, because he was an important mentor to me. I finally came to realize that I didn’t want to have a double life.”

After his diagnosis, Hersch was not only out, he became perhaps the best-known gay musician living with AIDS and also became an activist—organizing and performing in benefits. But he also made sure that activism didn’t overshadow the music that remains central to his life.

If you’ve encountered Hersch’s music in solo, duo or trio formats it’s no surprise, because that’s the way he likes to work. He’s especially proud of his working trio with bassist John Hebert and drummer Eric McPherson, with whom he recorded the 2018 album Live in Europe (Palmetto). But he also frequently records solo and has co-led albums or played duets with Jane Ira Bloom, Renée Fleming, Norma Winstone, Kate McGarry, Bill Frisell, Janis Siegel, Jay Clayton and many more.

Hersch’s collaborators also tend to become his friends. Here’s Kate McGarry on 18 years of working together: “We just had a concert in Santa Fe. It was called Fred Hersch and Friends. Anat Cohen and I were the friends this time. It was a wonderful experience. I enjoy watching how Fred puts together a show. He makes a general plan but also leaves space to feel out what he wants to do in the moment. He is fluid and connected with the audience and himself and intuits what is needed to make a great program happen. I also appreciate his gift for collaboration and his curious musical spirit. He has a knack for putting interesting groups together that bring out the best in each person and he is always pushing himself to grow and change. Fred’s been a mentor, a collaborator and a dear friend. I sang at his wedding and stood at his bedside when his was sick and he has been there for me in times of joy and sorrow. And always there is the music. He has invited me to sing in many different situations with him over the years and has given me so many opportunities to grow. I’ll always be grateful.”

Fred Hersch is a very lyrical player, though also a very forceful one—rhythm is a big part of his conception. That’s one of the ways he absorbed Bill Evans as an influence, but plays his own distinct style. He needs to move forward with new projects.”

“I feel pretty fulfilled at this point. I want to bucket list. I feel pretty fulfilled at this point. I want to move forward with new projects.”

One of those projects, for 2019, is a record with the WDR Big Band of Cologne, Germany, with Vince Mendoza’s arrangements of Hersch’s compositions. “There are other things in the pipeline, too,” he said, “but I’m not sure about them yet.”

Even without new music, it’s likely that Hersch has made a record you need to catch up on, from his musical interpretation of Walt Whitman’s Leaves of Grass to his numerous tributes: Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, Billy Strayhorn, Antônio Carlos Jobim, Bill Evans, Johnny Mandel and others. And if you’ve heard the music, now see the movie. The Ballad of Fred Hersch, a documentary directed by Charlotte Lagarde and Carrie Lozano and released in 2016, was shot around the time of rehearsals for My Coma Dreams. “I thought it would be about the making of that piece, but it became a musical biography,” Hersch said. “It’s got a fair amount about my personal life and it’s the film the filmmakers decided to tell. Watching yourself for 80 minutes is painful, though. Vanity gets in the way.”

You’re likely to encounter Hersch when you least expect him. The man has a rich body of work and his discography takes up five pages in the book. I recently bought a Jane Ira Bloom record, Modern Drama, at a flea market for $1—and loved its brash modernism. The piano was so perfect for Bloom’s concept that I scanned the personnel. Fred Hersch, of course. ♦

For more information, visit fredhersch.com. Hersch’s trio is at Village Vanguard Jul. 24th-29th. See Calendar.

Recommended Listening:
• Jane Ira Bloom/Fred Hersch—As One (JMT-Winter & Winter, 1984)
• Fred Hersch Trio—Heartsongs (Sunnyside, 1989)
• Fred Hersch—Passion Flower: Music of Billy Strayhorn (Nonesuch, 1995)
• Fred Hersch/Michael Moore/Gerry Hemingway—Thirteen Ways: Focus (Palmetto, 1999)
• Fred Hersch—Alone at the Vanguard (Palmetto, 2010)
• Fred Hersch Trio—Live in Europe (Palmetto, 2017)
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BADBADNOTGOOD | LIVING COLOUR

LEAN ON ME: José James Celebrates Bill Withers
Iconoclastic singer Barbara Dane always knew that music could help to change the world for the better. Now 91, she’s spent a lifetime proving it.

Raised in Detroit, Michigan, as a teenager Dane took to the blues and jazz as a natural expression of her discontent with the problems of racial and economic inequality that she saw around her. She was singing out professionally by the mid ‘40s, but turned down career-building touring opportunities in favor of singing in protest outside of factories and in union halls. “I saw that the songs inspired people and made them understand their similarities and their closeness, their reason for uniting,” she said backstage after the release concert last month at Joe’s Pub for her latest album.

In 1991, Dane and Silber donated the Paredon label, with influential folk music documented through song. With Dane as producer, the label also issued important recordings of spoken word, recommended for the release of Dane’s new album.

Dane became something of an international musical phenomenon—and in a position to spread her work as a protesting folk musician further. She decided to use her music and associations with musicians from around the globe to facilitate cross-border understanding, forming her own record label, Paredon Records, with influential folk music writer/editor Irwin Silber (who later became her husband). In 1969, through this label, Dane and Silber introduced a truly astonishing collection of liberation music to U.S. listeners—and to the historical record. Besides Dane’s own I Hate the Capitalist System, a solo album of 14 protest songs from 1975, the label released proceedings from a free-thought gathering from Angola, Haiti, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Palestine, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Thailand and Uruguay, to name only a few of the regional political struggles they documented through song. With Dane as producer, the label also issued important recordings of spoken word, including Ché Guevara Speaks, with the voices of the Marxist revolutionary himself presenting before the United Nations during the Cuban Missile crisis and of Fidel Castro reading Guevara’s farewell letter to Cuba, and The Legend of Ché Guevara: Nothing More Precious than Independence and Freedom, an auditory collection of the Vietnamese leader’s speeches, writings and poems.

In 1991, Dane and Silber donated the Paredon catalogue to Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, a non-profit label under the auspices of the Smithsonian Center for Folklore and Cultural Heritage and the sponsor for the release of Dane’s new album. Hot Jazz, Cool Blues and Hard-Hitting Songs chronicles more than six decades of Dane’s performing, recording and activism, including the output of collaborations with a multitude of groundbreaking folk, jazz and blues artists, and 14 never-released tracks.

Social message aside, the album reveals a clear evolution in Dane’s artistry. On some of her early tracks (“Basin Street Blues”) she seems to be following in the blues tradition of Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith. But she goes on to sing folk tunes with The Chambers Brothers (“Study War No More”), duets with blues singers Lightnin’ Hopkins (“Sometimes I Believe She Loves Me”) and Doc Watson (“Salty Dog Blues”), an anti-war anthem with active GIs (“Join the GI Movement”), and one jazz standard (“Boulevard of Broken Dreams”). The musical through-line is Dane’s commanding, certain voice. In her music she never asks questions—she provides answers.

At the album’s release concert Dane was able to sing a few of her favorites—“How Long Blues,” Abbey Lincoln’s “Throw It Away” (from her 2016 album of the same name) and the 1943 Fats Waller tune “This Is So Nice, It Must Be Illegal,” among them. But she didn’t get to do the most powerful song she knows, “Solidarity Forever,” which appears on the new album as a live duet with singer/songwriter Pete Seeger and contains the lyric, “We can bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old / When together we are strong.” Dane has been singing the song her whole life, she says, adding, “I believe it and I’ve seen it work out. That’s the way that life works.”

For more information, visit barbaradane.net

Recommended Listening:
• Barbara Dane—Hot Jazz, Cool Blues and Hard-Hitting Songs (Smithsonian Folkways, 1957-2014)
• Barbara Dane—Trouble in Mind (Barbary Coast, 1957)
• Barbara Dane—Livin’ With The Blues/On My Way (Dot-Fresh Sound, 1959/1961)
• Don Ewell—Denaert Concert (with Barbara Dane) (Pumpkin-Storyville, 1966)
• Barbara Dane—What Are You Gonna Do When There Ain’t No Jazz?” (GHB, 1998/2000)
• Barbara Dane (with Tammy Hall)—Throw It Away (Dreadnaught Music, 2016)

LES T W E FORG E T

Barbara Dane
BY SUZANNE LORGE

Even as mainstream storms crept ever closer, however, Dane continued to play consciousness-raising folk and blues tunes as a solo voice-and-guitar act in small venues, working as a protesting folk musician. During the ‘60s gave her a wider platform on which to promote social activism; in this role she toured the world, in 1966 becoming the first U.S. musician to visit post-revolutionary Cuba. Her work there made a difference: “Music for some reason crosses all bridges, all barriers,” she asserts.

By the ‘50s Dane had moved to San Francisco, where her reputation continued to grow. In 1956 she made her professional jazz debut as a singer with trombonist/bandleader Turk Murphy’s traditional big band and by the end of the decade she was appearing on television with jazz legend Louis Armstrong and performing with some of the most prominent bandleaders around—Jack Teagarden and Wee Willie Harris, along with leading blues musicians like Little Brother Montgomery, Otis Spann, Willie Dixon and Memphis Slim.

For Dane, jazz bands like those that launched her career provide a good example for social equality. “Everybody in the group...they start together in some fashion and state the case. Then everybody gets a turn, gets a say-so. The rest back them up, they come back together for the out chorus and boom. You have society the way it should be,” she said.

In the 50-year history of the Duke Ellington Orchestra, many consider its pinnacle to be the “Blanton-Webster Band” (Webster being tenor saxophonist Ben Webster) of 1939-1941. Ellington was expert at attracting musical geniuses and Jimmie Blanton (not Jimmy, as confirmed by suzanne lorge)

Duke Ellington—The Chronological: 1939-1940/1940-1941 (Classics, 1939-41)
• Duke Ellington—The Duke in Boston (Jazz U. Limited-Storvile, 1940)
• Duke Ellington—Solos, Duets and Trios (RCA, 1940)
• Duke Ellington—The Indispensable Duke Ellington, Vol. 5 & 6 (RCA Black and White, 1940)
• Duke Ellington—At Fargo 1940 (Vintage Jazz Classics-Storyville, 1940)
• Duke Ellington—A new nolament: The Blanton-Webster Band (RCA Bluebird, 1940-42)

For more information, visit bar barbaradane.net

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• Barbara Dane (with Tammy Hall)—Throw It Away (Dreadnaught Music, 2016)

Lest we forget

Jimmie Blanton
BY MARILYN LESTER

In Chattanooga, Tennessee to pianist and bandleader Gertrude Blanton. She started Jimmie in childhood on the violin, which he studied until switching to the bass at Tennessee State College. There, he began playing with the State Collegians, as well as a local band led by “Bugs” Roberts and drummer Joe Smith. He also played on riverboats during school breaks, principally with pianist Fate Marable’s Cotton Pickers. Blanton left college after three years, moving to St. Louis in 1937, where he joined the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra, as well as continuing to play with Marable.

There are several versions of how Ellington discovered Blanton. He (sometimes not a reliable source) remembered, “We were playing the Coronado Hotel. After the gig one night, the cats in the band went out jumpin’ in the after-hours joints. They landed up in a hot spot where they heard and jammed with a young bass player: Jimmie Blanton. Billy Strayhorn and Ben Webster dashed over to his hotel and came into my room raving about him. I had to get up and go with them to hear him and I flipped like everybody else.” On Nov. 2nd, 1939 Blanton sent a telegram to his mother telling her he was leaving St. Louis the next day to join the Ellington Orchestra. Blanton shared bass duties with Billy Taylor, who soon left in January 1940. With Blanton’s flexible playing, the rhythm section of drummer Sonny Greer and Ellington on piano came impassioned plea for social justice even further. She

Duke Ellington—The Chronological: 1939-1940/1940-1941 (Classics, 1939-41)
• Duke Ellington—The Duke in Boston (Jazz U. Limited-Storvile, 1940)
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• Duke Ellington—At Fargo 1940 (Vintage Jazz Classics-Storyville, 1940)
• Duke Ellington—A new nolament: The Blanton-Webster Band (RCA Bluebird, 1940-42)

A tribute to Blanton is at Dizzy’s Club Jul. 17th as part of the Ertegun Jazz Hall of Fame Festival. See Calendar.

Recommended Listening:
• Duke Ellington—The Chronological: 1939-1940/1940-1941 (Classics, 1939-41)
• Duke Ellington—The Duke in Boston (Jazz U. Limited-Storvile, 1940)
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To pizecato playing, plucking the string parallel with the finger, rather than at a right angle, to achieve maximum resonance. James Harvey Blanton was born on Oct. 5th, 1918
Chicago is a metropolis that knows how to nurture creativity. Whether it’s comedy, music or theater, Chicago is a cut above with scenes building on top of each other, creating a rich tapestry few other cities can match. One such thread in said tapestry is record company International Anthem.

The brainchild of musicians Scottie McNiece and Dave Allen, International Anthem proudly exclaims, “the mission of International Anthem is to make positive contributions to the changing state of the music industry and to vitalize the demand for boundary-defying music by presenting unique sounds in appealing packages to untapped audiences.” And what a sense of vitality International Anthem has cultivated with a no-holds barred approach that sets them above the contemporary music scene.

Though still in its infancy, the label has released nearly two dozen albums in just under four years, blurring every genre with a spirited through-line of a classic DIY punk rock label. Whether it’s the avant garde style of saxophonist Nick Mazzarella or soul music industry and to vitalize the demand for boundary-defying music by presenting unique sounds in appealing packages to untapped audiences.” And what a sense of vitality International Anthem has cultivated with a no-holds barred approach that sets them above the contemporary music scene.

While still young, McNiece and Allen continue to learn and develop their strategy. Allen says, “We hope to develop our own model of the way that we make records. We work with the artists and help them record and tour together,” says Allen. “It’s great, so much from different small towns and we would play together and tour together,” says Allen.

While neither of them grew up listening to or performing jazz, the experimental nature of Chicago’s music scene proved to be a great primer for what would become International Anthem’s call to arms as well as McNiece and Allen’s appreciation for out-of-the-box music. Allen elaborates, “I think both of us really had our minds blown and fell in love with the experimental music scene like the current one in Chicago, which then led us to the history of amazing music that had been born there. We really dove into that.”

While curating a series at the Chicago bar Curio, McNiece asked Allen to record a performance by cornet player Rob Mazurek. The seeds of International Anthem were planted with this inaugural release, Alternate Moon Cycles. “I had been curating that series for over a year and I started getting more and more invested in the music and more artists had been coming and wanted to play the space,” says McNiece. “We started giving people residencies so the Mazurek residency came around it was like we’re going to capture all this stuff and start a label.”

From that initial release, McNiece and Allen have already begun to make a name for themselves in the critical realm. The 2016 release The New Breed by guitarist Jeff Parker was met with acclaim receiving “Best of 2016” honors from NPR, The Observer, The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times and numerous others. In The Moment by drummer Makaya McCraven received praise by Pitchfork and Jazz Times, among others.

Part of the charm of the music is that it’s not just the idea of putting out music that strikes McNiece and Allen’s fancy but rather cultivating a relationship with the artist. Allen further elaborates by stating, “We usually get involved with the artist very early on because we like what they’re doing. Then we have a whole story of how the record is made and it’s a nice collaboration between us and the artists we’re working with. We can make something more special as a result.”

The investment in the artist is but one facet of International Anthem, which takes pride in its product and how it is presented to the world. In speaking about the albums themselves, McNiece adds, “That’s why if you really go put the energy and investment that you need to put in the beginning to turn it into an artifact, the fact that feels good in your hands and feels like a quality presentation, that should last forever.”

While still young, McNiece and Allen continue to learn and develop their strategy. Allen says, “We hope to develop our own model of the way that we make records. We work with the artists and help them record and tour together,” says Allen. “It’s great, so much about this music is a living, breathing thing. To be able to present it in person for different people in different ways.”

AUTHENTIC SWING

In 2004, Billie Holiday became the first singer inducted into the Ertegun Hall of Fame, joined in 2005, just shy of 50 years after she helped to launch Verve Records with Ella Fitzgerald Sings the Cole Porter Songbook. During the recording of that landmark album, Fitzgerald had a three-week gig at a small club in L.A. The live recording of one of those evenings gives us Ella at Zardi’s, a first-time release of the record through the modern-day Verve. On that evening, Verve founder Norman Granz gave his usual introduction before Fitzgerald took the stage, his voice ringing with admiration: “For me, she’s the greatest. She sing Bernstein, trumpet, lead alto sax, and has been a part of the scene since the early 1960s. Her band, which she fronted with a lot of energy and style, played a mix of hard bop and cooler jazz.

Despite her relative obscurity, Czyz received a lot of attention from jazz fans and critics alike. His music was praised for its originality and for its ability to blend different styles of music, such as bebop and swing.

No modern twists and turns in arrangements, none of the usual tech enhancements—just pure big band sounds and vocals that could have been recorded right next door to Ella at Zardi’s. His latest release, Ain’t It Grand (Blue Rhythm Records), contains 30 swing, novelty and original tunes, all performed and recorded in a time machine, it seems. Czyz’s arrangements for his 16-person group encourage dancing and laughter; there isn’t a woeful moment. Singers Hannah Gill and Dandy Wellington, dead ringers for ’20s radio stars, stand out for their plummy voices and vintage sound.

On a more contemporary big band recording, saxophonist and bandleader Bob Mintzer partnered with New York Voices to create Meeting of Minds (MCG Jazz), 10 traditional pop tunes (and one Mintzer original) that feature the tightly-knit vocal quartet embedded in a large modern jazz ensemble. The singers (Kim Nazarian, Lauren Kinhan, Darmon Meader and Peter Eldridge) move airily through each groove, solo and harmonic framework, ably guided by Meader’s nuanced arrangements.

No more than a few minutes of Bob Mintzer’s “Jazz in July” program covers a wide swath of jazz history, highlighting the work of Richard Rodgers and Leonard Bernstein, trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie and pianist Teddy Wilson, Tommy Flanagan and Hank Jones. Mary Stallings explores Prohibition-era songs (Jul. 17th); Sandy Stewart sings Rodgers (Jul. 19th); Rene Marie sings Bernstein (Jul. 25th); and Melba Joyce sings the blues (Jul. 26th).
Reggie Lucas, a noted producer and composer with hits by Madonna, Roberta Flack and others yet inhabiting the jazz firmament for his guitar playing with trumpeter Miles Davis from 1972-76, died May 19th at 65 from heart disease.

Lucas was born Feb. 25th, 1953 in Queens. He began piano studies at six and, entranced by Motown and the British Invasion, picked up the guitar at 11. During the ‘60s, a young Lucas absorbed all the disparate music of the time: blues, rock, psychedelia, jazz and R&B. He began playing in clubs at 15 and went on the road for the first time at 17 with Billy Paul, jazz and R&B. He began playing in clubs at 15 and went on the road for the first time at 17 with Billy Paul, reaching #2 in the 1977 Billboard pop charts. The pair went on to collaborate as composers and producers with the early ‘80s, releasing a Grammy in 1980 for Best R&B Song for Stephanie Mills’ “Never Knew Love Like This Before”. After severing their partnership, Lucas went on to establish himself as a hit-maker with Madonna’s eponymous 1983 debut, producing most of the album and writing two of the tracks, including “Borderline”, her first Top-10 single.

Lucas’ leader discography has been slim: 1975’s Survival Themes (East Wind), with Mtume, Anthony Jackson, Michael Henderson, John Stubblefield, Clifford Adams and others, and the funk-soul project Sunfire, with a single self-titled album on Warner Bros. in 1982. This is understandable as he amassed hundreds of credits through the decades as a composer and producer. But, to a certain extent, all of Lucas’ future success stemmed from that four-year period under the tutelage of Davis, who encouraged all of the young guitarist’s interests. As he related to Williams, “Miles was the one place where I got it all out of my system, and that was the beauty of Miles.”
Festival Report

FIMAV

BY BYRON COLEY

Although people have a tendency to call it a ‘jazz’ fest, the Festival International de Musique Actuelle de Victoriaville (FIMAV, May 17th-20th), is not easy to categorize. There are usually a good number of jazz-associated musicians on the bill, but quite often they’re not playing jazz. For instance, this year Swedish saxophonist Mats Gustafsson was performing on two separate evenings. But the set with his trio Fire!, while astounding, would more easily be categorized as ‘free rock’ with distinct progressive overtones. Gustafsson did not even play saxophone all that much, spending a good bit of time with electronic keyboards of one sort or another. He played saxophone quite a bit more in his other appearance, alongside Japanese electronics monster Masami Akita (aka Merzbow) and Hungarian drummer Balázs Pándi but anyone who would dub the trio’s tooth-rattling noise assault ‘jazz’ is making a leap not easy to follow.

Additionally, as it has evolved, FIMAV has added non-concert elements to its bill. This was the eighth year with a series of sound installations spread throughout a downtown park and adjacent buildings. It’s always a pleasure to watch kids and adults who don’t give a tinker’s cuss about avant garde music getting into the swing of these installations for the sheer pleasure and weirdness they deliver. This year the most crowd-pleasing piece seemed to be Marc Fournel’s “The Big Ears”, two large metal cones (looking like a gigantic pair of binoculars) mounted on a rotating base with a set of headphones. The cones picked up natural sounds of the park and mixed them with pre-recorded sounds of other nearby spots. The concept was simple, in actuality chaotic and fun.

In addition to these interactive installations, this was the second year to feature programs of avant garde short films. One day there were several Japanese short films, dating from 1962-2017. These included Takahiko Imura’s film-poem Ai (with sound by Yoko Ono) and Makino Takashi’s On Generation and Corruption (with wonderful drones by Jim O’Rourke). The next day they offered a selection of recent Québécois short films with wonderful drones by Jim O’Rourke). The next day they offered a selection of recent Québécois short films. One day there were several Japanese short films, dating from 1962-2017. These included Takahiko Imura’s film-poem Ai (with sound by Yoko Ono) and Makino Takashi’s On Generation and Corruption (with wonderful drones by Jim O’Rourke). The next day they offered a selection of recent Québécois short films with wonderful drones by Jim O’Rourke). The next day they offered a selection of recent Québécois short films.

Improvised music is an art form well aware of its own deep history, inasmuch as it also speaks to an eternal present. That said, it’s often difficult to square the halcyon era with what’s happening now: as a present observer and chronicler of the work, this correspondent is challenged in balancing the urge to live in my record collection versus devoting myself fully to the (new) work at hand. It is fair to say that the Vision Festival, now celebrating its 23rd year, has in the past exhibited tension in presenting young upstarts while celebrating scenes past. But history and presence now fold in on themselves, for many players that emerged a few years ago are established and originators of this music are ascending from the earth in droves. This result of living is a natural reconciliation of current and past that is fascinating to watch. Furthermore, the current political situation lent a weighty cast to the proceedings, whether in the music or the messaging from presenters Arts For Art, whose “Justice Is Compassion” screed was an undercurrent that flowed through each opening.

Taking place at Roulette (May 23rd-28th), the Lower Manhattan-rooted festival returned to Brooklyn for the first time since 2013 and the cast of participants read like an encyclopedia of the avant garde, both as it developed in the ’60s as well as in its current form. Followers of the music were brimming at seeing saxophonist Archie Shepp and pianist Dave Burrell reunite; they’ve done so a few times over the last 30 years and their collaborations throughout the ’70s are legendary. Burrell was this year’s recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award and made no bones about giving a sold-out house what it wanted. Of course, Shepp and Burrell were the centerpiece and, joined by the indefatigable rhythm section of bassist William Parker and drummer Hamid Drake, they worked through rousing performances of Shepp staples (“Mama Rose”, Burrell’s “Crucificado”) and standards (“My Funny Valentine”). The pianist was at turns infectious in the instrument’s middle and lower registers and wryly romantic, which fit Shepp’s theatrical grace and laconic but tough delivery. Other than a brief but spellbinding duo for Shayna Dulberger’s bass and the voice and movement of Djassi DaCosta Johnson, the night was devoted to Burrell’s music, a testament to the unflagging physicality of his concept and wide-ranging, operatic notion of structure, from the opening “Harlem Renaissance” suite (a quintet built from Burrell’s duo with trombonist Steve Swell) to the closing group improvisation with drummer Andrew Cyrille and saxophonists Kidd Jordan and James Brandon Lewis.

Whereas the piano was a focal point the first night, the second gave it a rest while spotlighting curious

VISION

BY CLIFFORD ALLEN

Traveling and listening share common strategies of description. A metaphor of choice was suggested in Voss, Norway, where this correspondent found himself enjoying dinner and a concert in the garden of Voss Jazz Festival director Trude Storheim. Even more than the fine company, the local paragliders soaring overhead illustrated what I was hearing. Their gravity-defying navigation of thermals mimicked the circular breathing of saxophonist André Roligheten, who, with fellow reedplayer Jørgen Mathisen, bassist Rune Nergard and drummer Axel Skalstad, cut against the grain of our sunlit surroundings with passages of brooding, enchanting abandon while their improvisatory arcs held visual analogue in the sky that framed them. Known collectively as Rune Your Day, they did anything but, instead completing a larger atmospheric puzzle, of which they were the corner pieces.

This was one among a handful of concerts under the auspices of Nutshell, a series of showcases presented to an international delegation over the course of four days. It all began the previous afternoon in the port city of Bergen, where a constellation of soloists led by drummer and singer/songwriter Siv Øyunn Kjenstad cut through jetlag fog with the starlight of “Take Me Back” and “For a Moment”, the latter commissioned for the 150th anniversary of Henrik Ibsen’s Peer Gynt and built around motifs of that play’s incidental music by Edvard Grieg.

We were then whisked away the following morning to the lakeside community of Voss. Our first showcase came courtesy of the whimsical collective known as Bounce Alarm. Under the beans of the Finesloftet, a church hall built in 1295, they primed expansive harmonies across the slick canvas of “Swing and Sweat”. Written by tenor saxophonist Elisabeth Lid Treen and featuring a phenomenal solo by alto saxophonist Christian Cuadra, it was an ideal prelude to a solo concert given later that afternoon by drummer Erland Dahlen, who, under Voss Church’s angelic iconography, linked an unbroken chain of electronically augmented beat science. Following the above-mentioned garden party, we headed for Grieg’s former home of Troldhaugen to be treated by the Dag Arnesen Trio. Alongside bassist Ole Marius Sandberg and drummer Ivar Thoroddsen, the eminently regarded pianist balanced technique and self-expression throughout tunes inspired by rural themes, life experiences and Grieg himself. Arnesen’s grounded playing piled the soil for his sidemen’s sowings, peaking in an arrangement of the Norwegian folk song “Bonden i Bryllupsørgarden” (The Peasant at the Wedding Farm).

Showcases continued back in Bergen proper. Demonstrations of novel instruments were at the
show off Hill’s stylistic range and breadth of his thinking. The opening three cuts alone cover a lot of ground: Hill’s own title track and “Retrograde” flank Tony Williams’ “Black Comedy.” “Interstellar Space” announces the album with a smooth, poised lope, then the trio sounds jaunty in the tricky start-stop rhythms of Williams’ piece, followed by the slick, smart electric funk of “Retrograde.”

Carter and Royston are a phenomenal rhythm section—the former a real under-the-radar master—yet Hill is firmly in command of the session, pointing the way every moment. His playing is at its most sophisticated and assertive, synthesizing all sorts of things that have come before, from the ’60s Miles Davis Quintet through McCoy Tyner, Brad Mehldau and Jason Moran, and he now has a strong, personal voice to go with his terrific pianism. The foundation of straightahead swing is always there and so is a fully integrated modernism, elements of rock and funk.

There’s not a weak spot on the record. In fact it seems like it gets better as it goes along. Everything is constantly interesting and tunes like “The Comet” develop a muscular power. More subtle, but equally important, is Hill’s judgment—the longest track is 6:37 and most are in the four- to five-minute range, nothing wasted, everything meaningful.  

For more information, visit posti-tons.com. Hill is at Smoke Jul. 1st with Charles Tolliver, Mezzrow Jul. 7th as a leader and Jazz Standard Jul. 25th as part of New Faces. See Calendar.
Catalan pianist Agustí Fernández spends a lot of time under the bonnet for someone so gifted on the keys. While such post-John Cage manipulations are almost obligatory for contemporary pianists there are few who have developed such a distinctive style. As a consequence he has established an international reputation and become a mainstay of bassist Barry Guy’s New Orchestra and Blue Shroud Band as well as saxophonist Mats Gustafsson’s NU Ensemble. Between times he’s also led his own groups and partook in numerous ad hoc encounters. Where such meetings uncover a particular connection they can evolve into a more regular partnership. That’s the case with Like listening with your fingertips, Fernández’ second duo album with Swedish bassist Johannes Nästén. It documents a 36-minute performance in 2016, as it progresses, Sweden presents the two operating in consort at the extremes of their instruments. Fernández draws a huge assortment of sounds from the piano’s inwards, encompassing spectral reverberations created by rubbing and working the wires, thudding reverberations from dampened strings and plucked harp-like sonorities. Nästén’s does just what’s needed rather than pursue virtuosity for its own sake, from gentle tickling to dashing bow work. They take an unhurried approach, beginning with slides along the strings contrasting resonant pizzicato inflections. It’s spacious with a conspicuous sense of give and take. Fernández’ almost rhythmic massage of the strings elicits a waverning sawed response, which, in turn, prompts an equivalent sound from the piano guts. Hammered keys and careening dark arco hint at a trajectory. And indeed a piano tremolo ringing with overtones supplies the first crescendo. But thereafter they exercise restraint, dromey and tappy, until the rattling rises to another peak from which emerges a bass soliloquy and an uncoiling keyboard line. In this way evry shape and groove, dramatic and narrative, emerges which ends with an almost mournful coda of picked strings and soft abrasion. Fernández also has previous experience with Rafael Mazur, who wields a custom-built acoustic bass guitar. They are joined on Spontaneous Soundscapes by Mazur’s fellow Pole cornet player Artur Majewski for six on-the-fly collectives. In a typical opening gambit, they begin in conversational mode on “Soundscape 1”, but then gradually the silences fill with more interplay up to a climax. Fernández fashions a lovely contrast between resounding key strikes and koto-like picks at the outset, later generating a rippling bedrock for Mazur’s bubbling woody twang and Majewski’s melodic flourries. Majewski’s use of echo dominates “Soundscape 2” to mixed effect, as the predictability of the duplicated phrases, no matter how incisive, becomes tiresome. Much better is “Soundscape 3”, which begins sparsely and ascetically and as Fernández obtains an almost electronic effect from stroking the strings. After a somberly middle section, “Soundscape 4” reassembles a group of very creative fours by Poole; then all of a sudden as the trio vanishes Gonzalez emerges playing a series of runs alternating behind the drums and Eric Wheeler’s bass resonance providing a bit more solo space. All that said, Wyatt and his reeds are the protagonists. His compass points between the late ‘50s-early ‘60s Rollins-Coltrane poles, but combined into his own style. Following the uptempo opener “E-Brother”, “Look to the Sky” is a waltz-like medium, characterized by a very open, almost singing theme. “Jolley Charlie”, a joyous tribute to Wyatt’s father, kicks off in a tight trio setting. “Tenderly” appears as an out of this world, then by ensemble interjections and then by Fernández’ rolling bass register, which incrementally becomes more wide-ranging and expansive. In “Part V” of “Conduccion #77”, Fernández enjoys a pulsing duet with dancer Sonia Sanchez’ footfalls, later outlining an aching melody that wouldn’t have been out of place on his wonderful El Liberador De La Memoria (Mbari, 2011). Unfortunately the CD is marred by jarring two-second silences inserted into the unbroken performances every time the piece moves from one part to the next, so Bandcamp might furnish the smoothest listen. There is an underlying passion in saxophonist Eric Wyatt’s dedication to his late parents. The music is deeply rhythmic and energetic, with mostly uptempo originals and a handful of standards. Pianist Benito Gonzalez is blistering and yet melodic in his best McCoy Tyner-like mode, providing exquisite solos and setting the pace with powerful inflections. It’s spacious with a conspicuous sense of give and take. Fernandez’ almost rhythmic massage of the strings elicits a waverning sawed response, which, in turn, prompts an equivalent sound from the piano guts. Hammered keys and careening dark arco hint at a trajectory. And indeed a piano tremolo ringing with overtones supplies the first crescendo. But thereafter they exercise restraint, dromey and tappy, until the rattling rises to another peak from which emerges a bass soliloquy and an uncoiling keyboard line. In this way every shape and groove, dramatic and narrative, emerges which ends with an almost mournful coda of picked strings and soft abrasion. Fernández also has previous experience with Rafael Mazur, who wields a custom-built acoustic bass guitar. They are joined on Spontaneous Soundscapes by Mazur’s fellow Pole cornet player Artur Majewski for six on-the-fly collectives. In a typical opening gambit, they begin in conversational mode on “Soundscape 1”, but then gradually the silences fill with more interplay up to a climax. Fernández fashions a lovely contrast between resounding key strikes and koto-like picks at the outset, later generating a rippling bedrock for Mazur’s bubbling woody twang and Majewski’s melodic flourries. Majewski’s use of echo dominates “Soundscape 2” to mixed effect, as the predictability of the duplicated phrases, no matter how incisive, becomes tiresome. Much better is “Soundscape 3”, which begins sparsely and ascetically and as Fernández obtains an almost electronic effect from stroking the strings. After a somberly middle section, “Soundscape 4” reassembles a group of very creative fours by Poole; then all of a sudden as the trio vanishes Gonzalez emerges playing a series of runs reminiscent of the purest bop tradition. When he is joined by Wheeler and Poole the climate turns festive, reminiscent of the purest bop tradition. When he is joined by Wheeler and Poole the climate turns festive, leading to the final exciting exchanges between Gonzalez and the leader. This is followed by a tribute to Wyatt’s mother, “A Psalm for Phinney”, taken at a slower pace and with a bit more of a blues-modal feel. Few musicians have ever been as supremely capable as Hank Jones. He seemed incapable of playing a bad note during the course of a 65-year career. Arriving in New York in 1944 as the war was winding down and modern jazz was reviving up, Jones quickly established himself as one of the first pianists to combine the innovations of Bud Powell with the elegance and polish of Teddy Wilson. In this he is comparable to Al Haig and Duke Jordan and, like them, he made some very memorable recordings with Charlie Parker, but was never a member of Parker’s working band. In fact, his regular gig was with Ella Fitzgerald, something that sharpened his skills both as an accompanist and as a soloist who could contribute concise melodic statements. But descriptions of a player’s style don’t tell us whether that artist convinces us, something that is especially important when the artist in question wasn’t really aiming to be a great innovator. Jones at his best did just what he does on this previously unreleased set; he finds ways to arrange and voice familiar standards that sound fresh and, as the things he does to bring the tunes out always feel like they are just right for the tune— in other words, he convinces us. Likewise, he structures his improvisations as if every note and every flourish is just right for what came before and leads inevitably to what follows. Standards as well worn as “Tangerine” and “Just Friends” come to new life and bop tunes like “Budo” and “Scrapple From the Apple” are effervescent and buoyant. For this date Jones was backed by the gifted Danish bassist Mads Vinding and the great drummer Shelly Manne and the sound balance for the most part is perfect. The former is a virtuoso of the post-LaFaro school and, as is true of many in this camp, his tone is not as full as that of earlier bassists, but unlike some of them he knows how to keep out of the soloist’s way and his pitch is dependable. His strong suit is his consistently engaging soloing. Manne, of course, never takes a false step. Neither will any fans of mainstream piano jazz who seek out this excellent release.
Although women like Lil Hardin (musical director of Louis Armstrong’s Hot Fives/Sevens), Blanche Calloway and Ina Ray Hutton led groups from the late ‘20s onward, female big band composer/arranger/conductors came to greater prominence with the work of Toshiko Akiyoshi, Carla Bley, Maria Schneider and others. Today, female-led large ensembles are flourishing worldwide.

For its third album, the Composers’ Orchestra Berlin turned baton and writing chores over to Hazel Leach. Inspired by folk/dance musics of Venezuela, Argentina, Northumberland, Peru, Greece and Germany, she penned eight distinctive pieces or “postcards”, all in triple meter. One might expect ‘rhythmic fatigue’ over the almost-hour-length set, but her varied treatments provide ample relief: “Postcard 10 Caracas” is in fast 6/8 with tricky counter-figures; “Postcard 11 Tucumán” boasts a grandiose orchestral sweep à la Schneider; “Postcard 7 Berwick upon Tweed” resembles a Scottish jig (with lush backdrop); “Postcard 8 Lima” shows her debt hand with heterophony. Strong, usually short, improvisations heighten the immediacy of each track, Meike Goossman’s clarinet solo on “Postcard 9 Kalâvrita” being a highlight.

Now 60, celebrating kanreki, the beginning of a new life cycle, Japanese pianist Satoko Fujii is busier than ever. Fukushima is her tenth outing with the Composers’ Orchestra Berlin, her 20-year-old group containing some of the city’s finest avant improvisers, like saxophonists Ellery Eskelin and Tony Malaby, trumpeter Herb Robertson and trombonist Joe Borlase, all powerful soloists. Adding two pianists, Fujii’s music is busier than ever. Fujii’s compositions show a range of styles: “Snappy” (modal music), Pinarbasi’s pianistic qanun, Kriss even finds some of something else as well. On “Shabazi”, featuring bassist Or Bareket and drummer Satoshi Takeishi created on the latter, where the pianist demonstrates his mastery of rhythmic modulation. López’ congas resonate on “Mafroum” while Bareket fashions quietly affective statements on “Bent” and the intro of the flamenco-esque “Azules”

This all leads up to surprising session closer “Four Equals Two”, eschewing words for an exquisite scalar conversation that ends with shock, the sweet pathos of “The Place” that allows us to shut out the horror.

For more information, visit sarahbernstein.com. Bernstein is at Downtown Music Gallery Jul. 8th and Wonders of Nature Jul. 17th. See Calendar.

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Green Light
Evan Ziporyn/Waclaw Zimpel/
Hubert Zemler/Gyan Riley (Multikulti Project)
by Eric Wendell

Green Light, the debut of a quartet of clarinetists Evan Ziporyn and Waclaw Zimpel, drummer Hubert Zemler and guitarist Gyan Riley, juxtaposes jazz, contemporary concert and world music into a swirl of tones and tapestries. While not always successful, Green Light is most rewarding when demonstrating the unique compositional talents of its component members. This is music created among four musicians who between them have explored minimalism, world music and free improvisation. The album has a moment-in-time aesthetic, creating a varied environment where genre is amorphous and ever-changing.

The album begins with Ziporyn’s “Tam-Tam”, which showcases percussive clarinet playing building into a dynamic groove. Another Ziporyn piece follows, “Id Kiss Gale”, beautifully marrying the ethereal timbres of the quartet with a meditative, rhythmic pattern. Zemler’s “Infundybulata Chronosynklastycna” seems unrealized, with the tension of something unraveling at any given moment. Riley’s “Melisamrta” is a great example of the intricate dialogue these musicians can produce. The album ends with Zimpel’s “Gupta Gamin”, a reflective exploration allowing Green Light to drift off into the horizon.

For more information, visit multikulti.com. Riley is at The Stone at The New School Jul. 10th-14th. See Calendar.

Masters of Improvisation
Kidd Jordan/Alvin Fielder/Joel Futterman/Steve Swell (Valid)
by Marc Medwin

On one level, it is nothing more than a beautifully voiced and vibrato-drenched third, two pitches at which saxophonist Kidd Jordan and trombonist Steve Swell arrive, but it is also a gateway, redolent of ‘20s New Orleans music history. Like the Ayler brothers before them, the veteran improvisers, in the equally distinguished company of pianist Joel Futterman and drummer Alvin Fielder, distill a glass bead game of syntactic and historical associations with each gesture. The aforementioned moment at 1:30 is just among those most readily apparent, as it is contextualized by a point of repose, a wonderful cadence as this excellent and deeply moving disc’s first track is only beginning.

It would be easy simply to get lost in the discovery of similar references delineating these masterful players’ complex histories. Each instant is replete with those most readily apparent, as it is contextualized by a point of repose, a wonderful cadence as this excellent and deeply moving disc’s first track is only beginning.

For more information, visit validrecords.com. Swell is at Zürcher Gallery Jul. 10th and Downtown Music Gallery Jul. 29th. See Calendar.
As one makes one’s way through this album, the key elements are the ones mentioned in the title—this is a trip all over the musical map and the results are often original and surprising. It’s clear that Nabaté Isles is a fluent, talented trumpeter, but the emphasis is on the tunes and the variety of colors from a diverse band of players he calls forth in a nearly 80-minute outing.

Of immediate note is how Isles takes on jazz tunes. The snaky lines of Walter Bishop, Jr.’s “Cubicale” are deftly laid down by a quintet and then follow a fiery solo by the leader, a dark and passionate turn by George Gee Big Band and Chicago’s scintillating The Fat Babies. Make room for Professor Cunningham and His Old School. Your instructor is Australia-bred, NY-based reedplayer Adrian Cunningham, who’s trod the boards with Wyckliffe Gordon, Wynton Marsalis, Matt Wilson and Chris Potter, among others. Tenor saxophone is his main axe and he also shines as clarinetist, flutist and occasional singer.

Cunningham leads his little big band in a spunky program of traditional fare (Louis Jordan’s “Caledonia”, Duke Ellington’s “Caravan”), a few originals and lesser-known ancients (Sidney Bechet’s “Bechet’s Fantasy”). Make no mistake—while this is quality jazz this is dance music, approached not with pious reverence but with plenty of Saturday night swagger.

The audience is warmed up with the lilting, relaxed swing of Gerald Marks-Seymour Simons’ “All of Me”, where pianist Alberto Pibiri takes a delightfully droll, sparse solo and guitarist John Merrill displays his sparkling bebop chops. Then things kick into high gear with Armstrong-style trumpet from Jon Challoner. “All of Me”, where pianist Alberto Pibiri takes a delightfully droll, sparse solo and guitarist John Merrill displays his sparkling bebop chops. Then things kick into high gear with Armstrong-style trumpet from Jon Challoner.

For more information, visit cuneiformrecords.com. This project is at Village Vanguard Jul. 17th-22nd. See Calendar.

Swing It Out! is replete with boisterous, danceable tempos, pithy heartfelt soloing and jolly swing, a portable party in handy CD form.

For more information, visit arborsrecords.com. This project is at Kingsborough Community College Jul. 14th. See Calendar.

Select jazz nerds know of a time when jazz was part of the spectrum of popular music. From approximately the ‘20s to 1945, when the era of the big bands was winding down, people danced to jazz on a regular basis. There are outfits dedicated to interpreting the sounds of those times, including Squirrel Nut Zippers, George Gee Big Band and Chicago’s scintillating The Fat Babies. Make room for Professor Cunningham and his Old School. His instructor is Australia-bred, NY-based reedplayer Adrian Cunningham, who’s trod the boards with Wyckliffe Gordon, Wynton Marsalis, Matt Wilson and Chris Potter, among others. Tenor saxophone is his main axe and he also shines as clarinetist, flutist and occasional singer.

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THE NEW YORK CITY JAZZ RECORD | JULY 2018

Guitarist Mary Halvorson is indisputably a current darling of the critics. She won the 2018 Jazz Journalists Association poll over people like Bill Frisell, Pat Metheny and John Scofield. In the most recent DownBeat Critics Poll, she finished first on guitar and also first in three “Rising Star” categories: composer, artist and ensemble (for her namesake trio). Thumbscrew is not that trio. It is a collective with bassist Michael Formanek and drummer Tomas Fujiwara. Ours and Theirs are the third and fourth Thumbscrew albums. The former contains three originals each by member, the latter is 10 covers, some famous (“East of the Sun”), some not (Misha Mengelberg’s “Weer is een dag voorbij”).

The signature sound is a guitar trio with bass and drums far forward in the mix. From deep within Fujiwara’s smashing and Formanek’s thundering, Halvorson traces vivid, unique lines. Formanek’s “Cruel Heartless Bastards” starts with the composer’s stentorian four-beat monotone, which slowly accelerates. In stutter steps, Halvorson picks her way through a minefield. As often happens with Thumbscrew, Halvorson is sucked into the vortex and her guitar, shrieking, joins the noise. Sometimes the opposite happens. Halvorson’s “Smoketree” has ferocious solos from the composer and Formanek, who then turn on a dime into placid, yearning reflection. The impulses that trigger this ensemble’s transitions are unfathomable.

Ours may get you thinking that Halvorson has been overpraised. The creative urgency and daring and chops of this trio are undeniable. But their continuous juxtapositions of disparate elements sometimes sound more like puzzles to be solved than art.

Thiers will make you a believer again. Ours, all forms are fluid, but on Theirs, Thumbscrew applies its wild collective imagination to specific songs fixed in history. Fixed until now. Benny Golson’s “Stablemates” and Wayne Shorter’s “Dance Cadavereous” are transfigured by Halvorson’s astringent harmonies and knife-edge melodies and by seething bass/drum fury. “The Peacocks”, that most ethereal of jazz standards, is atypically edgy and incisive, yet sustains its hovering, floating mystery. You keep waiting for Thumbscrew to explode or distort Jimmy Rowles’ masterpiece. They never do. The suspense is unresolved. Then there is “Scarlet Ribbons”. What Halvorson finds in it is extraordinary: introductory free decorations in bell tones; a few words of the lyrics murmured aloud, from emotion; the melody withheld and then disclosed, in atypically edgy and incisive, yet sustains its hovering, floating mystery. You keep waiting for Thumbscrew to explode or distort Jimmy Rowles’ masterpiece. They never do. The suspense is unresolved. Then there is “Scarlet Ribbons”. What Halvorson finds in it is extraordinary: introductory free decorations in bell tones; a few words of the lyrics murmured aloud, from emotion; the melody withheld and then disclosed, in.

For more information, visit cuneiformrecords.com. This band is at Village Vanguard Jul. 17th-22nd. See Calendar.
JD Allen’s latest release showcases a different side of the tenor saxophonist. A sharp contrast with last year’s *Radio Flyer*, an album of free-form improvisations, the new disc focuses on ballads and standards. *Love Stone* is in some ways a bookend to Allen’s superb 2016 recording *Americana*, a deeply personal exploration of the blues and American roots music. Allen is once again joined by bassist Gregg August and drummer Rudy Royston, his partners for the past several albums, along with impressive electric guitarist Liberty Ellman. Refreshingly economical in his approach, the leader’s solos are direct and succinct and the whole album clocks in at about 45 minutes.

The set opens strongly, with guitar setting the theme of “Stranger in Paradise”, before lustrous tenor enters. It’s a moving, quite melancholy and artfully deconstructed version of the song that was an early hit for Tony Bennett in the ’50s. “Until the Real Thing Comes Along” is given a classic treatment in the vein of Ben Webster, all warm, precise saxophone notes on top of a spacious framework provided by the rhythm section. A surprise selection is the traditional folk tune “Come All Ye Fair and Tender Ladies”, given a hushed, almost mournful performance, highlighted by introspective guitar. A gently swinging version of “Put on a Happy Face” evokes Sonny Rollins—one of Allen’s most important influences—most directly, with shimmering brushwork and loping bass.

This is one of the best albums of ballads you’re likely to hear anytime soon. Allen manages to put his own very modern imprint on the familiar fare without resorting to pyrotechnics, relying instead on flawless technique and a bagful of creative ideas and proving, as he has in the past, that less can be more in jazz.

For more information, visit jazzdepot.com. This project is at Zinc Bar Jul. 19th. See Calendar.

ABIAH Sings Nina Simone
ABIAH (Madoh Music Group) by George Kanzler

This is a lush, sensual immersion into the intense, romantic, sometimes compulsively so, songs embraced and sometimes written by Nina Simone. Jeremiah Abiah, who goes by ABIAH as an artist, has a voice remarkably like Simone’s, with a similar smoky timbre and deep, galvanizing tone. He’s also mastered Simone’s phrasing and seductive use of melisma and wordless faux moaning. ABIAH’s tenor is also close to Simone’s contralto in range and employs a similar vibrato. But he does not attempt to convey the keen sense of social injustice that informed her art, often through fury laced with a distancing irony. At least not until the final song and only original: “I’m Just Like You”, an imagined monologue by Trayvon Martin addressed to his killer (and more pertinently to white listeners).

The eight Simone-associated songs are all variations on love songs, some good old torch songs, others expressing obsessive passion, like the suppilciatory sensuous delivery of “Wild Is the Wind”, with drummer Chris Eddleton employing brushes. The album kicks off with “Black Is the Color of My True Love’s Hair”, Keith Witty’s pizzicato bass setting a mood eventually enhanced by a full panoply of rhythm section and strings enfolding the sweetly seductive, melisma-heavy vocal take. Another track with a full, technicolor production is *Porgy and Bess* classic “My Man’s Gone Now”. An initial vowel-heavy wordless opening is couched in hand drums, bass and horns and, after the lyrics, horns and pulsing rhythms underscore an ecstatic climb into falsetto. Some of the shortest tracks are also tersely sensual, like regretful “Don’t Smoke in Bed” and incantatory “See-Line Woman”. Eddleton effectively uses bundled sticks on the latter and on a shimmering “Don’t Let Me Be Misunderstood”, ABIAH adds overdubbed high voices as background. This is a surprisingly affecting tribute, if only to one side of Simone’s artistry, and should whet listeners appetites to go back to the original.

For more information, visit abiahmusic.com. Tributes to Nina Simone are at The Django at The Roxy Jul. 5th, New York Botanical Garden Conservatory Jul. 13th and Dizzy’s Club Jul. 18th as part of the Ertegun Jazz Hall of Fame Festival. See Calendar.
A contrafact is a new melody pasted on top of another tune’s chord changes. They have been a part of jazz at least since the ’30s, when “Pennies From Heaven” used the same chords as “I Can’t Give You Anything But Love” and “Moten Swing” emerged as a stripped-down version of “You’re Driving Me Crazy”, and became much more common during the classic bebop era.

Gary Smulyan, one of the top baritone saxophonists in jazz for the past 35 years, discovered pianist Reese Markewich’s little-known book Bibliography Of Jazz And Pop Tunes Sharing The Chord Progressions Of Other Compositions in 1970. Smulyan has since used that work as a reference and has been particularly intrigued by the number of contrafacts only recorded once.

The wittily titled Alternative Contrafacts finds Smulyan in a trio with bassist David Wong and drummer Rodney Green, just the second time he has recorded in this format. It is fun to try to guess which obscure songs are based on which standards. Certainly there are very few other recordings of such melodies as Mal Waldron’s “Vodka”, Jimmy Giuffre’s “Deep People”, Ted Curson’s “Ahma See Ya” and Coleman Hawkins’ “Handi” (“Dinah” backwards). Smulyan contributes “I’ve Changed” (based obviously on “You’ve Changed”) and among the other songs are contrafacts based on “Strike Up The Band”, “Get Happy”, “Out Of Nowhere” and “Love Me Or Leave Me”.

While there are occasional short solos by Wong and Green, the focus throughout is on Smulyan, who has yet to record an unworthy record or play an uninspired chorus. His passionate sound and fresh ideas make Alternative Contrafacts a set well worth picking up, particularly by straightahead jazz collectors.

For more information, visit steelpilechase.dk. Smulyan is at 92nd Street Y Jul. 19th as part of “Jazz in July” and Village Vanguard Mondays with the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra. See Calendar and Regular Engagements.

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Needle Driver
Brandon Seabrook (Nefarious Industries)

Guitarist Brandon Seabrook is a familiar face in New York’s new music circles, having played with Peter Evans and Jacob Garchik among others. Needle Driver is a trio with bassist Johnny DeBlase and drummer Allison Miller, a take-no-prisoners merging of avant garde jazz, progressive rock and heavy metal. Nothing settles into a groove—it’s nervous and constantly changing up. Seabrook probably wouldn’t want to hear the comparison, but the abrupt start and stops, constant tempo changes and ultra-fast virtuosic guitar work are reminiscent of classically-influenced British rockers Genesis, Yes, Hatfield and the North and Gentle Giant.

“Synonymph” opens the album and displays the clear influence of Captain Beefheart circa 1969 masterpiece Trout Mask Replica. But hold on, because “Synonymph” soon takes us miles away, into a sort of merger between shredding and Philip Glass minimalism. Then there’s a doomy section built on what sounds like bowed bass, followed by some head-pounding aggression. “Ocular Rabies” (there really is such a thing) is full-tilt rock ‘n roll, with truly impressive merging of avant garde jazz, progressive rock and heavy metal. Nothing settles into a groove—it’s nervous and constantly changing up. Seabrook probably wouldn’t want to hear the comparison, but the abrupt start and stops, constant tempo changes and ultra-fast virtuosic guitar work are reminiscent of classically-influenced British rockers Genesis, Yes, Hatfield and the North and Gentle Giant.

A change of pace is signaled by “Ventwhoreisin”, which rides in on a wave of abstraction. The piece seems to be finding its feet and gathering momentum when it’s abruptly dethroned by more doomy metal. If for some idiotic reason you think women drummers can’t play fast and loud, listen to this track. And finally, there’s “Optical Flavorist”, which proceeds in fits and starts like a student driver’s first day at the wheel. In a promising passage, the tune starts to settle into a lopsided groove with On the Corner overtones, but that’s soon leveled to the ground when the piece abruptly speeds up into a dense and somewhat relentless wall of sound. An interesting drone is developing at the end, but then there’s a fade out. I could have listened to more of that. The album comes in at 22:43. That’s too long for an EP and too short for a full CD, but an impression is made.

For more information, visit nefariousindustries.com. Seabrook is at Barbès Jul. 22nd. See Calendar.
Veteran pianist Bill O’Connell is no stranger to Latin jazz, having worked with flutist Dave Valentín, percussionist Mongo Santamaria and tenor saxophonist Gato Barbieri, among others. O’Connell makes good use of that experience on *Jazz Latin*. The core of the album is a trio of O’Connell, bassist Lincoln Goines and drummer Robby Ammen; Goines plays electric bass throughout while O’Connell is mostly on acoustic piano but switches to electric keyboards on two original pieces: “It’s OK” and “Quicksand”. The trio is also joined by five guest soloists: Randy Brecker on “Goodbye, My Friend”; tenor saxophonist Craig Handy on “It’s OK”; trombonist Conrad Herwig on Irving Berlin’s “Puttin’ on the Ritz”; flutist Andrea Brachfeld on “Quicksand”; and guitarist Dan Carrillo on “Goodbye, My Friend” and reflective ballad “Mom’s Song”.

A Brazilian influence is especially strong on “It’s OK”, lively “Obama Samba” (written for President Barack Obama) and a memorable performance of the António Carlos Jobim standard “Zingaro”. O’Connell is more mindful of salsa and AfroCuban music on “Quicksand”, “Puttin’ on the Ritz”, “Just One of Those Things” and Wayne Shorter’s “Footprints”. The angular “Tip Toes” draws on both AfroCuban music and the influence of pianist Thelonious Monk while O’Connell adds a funk feel to his own compositions, O’Connell makes certain that this album reflects his many years of contributing to Latin jazz projects and does so with consistently pleasing results.

For more information, visit amuletrecords.com. Martin is at The Stone at The New School Jul. 28th. See Calendar.

If you’ve seen Billy Martin performing in the chamber-funk trio Medeski Martin & Wood (MMW), then you’re probably familiar with the toolbox of exotic percussion instruments—bells and sound rings and gongs and whatnot—he often dips into when he wants to bring the music in a kind of art brut direction. That’s basically what he’s trying to do on his new solo album, a series of 23 minimalistic songs, none longer than four minutes, performed alone on drum set and a piano prepared, according to the liner notes, with “pieces of bamboo, alligator clips and small African bells.” Those accoutrements make the piano sound tinny and jangly and sort of spooky and childish. He plays the piano exclusively for the first six tracks and they pretty much blend together into one monotonous smear. There isn’t much of a pulse until “Flores”, the seventh track, when Martin dives into a kinetic, cymbal-heavy drum solo, with satisfyingly forceful tom hits. Martin is at his best when he’s drumming alone—even in MMW (think of his exquisite phrasing on “Latin Shuffle”, from *Combustication*, or tuneful soloing on “Buster Rides Again”, from *Tonic*). Martin solos on the drums for five tracks straight, then goes back to piano for the rest of the album.

The contrast between contemplative, interior piano and heart quickening drums works to enliven the listener’s ears, but in the end it doesn’t feel like enough to sustain an entire album. Conceptually it holds together, since Martin is presenting this album as a kind of sonic interpretation of his own visual art. He recorded the album surrounded by his own paintings, which he did on paper and canvas with gesso, oil pastel sticks and charcoal. The cover of the album features one, which seems to extend from abstract expressionism. It features big strokes of black and red, with white and grey in the background and squiggly strokes on top that provide some depth and texture. It’s a muddled painting, like Martin’s piano work. Martin’s drums, though, are too crisp and good to be seen as an interpretation of his visual art.
Two labels stood out during the '90s renaissance of New York free improvisation. There were others to be sure, but AUM Fidelity and No More Records excelled for their diligence in documenting that moment in spontaneous creation. AUM is still going strong, inching its way toward its 100th release, whereas No More started with a bang, issuing a pair of solo recordings for their decade of activity (plus a straggling collection by no wave act Mars issued in 2008).

No More started with a bang, issuing a pair of solo piano releases in 1995: an intriguing set of standards by Anthony Braxton and a brash recording by a young player from Delaware named Matthew Shipp, then a relatively youthful 34.

Shipp already had appeared on disc with Rob Brown, Mat Maneri, William Parker and – most notably – on David S. Ware’s releases on Columbia and DIW. But, as was the case with the Braxton album, his recording for No More, Symbol Systems, was his first solo piano release.

Symbol Systems has now become the first No More title to see reissue, by the venerable hatOLOGY label, and its appearance with the familiar hatOLOGY orange lettering over a black and white photograph provides the opportunity to refocus the ears and hear it anew.

Anyone who has spent more than a little time listening to Shipp knows well his quirks as a player: he is given to repetition; he likes pouncing away at blocky chords; and his drilling into familiar melodies takes on an almost obsessive-compulsive attack. Those charming tendencies are fully present in this early document, delivered with a youthful brashness. The 14 quick tracks, ranging from two to seven minutes, are filled with an earnest confidence. It often feels as if he can’t make his point fast enough, a quality that no doubt played well in the punk/free jazz overlay of the ‘90s. Such an approach would likely have grown stale had he persevered, but he has mellowed a bit over the years (not in intellect but in musculature), allowing Symbol Systems to retain an excitement of its time.

Shipp has released a number of solo recordings over the years, more mature and for the most part recorded with a richer tonal quality than this propulsive session. The audio quality keeps Symbol Systems from being his best, but had it been, where would he have had to go? It’s good to hear this youthful Shipp again, for more information, visit hathut.com. Shipp is at MoMA Sculpture Garden Jul. 29th. See Calendar.

The number of contemporary musicians who have played with progenitors like Ornette Coleman (1930-2015) is getting slimmer by the day. From the first decade of Coleman’s career, the only surviving comrades are his drummer son Denardo (b. 1956) and cornet player Bobby Bradford (b. 1934), the latter an associate from California via Texas who was a semi-regular partner for ten years beginning in 1954, but whose only official recordings with Coleman were the Science Fiction sessions in 1971. In the Los Angeles area, where he returned to live full time in 1964, Bradford worked extensively with reedplayer John Carter (1929-91) and also toured Europe with drummer John Stevens, reedplayer Frode Gjerstad and others.

Though the Carter-Bradford aggregations generally featured a rhythm section, they also performed extensively as a duo (examples of which can be heard on Tanlem, released on Emanem, and Mosaic Select 36). In May 1979, they joined the reedplayer Vinny Golia and trombonist Glenn Ferris for a quartet concert at the Century City Playhouse, the results of which are now available on CD after nearly 40 years. With structural and textural approaches reminiscent of Anthony Braxton, Golia was then an emerging force on the far-flung L.A. scene. Like a number of his contemporaries, he engaged the older Bradford and Carter in small and large group settings – the compact, burnished quality of cornet and the woody, high-pitched clarinet’s cry nod to the roots of American improvised music while Golia’s arsenal of flutes, bass clarinet, soprano and baritone saxophones add forceful constellations. “Views”, the second piece, begins with such a Chicagoan fanfare before splintering off into soil then dialogic commentary building (the cornet-trombone duet being particularly rich). Ferris, another Los Angeleno, would eventually decamp to Paris but his gorgeous tone and measured control are in full view here, grazing and supplanting the leader’s alto flute and Carter’s clarinet on the deft closing study “The Victims (for Steve Biko)”. A chamber ensemble comprised of established pairings and individual voices, this is work that demands a close listen.

Live at the Magic Triangle presents Bradford with a more recent partner, alto saxophonist Hafez Modirzadeh, in an Amherst, Massachusetts concert, joined by bassist Ken Filiano and drummer Royal Hartigan (the only member without West Coast bona fides) for a program of five originals, including the cornet player’s classic line “She”. This is Bradford’s fourth release on the frighteningly prolific NoBusiness label out of Lithuania and his second with Modirzadeh. “She” is rendered as a dirge, cup-muted brassy bars apposite the crisp drone of bass and viscous purrs, the theme emerging as a gasping lift across a field of cymbal taps and rich clamber, cornet and tenor in a braying dance of chortling extrapolations with Modirzadeh reminiscent of John Tchicai in his oblique, repeating commentary. Filiano’s limber pizzicato and incisive, full arco are a linchpin for the proceedings, providing a flexible harmonic ground for cracking silver and gravelly shouts as Hartigan adds a sensitive tumble balanced between background and mid-level surge. A tap dancer and skilled in the use of his hands, Hartigan unfurls a stripped-down and economical web of beats at the beginning of “Wadsworth Falls”, a gallop that beautifully suits Bradford’s laconic, brushy expressionism. Bobby Bradford, turning 84 this month, is a link to the development of this music, seasoning the ‘now’ with the wry swagger of tradition.

What’s the best way to get to the Newport Jazz Festival? The WBGO Bus!
The Accidental Orchestra is the creation of composer/multi-instrumentalist Michael Moss, who, at 74, is a 50-year veteran of the New York scene. Humorously self-described as “the farthest out cat” and a mainstay of Manhattan’s famed loft jazz scene, he has played with Sam Rivers, McCoy Tyner, Elvin Jones, Paul Bley and Richie Beirach, among many others.

Helix kicks off with “The Old One”, deriving its name from Albert Einstein’s name for God. A five-piece suite and what the composer calls “an initiation into sacred ground”, it is part of a musical tradition stretching from the earliest rituals over the dead to Bach’s Mass in B minor, through to Native American rites of passage into the spirit world, Jewish mourners’ Kaddish and Buddhist funeral rituals. It begins with the oceanic swirls of “Inception”, which quickly expand into a mix of horns and strings that are inscrutably inviting. The suddenness with which a passage can stop is at once mysterious and even ominous.

The second and longer piece is “See Sharp or Be Flat/C# or Bb”, written while Moss was recovering from a fracture suffered tripping over a curb, an event that also gave the group its name. The band swings on this theme, rendering a rich mix of jazz and rhythm and blues. Out of this massive sound machine are whiffs recalling The Beatles’ “Norwegian Wood”, James Brown’s “I Feel Good”, Modern Jazz Quartet’s “Bags’ Groove” and moments of Duke Ellington’s sacred music. Moss embraces all sorts of sounds while allowing space for his players to add to this cosmos of flavors.

The Accidental Orchestra is the creation of composer/multi-instrumentalist Michael Moss, who, at 74, is a 50-year veteran of the New York scene. Humorously self-described as “the farthest out cat” and a mainstay of Manhattan’s famed loft jazz scene, he has played with Sam Rivers, McCoy Tyner, Elvin Jones, Paul Bley and Richie Beirach, among many others.

For more information, visit michaelmoss.bandcamp.com

Thurston Moore, who turns 60 this month, became a staple of New York’s downtown scene in 1976 when he took an apartment near Avenue B, one with a view of the burgeoning punk and no wave movements. The guitarist leapt into both when the area was alive with the restlessness of dissent and poverty. New music composers and jazz improvisers seeking a road beyond their own avant garde saw a certain anarchic liberty in the raucous punk music amid crumbling structures and dying streets. In this fertile climate, an historic interchange of genre came to be and it opened the boundaries long separating so-called high and low culture.

Moore’s experimentation with extended techniques and alternate tunings began while performing with Glenn Branca and Rhys Chatham’s guitar ensembles and then blossomed during his years in Sonic Youth. His instrumental prowess has since become legendary and his discography extensive, alternating between thoroughly abstract and through-composed. On Disarm, Moore delves deeply into the former, becoming one with the most foreign of sounds that can be coaxed from his instrument. This is a decidedly lo-fi recording yet, as admirable as this leap back into the pre-digital age is, the separation between the guitar overdrive and the percussive components are awash in the soundscape.

The album opens with the title cut, a work built on layers of feedback and broken repetitive phrases. When notes are struck above the guitar’s nut, at the headstock, it sounds like the upper reaches of a piano, a feat Moore uses several times in this outing. Though Golębiewski enters soon after, his participation is drowned out. One can imagine the pair in the studio, kicking it to kingdom come, absorbing each other fully, but the final product too often leaves the drums sounding like cardboard boxes and pie plates. This is all the more the case on “Distant” where the Jimi Hendrix-Mitch Mitchell simpatico seemed to have been raging wonderfully, but out of listening range.

“Disturb” is a quietly introspective guitar solo, but “Distract” is the creative climax of this album. A much greater balance between the two is achieved here and in the next selection, though Moore’s ax doesn’t seem to have come down from its standard volume of 11. Suddenly, the strengths of Golębiewski become evident and as such, embraceable. The Polish drummer has performed extensively across Europe in experimental music settings, most notably with Yoko Ono, Fred Lonberg-Holm, Mats Gustafsson and an array from either side of the Atlantic, and has the wonderful habit of getting under the motivic phrases created by the guitarist, pulling them upward and framing them with an equal proportion of thunderous fills and unexpected tacts. In this light, Moore casts faraway worlds of tone and sound, driven by the unique melding of New York City and Warsaw.

For more information, visit endlesshappiness.bandcamp.com

Michael Leonhart Orchestra

The Painted Lady Suite

The Painted Lady Suite, the debut album by the Michael Leonhart Orchestra (MLO) is inspired by the butterfly of the same name. While Leonhart was initially attracted to its flamboyant coloration and wing ornamentation, it was the butterfly’s incredible migration, which spans over six generations and 9,000 miles — twice that of the Monarch butterfly, that inspired the trumpeter/composer/bandleader to write his “Painted Lady Suite.”

When Leonhart took on the role as arranger/conductor for the 21-piece orchestra on guitarist Nels Cline’s eclectic Lovers album (Blue Note, 2015) his love of conducting, arranging and composing for large ensemble was reignited. Once the album was finished, Leonhart was certain that he wanted to create a solo project in this vein, and thus the Michael Leonhart Orchestra was born.

When creating MLO, Leonhart’s idea was to get an all-star mix of soloists, ensemble players and pocket-players who would be as comfortable playing Mingus and Ellington as they would be playing Wu Tang and Fela Kuti. The Orchestra is comprised of a roster of some of the most sought after musicians in New York, including members of the Village Vanguard Orchestra, Maria Schnei der’s Orchestra, the Dip-Kings, Menahan Street Band and Antibalas. Working with these stellar musicians has given Leonhart the invaluable opportunity to workshop new arrangements of existing material, covering such artists as The Beastie Boys, Zappa and Bernard Herrmann, and new original compositions, building the repertoire in front of a rapidly growing audience.

MLO feat. Nels Cline @ Jazz Standard

July 17th & 18th (7:30 PM & 9:30 PM)

For more information, visit endlesshappiness.bandcamp.com

For more information, visit endlesshappiness.bandcamp.com
Pianist Diane Moser has been honing this project for years, beginning with her fortuitous residency at the MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire, where she discovered that birds are the master musicians on our planet. Of course, the fascination with our winged musical brethren has a storied history in the music we call jazz. Many fans are cognizant of woodwind soloists like Steve Lacy's enormous discography—maintained by William Kenz and Patrice Roussel at nyds-discographies.com/lacy.htm and listing 426 official entries as of January—keeps tossing out recordings, nearly 15 years after the saxophonist’s death. So many of these are new to listeners, recovered from the back catalogues of myriad labels. These two archival releases bring some previously unreleased tracks, so something truly new for even the most dedicated Lacy fan.

Emanem has been reissuing Lacy’s music for years and now has produced some extremely fine and important collections, like the Last Tour (with two studio tracks of Lacy with the Thelonious Monk Quartet). This new set collects two excellent albums from the mid ’60s, Disposability and Sortie, and issues for the first time an improvised film scoring session from 1967 and three substantial improvisations from a 1972 session.

Disposability is a 1965 trio date with bassist Kent Carter and drummer Aldo Romano while Sortie, recorded the next year, adds trumpeter Enrico Rava. The trio format was always one of Lacy’s best (along with his duets with pianist Mal Waldron)—he was always more interested in rhythm than harmony and here he plays inventively, both fitting into and taking apart divisions and subdivisions. The Monk tunes, “Shuffle Boil”, “Pannonica” and “Coming on the Hudson”, are vintage Lacy and there’s an excellent example of his early composing, “Generous 1”. Disposability is a mix of modern jazz language and improvisation, Sortie is more free. Lacy spits out pithy themes like “Undecipherable Jump”, “Frank Fellows” and “Death Scene” are baffling, the music an odd mixture of atmosphere and improvisation—there’s a bit of faux-trad jazz—that never comes together into a coherent score, but each individual cue is full of interest and there’s a palpable feeling of the musicians responding in the moment to the external stimulus.

The quintet has Lacy’s great foil Steve Potts (alto saxophone), Carter, Noel McGhie at the drums and Irene Aebi playing cello. They play Lacy’s “Rush”, a theme he didn’t bring out often, and then improvise “The Thing” in two parts. There are good moments in each, but this is Lacy in transition, trying to figure out exactly what the quintet was going to do.

That group, with Oliver Johnson now at the drums, is more coherent on Stamps, two late ’70s concert recordings originally issued on two LPs on hatHUT. The group here is a powerhouse, tight on vintage themes like “The Dumps”, the title track and the granulated Monk of “The Blinks” and improvising with great ensemble coherence and purpose. Some will be happy to know that there’s no real singing, Aebi is part of the overall texture when the band is playing all together. Lacy’s recordings on hatHUT are essential chapters in a long and important novel and it’s invaluable to have this one back in print.

For more information, visit emanemdisc.com and corbettvsdempsey.com

JULY 2018

NEW YORK CITY JAZZ RECORD
Gypsy swing evolved in the '30s with guitarist Django Reinhardt and violinist Stéphane Grappelli. The first resurgence of interest accompanied Grappelli's prolific recording and touring beginning in the late '60s. An even greater revival has taken place over the past 20 years or so, buoyed in part by the launch of the Django Reinhardt NY Festival at Birdland in 2000. The current generation of players is not only composing new music building on the early foundation, but also changing the instrumentation. This group of Django Festival AllStars—guitarist Samson Schmitt (son of the great Gypsy swing guitarist Dorado Schmitt, with whom he debuted at the age of 12), violinist Pierre Blanchard, accordion player Ludovic Beier, rhythm guitarist Philippe “Doudou” Cuillerier and bassist Antonio Licusati—represent some of Europe’s top stylists. Schmitt’s upbeat title track is marked by its playfulness and hot, brief solos. Blanchard penned the melancholy yet wry “Troublant Romeo”, with Beier whimsically quoting “Hernando’s Hideaway” and terrific ensemble work backing the soloists. The introduction to Blanchard’s gentle ballad “Balkanic Dance” features him on accordina in the lead, channeling a bit of Toots Thielemans’ lyricism. Beier’s “Around Toots” is a departure with the ominous Middle Eastern flavor of its introduction before switching gears into a more conventional setting, powered by blistering electric guitar and playful accordion, Licusati sporadically slapping his bass to add a bit of novelty. One of the surprising choices is the moving treatment of John Williams’ brilliant theme from the movie Schindler’s List; Blanchard’s powerful arrangement captures the despair and hopelessness of the prisoners, with his violin prominent in the mix conveying their anguish.

For more information, visit resiliencemusic.com. This band is at Birdland Jul. 10th-15th. See Calendar.

This is saxophonist María Grand’s first album after her debut EP Tetrawind, a complex, ambitious and rewarding effort. The theme is woman and family relations through the lens of the pioneering work of family therapist Virginia Satir, with most of the compositions inspired by mythical feminine figures. It is what used to be called a concept album, aptly fitting Biophilia’s aesthetic and the double-sided, 20-panel origami-inspired package. “La Immortal” opens with Grand’s tenor announcing and supporting Jasmine Wilson’s dramatic narration, followed by “Imani/Walk By”, a dedication to the African-American vocalist and composer Imani Uzuri, enriched by the piano of Fabian Almazan (founder of Biophilia). Grand’s mix of ethereal singing, which at times may sound slightly off-pitch, and spacious narration take a bit of an acquired taste but is quite appealing upon repeated listens. The core of the album is Grand’s trio with bassist Rashaan Carter and drummer Jeremy Dutton. The suite built around three mythical feminine figures is almost minimalistic, Carter and Dutton providing a sturdy yet dynamic tapestry above which Grand picks and chooses her notes carefully and at her own pace. In spite of her association with Steve Coleman, Grand’s sound is composed and cool, suggesting, along with her legato phrasing, a Lennie Tristano influence via Warne Marsh, particularly in “TII. Maria”, with a beautiful a cappella intro followed by an insistent bass pedal. “TIII. Magdalena” maintains a similar suspenseful mood, culminating in a dense bass solo. The trio adds pianist David Bryant for five compositions, his more abstract approach prominent in “Pyramid Sphere”, “Where is E” and “Demonium”, the latter the most programmatic piece, built on Satir’s tension/respite workshops. The other compositions (“Last Year” and “Sing Unborn”) are based on vocals by Grand, accompanied by Mary Halvorson unusually on acoustic guitar. Amani Fela’s rap-based delivery punctuated by the quartet’s sparse commentary closes the album with “Eyes y deseos”. This is a remarkably original and mature followup.

For more information, visit biophiliarecords.com. Grand is at Threes Brewing Jul. 16th. See Calendar.
A Generation Ago Today
Kenny Burrell (Verve)
by Tom Greenland

Guitarist Kenny Burrell, who turns 87 this month, has enjoyed a long and influential career, combining blues and bebop in his gorgeously toned, relaxed but propulsive style. A Generation Ago Today, released in 1967 and recently reissued, is a slightly unusual item in his copious catalogue in that it bears the stamp of Creed Taylor’s production values. The cover photos—the front a profile portrait of a sideburned, turtlenecked youth crowned by a red cap festooned with buttons bearing topical slogans and iconography; the reverse a matching shot of his female counterpart in yellow beanie—speak to the times.

The music within, however, harks back to guitarist Charlie Christian, particularly his game-changing tenure with Benny Goodman’s sextet; the entire set (Harold Arlen-Ted Koehler’s “As Long as I Live”, John Golden-Raymond Hubbell’s “Poor Butterfly”, Harry Barris-Gordon Clifford’s “I Surrender Dear”, Art Hickman-Harry Williams’ “Rose Room”, Jimmy Campbell-Reg Connelly-Ted Shapiro’s “If I Had You” and Goodman’s “Stompin’ at the Savoy”, “A Smooth One” and “Wholly Cats”) is gleaned from those influential recordings.

The album’s sound is based around the trio of Burrell, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Grady Tate, a transparent but robust combination that forefronts the leader’s impeccable tone and fluid chording in complement to his own melodic passages, heard to best effect on tracks like “Poor Butterfly” and “A Smooth One”. Alto saxophonist Phil Woods provides a vigorous foil on all but one track, adding obbligato parts and restless solos, as often laying out. Burrell too is an active but empathetic accompanist to Woods on “Poor Butterfly”, “Rose Room” (their interaction here is an album highlight) and “If I Had You”. Vibraphonist Mike Mainieri and pianist Richard Wyands have a cameo each and Carter offers subtle but dramatic flourishes to reverberating climaxes.

“Happy Juice” is by pianist Jon Davis and, after a “Killer-Joe”-like riff, evolves into a more full-throated groove. The horns are happy and soaring in the theme and then Lawrence, Coxx and Gillece are adventurous as well as deeply soulful. “Delilah Was a Libra”, from the very early days of the label, is by guitarist Edwings, a slow and seductive minor blues featuring shimmering vibraphone, delicate pianistics, breathy saxophone and bold trumpet. There’s more from the back catalogue: a remake of organ player Brian Charette’s “West Village” and the lightly swinging and simple but not-so-simple “I’m OK” by pianist Art Hirahara.

Gillece contributed three tunes and Lawrence two for the album. The former’s “Down the Pike” modulates harmonically and slips through some smart rhythms and chord changes with great help from the frontliners. “Vortex” glows thanks to the composer’s vibraphone and beautifully intimate saxophone. And “Follow Suit” is a multi-faceted excursion abetted by the dynamic work of the rhythm section. Lawrence is a bold composer as shown by “Hush Puppy”, a rapid-fire but straightforward blues featuring muted trumpet and, later, everyone trading with Sperrazza, while “Frederico” is a singus Latin tune with a hypnotic rhythm and some beautiful work by Hill.

“King Cobra” is taken from Herbie Hancock’s 1963 Blue Note album My Point of View. The players have absorbed the magic of the original and graciously pay homage through intelligent solos and tight ensemble work. The whole album reflects Free and his label’s reverence for the ethos of Blue Note and how it still applies to making jazz recordings in 2018.

For more information, visit posi-tone.com. This project is at Jazz Standard Jul. 25th. See Calendar.

Tropical Riffs: Latin America and the Politics of Jazz
Jason Borge (Duke University Press)
by Kevin Canfield

As Jason Borge tells it, his new book was in the works for almost two decades. Around the turn of the century, he watched Ken Burns’ Jazz and found himself “deeply unsettled” by the documentary’s “wholesale delatinization” of the music he loves. His long-simmering response, Tropical Riffs, is a superb history of Latin American jazz’ artistic and societal evolution.

Focusing on a five-decade period ending in the late ’60s, Borge, a professor of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of Texas at Austin, provides one edifying detail after another. In the ’20s-30s, he writes, jazz albums could be hard to find in Latin America and some of the region’s arts critics viewed fans as “vulgar flappers”. But with artists in Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela blending “jazz compositions and dance styles into their tópico [national/traditional] repertories”, the music gained many new listeners.

Politics were an unavoidable part of the scene. In Cuba, President Getúlio Vargas’ dictatorial regime used state-controlled airwaves and newspapers to squelch jazz’ popularity, instead celebrating “samba as the national music par excellence”. Despite these and other impediments, Brazilian bossa nova and American jazz eventually entered a period of artistic symbiosis. In Cuba, meanwhile, the landscape for domestic jazz innovators was, at various times, technologically advanced and creatively stifling. In the ’30s, Borge notes, the country was among “the first in the world to develop a viable radio industry”, supporting the work of local performers like percussionist Luciano “Chano” Pozo. But after Fidel Castro took power in 1959, “Cuban musicians, composers and critics were for many years...[denied]...their rightful place in jazz history”.

Throughout Latin America from the ’20s-60s, Borge explains, there was constant tension among homegrown artistic inventiveness, influence of American sounds and considerable social pressures. Some reactionary voices argued that jazz would lead to “the menace of social upheaval,” he writes, but lots of others viewed its ethos of freedom as “the best of modern life.”

For more information, visit dukepress.edu
Charles Lloyd is 80 years old and could well be taking his victory lap. But he’s still at it and on fire. Of course, jazz musicians don’t tend to take the gold watch.

This music was recorded in 2016 at two concerts: lengthy “Dream Weaver” at Montreux and the rest at The Lensoic in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Check out how the Swiss sit on their hands during the volcanic “Dream Weaver” and the Yanks exclaim “hey” and “yeah” during the popping moments of “Nu Blues”. Lloyd is revisiting his back catalogue here, as all of the album is previously recorded compositions.

Pianist Jason Moran, bassist Reuben Rogers and drummer Eric Harland are one of the most cohesive units in jazz. “Dream Weaver”, all 17:45 of it, never loses focus. Lloyd, who first recorded the tune in 1966, enters his ninth decade and this is one of his best records in a catalogue full of them.

For more information, visit bluesnote.com

Is It Me…?
Polly Gibbons (Resonance)

Polly Gibbons is shaping up to be the U.K.’s most celebrated female jazz vocal export since Claire Martin emerged in the ’90s. Gibbons is a big-voiced soul-jazz belter whose gritty approach draws on Carmen McRae and Dee Dee Bridgewater as well as R&B icons like Aretha Franklin, Chaka Khan and Teena Marie. Is It Me…? is by no means the work of a purist and parts of this unpredictable effort have more to do with soul or the blues than with straight-ahead jazz.

From a jazz standpoint, Gibbons is at her most straightahead on gutsy performances of Spencer Williams’ “Basin Street Blues”, Duke Ellington’s “I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart” and Harry Barris’ “Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams”. She favors a mixture of soul and blues on Franklin’s “Dr. Feelgood” while the lively “You Can’t Just…” is akin to the type of soul-funk Khan recorded in the mid ’70s, though Gibbons is joined by a mostly acoustic big band.

Gibbons’ diversity is one of her strong points and she has no problem rising to the occasion whether tackling Thomas Dolby’s “The Ability to Swing”, making the new wave song sound perfectly natural as hard-swinging big band jazz; Gary McFarland’s “Sack Full of Dreams”; or Leslie Bricusse-Anthony Newley’s “Pure Imagination”, taking the latter away from its relationship to The Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory roots into a combination of postbop and ’70s soul.

Gibbons is either backed by a big band that includes skilful players such as pianist Tamir Hendelman, trumpeter Willie Murillo, saxophonist Bob Sheppard and trombonist Bob McChesney or a quartet arranged by pianist James Pearson, who co-wrote three of the selections with her: “You Can’t Just…”, introspective title track and gospel-drenched “Midnight Prayer”.

Is It Me…? does not cater to jazz traditionalists. For those who appreciate soul, funk and the blues as well as straight-ahead jazz, it is a fine demonstration of Gibbons’ abilities.

For more information, visit resonancerecords.org. Gibbons is at Birdland Jul. 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th. See Calendar.

THE NEW YORK CITY JAZZ RECORD | JULY 2018
Teddy Wilson was the definitive swing pianist. He sounded relaxed at all tempos, played with taste and subtle creativity, never seemed to make a mistake and always swung. His accessible style became highly influential not only on his contemporaries and the next generation of jazz pianists but on decades of cocktail and piano bar pianists who enjoyed the way that he uplifted melodies. Wilson was most famous in the ‘30s for his work with the Benny Goodman Trio and Quartet and for heading many sessions that featured Billie Holiday. Mosaic’s recent limited edition, seven-CD boxed set concentrates on the pianist’s other recordings of the era since the Goodman and Lady Day sessions are readily available elsewhere. The contents of the box feature Wilson’s solo piano performances, the instrumental numbers that were made at the Billie Holiday dates, allstar sessions that featured other singers, the short-lived Teddy Wilson Orchestra of 1939-40 and his sextet of 1941-42.

Mosaic’s agreement with Sony was for a seven-CD set so there are some absent performances that keep this from being 100% complete. Missing are two versions of “I’ve Found A New Baby” that are in Mosaic’s Count Basie/Lester Young box, two sessions with tenor saxophonist Chu Berry that are in Berry’s Mosaic box, Wilson’s piano solos for the Commodore label and sessions in which Wilson’s groups worked with singers Eddy Howard, Chick Bullock and country singer Redd Evans. It is a pity that this is not an eight-CD set that could have included everything but there is certainly no shortage of exciting moments. 64 of the performances are Wilson piano solos including 39 alternate takes, 18 of which were previously unreleased. Some were originally released decades later on collectors’ LPs, including his lone date from 1934, when the influence of Earl Hines is more apparent on his playing than it would be a year later. The solos are all enjoyable (and a trio session) although the music of Apr. 11, 1941, which has eight straight versions of “China Boy” followed by ten of “I Surrender Dear”, will be difficult to consume in one setting.

All of the recordings by the Teddy Wilson Big Band are here but, although it was a decent band, it did not have a sound of its own beyond Wilson’s piano. Tenor saxophonist Ben Webster (shortly before he joined Duke Ellington) gets some strong spots, trumpeter Shorty Baker is heard from and there are vocals by Thelma Carpenter and Jean Eldridge but one can see why the orchestra did not catch on during a period when there was a glut of big bands.

Of greatest interest are the 88 small-group performances, which include 28 alternate takes of which six were unissued. All of the vocalists (Ella Fitzgerald at the beginning of her career, Helen Ward, Midge Williams, Boots Castle, Frances Hunt and Nan Wynn) are excellent with Fitzgerald and Ward taking honors.

Among those instrumentalists who make strong impressions, both on the instrumentals and vocal sides, are trumpeters Harry James, Chris Griffin, Frankie Newton, Jonah Jones and Bobby Hackett (actually on cornet), clarinetists Buster Bailey and Pee Wee Russell, alto saxophonists Johnny Hodges and Benny Carter, tenor saxophonists Webster and Vido Musso, Red Norvo (sylphone and vibraphone), bassist John Kirby and drummer Cozy Cole with Goodman, Gene Krupa and Lionel Hampton also making appearances.

The most acclaimed session features a quartet with James, Norvo and bassist John Simmons that resulted in the two-part “Just A Mood” and a pair of Fats Waller songs. However, all of the combo performances are quite enjoyable, including the later sextet numbers with trumpeter Bill Coleman and Jimmy Hamilton or Edmond Hall on clarinet.

An extra bonus is Mosaic’s typically informative and colorful booklet. Their Teddy Wilson limited edition set, Mosaic’s first release in too long, is highly recommended.

The most acclaimed session features a quartet with James, Norvo and bassist John Simmons that resulted in the two-part “Just A Mood” and a pair of Fats Waller songs. However, all of the combo performances are quite enjoyable, including the later sextet numbers with trumpeter Bill Coleman and Jimmy Hamilton or Edmond Hall on clarinet.

For more information, visit mosaicrecords.com. A tribute to Wilson with pianists Dick Hyman, Rossano Sportiello, Aaron Diehl and Bill Charlap is at 92nd Street Y Jul. 18th as part of “Jazz in July”. See Calendar.

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**BOXED SET**

**Classic Brunswick & Columbia Teddy Wilson Sessions (1934-1942)**

Teddy Wilson (Mosaic)

by Scott Yanow

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**JUL 1**

jeff “tain” watts travel band

album release party

**JUL 2–9**

closed for annual maintenance

**JUL 10**

michael pingréuy & the awakenings ensemble featuring dominick farinacci

**JUL 11–12**

claudia acuña: a tribute to abbey lincoln

**JUL 13–15**

roni ben-hur quartet with special guest joyce moreno

**JUL 16**

jon gordon quartet

**JUL 17**

eruption jazz hall of fame festival

tribute to jimmie blanton

**JUL 18**

eruption jazz hall of fame festival

shenel johns and vuyo sotashe: in honor of nina simone

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**JUL 19**

eruption jazz hall of fame festival

freddy cole quartet pays tribute to nat king cole

**JUL 20–22**

jon faddis quartet

**JUL 23**

the descendants: an african sextet in new york

nelson mandela centennial celebration

**JUL 24–25**

stanley cowell quintet

a 50-year retrospective of his recordings and songs

**JUL 26–29**

catherine russell

**JUL 30**

monday nights with wbgo

loceia benjamin quartet plays coltrane

**JUL 31**

gabe schnider presents hapa: love stories

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**MISHA MENGBERG SOLO LP**

According to ICP scholar Kevin Whitehead, “Mengelberg never treated piano as a temple, Köln Concert-style. For him, the instrument was more scratchpad, daybook, chalkboard to scrape, and graffitti wall – never more than on his first of four all-solo albums, Pech Onderweg, recorded at the old old Bimhuis in 1978.” Boogie shuffles, Monkish balladry, swirling romanticism, deftly expressive gestures, insidious earworms, deliberately bad singing, it’s all here, remastered on 180 gram vinyl.

**JORIS ROELOFS + HAN BENNINK CD**

Daring, versatile, award-winning (bass) clarinetist Joris Roelofs and legendary madcap swingmaster Han Bennink have been playing together since 2015. On Icarus, their first CD, they engage in 14 cracking duets that hopscotch the listener from Dolphy to Kurt Weill, touching songfully on chamber music, free jazz, cabaret, and Americana in the process, all of it brimming with whispertalk smartness and crackpot exuberance.

available from icporchestra.com
July 1  | Earl Warren 1914-95  
July 2  | Teddy Hill 1904-94  
July 3  | Tri-City 1927-2009  
July 4  | Eileen Sachs 1923-2014  
July 5  | Ray Brown 1905-85  
July 6  | Betty Carter 1925-75  
July 7  | Tiny Grimes 1916-89  
July 8  | Bill Challis 1904-94  
July 9  | John Lear 1906-90  
July 10 | Nicele Simms 1889-75  
July 11 | Billy Kyle 1914-66  
July 12 | Tallulah Bankhead 1902-70  
July 13 | George Lewis (tb) 1952  
July 14 | Billy Kyle 1914-66  
July 15 | Jack Teagarden 1907-66  
July 16 | Tallulah Bankhead 1902-70  
July 17 | Mary Osborne 1921-92  
July 18 | Charlie LaVere 1910-83  
July 19 | George Lewis (cl) 1921-89  
July 20 | Bill Dillard 1911-95  
July 21 | Erskine Hawkins 1914-93  
July 22 | Paul Moten 1987-92  
July 23 | Teo Macero 1925-2015  
July 24 | John Handy 1926-84  
July 25 | Chris Connor 1929-88  
July 26 | Bob Dorough 1971-76  
July 27 | Howard Riley (Mosaic)  
July 28 | Tony Scott 1971-74  
July 29 | Ray Biondi 1905-81  
July 30 | Carl Fontana 1928-2003  
July 31 | Art Taylor for five Monk tunes.  
August 1 | Howard Riley (Mosaic)  
August 2 | Tony Scott 1971-74  
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Sunday, July 1

- Richard Wyands 90th Birthday Celebration
- The 75 Club at Bogus Marcian 8:30 pm $25
- Marco Capolo/Lewis Porter
- Ray Wilson/Barry Flanagan
- The Hot Licks
- The Ladybirds
- The Ladybirds' 2nd annual with Nick Feitel
- Salsa La Trucha Trio with Frankie and the Koko Westing, Brandon Ventoso, Anthony LaPolla
- Mike Clark
- Club Bonafide 8 pm $15

Monday, July 2

- Oscar Noriega, Russ Lossing, Satoshi Takeishi
- David Leon Trio with Cole Dickerson/Liliana Bivona, Laura Harrison
- Brian Fulcher
- Joe Farnsworth Group
- Kenneth Jimenez, Dayeon Seok; Bob Hoffnar/Janie Cowan
- David Miller
- Jaz boosted Brooklyn 8:30 pm $20
- Emily Brades

Tuesday, July 3

- Jonathal Udall Trio with Dave Leon, John Nathan Eligmson-Bell, Grant Gordy Trio with Adam Ondracek, Alwyn Robinson Bar North Door 6:30, 8:30 pm $10
- Veronica Swift and Emilie Cohen Trio with Peter Washington, Evan Sherman Bar North Door 9:30 pm $10, 11:30 pm $12
- Veronica Swift and Emilie Cohen Trio with Peter Washington, Evan Sherman Bar North Door 9:30 pm $12
- Lee Ritenour Bar North Door 9 pm $10
- Mike Clark
- Blue Note 11:30 am 1:30 pm $39.50
- Mark Edward Dill
- Joe Farnsworth Group
- Michael Casen
- Ben Netzer
- Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine 10 am 12 pm $30
- Haus Westmoreland, Morgan Linn, John McCown
- Michaela Arndt
- Myriam Yamakawa, Nicholas Bruce
- Rusty Johnson Trio with Jonone-West, Fukushima Taisaka, Kush Abadey

Wednesday, July 4

- Cole Davis Trio with Vaugn Stoffey, Jk Kim
- Veronica Swift and Emilie Cohen Trio with Peter Washington, Evan Sherman
- Lee Ritenour
- Cornelia Street Underground 8, 9:30 pm $10
- Tomi Jazz 8 pm
- Saint Peter's Church 5 pm
- Bar Next Door 6:30 pm $12
- Bar Next Door 8:30, 10:30 pm $12
- Cornelia Street Underground 8, 9:30 pm $10
- Fat Cat 8 pm $10
- This Week's Calendar
- The Week's Calendar

Thursday, July 5

- Veronica Swift and Emilie Cohen Trio with Peter Washington, Evan Sherman
- Lee Ritenour
- John Melendez/Annie Nikunen Quintet with Evan Caplinger; Noshir Mody Ensemble
- Maria Alejandra Rodriguez
- Lee Ritenour
- John Colianni Sextet
- Cole Davis Trio with Vaughn Stoffey, JK Kim
- George Schuller
- Veronica Swift and Emilie Cohen Trio with Peter Washington, Evan Sherman
- Red Sea Jazz Festival 2018
- Veronica Swift and Emilie Cohen Trio with Peter Washington, Evan Sherman
- This Week's Calendar

Friday, July 6

- Veronica Swift and Emilie Cohen Trio with Peter Washington, Evan Sherman
- Lee Ritenour
- Eric Wyatt
- Rob Heckman
- Rob Rocker Trio
- Lauren Mayershohn, Roberta Grossman, Paul Bolen
- Rachael DiGiorgio
- The Django at Roxy Hotel 8:30 pm $30
- John D'Martino Quartet
- Michele, John Martin
- Bar Brooklyn 8:30 pm $25
- Fat Cat 6 pm $10
- Blue Note 11:30 am 1:30 pm $39.50
- Blue Note 11:30 am 1:30 pm $39.50
- Blue Note 8, 10:30 pm $35
- Blue Note 8, 10:30 pm $35
- Blue Note 8 pm $30
- Jazz Standard 7:30, 9:30 pm $35
- Maria Repp and the Lady Sharks
- Dave Miller
- Todd Capp; Sarah Bernstein solo
- Bar Brooklyn 7 pm $25
- Bar Brooklyn 8 pm $25
- Zanzuid 6 pm $10
Tuesday, July 24

- **Jazz in July Festival—Celebrating Dizzy Gillespie**: Jon Faddis, Jimmy Greene, Renee Rosnes, Bill Charlap, Peter Washington, Kenny Washington, Daniel Sadawkowski

- **Tom McDermott**: Bar Boulud 8:30, 10 pm $10


- **Birdland Big Band**: Birdland 8:30, 11 pm $40

- **Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Big Band**: Birdland 10:30 pm $40

- **Dan Margolius**: Blue Note 11:15 pm $10

- **Stanley Cowell Quartet with Bruce Williams, Freddie Hendrix, Tom DiCarlo, Vince DiFiore**: Dizzy’s Club 7:30 pm $30

- **Vanisha Gould**: The Django at the Renaissance 8:30 pm $30

- **Saul Zabell**: Fat Cat 7 pm $10

- **Michika Fukumoto solo**: Jazz at Lincoln 11 pm

- **Bill O’Connell Jazz Latino Quartet with Craig Handy, Lincoln Goines, Cliff Almond and guests Andrae Braithwaite, Dan Carluccio**: Jazz Standard 7:30 pm $25

- **Ben Gelfand with Kirk Knuffke, Tony Scherr, Kenny Wollesen**: Michael Formanek Group 9:30 pm $20

- **Alex Wein, Dave Baron, Jimmy Moots**: Macoun 8 pm $20

- **James Jabbo Ware Jr. We & Them Orchestra with Cool Briegerwater, Eddie Allen, Hector Colon, Richard Gilman, Clifford Smith, Dave Pianka, Jason Richardson, Jr., Larry Gaston**: New York City Bar Center 9:30 pm $16

- **Sweet Melody and the Wayfarers**: Broadalbin Hall 8 pm

- **Steve Nelson Quartet, Frank Lacy Group**: Village Vanguard 1:30 pm $20

- **Ike Mosel, Sylvie Crouvoyer, Annie Gosfield**: The Stone at the New School 8 pm $20

- **Jonathan Tossaon, Yoko Yamasaki**: Tom Jazz, 8 pm

- **Fred Hersch Trios with John Hebert, Eric McPherson**: Village Vanguard 8:30, 10:30 pm $30

Wednesday, July 25

- **Jazz in July Festival—Leonard Bernstein Jazz at The Town**: Renee Rosnes, Jeremy Pelt, Jon Gordon, Melissa Aldana, Peter Washington, Peter Washington, Kenny Washington

- **Mike Chouza Trio with Dan Weinberg**: The Django at the Renaissance 8:30 pm $20

- **Julian Tippapoom Trios with Nong Kengnamma, Joey Lamb**: Birdland 9 pm $40

- **Birdland Big Band**: Birdland 8:30, 11 pm $40

- **Dan Margolius**: Birdland 10:30 pm $40

- **Gary Lucido, Falle Yang, Jason Candler**: City Winery 7:30 pm $15

- **Audrey Silver Band with Jon Contino, Alex Nords, Paul Beaudry, Anthony Procopio**: Club Bonafide 8 pm $10

- **Stanley Cowell Quartet with Bruce Williams, Freddie Hendrix, Tom DiCarlo, Vince DiFiore**: Dizzy’s Club 7:30 pm $30

- **Vanisha Gould**: Dizzy’s Club 11:15 pm $10

- **Raphael Drigh Trio +1, Ned Gosdik Jam**: Fat Cat 7 pm 12:30 pm $10

- **Jazzmoebie: Reggie Workman**: Gale’s Tomb 7 pm

- **Scott Morgan Quartet with Billy Martin, Matt Lannon**: Jazz at the Knit 10 pm $10

- **Post-Tone New Faces**: Josh Lawrence, Ross COP, Beth Gillet, Theo Hill, Peter Breiner, Vinny Sparkons**: Jazz Standard 8, 10:30 pm $30

- **Ron McDunn**: Manhattan 9 pm $20

- **Paul Beaudry and Quintessence**: National Sawdust 7 pm $25

- **JASON PROVER SPEAK THEATRICIANS**: Birdland 9 pm

- **Karen-Obi/Seun Kukus**: Safran’s Church 1 pm $10

- **Offshore Quartet**: Village Vanguard 8 pm $30

- **Kirk Lightbody Group; Andrew Gould Quartet**: Village Vanguard 11 pm $20

- **Double Double Trouble**: Yuka Honda, Arnie Goffstold, Nels Cline, Roger Kaser**: The Stone at the New School 8 pm $30

- **John Marinino, YO Kanasawa**: Tom Jazz, 11 pm

- **Fred Hersch Trios with John Hebert, Eric McPherson**: Village Vanguard 8:30, 10:30 pm $35

Thursday, July 26

- **Jazz in July Festival—Blues In The Night**: Houston Person, Melba Joyce, Eddie Allen, Rodney Jones, Lafayette Harris, Mike LeDonne, Bill Charlap, Peter Washington

- **Pucci Amanda Jones**: Birdland 8:30 pm $30

- **Bianca Catan**: Birdland 10:30 pm $30

- **Roland Templest**: Blue Note 11 pm $40

- **Mark Bernstein's Secret Jazz NYC**: Blue Note 8 pm $30

- **Beatrice Coelho**: Columbia University Earl Hall 4 pm

- **Jennifer Russell with Matt Munisteri, Mark Shane, Tal Ronen, Mark McLean**: Dizzy’s Club 7:30 pm $40

- **Vanisha Gould**: The Dizzy Club 8 pm $25

- **John Decker/Steve Eisenberg**: Dizzy’s Club 10 pm $10

- **Arlands Quartet with Bruce Williamson, Dean Johnson, DJ Healer**: Dizzy’s Club 8 pm $30

- **Lee Oppenheim**: The Jazz Gallery 7:30 pm $30

- **Richard Bropch**: The Jazz Gallery 8 pm $30

- **Fred Hersch Trio with John Hebert, Eric McPherson**: Village Vanguard 8:30, 10:30 pm $35

- **Ayden Fernandez**: Smoke 7, 9 pm $20

- **String Noise: Pauline Kim Harris, Conrad Jordan, Annie Costel**: Dizzy’s Club 10 pm $30

- **Jasper Dutzi, Sven Ein**: Village Vanguard 8:30, 10:30 pm $30

- **Eric-Pack Trio with John Hebert, Eric McPherson**: Village Vanguard 8, 10 pm $30

- **David Veilles**: Village Vanguard 8:30, 10:30 pm $35

Friday, July 27

- **Bill Bernstein**: Bar Boulud 8:30, 10 pm $10

- **Jonathan Saraga Trio with Walter Simonson, Colin Stronshon**: Bar Boulud 11:15 pm $30

- **Endangered Heart Quartet**: Roy Nathanson, Curtis Fowlkes, Tim Klah, Jesse Mills**: Barbara Marchman 8 pm $20

- **Birdland Big Band**: Birdland 8:30, 10:30 pm $30

- **Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Big Band**: Birdland 11:15 pm $30

- **Dan Margolius**: Birdland 12:30 pm

- **Ken Simo Trio**: Bar Bonafide 6 pm $30

- **Emile Surtees**: NY Nightingales 8 pm $20

- **Hot Willar’s Amazing Mimi Roda**: Dartmouth Park at Lincoln Center 7:30 pm

- **Catherine Russell with Matt Munisteri, Mark Shane, Tal Ronen, Mark McLean**: Dizzy’s Club 7:30, 10:30 pm $40

- **Vanisha Gould**: Dizzy’s Club 11:15 pm $10

- **Ken Cross, Ita Knes and Otto Gress**: The Django at the Renaissance 8:30 pm $30

- **David Neo’s Point of Departure**: The Dizzy Club 10:30 pm $20

- **Stephen Gough/Cooper Moore**: Sandi’s Speakeasy $10

- **NYO Jazz with guests Donnie Reeves, Wyckoff Gordon**: Carnegie Hall 8 pm $20

- **Heiko Aves Trio with Boris Kozlov, Duduca Da Fonseca**: Jazz Standard 8, 10 pm $20

- **Lee Konitz/Dan Tepfer**: The Jazz Gallery 8 pm $20

- **Regina Carter Quartet with Adam Bindman, Chris Lightcap, Alverton Garnett**: The Jazz Gallery 9:30 pm $20

- **Russ Kerber Quartet with Stan Killian, Will Armstrong, Sam Gualter**: Manhattan 9:30 pm $10

- **Old New, Blue & Red: A Celebration of Gershwin’s Rhapsody**: Brooklyn Jazz Factory Collective led by Dominic Pandian

- **Mike Territo Trio**: Park Ave 7 pm $20

- **Chuck Branan Band**: Park Ave 6 pm $10

- **Jazzmoebie: Valerie Capers**: Resonance Amphitheater at Marcus Garvey Park 7 pm $25

- **Go: Organic Chamber Orchestra and Brooklyn Raga Massive**: Bar Next Door 11 pm $30

- **Steve Williams Quartet with Abraham Burton, Aaron Weinman, Fred Williams**: Smalls 7:30, 10:30 pm $10

- **Om-Denas Quartet with Bill McHenry, Buster Williams, Mark Whitfield, Jr.**: Smalls 7, 10 pm $30

- **Together Jazz with guests Wynton Marsalis, Ron Wellons**: Village Vanguard 8:30, 10:30 pm $25

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“Forrest may be best appreciated as a radiant and stylistically uncategorizable pianist and composer in a solo context. Like a present-day Fats Waller, he can dazzle you while making you laugh out loud.”

– Steve Futterman, The New Yorker

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Jofe Forrestor in New York in July

**Every Sunday - Grace Gospel Church, 589 E. 164th Street / 11 AM-1 PM**

- **Jules, 65 St. Marks Place, Solo piano**: July 4, 11, 18, 25 - 5:30-7:30 PM / July 7, 1, 21, 28 - 6:48-PM / July 1 (duo), 15, 22, 29 - 4:60-PM

- **Baker's Pizza, Avenue A and E. 13th Street - July 6, 13, 20, 27 - 7-9 PM**

- **George's 35th Avenue and 36th Street, Astoria - July 5, 19, 26 - 6:30-9 PM**

**Jofe Forrestor Trio**

- **July 8 - Thai Rock, 375 Beach 92, Rockaway Park - 7-10 PM**

- **July 12 - Cleopatra's Needle, Broadway between 92nd and 93rd - 7-11 PM**

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joeforrestor.com

ridesymbol.com
The first ever reissue of the 1975 free jazz album originally released by Jazz Navy June 29 LP/digital

Includes new liner notes by Clifford Allen

www.valleymofsearch.com
(INTERVIEW CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

RC: My grandmother was a coal miner and Southern Comfort helped me to get to know his life better. I didn’t know my grandfather; he had passed away. So, I joined Ancestry.com and started making connections with other family members and finding some really interesting information and it hit me: what was the music like during my grandfather’s lifetime? I started doing some research on the internet, sending away for some recordings through the Library of Congress and contacting professors at different universities. It was a fun process just hearing this music. I found some really interesting field recordings of lullabies, school games, children’s games, prison songs, railroad songs.

TNYCJR: I’ll Be Seeing You: A Sentimental Journey is another concept album.

RC: That was a record dedicated to my mom, Grace Williamson Carter. I call it a healing project for myself because I did that right after she passed away from cancer. This was like her third or fourth time dealing with cancer; she had always beaten it and it looked like she was going to beat it this time but she didn’t. I decided to do a lot of my mom’s favorite tunes, including “A-Tisket, A-Tasket”—she sang that all the time. She loved “I’ll Be Seeing You”. And “There’s a Small Hotel” came from that era when she was growing up in Detroit.

TNYCJR: You’ve worked with a wide range of great musicians over the years, from Kenny Barron to Billy Joel to Lauryn Hill to Dolly Parton.

RC: I remember that when I first moved to New York, I was taking all kinds of gigs—and someone said to me, “Be careful working with all these different musical groups. People will not take you seriously because you’re all over the place.” But I didn’t care; I had to pay the rent. And I’m glad I didn’t listen to that person because I didn’t grow up listening to only one style of music. Stylistically, I had experience playing so many different styles of music and that afforded me some wonderful opportunities. Dolly Parton was one of the nicest people—oh my God, she was so incredibly nice. I played with her on The Rosie O’Donnell Show. A good friend of mine, bassist Tracy Wormworth, was part of that band and I remember Dolly—her very southern accent—saying, “It’s so nice to see some ladies in the band.”

TNYCJR: And Lauryn Hill, formerly of The Fugees?

RC: I had that opportunity through cellist Akua Dixon, who did a lot of the string arrangements for Lauryn’s record The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill. Lauryn produced a tune for Aretha Franklin, “A Rose Is Still a Rose”, and I got a little bit of a solo spot up front. And I had played with Aretha back in Detroit as well.

TNYCJR: You’ve worked with Barron quite a bit.

RC: Yes, yes. I had a chance to tour with Kenny and I was honored to do a duo record with him, Freefall. I met Kenny way back in the ’90s at the Telluride Jazz Festival. Kenny said he wanted to play or record with me and I thought he was just being nice. But years later, he hired me to play a concert with him. Kenny picked me up in front of Sweet Basil and I remember that he was listening to an R&B artist while he was driving. I was so shocked because I thought Kenny Barron would only be listening to jazz, but he was like, “No, great music is great music. I love everything.” And that helped me to stop having preconceived notions about people. Kenny’s super nice and very approachable—just an all-around great human being. I learned so much working with him. And [bassist] Ray Brown was also very down-to-earth. I had a chance to tour and play with the late, great Ray Brown and he immediately made me feel really comfortable. It was like working with my dad.

TNYCJR: Who were some of the violinists who inspired you the most over the years?

RC: My introduction to jazz was by way of three violinists: Jean-Luc Ponty, Noel Pointer and Stéphane Grappelli. One of my best friends is [vocalist] Carla Cook, who is a real jazzhead. She would come to my high school in Detroit and talk about Miles Davis, Sarah Vaughan, Eddie Jefferson and bring me their records. Then, when I was 16 and we could drive, Carla got tickets for us to hear Stéphane Grappelli live. I was really taken by how much the whole band was really enjoying themselves. And whenever Noel would play Baker’s Keyboard Lounge in Detroit, my mom would take me. I would talk to Noel all the time. He was super nice. So, those were my first three influences. And later on, someone introduced me to Ray Nance and Stuff Smith. I did a paper about jazz violinists once and doing that research, I couldn’t find a lot of information about Ray Nance—I couldn’t find anything. But I did find some Ginger Smock, who used to study with Stuff Smith—and you can really hear his influence in her playing. I learned about those players and about Billy Bang and Leroy Jenkins. I heard some Ornette Coleman on violin and the world just kind of opened up from there.

For more information, visit reginacarter.com. Carter is at Jazz Standard Jul. 26th-29th. See Calendar.

Recommended Listening:
• String Trio of New York—Intermobility (Arabesque, 1992)
• Regina Carter—Rhythms of the Heart (Verve, 1998)
• Kenny Barron & Regina Carter—Freefall (Verve, 2000)
• Regina Carter—I’ll Be Seeing You: A Sentimental Journey (Verve, 2006)
• Regina Carter—Southern Comfort (Sony Masterworks, 2014)
• Regina Carter—Ella: Accentuate the Positive (Okeh, 2016)

(LABEL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11)

places really helps to bring it to life. [The music] is never the same in a different place.”

International Anthem’s most recent showcase took place last month at Brooklyn’s National Sawdust. McCraven led a quartet of trumpeter Marquis Hill, vibraphonist Joel Ross and bassist Luke Stewart, beautifully capturing spontaneous music. Parker performed material from The New Breed with a band of McCraven, saxophonist/keyboardist Josh Johnson and bassist Paul Bryan. The evening ended with the free-jazz brawn of Irreversible Entanglements, a collective group of vocalist Camae Ayewa, alto saxophonist Keir Neuringer, trumpeter Aquiles Navarro, bassist Luke Stewart and drummer Tcheser Holmes. The three acts are only a sample of the talent of International Anthem’s impressive roster.

For McNiece and Allen, it’s more than just the satisfaction of creating powerful music but building community and taking satisfaction from the process. “To us it feels like family and that’s what we’re striving for. We want our artists to succeed just as much as we want to succeed and them succeeding is our success in a way,” says Allen. “All this stuff is hard and it’s pain in the ass…but it’s fun,” says McNiece.

For more information, visit intlanthem.com. Artists performing this month include Jaimie Branch at Backwick Public House Jul. 30th. See Calendar.

COMING SOON!
Don Alias
“Heartbeat Tour”
with
Michael Brecker
Randy Brecker
Mitch Stein
Gil Goldstein
Django Bates
Carles Benavent
Giovanni Hidalgo
Alex Acuña
Steve Berrios

COMING SOON!
Elvin Jones
“Live at Carnegie Hall”
with
Steve Grossman
David Liebman
Gene Perla

PMRecords.com
played with melodic power recalling the late great Jimmy Lyons. Danish saxophonist Mette Rasmussen played with an electronics duo comprised of Norway’s Martin Taxt (doubling on tuba and dud-dads) and Japan’s Toshimaru Nakamura, whose approach to electronic improvisation was subtle and open. The latter was created and recorded in New York and in Rasmussen’s own blend of sounds (Taxt even using his tuba as a subtle percussion instrument) while Rasmussen powered into flat out-chunks of wailing tone resembling the structures Pharaoh Sanders specialized in during the late ’60s. It was loud, free and fun. The third jazz concert was by ROVA Saxophone Quartet and it was surprisingly muted and felt very doctrinaire: a standard series of solos and vamping. ROVA’s best concerts (of which this correspondent has seen many) involve a much higher level of deep interspersed communication, with lots of lines bending through each other’s loops and a palpable level of fever. This show took place in the newest venue in FIMAV’s roster, a beautifully resonant and ornate 19th century Church. It was good but it could have been fantastic.

The room itself has become a favorite venue and all of its performances in this year’s festival. The first of these was Swiss ex-pat violinist Charlotte Hug, currently based in London. Her playing was technically fascinating and she added a lot of theatrical and vocal elements to take it to another level. Hug’s string touch was so delightfully varied, the sonorities insistently out and played with good humor. The same was true of Breton bagpiper Erwan Keravec, who plays everything from traditional material to wild duets with Gustafsson and others. Erwan’s piece unwound slowly, but the pace seemed designed to show off the inherent drone qualities of the instrument and he also managed to use the nous and creaks of the church’s nave in ways that enhanced the visuals as well as the sounds. The other solo set was by Montréal-based bass clarinetist Lori Freedman. Her approach was a bit more formal than the others, but she displayed a lyrical approach to improvising that offset the more academic nature of her compositions. One suspects that Freedman’s performance style might be lighter if she played a more easily portable instrument, but the sound of her clarinet echoing through the church on a sunny afternoon was exceptionally lovely.

Other highlights were all over the map. Malcolm Goldstein’s always great violin playing sounded fantastic in a trio with Liu Fang contributing fast cello figures andPaavali Rainer Wiens playing some of the most abstract electric guitar I’ve ever heard. Saicobab, a trio with YoshimiO from The Boredeaux on vocals, Yoshida Daikichi on electric sitar and Hamamoto Tomoyuki on framedrum, played some of the best chipmunk-voiced raga you could hear. But the hotel bar at le Victorin was continuously welcoming presence at the end of the long days. It was a place where you could find yourself sitting down and speaking to a friend or just people watching. Between those unmistakable bellows and the past, there would be no vision to experience.

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