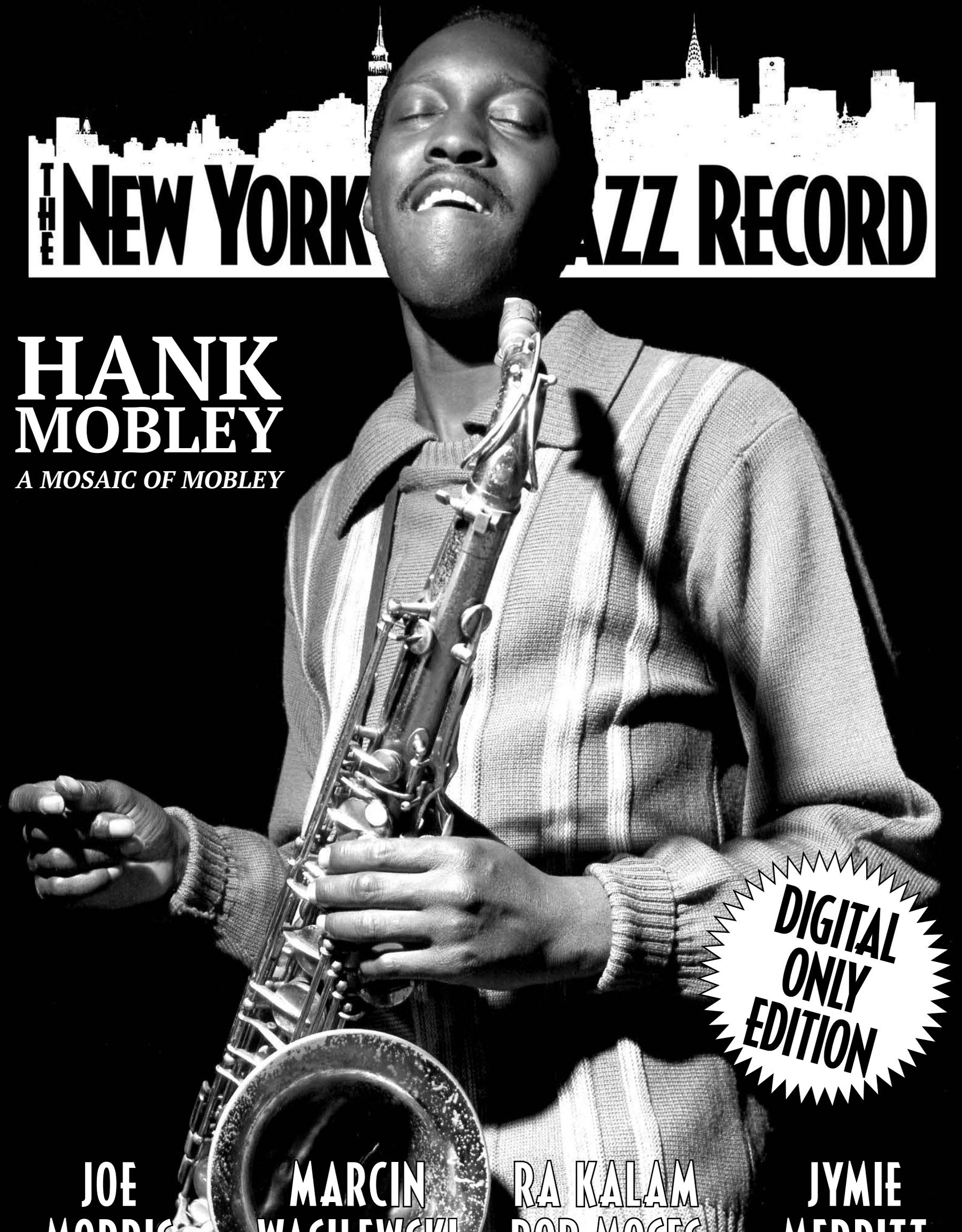


JULY 2020—ISSUE 219

YOUR FREE GUIDE TO THE NYC JAZZ SCENE

NYCJAZZRECORD.COM



# THE NEW YORK JAZZ RECORD

## HANK MOBLEY

*A MOSAIC OF MOBLEY*

**DIGITAL  
ONLY  
EDITION**

**JOE  
MORRIS**

**MARCIN  
WASILEWSKI**

**RA KALAM  
BOB MOSES**

**JYMIÉ  
MERRITT**

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# THE NEW YORK CITY JAZZ RECORD

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*Originally, after a couple of months of lockdown, we thought to have a more light-hearted edition, inspired by Sesame Street: this issue was brought to you by the letter M – saxophonist Hank Mobley (On the Cover), multi-instrumentalist Joe Morris (Interview), pianist Marcin Wasilewski (Artist Feature), drummer Ra Kalam Bob Moses (Encore), bassist Jymie Merritt (Lest We Forget) and More Is More (Label Spotlight).*

*But, with the pandemic raging and the economy in free fall, a third crisis has come to this country. While the first could have been mitigated and the second inevitable and necessary, the third is akin to that old jazz cliché: new wine in old bottles. The killing of George Floyd is, tragically, unremarkable in this country, given a history of racism and use of force by those in power throughout U.S. history, much less the past few years. What has been remarkable is that the pace of response – even when faced with the dangers of COVID-19 – has been astonishing and heartening, but only if something lasting and positive comes out of his and many others' senseless deaths. One could theorize that the intensity of the movement is a direct comment on those at the top of the power chain who have done little to fix the systemic problems and have, in many cases, exacerbated it for their own short-term political gain.*

*Simply put, you cannot pick up this gazette, professing an interest in jazz, without having a concurrent interest in Civil Rights. While we may try to remove the individual personality from his or her artistic output in the case of some problematic figures, to say that jazz and the history of African-American struggle can be separated somehow is to say that Olivier Messiaen's Quatuor pour la fin du temps could have been written anywhere, at any time.*

*However you choose to register your protest, it is your duty to do so. Jazz may be entertaining but it is not entertainment. Those that suffered to bring it to us and inspired the generations that followed need to know that the world of the future can be better than the one they knew.*

**On The Cover:** Hank Mobley (Photograph by Francis Wolff © Mosaic Images LLC)

**Corrections:** In last month's CD Reviews, in the Susannah B. album, John Ballinger provided all the arrangements as well as the vocals on "Lullaby Land".

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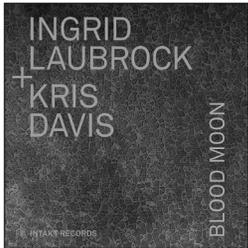
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## **JAMES BRANDON LEWIS – CHAD TAYLOR LIVE IN WILLISAU**

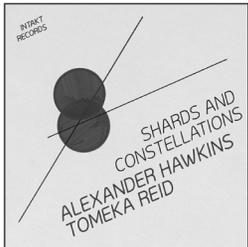
James Brandon Lewis: Tenor Saxophone  
Chad Taylor: Drums, Mbira



Intakt CD 345

## **INGRID LAUBROCK – KRIS DAVIS BLOOD MOON**

Ingrid Laubrock: Saxophone  
Kris Davis: Piano



Intakt CD 344

## **ALEXANDER HAWKINS – TOMEKA REID SHARDS AND CONSTELLATIONS**

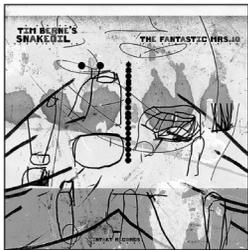
Tomeka Reid: Cello  
Alexander Hawkins: Piano



Intakt CD 333

## **OMRI ZIEGELE TOMORROW TRIO ALL THOSE YESTERDAYS**

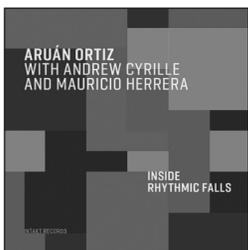
Omri Ziegele: Saxophone, Voice | Christian Weber: Bass  
Han Bennink: Drums



Intakt CD 340

## **TIM BERNE'S SNAKEOIL THE FANTASTIC MRS. 10**

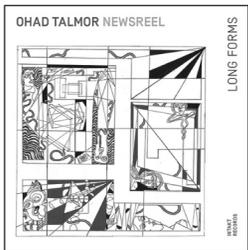
Matt Mitchell: Piano | Ches Smith: Drums, Vibraphone | Oscar Noriega: Clarinet  
Marc Ducret: Guitar | Tim Berne: Alto Saxophone



Intakt CD 339

## **ARUÁN ORTIZ WITH ANDREW CYRILLE AND MAURICIO HERRERA INSIDE RHYTHMIC FALLS**

Aruán Ortiz: Piano, Voice | Andrew Cyrille: Drums  
Mauricio Herrera: Percussion, Voice



Intakt CD 341

## **OHAD TALMOR NEWSREEL SEXTET LONG FORMS**

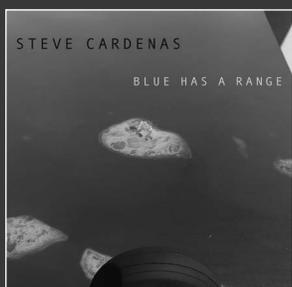
Ohad Talmor: Tenor Saxophone | Shane Endsley: Trumpet | Miles Okazaki: Guitar  
Jacob Sacks: Piano | Matt Pavolka: Acoustic Bass | Dan Weiss: Drums



Intakt CD 343

## **EVAN PARKER – PAUL LYTTON COLLECTIVE CALLS (REVISITED) (JUBILEE)**

Evan Parker: Tenor Saxophone  
Paul Lytton: Drums



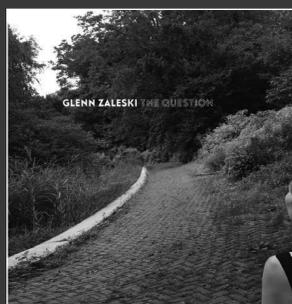
**STEVE CARDENAS**  
**BLUE HAS A RANGE**

SSC 1588  
AVAILABLE 7/10/20

There is a rooted and natural expressiveness in the music of guitarist Steve Cardenas. He has developed a spacious yet personal style that reflects his influences but has also broadened them into a palette of many hues. Cardenas's new recording, *Blue Has a Range*, presents a new view of his breadth as a player, composer and collaborator, remaining attached to the essence of jazz, while alluding to blues in all its tones.

Cardenas's ability has provided him opportunities to play in situations of many varieties. Beginning in his hometown of Kansas City and settling in New York City, Cardenas's path has been full of remarkable associations. Notably as a long-standing member of groups led by legendary jazz artists such as bassists Charlie Haden, Steve Swallow and John Patitucci, as well as drummers Paul Motian, Joey Baron and Adam Nussbaum.

It was only natural that Cardenas would pick friend and long-time collaborator, Ben Allison, to play bass, co-produce and mix the recording. When Cardenas was confirming Cowherd's availability in July 2019 to record, Cowherd informed Cardenas that he would just be concluding a run at the Blue Note with drummer Brian Blade's Life Cycles band. Blade was free after the Blue Note run, and so the band was set. Soon after, with these musicians in mind, new compositions began to flow from Cardenas.



**GLENN ZALESKI**  
**THE QUESTION**

SSC 1591  
AVAILABLE 7/17/20

The summer of 2019 brought pianist/composer Glenn Zaleski to a new milestone in his life. As he left his twenties, he also found out that he was expecting his first child. This led Zaleski to a period of reflection. He began to reexamine his youthful early interpretations of the world, the media and life in general, preparing himself for this transitional period.

Zaleski discovered that his initial concerns might not have been the ones he should be focusing on. He may have been distracted from his path and might not have been asking the right questions. Zaleski's new recording, *The Question*, explores the mood during this period of uncertainty and reflection. It also marks the pianist's return to an ensemble, the quintet, that provided a great deal of inspiration earlier in his development.

Zaleski's choice of instrumentalists was easy and inspired. He knew that he wanted to feature the incredible sound of tenor saxophone and trumpet as leading voices. Saxophonist Lucas Pino is one of the pianist's oldest friends and collaborators, so there was no question about his involvement. Trumpeter Adam O'Farrill is a more recent acquaintance but one that Zaleski wanted to revisit after first playing with O'Farrill seven years ago.

The rhythm section includes two musicians that Zaleski has long admired and performed with. Bassist Desmond White has been a regular collaborator with the pianist since college and drummer Allan Mednard has been a favorite time-keeper on many stages.



Sunnyside

www.sunnysiderecords.com

Pianist **Dan Tepfer** blends conservatory training with improvisation and technology. For a recent live-stream performance (Jun. 6th), he used a series of self-programmed digital algorithms (from his latest project, *Natural Machines*) to control his Yamaha Disklavier. Seated at his state-of-the-art player piano, Tepfer becomes a cyborg, the instrument a biomechatronic extension of his body and imagination. The first piece, using a program called "Canon at the Octave", generated a second voice, 12 tones apart, creating the unusual effect of Tepfer in nervous conversation with himself. On an improvisation using an algorithm called "Inversion", digital images of the computer's responses (projected on the right side of the screen) popped up and morphed into different shapes and colors, a visual metaphor for Tepfer's thought process. A piece set to "Tremolo" combined a classical psalm with theremin-like glissandi. "Intervals", based on a folksy tune in E Major, was amplified by eccentric arpeggios that skated across the keys as no mortal hands ever could. Watching the keys play automatically—with no finger touching them—as Tepfer played alongside, was like watching him duet with a ghost, the self-depressing keys the visible traces of an invisible machine mind. "Triad Sculpture" allowed Tepfer to modulate hymn harmonies; "Demonic March" added trailing accents to a baroque theme; "Constant Motion" spun out short ideas into lingering loops; and a final piece trilled tastefully in F minor.

—Tom Greenland



Dan Tepfer

Entering its second decade, Joel Harrison's **Alternative Guitar Summit** camp has gone online, necessitated by COVID-19. One important ramification is that, due to the inherent latency of digital broadcasts, musicians can't play in time together unless they're in the same physical space. This didn't prevent guitarists Nir Felder and Tim Miller, two of the featured faculty this year, from turning in some captivating solo performances on the opening night (Jun. 18th) of the three-day event. After exchanging chitchat and mutual compliments from their respective rooms, Felder sprinted into a rocking/bopping excursus on "I Fall In Love Too Easily". Miller answered his challenge in this ever-so-friendly cutting contest with an exposé on panoramic chords laced with internal melodies over a progression that turned out to be "Stella by Starlight". Unfortunately, Felder's equipment malfunctioned and he couldn't hear Miller for the rest of the concert. Indeed, half the fun of listening to Felder play "All The Things You Are", during which he tried out some unusual banjo-inspired ideas, was watching Miller's face (screen left) respond to Felder's amazing touches. Miller's audio and visual signals were not as clear as Felder's, but he played some inspired harmonies on his original, "Lift", and some jaw-dangling arpeggios over "Solar", his delicate fingers traversing the neck like a long-legged crab. Felder was looser, earthier, busier, a wellspring of ideas, some so inventive they made Miller's nose scrunch up in appreciation. (TG)

In the upper-left-hand corner of the Smalls live-stream feed is a counter of active watchers. While saxophonist **Abraham Burton**'s trio with bassist Dezron Douglas and drummer Eric McPherson (Jun. 23rd) had 90-something viewers at one point it was another number, 665K, that is significant. That is the total audience for all of the club's streams over the past years. As such, Smalls was much better positioned to adapt to the COVID-19 reality of online concert attendance: the shows were sponsored as part of the Smalls Live Foundation, so those involved need not worry about donations; the sound was excellent, allowing for depth and dynamics to be appreciated, and lighting professional and, um, illuminating; there were three camera feeds in rotation, removing the deer-playing-saxophone-in-headlights static tableau of most live-streams; and the technology was reliable, with a nary a digital wobble nor source breakdown to be found. Thus it felt as close to being at a concert as we are likely to get for a few months yet and Burton particularly relished the opportunity. "I feel a sense of happiness of playing with some people and something coming back at you," he said. "You can be champion of the world shadowboxing," he continued but expressed how much you need to go up against real competition. The environment was not adversarial, however; more cathartic, ranging from spiritual to gleeful and it was a relief, echoing Burton's observation, to see people in a room that wasn't their kitchen.

—Andrey Henkin



Abraham Burton Trio

One wonders if other professional fields where there is often marriage among co-workers have had similar approaches as jazz to getting through the pandemic. Are married lawyers, bereft of opportunities to litigate in a courtroom setting, engaging in mock-trials in their living rooms? Are spousal stockbrokers jumping over each other in their pajamas, keeping the muscles strong for an eventual return to the trading floor? Anyhoo, as part of Arts for Art's live-streaming series, saxophonist **Ingrid Laubrock** and drummer **Tom Rainey** expanded their regular duoship by adding bassist **Nick Dunston**, participating in his own apartment, the threesome connected by video but, more importantly, headphones (though Laubrock seemed a tad encumbered by hers), allowing for a surprisingly fluid mini-set of two improvisations. There were technical glitches as far as switching between the streams but that did not negatively affect the music, Dunston, fearless as ever, pushing himself nicely into a partnership of long standing. His feed was a closeup and viewers had a chance to see his muscular approach and deep concentration (though his sound did clip at times). The first piece was 15 minutes, the second 8, the former in energy mode, the latter darker, grimmer, deeper, slower and the degradation in the feed gave the musicians a Photoshop filter look that was noirishly appropriate. The one lost opportunity was that Rainey, in his kitchen, stuck to his kit instead of including pots, pans and the proverbial kitchen sink. (AH)

"Did you like that? We liked it," **Billy Hart** declared, smiling broadly as he addressed the unseen listeners tuned in to the inaugural live streamed performance from the Village Vanguard (Jun. 13th). He and bandmates tenor saxophonist Mark Turner, pianist Ethan Iverson and bassist Ben Street had opened up their set with Iverson's "South Hampton", a bluesy homage to the late Hampton Hawes, Turner blowing with Coltrane-ish intensity. Iverson's classically tinged improvised prelude introduced a harmonically engaging arrangement of "Giant Steps". It opened ethereally, buoyed by Hart's effervescent brushwork, before swinging straightahead as he switched to sticks, propelling authoritative tenor and piano solos that mined the Coltrane classic for fresh melodic twists and rhythmic turns. A malleted drum solo initiated Hart's "Teule's Redemption", a lively modal outing at times reminiscent of the spiritual character of some works by the drummer's one time boss, McCoy Tyner. Iverson's pretty melancholic ballad "Showdown" showcased his nuanced melodicism and Hart's painterly mallet and brush backing. The drummer dedicated his "Duchess", a bouncy melody with a soulful bassline "to all the grandmothers of the world" while his atmospherically exotic "Song For Balkis", a feature for Turner's airy tenor, fêted the Queen of Sheba. The set concluded with "Neon", a commanding Iverson composition, brimming with an optimism much needed in these troubling times.

—Russ Musto



Billy Hart Quartet @ Village Vanguard

"It definitely feels so good to actually get out of the house and go to a venue to do a gig. Even though there is nobody here, I feel the energy of everybody watching," **Luis Perdomo** announced to the audience viewing to his live-streamed performance at Brooklyn's Soapbox Gallery (Jun. 11th). Nattily attired for the occasion in a black suit, the Bronx-based, Venezuela-born pianist had gotten the recital started with a stirring, classically-tinged reading of the standard "I Fall In Love Too Easily", followed by his own "Unexpected", a lilting rhapsodic melody well served by the full bodied sound of the room's Yamaha grand piano. He continued with a dramatic, deliberately paced extended free improvisation flowing into the Lennie Tristano classic "Lennie's Pennies". Declaring, "I'm not really sure what I'm going to play next, but I'll figure out soon," it didn't take long for him to wend his way into an appealing interpretation of "I Thought About You", which had him interjecting stride piano passages. He then introduced his "very, very special guest", longtime bassist partner Mimi Jones. Picking up the pace, the pair got started with a version of Ellis Marsalis' "Swinging At The Haven" that lived up to its title. Jones' engaging "Baby Steps" opened ethereally before resolving into a briskly swinging rhythm changes romp. The duo dug into Perdomo's Latin roots with an exciting rendition of his "Berimvela" before closing out with an encore, Dave Brubeck's beautiful "In Your Own Sweet Way".

(RM)

Within the pains of social distancing and club closures, this odd new milieu offers a unique opportunity for informal teach-ins "onstage", something rarely seen in New York nightlife before. Once a level of normalcy returns, we may find that the views absorbed in this period may have worked to the positive. Brooklyn Raga Massive has been among those presenting enticing lecture/performance painting a world of sound. **Kenny Wessel**, the guitarist who spent a dozen years with Ornette Coleman, has dedicated much time to North Indian classical music, however, he's yet actually to study it formally. "I've collaborated with many Indian musicians, particularly Badal Roy. As a jazz musician, I seek points of intersection and departure with this music," he explained to the audience (Jun. 9th). Discussing the subject with host David Ellenbogen, Wessel outlined a comparative short-list between Indian classical and Western jazz, including the spiritual connection and, of course, improvisation. It all came together when Wessel launched into a fascinating 5/4 version of "Solar" (Miles Davis, or Bill Evans or Chuck Wayne?) against a two-measure click pattern, which must have caused convulsions in drummers. Flowing over the expanded melody line in shades of purple and blue, Wessel admitted he'd stumbled once, but recovered well. "When Ornette attended an Indian classical concert and was questioned later, he would only say, 'They're all sweatin' to get to 1'".

—John Pietaro



Kenny Wessel

Composer/guitarist **John King** is among the many seeking to break the silence of COVID-19 lockdown. His series of Sonic Gatherings have, true to form, united a variety of genres and schools of thought, from the composed to the wholly improvised (Jun. 3rd). King's "electrified e-bow guitar" painted large swaths of the soundscape, at points creating a field that had little in common with standard guitar (one could think there was a hidden bank of keyboards), yet at other points, he dispensed with such timbres and simply tore into the music. In any case, the concept was to mingle his rich palette with the deep, throaty trombone. Three of them, in fact. Chris McIntyre, already well versed in the use of electronics for sound-shifting, was a fitting companion in this sojourn as was German trombonist Stephan Kirsch, broadcasting from his home in Mannheim. Though both are welcome names to *TNYCJR* readers, the third, Steve Swell, had to cancel at the last moment. Hard not to be disappointed as Swell's presence anywhere is nothing short of masterful, but the pair with King cast textures at once enveloping and gripping. Out front, two gifted dancer-choreographers Brandon Collwes and Claire Westby, both from the Liz Gerring Dance Company (Collwes also did years with Merce Cunningham) brought the music into the fully tangible, embracing each shift with pose and motion that had your frustrated reviewer damning the limits of technology. Catching a live Sonic Gathering is on the agenda ASAP.

(JP)

## WHAT'S NEWS

Entries are now being accepted for the **Ninth Annual Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition**, tentatively scheduled to be part of the TD James Moody Jazz Festival in November. Applicants must submit by Sep. 8th and finalists will be announced Oct. 13th, to be judged by a panel of Christian McBride, Carmen Lundy, Vanessa Rubin, Robert Ottenhoff and Chuck Mitchell. For more information and to apply, visit [sarahvaughancompetition.com](http://sarahvaughancompetition.com).

The fourth annual **Seifert Competition**, named in honor of Polish violinist Zbigniew Seifert (1946-79) will take place online from Jul. 8th-10th. Finalists are Omer Ashano, John Pearce, João Silva, Dominic Ingham, Dawid Czernik, Kristijan Krajinčan, Johannes Dickbauer, Gabriel Terracciano, Gabriel Vieira, Tadas Dešukas, Clement Janinet, Youenn Rohaut, Kristijan Rudanovski and Greg Byers. For more information and to watch, visit [facebook.com/SeifertCompetition](https://facebook.com/SeifertCompetition).

Virtual screenings of **Ella Fitzgerald: Just One Of Those Things** (Eagle Rock Entertainment) began Jun. 26th (see review on pg. 21). To watch the film, make a reservation at [watch.eventive.org/ellamovie](http://watch.eventive.org/ellamovie).

Jazz Power Initiative will be holding its sixth annual **Jazz Power Institute**, which "will address the theme of adaptability, providing strategies and online tools for remotely engaging students from all backgrounds in jazz" online Jul. 7th-8th in partnership with Lehman College. For more information, visit [jazzpower.org](http://jazzpower.org).

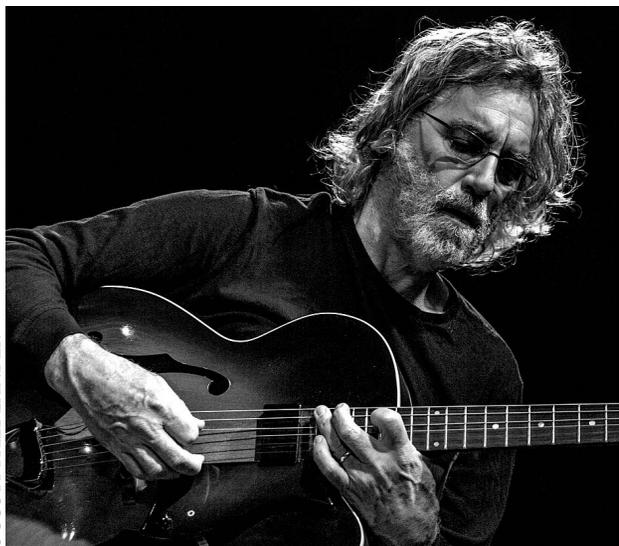
**Bloomingdale School of Music's Ready, Set, Summer (Online)! virtual music classes** will begin Jul. 6th, 2020. Among the eight-week offerings are Jazz Improv Workshop for children K-12, A Rough Guide to Jazz History by percussion faculty Douglas Marriner and Summer Jazz Ensemble. For more information, visit [bsmny.org](http://bsmny.org).

Clarence Otis has been selected by the Board of Directors of **Jazz at Lincoln Center** as its next Board chair, effective Sep. 15th, succeeding Robert J. Appel, who has served in that capacity since 2012. For more information, visit [jazz.org](http://jazz.org).

**South Arts** has awarded 450 jazz musicians across the U.S. \$1,000 Jazz Road Quick Assist grants, unrestricted funds to support artists who have lost significant work and income due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information, visit [southarts.org](http://southarts.org).

Submit news to [info@nycjazzrecord.com](mailto:info@nycjazzrecord.com)

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# JOE MORRIS

BY MICHAEL COBB

Joe Morris is a composer/improviser who plays guitar, double bass, mandolin, banjo, banjouke, electric bass and drums. He is also a recording artist, educator, producer, concert curator and author. DownBeat magazine called him "the preeminent free music guitarist of his generation". Between 1975-86 he was active on the Boston creative music scene as a performer and concert organizer. In 1983 he formed his own record company, Riti, and recorded his first LP Wraparound. Between 1986-89 he lived in New York City, then Boston and in 2001 he returned to the New Haven, CT area. In 2019 he began his "Instantiation" project, recording the first four parts of the multi-part work, which uses the properties of free music in new ways with various ensembles. He is featured as leader, co-leader and sideman on 150 recordings to date. In 2012 he published the book Perpetual Frontier: The Properties of Free Music and has authored many articles. He has taught at Harvard, Princeton, Dartmouth, University of the Arts, Berklee College of Music, Tufts University Experimental College, Southern Connecticut State University and the Longy School of Music at Bard College. He is a faculty member at The New School and New England Conservatory of Music.

**The New York City Jazz Record:** Did you grow up in a musical household?

**Joe Morris:** Not exactly. My father's oldest brother Johnny Morris was a drummer, singer and bandleader who was very successful starting back in the 1920s. He played with Benny Goodman, Eddie Lang, Bix Beiderbecke, Frankie Trumbauer, Tony Pastor, Artie Shaw, etc. He was a hero in my family. My mother's parents played music. Her mother played piano and was apparently able to go to Broadway to see a show and then come home and play all the music on the piano from memory. My parents met at a dance where my uncle performed. My mother had seen him at the Paramount opening for Sinatra before. Mutual friends introduced my parents. My father had been a road manager for swing bands in the late '30s. He met Louis Armstrong, Art Tatum and traveled all over. Music mattered to my family.

**TNYCJR:** How did you come to music?

**JM:** I always wanted to play music. I took trumpet lessons at school when I was 12, but I had school issues and there was no money for lessons. At 14 a friend showed me some guitar chords and I got hooked. I saved and borrowed money to buy a crappy guitar and an amp for \$99 and started playing.

The guitar was like learning philosophy. It was so important to me as a kid. I needed something that I could really concentrate on to have a sense of calm and organization in my life and music has always done that for me. It's always given me a focus. It really helped me a lot to grow. You hear music and it speaks to you and you want to be involved. Especially for people in their adolescence, having something that

they can express themselves with that demands some skill, that gives them something to deal with, is really healthy. It gives them a lot of self-respect. But mainly I just loved music. I think with my ears.

I needed to engage in abstraction and the more I understood that, the more music became more important to me. It's not that I have any particular love of music; I love the complexity I get to engage with by formulating abstraction, playing music and improvising and playing with people. That's really what I needed from music and fortunately I found it.

**TNYCJR:** John McLaughlin was pivotal for you.

**JM:** It was confusing, exhilarating and inspiring to hear him. His influence made me study and practice in a different way. It changed us and made us listen to Miles Davis, which connected to Chick Corea and then to Anthony Braxton and on and on... We learned to do it because we wanted the skill but didn't think it would define us. We thought we'd define ourselves our own way. Playing along with those records taught me how to play modal music.

**TNYCJR:** You cite the following as major influences: Cecil Taylor, Eric Dolphy, Leroy Jenkins, Thelonious Monk, Jimi Hendrix and West African string music. Who else influenced you?

**JM:** They all did for the reasons that are very apparent to anyone who hears their music. They were different and deep, they were all connected by a very specific idea. I also got a lot from Ornette Coleman, Don Cherry, Django Reinhardt, Anthony Braxton, Jimmy Lyons, René Thomas. So many, everyone. Charles Ives, Olivier Messiaen, Evan Parker, Barre Phillips. So many.

**TNYCJR:** Can you talk more about West African string music and its influence on you?

**JM:** At a critical point I was concerned about right-hand technique for solo music. I didn't think classical guitar music was the way to go. Instead, I focused on the Delta blues players who had a different way. I was attempting to deal with the model that Cecil Taylor's piano playing presented and do what I could with that on guitar. That required density. Anyway, the blues technique led me to go to the deeper source, which was African string music, in particular Kora music [West African harp built from a gourd]. That helped me with the guitar problem and the Cecil problem. But I wanted to be an American musician, which is a synthesis of all kinds of things. I'm just trying to participate in a thing that's compelling. I think everyone in the U.S. should follow the lead of people who do good things.

**TNYCJR:** Tell me about your time in Boston in the '70s.

**JM:** I wasn't into it. I already had a direction that had

started with New Haven and the material that informed that wasn't really present in Boston. Boston was modal, fusion, late Coltrane and changes. There was more competition about what you were supposed to play because of Berklee. But I didn't care, I knew what I wanted to do.

**TNYCJR:** How did you teach yourself to play music?

**JM:** I got books and did my best to understand what was in them. The few lessons I had gave me a good start. I think many people older than me were self-taught. As a guitarist it was common, except for those

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 13)



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# MARCIN WASILEWSKI

BY GEORGE GRELLA

"I'm just amazed by what they did, how jazz spread all over the world. You can hear how deep they were into this music to survive, to fight, through such hard lives for so many years. And still there is racist behavior." Pianist Marcin Wasilewski was speaking on the phone from his home in Warsaw, Poland, in the middle of June, two weeks into the steady, worldwide demonstrations against racism. The agonizing ironies, that such a demand must be made to begin with and that America, where African-American musicians built the foundation of so much of the nation's culture, was both the focal point and the match that lit the fire, were not lost on Wasilewski.

"The music we play," he continued, "this African-American jazz music, makes me so proud about the people who discovered this sound and this music. How they suffered, how they built this music, blues, jazz, gospel...It's just amazing for me because I'm playing the music of Black [musicians] mixed with European musical traditions", which came via European settlers and immigrants. "But without the African-American traditions it wouldn't be...they brought this rhythmic tradition, which is most important, with blues."

Easy, powerful swinging and fluid, rock-flavored rhythms are one of the trademarks of Wasilewski's trio with bassist Sławomir Kurkiewicz and drummer Michał Miśkiewicz, who followed up their scintillating 2018 ECM release *Live with Arctic Riff*, featuring tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano, released in late June. Wasilewski related a capsule history about how a young Polish musician came to collaborate with one of the leading contemporary American jazz musicians.

Wasilewski began playing jazz as a teenager. "When I was 13, I went to a jazz festival with a classmate and still my bassist Sławomir. It was the 1989 International Jazz Festival in Warsaw. Every year there was a formula, many great American jazz musicians, European jazz musicians and Polish jazz musicians. There were so many amazing musicians, Gene Harris, Ray Brown, Joey Calderazzo Quartet with the great Michael Brecker." The experience left such a deep impression that the young men "decided to play this music, started to learn how to play this music."

Like most neophytes, they did a lot of learning through records. "I was listening to a lot of American and European jazz musicians. Then I discovered that there were these great Polish musicians, [pianist and film composer] Krzysztof Komeda, [trumpeter] Tomasz Stańko...we started to have contact with them and we started playing with them and it was the best way to learn, to play with better musicians, like Stańko. When we were teenagers, we met Stańko and that's how we started to play with such a great musician."

The trio backed Stańko on the trumpeter's ECM albums *Soul of Things*, *Suspended Night* and *Lontano*, the first recorded when the rhythm section were in their 20s. Stańko was an indispensable mentor. When they first met him, "We were still in high school. Stańko's approach to the music—so free—we didn't know in the

beginning how to play this, what was this free music, how do you play it? We were playing conventional music.

"But we were listening to the Miles Davis Quintet with Wayne Shorter and we were wondering how to play like this, it was conventional but also very open, very free. Our focus was to connect these two approaches to improvising. Stańko was very free and we wanted to connect [our] rhythmical playing with his approach. He liked it, we liked it and we were discovering such great freedom from him in the music. We tried to connect our world to his."

That fruition can be heard on *Arctic Riff*. Lovano has long been comfortable playing both inside and outside song form and harmonic rhythm and the trio are as at ease and responsive on the two takes of Carla Bley's "Vashkar" as they are on the grooves and riffs of "L'amour Fou" and midtempo ballad "Fading Sorrow." With Lovano's warm sound and the soul the trio brings, the album comes off as a worthy successor to the label's recordings of Keith Jarrett's European Quartet.

And how did Wasilewski and his band start playing with Lovano? It had to do with another jazz festival. "We first met in 2006" at the Lotos Jazz Festival in Bielsko-Biala, Poland. Lovano was scheduled to play in a duo with pianist Hank Jones, but had to reschedule late. "He chose us as his rhythm section, we had already crossed paths through touring with Stańko, so he had heard us playing. The concert went very well!"

The polish of the new album belies the fact that the musicians did not meet to play again until they assembled in the studio in the late summer last year. Since the tracks were laid down, the world has changed immensely, with all sorts of playing opportunities set by the wayside due to the COVID-19 pandemic. "We were planning a September tour with Lovano, but we had to postpone it to February 2021. But we still don't know what's going to happen" if the virus continues, or returns in future waves. The trio does have one live date coming up: "We will play an opener in July," Wasilewski explains, "a concert for the [second anniversary] of Tomasz Stańko's death. We will play some special projects" of the trumpeter's. Still, right now, Wasilewski says, "it's scary to be a musician, the whole world is scary. We don't really know what's going to happen" after the pandemic. "Things have collapsed in the music industry."

And then there's the intense roiling in the public, which is not confined to America. "Of course it's very scary what's happening with our government" in Poland, he says. "They have focused on nationalism, a feeling that I thought was far behind us in history.

"I have been in America, but just for short trips," he adds, pointing out that he doesn't know how it really feels to live here, "but I know they are still, still faced with racism. It's incredible, I don't understand why [George Floyd was killed]." Wasilewski is clearly troubled by the balance between a culture he admires and a savagery he loathes. "Improvised jazz music, it's so beautiful, so fantastic that the music spread out all

over the world. Everywhere people want to play this beautiful music coming from America." ❖

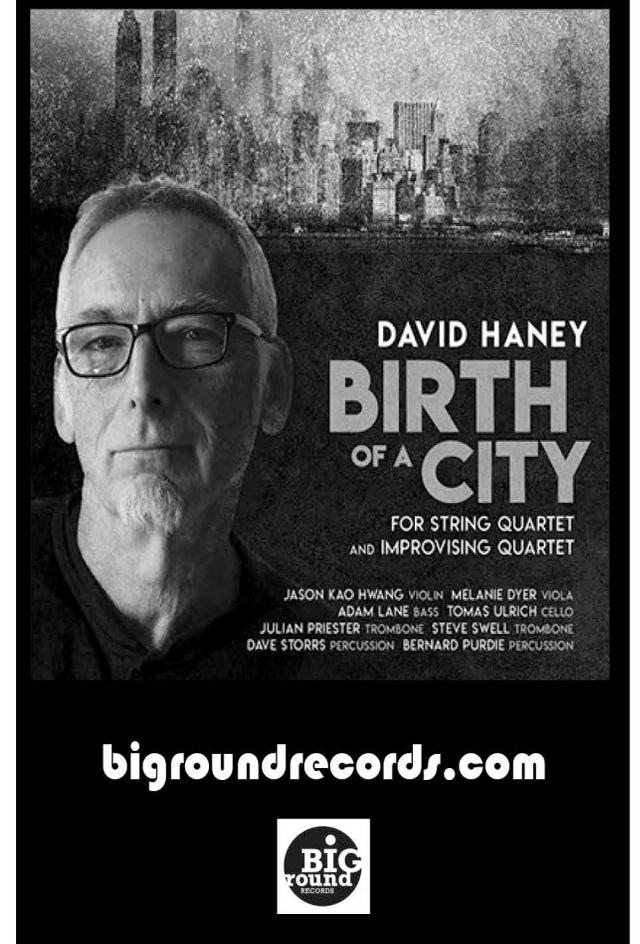
For more information, visit [marcinwasilewskitrio.com](http://marcinwasilewskitrio.com)

#### Recommended Listening:

- Simple Acoustic Trio — *Komeda (Lullaby For Rosemary)* (GOWI-Not Two, 1995)
- Tomasz Stańko Quartet — *Soul of Things* (ECM, 2001)
- Tomasz Stańko Quartet — *Lontano* (ECM, 2005)
- Marcin Wasilewski Trio — *January* (ECM, 2007)
- Marcin Wasilewski Trio — *Live* (ECM, 2016)
- Marcin Wasilewski Trio/Joe Lovano — *Arctic Riff* (ECM, 2019)



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# HANK MOBLEY

## A MOSAIC OF MOBLEY

BY GEORGE KANZLER



PHOTOGRAPH BY FRANCIS WOLF © MOSAIC IMAGES LLC

The casual jazz fan doesn't usually ask Siri to play Hank Mobley, who would have turned 90 this month, but hears him whenever jazz radio plays an early Jazz Messengers track or Horace Silver's early hits like "The Preacher". The tenor saxophonist on them is Mobley. He's also the tenor you hear on a lot of trumpeter Lee Morgan's recordings, as well as those of guitarist Grant Green and trumpeter Donald Byrd, notably the latter's *A New Perspective*. From 1955-70, Mobley recorded prolifically as both a sideman and leader, helming 24 albums for Blue Note alone during that decade, as well as over 50 as a sideman on various labels.

Yet for many, Mobley remains the aural equivalent of "invisible in plain sight." In many ways, he was THE hardbop tenor saxophonist, pioneering and establishing the style with the original Jazz Messengers and Silver and later with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, Max Roach and even Miles Davis, in whose quintet he held the tenor chair after John Coltrane.

It was Roach who discovered Mobley playing at a Newark NJ club in 1951 (Mobley hailed from nearby Elizabeth, NJ) and brought the 21-year-old to the Big Apple with his band. Mobley remembered those early years in an interview he did with John Litweiler in *DownBeat* in 1973: "To the best of my knowledge, Sonny Rollins, Sonny Stitt, myself, Jimmy Heath, John Coltrane—we called ourselves the 'Five Brothers', you know, the five black brothers—we all started playing alto, but Charlie Parker was such a monster that we all gave up and switched to tenor. I wasn't creating anything new, I was just part of a clique. When we listened to Fats Navarro and Bud Powell, when we were 20, 21, all of us were learning together. We weren't trying to surpass Parker or the heavyweights. But as you get older you start finding different directions. At the time it was like going to college. It was just doing our thing, playing different changes, experimenting..." Bird was the lodestone of Mobley's generation. "I played with Parker a lot of times," he told Litweiler, "and he told me a lot of things. To a young person he wouldn't say much, but what he said meant a whole lot. He didn't say, 'Practice these scales, do this or do that—he just said 'Baby, you'd better learn those blues; can't play enough of the blues. Where do you think everybody got the blues from? Did you ever hear [Parker's] 'Just Friends' and tap your foot to it? [My] 'Soul Station' is the same thing, just like walking down the highway, it sounds like somebody's saying 'Oh, man, I'm tired of this town, got to get away from this.' Parker played the modern blues; what he's saying is that so much of modern jazz, structures, harmonic progressions, they're all based on the blues."

A tenor saxophonist known for his blues-rooted playing, Houston Person avidly followed Mobley on records as he learned and honed his craft in the south, before moving north in the late 60s. "Hank was one of the influences on my sound," Person remembered over the phone, "He was one of my main guys. He was phenomenal; the way he used space and silence and his compositions were distinctive. But his sound was the kind that I liked when I was approaching jazz, a sound somewhere in the

middle—not Trane or Rollins, not so stark—I wouldn't quite describe it as smoother, but a big, burnished sound, like another of my favorites, Zoot Sims."

Of the Five Brothers, Coltrane (1967) and Stitt (1982) died before Mobley (1986, although he stopped actively recording in 1970), but Coltrane had the biggest influence on tenors of them all and both Rollins and Heath continued to add to their considerable legacies in the 21st Century. Coltrane's impact was so overwhelming that many of his contemporaries aped or adapted his style, not always with the best results. "I was surprised some of my really respected horn players tried to go the way of Trane," says Person. "Harold Land tried out Trane and I said, 'what in the hell is he doing?' But Hank never faltered, he was always Mobley. He was THE first hardbop tenor and a great ballad player too." And one of Mobley's most resilient talents, notes Person, was his adaptability. "He could blend in with and adapt to the other guys [in the frontline]", says Person. "Hank was great with trumpeters like Lee Morgan and with other saxophonists like Johnny Griffin and Trane."

It's no accident that almost all of Mobley's own recordings feature him sharing a frontline with other horns, unlike those of the other four Five Brothers. Mobley's ability both to blend with and enhance the roles of trumpeters especially, is what makes his recordings so timeless and worth hearing. Trumpeters from Kenny Dorham to Morgan, Bill Hardman to Byrd and Woody Shaw to Blue Mitchell, all shine in his presence on records he made for Blue Note and now available on two Mosaic boxed sets, the most recent *The Complete Blue Note Sessions 1963-1970*. Yet most of that music is hardly ever heard outside of those sets. As Person notes, "people sort of give Mobley a backseat, as they do Johnny Griffin [and many other saxophonists of that era]. We take the Big Three, so to speak, and then try to pigeonhole everybody else, but we can't do that. Like people just forget about [James] Moody and I'll never understand that."

Mobley revealed his strategy for a personal sound and approach to Litweiler when remembering an uncle who "always used to say, 'Listen to Lester Young.' When I was about 18 he told me: 'If you're with somebody who plays loud, you play soft, if somebody plays fast, you play slow. If you try to play the same thing they're playing you're in trouble.' Contrast. If you play next to Johnny Griffin or Coltrane, that's hard work. You have to out-psych them. They'd say, 'Let's play 'Cherokee', I'd go, 'naw, naw-ah, how about a little 'Bye Bye Blackbird'? I put my heavy form on them, then I can double up and do everything I want to do.'"

The critic Leonard Feather effectively hammered the metaphoric nail in the coffin of Mobley's reputation when he referred to him as the "middleweight champion of the tenor saxophone", a comment often seen as disparaging him as not a "heavyweight" like Coltrane, Rollins or Dexter Gordon. If only Feather had called him the "Sugar Ray Robinson of tenors" instead, Mobley's heritage might be completely different.

Or maybe not. For like many of Bird's admirers,

Mobley also followed Parker into heroin addiction. But he was a late starter, as he told Litweiler: "I had the knowledge. When I got strung out it was my own fault. A person getting strung out at 18; that's a problem. He doesn't even have a chance to learn what life is about. By the time I got strung out I had learned my instrument, I was making money." Mobley was incarcerated twice for drug use, once in the late '50s and again in 1964.

When Mobley returned from Europe in 1970, tenor saxophonist Leo Johnson, a stalwart on the Newark, NJ jazz scene and a player whose sound has been influenced by Mobley, remembers a homecoming celebration for him at the Tremont Lounge in East Orange. "Hank didn't have a horn, so I lent him my Selmer I had just bought recently in Paris," remembers Johnson, who adds "he played it, but I stayed very close to him", not wanting Mobley to lose or pawn it. Drugs and later alcohol, would curtail Mobley's career. He stopped playing and reportedly was homeless for long periods until his death. But Mobley's career might also have suffered from his extreme reticence.

Sonny Greenwich, a Canadian jazz titan known for his Trane-like playing on guitar, appears on a 1967 Mobley septet album, *Third Season*. "I got a call to be on the date because I knew Lee Morgan [also on the date]. At the rehearsal it was a real party atmosphere, a lot of people were there [who weren't on the record] like Kenny Burrell and Duke Pearson. Hank himself was a very quiet, quiet person, almost invisible. I got a feeling he was interested in doing another session with me—we got along real well musically—but we did very little talking. He was very quiet throughout."

The introverted Mobley's reticence was no match for achieving success at Blue Note. The company recorded him prolifically, but many of the album sessions he cut never saw the light of day until years later, some being released only in Japan or posthumously. "I'm tired of people saying, 'Do a record date' and you go through all the effort," he told Litweiler. "You write something good that should be heard and they sit on it. What's the point of it all?"

He goes on to mention a "brass ensemble" record with trumpets, trombones, French horn, baritone horn and tuba that was never green lighted. Five tracks from a session with five horns, including euphonium and tuba, from 1966, can be found on the aforementioned 1963-1970 set, just another tantalizing example of the under-appreciated artistry of Hank Mobley. ❖

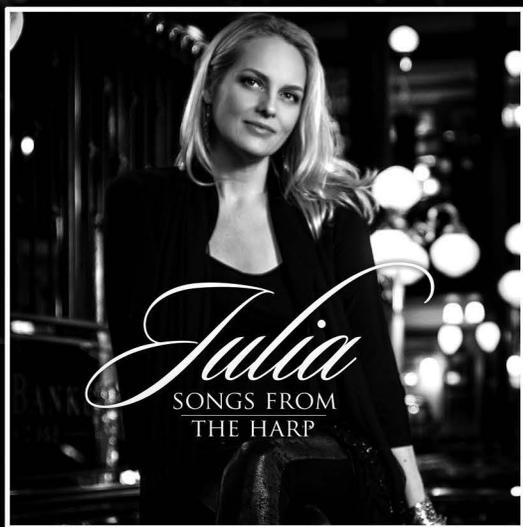
For more information, visit [bluenote.com/artist/hank-mobley](http://bluenote.com/artist/hank-mobley)

#### Recommended Listening:

- Horace Silver — *And The Jazz Messengers* (Blue Note, 1954-55)
- Art Blakey & The Jazz Messengers — *At The Jazz Corner of the World, Vol. 1-2* (Blue Note, 1959)
- Hank Mobley — *Soul Station* (Blue Note, 1960)
- Miles Davis — *In Person Friday and Saturday Nights at The Blackhawk (Complete)* (Columbia-Legacy, 1961)
- Hank Mobley — *Dippin'* (Blue Note, 1965)
- Hank Mobley — *A Slice of the Top* (Blue Note, 1966)

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# RA KALAM BOB MOSES

BY JIM MOTAVALLI

The man formerly known as the jazz drummer Bob Moses, active since the '60s and on albums by everyone from Gary Burton to Henry Kaiser, is now Ra Kalam. The new name was bestowed upon him by Bhapuji Tisziji Muñoz, a spiritual guide to many musicians and also a killer guitarist.

When Kenny G put his Los Angeles farmhouse on the market in 2018, the asking price was \$4 million. By contrast, Moses lives in a Quincy, Massachusetts apartment he shares with two roommates. He doesn't have a lot of possessions and doesn't go out much, but he's happy. "We live in the funkier house on the block," said Moses, 72. "I don't have a TV or take vacations, but creatively, spiritually, this is the best time for me." Can Kenny G say as much?

We need to start with Muñoz, because his counsel is very central to the centered being Moses is today. They play together as regularly as they can and talk frequently on the phone. "Tisziji has been known to play for 11 hours straight, going through several drummers," Moses said. "I know because I was one of them. He wears them out." Muñoz' message to Moses boils down to this: leave your reference points behind and be free. He once leaned in on Moses during a gig and whispered the phrase "no time" with a beatific expression on his face.

Some Moses ancient history. He grew up in the Bronx, arriving during the terrible blizzard of 1948. His parents weren't particularly musical, but his father was a press agent who worked with musicians. "I sat in Dizzy Gillespie's lap when I was five," Moses said. A life in jazz seemed pre-destined, especially when — at their son's insistence — the family moved to Manhattan, Central Park West and 101st Street. The address is

important, because the building they chose was also inhabited by Max Roach, Elvin Jones and Art Blakey. Moses' jazz-loving uncle used to dry clean Horace Silver's suits for free. C'mon, is that fate or what? Booker Little and Lee Morgan came by. Moses saw Blakey evicted, with his Gretsch drums arrayed on the sidewalk. He saw Eric Dolphy playing with the birds on the curb and they became friends. "He was a humble cat and he was interested in me," Moses remembers. "His death affected me more than Coltrane's."

Moses showed an early aptitude for music and picked up several instruments before settling on the drums at age 10. He played with Rahsaan Roland Kirk while still in his teens and appeared on *I Talk with the Spirits* (1965). Moses' first group, after playing salsa in Puerto Rican groups when he was 13, was The Free Spirits, who lived up to their name by being into everything: rock, jazz, blues, free jazz, Bob Dylan, The Beatles and The Rolling Stones. Along for the ride were both guitarist Larry Coryell (who ended Moses' short career as a jazz snob) and saxophonist Jim Pepper. Coryell got hired away by Gary Burton and soon Moses also joined the vibraphonist's band. He was on board by 1967, in time to play on the groundbreaking *Lofty Fake Anagram* and two other Burton RCA LPs (they later worked together on two more for ECM in the '70s). His brief taste of record company money was when his jazz fusion band Compost (with Harold Vick, Jumma Santos, Jack Gregg and Jack DeJohnette) signed to Columbia in the early '70s.

Moses was up and running. He formed close collaborations and recorded with many postbop players, including Dave Liebman, Paul Bley, Pat Metheny, Steve Kuhn, Michael Gibbs, Gunter Hampel, Terumasa Hino, Emily Remler and Steve Swallow. He's still doing that work today, but he also recorded extensively as a leader. *Bittersweet in the Ozone*, released in 1975, is a favorite (both of Moses and this writer). The drummer on it is Billy Hart, because Moses found it was difficult to play the skins and conduct at the same time.

In the early '80s, Moses wasn't finding much work in New York and got offered a teaching gig at the New England Conservatory. He moved up there around the

time his son was born (1985) and has stayed put. "I thought it might be good for my gigging career," he says, with some delight. "It didn't work out that way. So here I am living in Quincy, on a dead-end street, with no culture around, no great musicians to play with and no girlfriend and I'm in my most creative place."

I asked drummer Billy Martin, of Medeski, Martin & Wood, for an assessment of his friend: "I love him," Martin said. "I can't imagine what my life would be like without him in it and we've visited each other over three decades. He's a true artist who is both playful and timeless."

Moses has been putting out records on his Ra-Kalam label, the most recent being a collaboration from the early '70s (discovered on an old cassette) with keyboard player Mike Nock playing early synthesizers. The recording was enhanced with overdubs from recent collaborators, including horn players Stan Strickland, Daniel Bitran, Jorrit Dijkstra and Edmar Colon. Moses said the new musicians played in reaction to the old tape; they couldn't hear what the other guests were doing. Now that's free!

And Moses is free. He doesn't have much money, but he gets by — drum lessons via Skype are one avenue. "It's a hard time for the earth and I feel the sadness of people, but it hasn't affected how I live all that much," he said. "I love being alone. I'm playing my drums almost every day and I have eight or nine new paintings." ❖

For more information, visit [nativepulse.com/ra-kalam-bob-moses-records](http://nativepulse.com/ra-kalam-bob-moses-records)

#### Recommended Listening:

- Steve Marcus — *Tomorrow Never Knows* (Atlantic, 1967)
- David Liebman — *Open Sky* (PM, 1972)
- Pat Metheny — *Bright Size Life* (ECM, 1975)
- Bob Moses — *When Elephants Dream of Music* (Gramavision, 1982)
- John Medeski/Tisziji Muñoz — *Beauty as Beauty* (Anami, 2008)
- Ra Kalam Bob Moses — *The Skies of Copenhagen* (Ra-Kalam, 2012)

## LEST WE FORGET



# JYMIE MERRITT

BY MARILYN LESTER

Philadelphia-based bassist Jymie Merritt, who passed on Apr. 10th of liver cancer a few weeks shy of his 94th birthday, has long been recognized as an important innovator in the jazz world. He was one of the earliest, if not the first, to use an electric bass, an instrument that's become standard since he adopted it in 1951, the year Leo Fender's perfected Precision Bass went into production. Merritt had been attracted to the electric bass early on, playing the hybrid Ampeg transducer/amplifier system for the upright bass, prior to purchasing his Fender. Merritt never recorded as a leader, yet was an anchor for several key postwar jazz groups, most notably Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers from 1958-62.

James Raleigh Merritt was born on May 3rd, 1926 to a businessman father and a voice and piano teacher/choral director mother, who encouraged his studies in music. He began on the saxophone, but was so inspired by recordings of the great Duke Ellington bassist Jimmie Blanton he took up the instrument, studying at the

Ornstein School of Music in Philadelphia and with Carl Torrello of the Philadelphia Orchestra. From 1944-46, Merritt served in the army. After his discharge, he worked for a short time with his father in real estate before setting out on his full-time music career. From 1949-53 he backed rhythm and blues artist Bull Moose Jackson and then toured with B.B. King. Then he transitioned into jazz with Blakey, recording on seminal albums such as *Moanin'* (1958), *At the Jazz Corner of the World* (1959) and *A Night in Tunisia* (1960). After leaving Blakey, Merritt established Forerunner in 1962, a cooperative in Philadelphia's cultural and community activities into the late '80s. As part of that initiative, his band of the same name included saxophonists Odean Pope, Julian Pressley, Bobby Zankel and Terry Lawson; percussionist Warren McLendon; drummer Alan Nelson; and his son, bassist Mike Merritt. With The Forerunners, Merritt and his men further explored his theories of chord inversions, harmonics and unique compositional styles, which became the Forerunner system, embodied in Merritt's expansive composition "Visions of the Ghost Dance". Approaching his 90th birthday, Merritt was still performing with the latest of many incarnations of The Forerunners band.

In the period after leaving the Jazz Messengers, Merritt also worked with trumpeters Chet Baker, whose unfinished autobiography features him prominently, Dizzy Gillespie and Lee Morgan, working in the latter's final bands in the late '60s-early '70s.

Morgan's *Live at the Lighthouse* (1970) features Merritt's compositions "Absolutions" and "Nommo", written for drummer Max Roach, with whom he worked from 1965-68, the former that appears on Roach's 1968 album *Members, Don't Git Weary* and the latter on 1966's *Drums Unlimited*.

Professionally active throughout his life, Merritt has been recognized by awards that include the Don Redman Heritage Award in 2008, sponsored by the Harpers Ferry Historical Association and the Jefferson County NAACP under the auspices of the Don Redman Heritage Society of Piedmont, West Virginia; and in 2009 the Jazz Heritage Award, presented to him by the late Philadelphia bassist Charles Fambrough at the Philadelphia Jazz Fair. Merritt also received the Clef Club of Philadelphia's Living Legend Jazz Award, bestowed upon him and fellow bassist Reggie Workman in 2013. ❖

For more information, visit [mikemerritt.com/wp/?page\\_id=310](http://mikemerritt.com/wp/?page_id=310)

#### Recommended Listening:

- Sonny Clark — *Sonny Clark Trio* (Blue Note, 1958)
- Art Blakey and The Jazz Messengers — *Moanin'* (Blue Note, 1958)
- Dizzy Reece — *Comin' On* (Blue Note, 1960)
- Wayne Shorter — *Wayning Moments* (Vee-Jay, 1962)
- Max Roach — *Members, Don't Git Weary* (Atlantic, 1968)
- Lee Morgan — *Live at The Lighthouse* (Blue Note, 1970)

# MORE IS MORE

BY JOHN SHARPE

It's not an exaggeration to say that trumpeter Peter Evans is one of those rare musicians identifiable after a single note. He's one of a select cohort who has taken his instrument to levels undreamed of by previous generations, especially in the realm of solo playing. His debut under his own leadership was a striking unaccompanied outing titled *More Is More* on Evan Parker's psi imprint in 2006 and he's also used that as the banner for his own label.

Why did he choose that name? "I thought at that time that it reflected the aesthetic as well as being a kind of a riff on a common phrase." It's an aesthetic that still has currency as Evans affirms: "I like works of art that give the experiencer more than they can chew on at first sittings." And that depth and richness of material applies to much of the music on the label, whether solo, duo or ensemble, although he goes on to explain: "It doesn't mean I just put out records of super-dense music."

Of course, musician-run outlets are no rarity. The impetus for Evans to found More Is More in 2011 came with the self-recorded *Ghosts*. Although he had multiple releases under his belt on a variety of labels without any misfortunes, he found the experience of shopping *Ghosts* around labels and fitting in with long release schedules demoralizing. "I didn't want to wait around and because I didn't start the label until I'd been around a little bit, some people knew who I was

and I had some contacts, so that record did really well and it made it seem like, OK this isn't actually that hard."

Subsequent recordings have tracked the evolution of his astonishing solo trumpet music, beginning with *Lifeblood* in 2016, on through *The Veil* (2018) and latterly *Into The Silence* (2020), as well as the daredevil expression of his quintet, which made *Ghosts*, *Destination: Void* (2014) and *Genesis* (2016), along with other projects like Rocket Science and Pulverize The Sound. The label remains primarily a vehicle for Evans' own efforts, although there is one album in the catalogue by another artist, a solo session by New York saxophonist Aaron Burnett.

Evans takes a purposeful approach to what he puts out. "I decide way ahead of time I'm going to do this thing. And if it doesn't work, then I don't put it out. Sometimes these things take years and other times they are really quick. So with *The Veil*, I had these specific ideas I wanted to do, I practiced for these pieces for a couple of months and then recorded them."

There are benefits from operating small-scale, Evans finds: "It keeps the costs down. An album like *Lifeblood*, I would say a third of the record is live. The title track is a live solo gig from Cleveland, which I didn't even know was going to be recorded. At that time I was going for a certain thing. After the gig I asked for the recording and it came out well. So I attached it to the other stuff that I had. I spent some money on it but that album did well. With the ensemble records it's more difficult. I always pay musicians, especially if it's a studio thing. So I'm just about making the cost back."

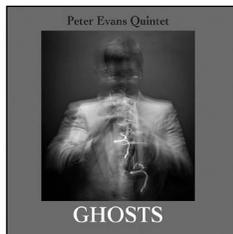
Evans shares the logistics with his wife and he has

a de facto team for production. "Any record that Sam Pluta is on he usually mixes, because it's just the way that music works with live processing, the way that it comes from background to foreground, it might be a bit difficult for someone to mix that. Then once I started recording with Jason LaFarge at Seizure's Palace, because he was there and does a really good job, I had him mix them. And Weasel Walter does all the mastering. So I don't have to think about it." By this stage, the label is largely digital, although he has experimented with USB drives for albums with longer running times. As the next two releases fit comfortably on an LP they'll also be issued on vinyl.

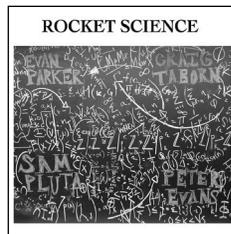
In 2020 Evans releases albums by two contrasting outfits. *Being & Becoming* is the first from an acoustic jazz quartet with three younger players from the New York scene: up-and-coming vibraphonist Joel Ross, bassist Nick Jozwiak and drummer Savannah Harris. "They are all really open and they seem interested in doing anything I throw at them. Every time we played it was something different. We'd do a gig that was all free improvisation, or all standards and not like free standards, or new compositions. After six months I thought OK there's certain things that work and are slam-dunks, things that are maybe a bit too easy. So I wrote specifically for the record. I've just tried to get variety in there, tried to make sure that everybody has a moment to shine, that we do some of the expected things, but also some of the unexpected things."

Then on August 15, Evans drops *Horizons* by a different, more radical quartet, comprising violinist Mazz Swift, percussionist Levy Lorenzo and the keyboards of Ron Stabinsky, which grew out of his

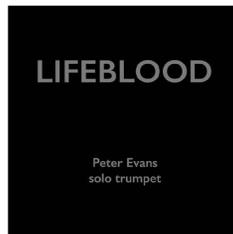
(CONTINUED ON PAGE 13)



*Ghosts*  
Peter Evans Quintet



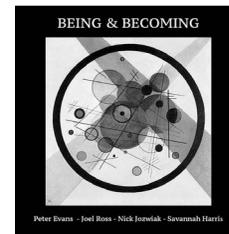
Eponymous  
Rocket Science



*Lifeblood*  
Peter Evans



*Pulverize The Sound*  
Peter Evans/Tim Dahl/Mike Pride



Eponymous  
*Being & Becoming*

## VOXNEWS

# SILENT NO MORE

BY SUZANNE LORGE

Singer/composer Sara Serpa's silken voice stands in contrast to the theme of her June release *Recognition: Music for a Silent Film* (Biophilia). This soundtrack from Serpa's affecting 2017 multimedia project *Recognition*, takes to task 500 years of colonial abuses her native Portugal perpetrated against the black citizens of Angola. The film portion of the project—available on Serpa's website—comprises actual footage of '60s Angola from a family archive.

Throughout the footage of bombings and military parades, Serpa interspersed text from the writings of Amílcar Cabral, the anti-colonial thinker credited with overthrowing Portuguese dominance in the African colonies. The relevance of these provocative texts to the legacy of African slavery in modern-day America is hard to miss and Serpa's disturbing images alongside these textual overlays have only become more distressing in the few years since she debuted the project. Without these additional media, however, her music takes on a wholly different character. What emerges from the audio-only experience is simply the elegance of Serpa's intervallic vocal lines and the impressionistic interplay of harp (Zeena Parkins),

saxophone (Mark Turner) and piano (David Virelles) on tracks like "The Multi-racialism Myth", "Civilizing Influence" and "Unity and Struggle". Thus the album, as a stand-alone, shows how beauty works as a tool of protest.

Banjo player/singer Don Vappie revitalizes a nearly forgotten New Orleans musical tradition on *The Blue Book of Storyville* (Lejazzetal), a collection of 17 banjo-centered tunes. Backed by a trio of guitar (Dave Kelbie), bass (Sébastien Girardot) and clarinet (David Horniblow), Vappie champions the Créole contribution to the exquisite blend of ragtime, marches, hymns and blues that became New Orleans jazz. "I really wanted to advance the banjo in a more melodic role as I perceived it was in some of the Caribbean and African styles", Vappie explains in the liner notes. With this in mind, he turned out the bawdy, blue-tinged title track, one of four originals on the album; happy jags like the traditional "Mo Pas Laimé Ça"; more well-known tunes like Jelly Roll Morton's droll "Buddy Bolden's Blues"; and homages like "C'est L'autre Cancan" by Créole jazz trombonist Edward "Kid" Ory. In sum, a joyous reminder of New Orleans' diverse heritage.

Singer/composer Jay Clayton, one of the most imaginative free singers around, excels in small formats, where her roomy, nuanced improvisations can receive the necessary attention. On her latest release for Sunnyside, *Alone Together*—a duo album with drummer Jerry Granelli, recorded completely

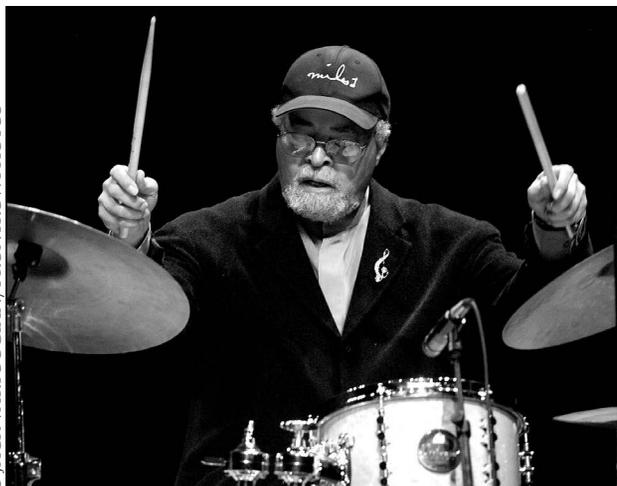
extemporaneously—she sings and voices spoken word with only percussion for accompaniment. For source material, Clayton drew on the writings of e e cummings, whose verse inspired the album's bookends, opening with "Because It's Spring" and closing with "Bells Too". The freeform poet's tantalizing words land in the sweetest part of Clayton's voice, where the warm lower tones are just beginning to melt into her surprisingly light soprano. This time she also recorded one of her mainstays from Ornette Coleman's canon, "Lonely Woman", its solitary melody all the more aching for the lack of chordal backing. And on inventive originals like "Swing Thing" and "New Morning Blues" Clayton used electronic effects in real time to enhance the textures of her wordless vocals—a tricky technique that few do as well.

But Clayton, also a jazz educator, is more than willing to share what she knows—she recently signed on as a coach with jazzvoice.org, vocalist Alexis Cole's new educational site for vocal jazz. Born of lockdown necessity, the site is unusual for the access it gives new singers to A-list jazz vocalists; besides Clayton, interested singers can study privately with the likes of Karrin Allyson, Paul Jost, Jane Monheit and Tierney Sutton, among equally impressive others. Subscribers can participate in master classes with pros like John Proulx and Catherine Russell and free-access educational videos can help aspirants understand how jazz singers approach feel, vibrato and scatting. ❖

# JIMMY COBB

BY ANDREY HENKIN

© JACK VARTOGIAN/FRONTROWPHOTOS



Drummer Jimmy Cobb, usually described in reductionist terms as the last surviving member of Miles Davis' *Kind of Blue* band but who was active for years before and decades after, died May 24th at 91.

Wilbur James Cobb was born Jan. 20th, 1929 in Washington, DC. Recalling his youth to our own Russ Musto in December 2018, Cobb said, "there was music coming out of everywhere...Baptist churches, little places that would have people come into town on the weekend, jazz places... And there was the Howard Theater." Cobb became interested in playing drums while listening to jazz records and he'd "bang on the side of the table." His first professional engagements were in a band that included the slightly older saxophonist and Washington, DC stalwart Buck Hill. Then he supported other up-and-coming locals like Charlie Rouse and Leo Parker.

After moving to New York, Cobb joined alto saxophonist Earl Bostic's band and it was with him and his singer Dinah Washington that Cobb got his first recording credits. More work would follow with Cannonball Adderley, Wynton Kelly and Paul Chambers on albums made for EmArcy, Mercury, Riverside and Vee-Jay. It was through Adderley that Cobb would be connected to Davis, the drummer stepping in for an absent Philly Joe Jones on occasion. He then got the gig full-time when "Miles calls me up and says 'Well Joe's not going to be in the band... I asked when the next gig was going to be and he said, 'Well, actually I'm working tonight.' I said, 'Oh yeah, where?' And he said Boston. I said 'Boston?' And it's like 6:30 in the evening and I'm at home in New York. I asked, 'Oh yeah, what time do you start?' And he said, 'Nine o'clock.' I said, 'Nine o'clock; how am I gonna get there at nine o'clock?' He said, 'You want the gig, don't you?'" Cobb would appear on such Davis albums as *Porgy and Bess*, *Sketches of Spain* and, of course, *Kind of Blue*, working in the trumpeter's bands from 1958-62.

During and after his time with Davis Cobb worked with Wayne Shorter, Nat Adderley, Art Pepper, Bobby Timmons, John Coltrane, Julian Priester, Mark Murphy, Dorothy Ashby, Paul Gonsalves, Sonny Red, Bill Hardman, Wes Montgomery, Benny Golson, Shirley Scott, Hubert Laws, Bunky Green, Walter Bishop, Von Freeman, Sarah Vaughan, Mongo Santamaria, Joe Henderson, Kenny Drew, Ricky Ford, Billy Mitchell, Red Garland, Nick Brignola, Richie Cole, David "Fathead" Newman, The Great Jazz Trio, Kenny Barron, John Hicks, Mark Morganelli, Frank Morgan, Bud Shank, Bertha Hope, Rahn Burton, Antonio Hart, Peter Bernstein, Roy Hargrove, Ernie Watts, Eddie Gomez, Cedar Walton, Geri Allen and many others. Cobb finally debuted as a leader in 1981 for Contempo Vibrato and released several more albums on Milestone, Chesky, Marsalis Music and Smoke Sessions well into the new millennium.



**ALDO BASSI** (Jan. 29th, 1962 - May 10th, 2020) The Italian trumpeter was active since the late '80s, working with Riccardo Fassi, Mauro Zazzarini, Mario Raja, Barrio Jazz Gang, Antonella Vitale, Federica Zammarchi, Nina Pedersen and Carla Marcotulli. Bassi died May 10th at 58.



**ALDIR BLANC** (Sep. 2nd, 1946 - May 4th, 2020) The Brazilian composer had his songs recorded by Claudette Soares, Ronald Mesquita, Tamba Trio, João Bosco, Elis Regina, Quarteto Em Cy, La Gran Orquesta De Paul Mauriat, Milton Banana, Lee Ritenour, Zimbo Trio, Irakere, Karrin Allyson and Stefano Bollani. Blanc died May 4th at 73.



**RICHIE COLE** (Feb. 29th, 1948 - May 2nd, 2020) The saxophonist got his start with Buddy Rich in the late '60s, worked with Eddie Jefferson, Don Patterson, Red Rodney, Vic Juris, Mark Murphy and others in the '70s, was a regular accompanist for The Manhattan Transfer in the '80s, was on Veronica Swift's 2004 debut when the singer was only 10 and made records regularly as a leader from the '70s onwards for Progressive, Muse, Seven Seas, GNP Crescendo, Palo Alto, Concord, Fantasy, Milestone, Candid, Venus, Jazz Excursion and other labels. Cole died May 2nd at 72.



**SONNY COX** (1938 - May 5th, 2020) The alto saxophonist was active in the mid '60s as part of The Three Souls with two LPs on Argo and his own date for a renamed Cadet, then left music to pursue a career as a high school basketball coach in Chicago, where his teams won three state championships. Cox died May 5th at 82.



**JOHN CUMMING** (Sep. 30th, 1948 - May 17th, 2020) The British jazz impresario and OBE recipient founded the Bracknell Jazz Festival, Camden Jazz Week, managed John Surman and Andy Sheppard, was an original member of the European Jazz Network and, most notably, began and ran the London Jazz Festival from 1993-2017. Cumming died May 17th at 71.



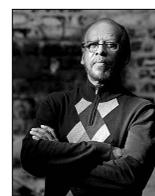
**HENRY ESTRADA** (Jul. 25th, 1936 - May 10th, 2020) The saxophonist was one-third of the titular Estrada Brothers, which had albums on Chazz, Rumba Jazz, Milestone and Cougar in the '90s and recorded with Gary Lefebvre in the '80s. Estrada died May 10th at 83.



**MORY KANTÉ** (Mar. 29th, 1950 - May 22nd, 2020) The Guinean kora player and vocalist had albums since the '80s on Barclay, Syllart and other labels plus recording credits with Manu Dibango, Azikmen, Sofi Hellborg and others. Kanté died May 22nd at 70.



**LENNIE NIEHAUS** (Jun. 1st, 1929 - May 28th, 2020) The St. Louisan alto saxophonist was a West Coast jazz fixture from the '50s onwards, both through his albums for Contemporary and EmArcy and work with Stan Kenton's various '50s groups as well as Howard Rumsey's Lighthouse All-Stars and Shorty Rogers but known most to the general public for his helping composing for Clint Eastwood-directed movies like *Unforgiven*, *Mystic River* and *Million Dollar Baby*. Niehaus died May 28th at 90.



**BOB NORTHERN** (May 21st, 1934 - May 31st, 2020) The French horn player and flutist contributed to dozens of albums in the late '50s-60s by Art Farmer, Gil Evans, Thelonious Monk, Dizzy Gillespie, Billy Byers, John Coltrane, John Lewis, Julius Watkins, Milt Jackson, Michel Legrand, Oliver Nelson, Quincy Jones, Donald Byrd, The Jazz Composer's Orchestra, McCoy Tyner, Charlie Haden, Sun Ra and others as well as his own few albums for Strata-East and Divine as Brother Ah, the moniker he used to host his weekly jazz radio program in Washington, DC. Northern died May 31st at 86.



**BOB PILSBURY** (1927 - May 12th, 2020) The pianist was a member of the Black Eagle Jazz Band, active since the '70s with albums on G.H.B., Stomp Off, Philips and other labels, plus his own '80s date for Dirty Shame. Pilsbury died May 12th at 93.



**HOLLI ROSS** (1957 - May 9th, 2020) The vocalist was a founding member of the String of Pearls trio and The Royal Bopsters quartet, wrote lyrics sung on albums by Mark Murphy, Claudio Roditi, Giacomo Gates and others and directed the jazz vocal ensemble at Montclair State University. Ross died May 9th at 63.



**HERMAN SANDY** (Nov. 15th, 1921 - May 13th, 2020) The Belgian trumpeter had his own entry in the *Innovation En Jazz* series in 1955 and recorded with Jacques Pelzer, David Bee, St. Tropez Jazz Octet, Fats Sadi, Belgian Big Band, Victoria Jazz Band and others. Sandy died May 13th at 98.



**CAREI THOMAS** (1938 - May 28th, 2020) The composer, pianist and sometimes-vocalist's Feel Free Ensemble released a 2002 album on Roaratorio and he had a record under his name for Innova in 2005, all featuring his original music. Thomas died May 28th at 81.



**DONN TRENNER** (Mar. 10th, 1927 - May 16th, 2020) The Connecticut pianist established himself on the West Coast in the '50s with Stan Getz, Dave Pell, Helen Carr, Les Brown, Ben Webster, Mel Tormé, Nancy Wilson and others and released two late-career duo records with vocalist B.J. Ward. Trenner died May 16th at 93.



**DON WELLER** (Dec. 19th, 1940 - May 30th, 2020) The British saxophonist recorded with Stan Tracey in the '70s-90s, Harry Beckett, Michael Garrick, Marvin Hannibal Peterson, Gil Evans, Charlie Watts, Mick Pyne in the '70s-80s and Tina May in the '90s, all this to go along with his own handful of albums since the late '70s on Affinity, Emanem, 33 Records and Trio. Weller died May 30th at 79.



**JÜRGEN WUCHNER** (1948 - May 1st, 2020) The German bassist was active since the early '70s, working with Michael Sell, Hans Koller, Bob Degen, Heinz Sauer, Herbert Joos, Vienna Art Orchestra, Gunther Klatt and Uwe Oberg, leading his own dates for View, Sporeprint and his own JWJ imprint and was integral to the founding of the Jazz Institute in his hometown of Darmstadt. Wuchner died May 1st at 72. ❖

(INTERVIEW CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

who went to Berklee back then. And they all sort of played the same way. So, I think it helped me to figure it out my own way.

**TNYCJR:** What's distinctive about your style and voice as a musician?

**JM:** I'll leave it up to other people to draw their own conclusions about that, but I will say that I am influenced by a unique set of people and ideas. I incorporate things and draw from them in a creative way. My output is varied to the point of confusing people about who I am and what I do and there is a lot of it because I try to never repeat myself, which makes every day a beginning of my musical life. Also, my sense of what I feel is melodic seems to confound many listeners who hate what I do. So, my best effort to entice people to enjoy my music as a way to have a new experience seems to annoy more people than I would have ever expected. I've been heavily criticized for decades for not sounding like other people and I've been praised for the same thing.

**TNYCJR:** What kind of gear do you use and does that affect your sound?

**JM:** I used to play a '71 Les Paul Custom [Black Beauty] plugged into a Fender Deluxe amp for years, but that was burned in a fire. That was the only guitar I ever really loved. Later, I got another Les Paul but about 20 years ago I got interested in archtop guitars and then worked for a long time to have a way to sound as acoustic as possible and still loud enough to be heard. I have a Heritage Eagle and an Eastman AR810 that I have modified with piezo pickups added with the floating pickup. I use a DPA mic sometimes too. My preferred amp for that is an Acoustic Image Clarus combo. I have some Moogerfooger effects, a ring modulator and a freqbox, which I add expression pedals to. I use an old feedback pedal sometimes and a delay and octafuzz. Mainly I prefer the most active use of pedals through the expression pedals. They allow me to improvise with sound rather than just stomp them and leave them on. I like the mystery offered by using the pedals that way. I separate all of my guitar playing, techniques and gear based on what I expect to play and with whom. So my guitar playing is never one thing, never fixed to make the same point and as often as possible, with every allowance for redundancy, open to discovery on the spot. I also have very studied techniques that I use when I need or want it.

**TNYCJR:** Talk about the record label you started and some of the groups and artists you've worked with.

**JM:** I followed the lead of people I admired, like Julius Hemphill, and started my own label in 1983. I did it because no one else would release my music, or at least I figured they wouldn't until I did it myself. The name Riti is taken from a one-string African fiddle that factors into a technique I use.

**TNYCJR:** You live in New Haven, CT, not a place people typically think of for jazz. What's the jazz scene like there and how does it compare to other places?

**JM:** New Haven has a small and varied jazz scene with good players in a lot of different approaches. The scene I'm in here is small but serious. Growing up, there was a lot going on. There were a lot of smart people and a lot of creativity and it was more accessible than New York, though I went to New York as often as I could.

Also, we have one of the best venues in the world, Firehouse 12, and others like State House and Cafe 9 all on the same city block. Getting easy space to play other than those is tough, but we keep trying. We play at

Never Ending Books and Best Video. I've presented things at city libraries, art galleries. We also have Hartford 40 miles north where Real Art Ways is very special. There are venues in Willimantic CT, in Greenfield MA, in Providence, Boston and quite a few house show venues especially Orchard Strassa in New Haven, etc. We do our best to make it happen here. It's all very grassroots and musician-generated except for the few venues I mentioned.

**TNYCJR:** What about your work as an educator?

**JM:** Well, there is a lot to say. I'm in my 21st year at New England Conservatory. I teach lessons at The New School. I've taught at a few other places too: Longy School of Music of Bard College for 10 years, University of Calgary and Southern Connecticut State University. I have a curriculum that is laid out in my book *Perpetual Frontier: The Properties of Free Music*. I teach some harmonic things, but I specialize in improvised music that is not based on harmony. I teach ensembles, lecture and teach private lessons.

**TNYCJR:** What projects are you currently working on?

**JM:** I made 13 recordings so far in 2020. Four more are due. But my main big thing is the first volume of my "Instantiation" music: four CDs, *Paradoxical*, *Versioning*, *Locale* and *Switches*. "Instantiation" is a composition for improvising musicians' projects. I plan to continue with the next volume of recordings as soon as society opens up again. I've been thinking about how I might configure melody differently so that it functions as a different type of template for different kinds of improvisations. That's something I'm working on right this minute. I also work a lot on technique so that I have the facility on my various instruments so that I can execute what I'm hearing and thinking. And this whole "Instantiation" project is a way of combining regular notation with graphic notation that I invent to get groups of people to have a certain kind of control over needing no control to get new things. This last group of records that I made with this concept are all pretty different but have the similarity based on how the compositional material steers them. But still, 99% of the music is improvised. I'm interested in things like that.

I have a new record coming out with Tomeka Reid the cellist, I'm on [vocalist] Fay Victor's new record and I am constantly putting out things on my Bandcamp label. I have a lot of different projects, they're all sincere, there isn't one part of it that is less important to me than the other. That's what I do. The similarities and variety of it, that's who I am, that's what I'm trying to do. It's a bigger objective than trying to do one thing and perfect it.

**TNYCJR:** How are you adapting to the pandemic?

**JM:** My life is pretty normal so far, because I live in the woods, isolated from people, and I'm used to being here a lot when I'm not teaching or performing. I miss playing with people and lately it's hit me that this is probably the longest length of time without that in decades. My understanding of myself and what to do is more dependent on playing with people than I thought. But I have made a couple of recordings remotely with [keyboard player] Jamie Saft. [Drummer] Mike Pride is on one of them. I've been getting caught up on mixing and releasing recordings for release on my Glacial Erratic Bandcamp page.

**TNYCJR:** Thoughts about the future?

**JM:** Keep going. "Instantiation" will be a big part of that. Playing more bass, new duos with Tomeka Reid and Ken Vandermark, special things coming up with Jamie Saft. Playing gigs on drums, which I started doing more last year. Hoping like hell that the world

settles back to its earlier messed-up level and we can get back to doing everything possible to change things by playing music together. ❖

For more information, visit [joe-morris.com](http://joe-morris.com)

#### Recommended Listening:

- Joe Morris Trio – *Symbolic Gesture* (Soul Note, 1993)
- Joe Maneri/Joe Morris/Mat Maneri – *Three Men Walking* (ECM, 1995)
- William Parker/Joe Morris/Hamid Drake – *Eloping With The Sun* (Riti, 2001)
- Joe Morris/Barre Phillips – *Elm City Duets* (Clean Feed, 2006)
- Joe Morris – *Solos Bimhuis* (Relative Pitch, 2013-14)
- Mary Halvorson/Joe Morris – *Traversing Orbits* (RogueArt, 2018)

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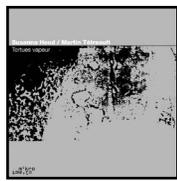
quintet with Pluta and Jim Black. "It felt to me three or four years ago, OK that had had its life, let's do something else with this group. So I added Mazz and Levy to make a seven-piece band. Because Levy, Mazz and Ron all live in the New York area, that subgroup became its own little thing. We did a few shows and the music also became modular. That band, anything I can imagine, they're down to do. It's truly experimental, not in terms of making the weirdest sounds, but in terms of just sheer approach. OK, we're going to do notated chamber music, then we're going to have a Weather Report-style groove with a synthesizer, so anything that I feel like doing, they're game." ❖

For more information, visit [peterevanstrumpet.com](http://peterevanstrumpet.com)

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# ALBUM REVIEWS



*Songs from the Harp*  
Julia Cunningham (s/r)  
*Tortues vaporeur*

Susanna Hood/Martin Tétreault (Mikroclimat)  
*A Cheerful Little Earful*  
Diana Panton (Hamilton)  
by Pierre Giroux

These three releases are interesting examples of what some Canadian jazz and contemporary music artists are up to these days. They are a mélange of English and French-Canadian cultures (with a tinge of avant-garde edginess) fitting nicely in the country's duality (Happy Canada Day – Jul. 1st).

"Recording *Songs from the Harp* was by far the most fun I've had making a record and a long held dream." So says Victoria B.C.-based harpist/singer Julia Cunningham. Starting with a prestigious musical education studying classical harp and several years touring jazz and blues festivals with Solomon Burke, followed by a half-dozen self-released instrumental recordings, Cunningham delivers a stellar vocal recital of compositions from the standards songbook. One has to wonder what took her so long to get to this place.

Throughout this 14-track release, produced by Joby Baker, Cunningham stays in her comfort zone as she delivers delightful turns on "There's A Small Hotel", "God Bless The Child" and the uptempo "On The Sunny Side Of The Street". Not forgetting her harp antecedents, she features a gorgeous instrumental rendition of the Consuelo Velázquez bolero "Bésame Mucho". With this debut vocal release, Cunningham has laid down a marker that this could be the kick-off of something important.

*Tortues vaporeur* (Steamed Turtles) is a digital release from Montréalers Susanna Hood and Martin Tétreault, who really are performance artists more than musicians. The sounds they produce are primarily of electroacoustic provenance. Although the six tracks are given titles, they provide no guidance to their content. Each is an amalgam of noise, rhythms, textures, voice and snippets of previously recorded material, creating a sound-garden to be tilled or left fallow as the listener chooses. So regardless of how this process is described, it's certainly not for the faint of heart.

When Diana Panton started out to record *A Cheerful Little Earful*, it may have been originally directed towards a younger listening audience. However, the end result certainly has an adult construct with the musical support of two Canadian jazz stalwarts: guitarist Reg Schwager and the multi-talented Don Thompson. Both have great reputations in Canada, but also gained broader recognition as members of the final iteration of the George Shearing Quintet.

Using material from the Great American Songbook, along with melodies that popped up in films and Broadway musicals, Panton's expressive satiny voice weaves a little magic into these compositions. The acquaintance with the songs as well as their joyful presentation is never discourteous to the composers' intentions, as for example the opening track "Happy Talk", which is delivered with direct simplicity. The title track has, thanks to some over-dubbing, a Shearing Quintet feeling (not unsurprisingly) and Panton revels in the accompaniment. Following Panton's lovely acappella opening to "Look To The Rainbow", both Schwager and Thompson on piano provide sympathetic support as Panton smoothly searches the lyrics in her amiable style. Regardless of the composition, Panton approaches the lyrics with sense of delight and wonderment, which fits perfectly with her exuberant vocal style.

For more information, visit [soulharp.com](http://soulharp.com), [mikroclimat.bandcamp.com](http://mikroclimat.bandcamp.com) and [dianapanton.com](http://dianapanton.com)



*Paisaje*  
Sebastián Greschuk (ears&eyes)

*El Contorno Del Espacio*  
SLD Trio (Fundacja Słuchaj!)  
*New Improvised Music from Buenos Aires*  
Various Artists (ESP-Disk')  
by Tom Greenland

Buenos Aires, Argentina has long supported creative impulses, including music from classical to tango to free improvisation. Three releases—two recent, the third a sampler of the previous eight years—show several directions these impulses have taken (Happy Día de la Independencia – Jul. 9th).

Trumpeter Sebastián Greschuk's *Paisaje* swims in the mainstream tradition of postbop, adapting its vocabulary and mannerisms with a certain personal flair. The music on this evenly paced set is both relaxed and urgent, the melodies drawn from the serpentine architecture of bop and peppered with flat-five intervals, all prodded along with gentle syncopation. "La Aspera", rendered on buttery flugelhorn, is an affecting tune, the solo showing Greschuk's penchant for sequenced ideas and gently squeezed grace notes. Avoiding the highest register, he prefers to speak in the warmer, gruffer tones available to the lower regions of the horn. Pianist Nicolas Boccanera trades between acoustic and electric instruments, like Greschuk showing a penchant for patterned lines, yet equally fond of fluid, textural gestures. Bassist Matías Crouzeilles is something of a sleeper here, making his strongest moves later in the game: a persuasive soliloquy of sliding double-stops introducing "Boomerang"; then a swinging solo over the tune, adeptly complemented by drummer Sebastián de Urquiza (just before Boccanera joins them for an interactive threesome); and finally a third turn on the impressionistic closer "Moñongo-Cherry".

The SLD Trio, an acronym for pianist Paula Shocron, bassist Germán Lamonega and drummer Pablo Díaz, has been active in Buenos Aires' free improv scene for five years. *El Contorno Del Espacio*, their third disc, recorded in the studio, is a relatively structured effort, with three compositions by each member and a cover of Duke Ellington's "Melancholia". Like a successful television sit-com, where the ensemble chemistry makes (or breaks) the show, here the mutual chemistry is immediate and persuasive, from the understated tension of the title track, to the collective climax and spun-out release of "Jiwasa", continuing through a gamut of mutual motions both dense and spacious, spattered and smooth, until the impressive denouement to Shocron's intense outpouring on "Máquina Verde"—an effortless yet immaculate deconstruction of the 'groove'. The last piece, "Caída Libre", shows Shocron's proficiency in permuting and through-thinking a motive (this one reminiscent of the *Mission: Impossible* TV theme) in the manner of Beethoven, John Coltrane or Thelonious Monk.

*New Improvised Music from Buenos Aires* is an anthology of (mostly) studio pieces featuring a rotating cast. The SLD Trio is here, three-fifths of a quintet with cornet player Enrique Norris and tenor saxophonist Pablo Moser on "Improvisation on Graphic Score", which transitions from bangings and tinklings to rock/swing and back. Shocron duets with Norris on the pretty "La Puerta R", but plays alone on a highly contrapuntal piano improv beginning with rapid, scampering lines, which, for all their speed, never lose clarity, settling into a more stately and rhapsodic mood towards the end. Díaz reappears on "Improvisation 0681", a short, forceful trio piece with tenor saxophonist Miguel Crozzoli and bassist Juan Bayon; and on "La Playa Pequeña", a fast freebop number with Norris

(employing an Ellington-esque growl tone) and bassist Maximiliano Kirsznar. Other cast members of note include reedplayer Luis Conde, who pairs with pianist Fabiana Galante on three short vignettes ("Relámpagos I-III") and whose booming bass saxophone makes an indelible impression on "Primer Jugo Bovino", a duo with guitarist Ramiro Molina; on "18:18", a duo with clarinetist/synthesizer player Jorge Chikiar; and on "Transición", the final track with Galante, flutist José María D'Angelo and bandoneón player Eliseo Tapia, who pumps with the power of a runaway train.

For more information, visit [earsandeyesrecords.com](http://earsandeyesrecords.com), [fsrecords.net](http://fsrecords.net) and [espdisk.com](http://espdisk.com)

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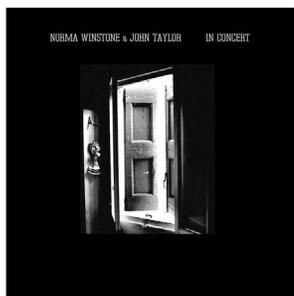
**Everything Old Is New Again**  
**Mark Soskin (SteepleChase)**  
 by Alex Henderson

Pianist Mark Soskin has embraced a wide variety of jazz over the years. *Everything Old Is New Again* finds the Bay Area native, who turns 67 on Jul. 12th, offering mostly acoustic postbop influenced by the mellower sides of saxophonists Wayne Shorter, John Coltrane and Pharoah Sanders. Soskin leads a quartet of Billy Drewes (soprano saxophone and bass clarinet), Jay Anderson (bass) and Matt Wilson (drums). This is the same lineup Soskin led on his 17 (*Seventeen*) album from 2001, absent trumpeter Tim Hagans and percussionist Daniel Sadownick. *Everything Old Is New Again* consists of seven Soskin originals, Ornette Coleman's "Happy House", David Crosby's "Guinnevere" and the Todd Rundgren ballad "Pretending to Care".

None of the Soskin originals are barnburners, a relaxed, contemplative mood usually prevailing, from "Tribute" and the title track to "Hymn for Her". The exception is "Happy House", which brings a dose of abstraction. The influence of Shorter, Coltrane and Sanders comes through not only in Soskin's composing but also in Drewes' soprano solos (he switches to the bass clarinet on "Happy House", "Pretending to Care" and Soskin's "Stretching"). "Elvin's Tune" one may assume was written for Elvin Jones; it recalls the more laid-back recordings that the drummer played on as part of Coltrane's quartet in the early '60s. "One Once" is easily the most Latin-flavored track, reminding listeners of Soskin's Latin credentials (in the '70s, Soskin was part of the Latin band Azteca and was featured on some albums by percussionist Pete Escovedo). "Guinnevere" started out in folk-rock when Crosby unveiled it as part of Crosby, Stills & Nash in 1968; Soskin takes the song in a very different direction as he also does with Rundgren's '80s pop-rock song.

17 years passed between 17 (*Seventeen*) and *Everything Old Is New Again* and it's good to see that Soskin's rapport with Drewes, Anderson and Wilson was as strong in 2018 as it was in 2001.

For more information, visit [steeplechase.dk](http://steeplechase.dk)



**In Concert**  
**Norma Winstone/John Taylor (Enodoc - Sunnyside)**  
 by Dan Bilawsky

While July 2020 marks five years since British pianist John Taylor's passing, time and absence have done nothing to dull the beauty and power of his work. An autodidact, who nodded toward Bill Evans, absorbed and refracted classical nuances, established a firm rhythmic presence and embraced metric wrinkles, Taylor was a school of one. Over the course of approximately half a century he carved out a place in the pantheon through associations with the likes of John Surman, Kenny Wheeler, Mike Gibbs and numerous other creative heavyweights. But his most enduring and

fruitful relationship was with his one-time wife, vocalist Norma Winstone. Artistically aligned in every way, theirs was always an easy rapport with a hard-to-describe synergy at play in their cooperative ventures.

A remastered reissue of an Enodoc Records release, *In Concert* finds Taylor and Winstone working their off-the-cuff programming skills. Having completed a teaching engagement at London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama in the summer of 1988, they were asked to put on a concert with little notice. Not surprisingly, their collective presence thrives on the spontaneity. Taylor and Winstone prize zeal and engage in a bit of pointillism during Steve Swallow's "Ladies In Mercedes". They use Egberto Gismonti's "Café" as an opportunity to stretch out across time and space, with stark suggestions, flowing lines and dream-like charms passing through. There's push and pull at play in their reimagining of Dave Brubeck's "In Your Own Sweet Way". And they float off on rising reflections during Ralph Towner's "Celeste". Winstone treats lyrics—both her own and others'—as poetry and putty and Taylor tailors every song to fit the duo's frame. Masters of perception and persuasion, Winstone and Taylor were made for each other.

For more information, visit [sunnysiderecords.com](http://sunnysiderecords.com)



**We Speak Luniwaz: The Music of Joe Zawinul**  
**Scott Kinsey (Whirlwind)**  
 by Brian Charette

Dynamic Los Angeles-based keyboardist Scott Kinsey knew Joe Zawinul, who would have turned 88 this month, well; the latter was executive producer of Kinsey's album *Kinesthetics* and the former produced Zawinul's *Faces and Places*. This coupled with Kinsey's direction of The Zawinul Legacy Band and work with fusion super-group, Tribal Tech, gives Kinsey street cred when it comes to this particular set of music. Kinsey talks about how he learned to speak "Luniwaz" in his own dialect by studying the compositional approach of the master. It's immediately apparent that Kinsey understands the subject matter deeply and has even expanded on some of the Austrian maestro's concepts.

Atmospherically panned shakers and quirky mono synths kick off "The Harvest". Percussion splashes blossom into a robotic vocal line and Kinsey's spot-on sonic emulations. The strident flute of Katisse Buckingham peeks out as the tune develops with a vicious offbeat ride cymbal from drummer Gergő Borlai. A bewitchingly wide stereo mix grants surprising sonic bursts from every angle. At the climax, Jimmy Haslip's bass darts from left to right as Kinsey's lush poly chords accompany slight ring-modulated blips.

The title track gets its time feel from a woody synth sequence precisely peppered with thin organ; Cyril and Yon Atef's scattling cements the oh-so "Mr. Gone" feeling. Splash cymbals ping gently as a bee swarm of saxophone explodes into vocoded bliss. The rhythm section jams with effortless propulsion and a perfectly placed bass harmonic completes the wink. The take on Weather Report classic "Black Market" is slower than the original and augmented by the actual vocal samples gifted to Kinsey by Zawinul. Bobby Thomas, Jr.'s finger cymbals and Buckingham's golden saxophone tones are echoed by the sly vocal of Arto Tunçboyacıyan. On a dime, the band metrically modulates into the original time feel, which they replicate with alarming accuracy. Kinsey comps with layered synth punches behind

Buckingham's also-doubled solo. A sudden beat drop and spooky reverb settles into chill reggae with small percussion that trades with far off honkey tonk for the understated recapitulation.

"Port of Entry" is a lovely tribute to Jaco Pastorius. Haslip, who for the rest of the album makes departures from a strict interpretation of the bass chair, switches to fretless and expertly cops the sound of the revered bassist. His channeling is wrapped in gorgeous polysynth hits, unusual vocal bursts and a perfectly trashy cymbal that rides the tune out. This recording is Weather Report 3000 and a lovingly brilliant tribute.

For more information, visit [whirlwindrecordings.com](http://whirlwindrecordings.com)

UNEARTHED GEM

**Ow! Live at The Penthouse**  
**Johnny Griffin & Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis (Reel to Real)**  
 by Duck Baker

Here's more manna from jazz heaven via the trove of live recordings made by radio station KING-FM at the Penthouse club in Seattle during the '60s, the third release from this archive to appear on the Reel to Real label and all of them terrific. *Ow!* was taped on May 30th and Jun. 6th, 1962, just weeks after *Pisces*, the last of the five studio dates made by the Johnny Griffin-Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis quintet and features the same lineup with Horace Parlan (piano), Buddy Catlett (bass) and Art Taylor (drums). But the records that it will be compared to are the four that were taken from their Jan. 6th, 1961 gig at Minton's Playhouse. Considering that this, the hardest-hitting of all two-tenor lineups, was only around for a couple of years, we can only marvel at their prodigious output.

The idea of "battling tenors" came to the fore when Herschel Evans and Lester Young were members of Count Basie's Orchestra and was further enshrined by the extended battles of boppers like Wardell Gray and Dexter Gordon in the late '40s. Like Evans, both Griffin (who died 12 years ago this month) and Davis can be seen as stylistic descendants of Coleman Hawkins, Griffin by way of ultra-extroverts like Illinois Jacquet and Griffin more out of Don Byas. But there's no mistaking one for the other; each had a unique style, Davis relying on smears, slurs and almost disjointed phrasing only a self-taught genius could have developed and Griffin on a staggering technique and postbop harmonic sense. Both players were lyrical ballad interpreters (Griffin's feature on "Sophisticated Lady" here is a good example) and the program includes a couple of midtempo excursions like "Bahia" but plainly they felt that uptempo burners like "Blues Up And Down" and completely ridiculous "Tickle Toe" were what their audience wanted to hear and it's obvious that they loved dishing out the hottest heat on any jazz menu.

The rhythm section is every bit as good as the Junior Mance/Larry Gales/Ben Riley team featured on the earlier live recordings and the recording balance is fantastic, allowing us really to hear what each player is doing and how they all are interacting. Add a 27-page booklet full of great notes and interviews and you have a package no hardbop fan will want to miss.

For more information, visit [cellarlive.com](http://cellarlive.com)

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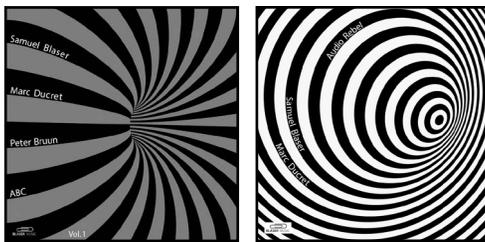


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*ABC, Vol. 1*  
Samuel Blaser/Marc Ducret/Peter Bruun (Blaser Music)  
*Audio Rebel*  
Samuel Blaser/Marc Ducret (Blaser Music)  
by Robert Iannapollo

Swiss trombonist Samuel Blaser, who turns 39 this month yet has almost two-dozen compelling albums under his belt since 2008, and French guitarist Marc Ducret began a musical partnership in 2009 and it seems to get stronger with each year. Ducret first appeared on Blaser's quartet record *Boundless* (hatOLOGY, 2010) and Blaser returned the favor as a member of Ducret's group on *Metatonal* (Ayler, 2014). But perhaps their bond is best exemplified in the trio the two share with Danish drummer Peter Bruun. They released the live *Taktlos, Zurich 2017* on hatOLOGY to great reviews and toured the album.

They now have a second disc, *ABC, Vol. 1*, self-released by Blaser in digital-format only. Each player contributes material and it marks a step further in their development. The opener is an epic 25-minute version of Ducret's "L'Ombra Di Verdi". It develops into a three-way improvisation alternating between the spacious and the dense; at the midway point, all build to a fever pitch and seamlessly lock into a repeated riff, which demonstrates how attuned these players are to one another. Bruun contributes "Svesker", a slowly developing, brooding piece with the melody handled by trenchant trombone. Blaser's arrangement of a brief Stravinsky piece, "Fanfare For A New Theatre", (originally a miniature, scored for two trumpets) is also found on the *Taktlos* disc. But whereas that earlier version serves as a prelude to a Ducret piece, here it is given a full nine-minute treatment with the brief theme cropping up throughout in fragments and reprised at the end. Blaser's "The Rain Only Drums At Night" is a beautiful piece with the composer and Ducret harmonizing on the melody as Bruun artfully splashes cymbals to accompany them. This is a remarkable trio. Blaser has a number of projects in his arsenal but this is one of the best.

The first meeting of Blaser and Ducret as a duo happened in 2009. And while they've played together in several formats, the duo has continued throughout. *Audio Rebels* stems from a tour of Brazil they did in 2013. This set is from the Rio de Janeiro performance and it's a corker. The seven tracks sound like a mixture of complete pieces and excerpts. But they are all discrete and play well as excerpted. Both players are sonic texturalists and vary their sound throughout. In this performance one can really appreciate Blaser's use of harmonics and deft handling of mutes. Ducret uses the occasional attachment (particularly effective is a gnarly fuzz) but many of the textural shifts stem from the handling of his instrument's strings and fretboard. Opening with the title track, it's quiet, almost tentative with the two seemingly feeling each other out. But they quickly find their mark and they're off. Blaser does some remarkable muted work during this section as the two intertwine around each other. "La Voie Grise" is a beautiful interlude with a bittersweet melody. It's not quite three minutes long yet still a complete piece unto itself. It's hard to tell if its fade is engineered or natural. The album closes with a more compact version of "L'Ombra Di Verdi" (5 minutes vs. 25 found on *ABC, Vol. 1*) and while not quite as satisfying as the trio version it's a perfect way to close out this album.

For more information, visit [samuelblaser.com](http://samuelblaser.com)

## GLOBE UNITY



Plays Ingrid Laubrock  
GGRIL (Circum-Disc)  
*If You Listen Carefully The Music Is Yours*  
Espoo Suite  
Espoo Big Band (Galileo)  
by Tom Greenland

When many people are talking at once, it's hard to be heard, even harder to make one's point. Such is the challenge for large improvising ensembles. New releases show how the challenge was met in Canada, Norway and Finland.

Le Grand Groupe Régional D'Improvisation Libérée (GGRIL) is based in Rimouski, Québec, well off the urban grid inhabited by most big bands. These small-town Quebecois have notably "big ears" and, of the groups reviewed here, show the most open-ended approach to improvisation. *Plays Ingrid Laubrock* interprets three of the German-born saxophonist's pieces. "Silent Nights" blends acoustic and electric strings with percussion, suggesting a large factory in which the distinct grinds, groans, rattles or hums of each worker's machine add to the melodious cacophony. "Stark Dark" starts with raucous guitars, soon subsiding into subtler tonal manipulations. The initial crash cymbal roll on "Palindromes" stops suddenly, setting up a slow, inexorable six-minute crescendo, as ominous as the approach of a zombie army, culminating with a sound like that of a chainsaw hacking through a large glass window.

Gard Nilssen's Supersonic Orchestra melds the flexibility of a small combo with the polyrhythmic urgency of a drum circle. Its instrumentation is unusual: one trombone, two trumpets, seven saxophones, three basses and three drumsets, with everyone doubling on percussion. *If You Listen Carefully The Music Is Yours*, the group's live debut, opens with "Premium Processing Fee": a series of cued hits, a chaotic group squall, then off into a limping waltz (every fourth bar is a beat short), ending with four horns howling like wolves. "Bøtteknott" swings in 6/8, with gentle chorales and dynamic tenor saxophone solos by Per "Texas" Johansson and Kjetil Møster. "Teppen Dance" and "The City of Roses" are loose, bouncy and ecstatic in the manner of Charles Mingus. "Jack" puts the three basses up front before busting out the funk, capped by "Bytta Bort Kua Fikk Fela Igjen", which adds tribal and disco touches to even fiercer funk figures.

The Espoo Big Band, under the baton of Finnish composer/arranger/guitarist Marzi Nyman, fêtes its home base on *Espoo Suite*. Of the albums under review, it hews closest to the classic Count Basie lineage in its juxtaposition of trumpet, trombone and saxophone sections, though the twin drumkits, electric bass, keyboard and guitars (one often played with a slide) lend it a more progressive aspect. Nyman's charts have spy background figures behind the soloists (heard on "Quiet Flows the Aspen River", "Moonshine Chase" and in the middle of "Finale") and painterly touches à la Duke Ellington (as on "Quiet Flows..." and "Igor's Lament"). There are also bits of techno, heavy metal, R&B, even Roma music. "Espoo Blues", the 'encore' of this studio set, contains oddly accelerated phrases deftly executed by the soloists and the band.

For more information, visit [circum-disc.com](http://circum-disc.com), [odinrecords.com](http://odinrecords.com) and [galileo-mc.de](http://galileo-mc.de)



**Across the Universe**  
Al Di Meola (Ear-Music)  
by Robert Bush

There could just be a portrait of an old Al Di Meola, who turns 66 this month, stashed away in the guitarist's attic somewhere because he does not seem to have weathered much since breaking into the public consciousness as a 19-year-old virtuoso back in 1974, when he joined Chick Corea's Return to Forever (RTF).

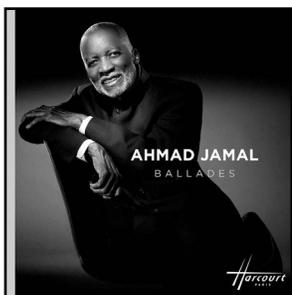
Di Meola was fresh out of Berklee College of Music at the time and he was drafted into RTF to replace Bill Connors (apparently Earl Klugh briefly preceded him), just in time to make the album *Where Have I Known You Before*, before hitting the road. Di Meola made his debut album under his own steam, *Land of the Midnight Sun* for Columbia, in 1976 and would go on to make nine records for the label, culminating with *Scenario* in 1983. Never a traditional jazz guitar player, he received his share of slings and arrows from the jazz critics, but he carved out a comfortable niche in the "instrumental rock/Latin" area since the late '70s.

This is his second album of Beatles covers, following 2013's *All Your Life: A Tribute to the Beatles Recorded at Abbey Road Studios*. Whether anyone needs another instrumental take on the Fab Four is an open question. For the hardcore Di Meola contingent, all the signature salient features are intact: very precise layering of multiple guitars; blazing speed; and screaming distortion. Much of this record illustrates a "one-man-band" kind of aesthetic, with Di Meola himself handling most of the instruments, aside from some percussion and keyboard contributions.

George Harrison's "Here Comes The Sun" receives a drastic makeover. It's one of those tunes where Di Meola plays everything, including bass and drums, and it's all done very well, but absent a compelling vocal, it does not feel superior to the original. "Norwegian Wood" piles everything but the kitchen sink into an elaborate redux leaning heavily on the presence of Amit Kavthekar's tabla to emphasize an even heavier Indian vibe than the original.

Strangely enough, this reviewer found the solo guitar rendition of "Here, There and Everywhere" to be utterly charming and aesthetically appealing. Alternating between finger-style and conventional chord-melody work, each note conveys layers of meaning.

For more information, visit [ear-music.net](http://ear-music.net)



**Ballades**  
Ahmad Jamal (Jazzbook/Jazz Village)  
by Stuart Broomer

Pianist Ahmad Jamal, who turns 90 this month, has worked for most of the past 70 years as the leader of very distinctive trios, first with guitar and bass, then bass and drums, sometimes supplementing them with percussion or collaborating with a horn soloist.

His distinctive use of vamps and ostinatos has made him both influential (on musicians like Miles Davis, John Coltrane and Keith Jarrett) and a *bête noire* (literal meaning intended) for a certain kind of critic who can't understand jazz that's genuinely popular or genuinely original. Jamal may have also suffered for achieving a certain perfection in his '50s trio with bassist Israel Crosby and drummer Vernel Fournier.

This solo recording dates from 2017, when Jamal was already 87, but there's nothing to suggest decline in his skills as he explores a program including personal standbys, enchanted ballads and scattered originals, occasionally with his regular bassist James Cammack joining in. The music can pass for sweetly decorative, but it's also music by a man who would open a jazz club, in Chicago circa 1960, which didn't serve alcohol and was called the Alhambra for that Andalusian encyclopedia of geometric pattern and infinite reflection, a temple of perfectly chiseled text. Sometimes the music doesn't seem strong on shape or drama, but Jamal is a master of a dense chromaticism overlaid on beautiful tunes and he shapes adjoining, shifting segments by drawing from that chromatic wealth, moving from overlays of exotic modes suddenly to reveal the original composer's particular and perfect harmonic sequence, as in "Poinciana", a tune with which Jamal has undoubtedly spent vastly more time than its composer, Nat Simon, who jotted it down on a restaurant table cloth and seems to have adapted it from a Cuban folk song. The same gifts are applied to repertoire like "So Rare" (Jimmy Dorsey), "I Should Care" (Axel Stordahl-Paul Weston-Sammy Cahn), "What's New" (Bob Haggart-Johnny Burke), "Spring Is Here" (Richard Rodgers-Lorenz Hart) and Johnny Mandel's "Emily", a song so beautiful that Jamal barely deigns to exploit its melody.

There's a sense of reverie, of reflection, everywhere here. A well-known moment in Ken Burns' *Jazz* is when Duke Ellington, being interviewed at a piano and playing sporadically, remarks, "This isn't piano. This is dreaming." That's precisely what Jamal offers here.

For more information, visit [pias.com/labels/jazz-village](http://pias.com/labels/jazz-village)



**Giuseppe Verdi Entangled**  
Oscar Del Barba OX Quartet (Da Vinci)  
by Elliott Simon

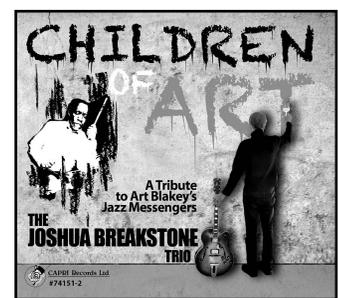
Oscar Del Barba's earlier OX Trio (OX, Dot Time Records, 2017) expands to a quartet and focuses on the pianist's arranging and leadership skills on *Giuseppe Verdi Entangled*. Del Barba wisely recruited clarinetist/saxophonist Achille Succi, who turns 49 this month, to help him reimagine these 10 pieces drawn from three of Verdi's operas. Succi's tonal mastery, especially on bass clarinet, and overall improvisational ability bring Del Barba's creative arrangements to life. Bassist Giacomo Papetti and drummer Andrea Ruggeri have a long association with Barba and all are at home with Succi's style. This is important and the program succeeds largely on the quartet's holistic approach, with Succi an integral part of these modern jazz explorations.

The session includes well known selections from *Il Trovatore*, *La Traviata* and *La Forza Del Destino* but two of Verdi's most famous operas, *Aida* and *Rigoletto*, are not represented. The band has no operatic pretense but instead uses Verdi's context and intent to create new music. The music stands on its own merit and can

bear little relationship to the original melody with a well-known refrain, as on opener "Coro Degli Zingari (Anvil Chorus)", sometimes seeming out of place. But more often than not Del Barba frees songs like "Addio al Passato" from their baggage while enhancing their exoticism.

Papetti's emotive touch combines with Succi's gorgeous tone and Barba's plaintive chords for a moving rendition of "Di Provenza il Mar, il Suol". The bassist then sets a bewitching atmosphere for "Di Quella Pira" before Ruggeri, through freeform-ish maneuverings, morphs it into fiery ambience. On "Overture of Destiny", the band becomes a superb storyteller conveying a range of emotions within Del Barba's brilliant setting. Closer "Preludio" continues the deep expressive mood through elegant Succi/Papetti voicings while Del Barba instills hints of chordal optimism. The OX Quartet excels as a unit as they open up new vistas for these 19th Century arias.

For more information, visit [davinci-edition.com/cds/da-vinci-jazz](http://davinci-edition.com/cds/da-vinci-jazz)



**Children of Art: A Tribute to Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers**  
Joshua Breakstone Trio (Capri)  
by Joel Roberts

A guitar trio may seem like a curious format for paying tribute to Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, a band that epitomized uptempo hard bop and featured a long line of legendary horn players like Jackie McLean, Hank Mobley, Benny Golson, Lee Morgan, Curtis Fuller, Wayne Shorter and Wynton Marsalis, among others. But veteran guitarist Joshua Breakstone is more than up to the task on his latest release *Children of Art: A Tribute to Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers*, tackling the Blakey legacy in a mellower-than-usual tone with the help of bassist Martin Wind (a frequent collaborator with drummer Matt Wilson, pianist Bill Mays and many others) and former Bill Evans drummer Eliot Zigmund.

Breakstone, a New Jersey native who turns 65 this month, has impeccable hardbop chops and his trio mates are a fine match for his sophisticated, unhurried approach. He has previously issued tributes to Grant Green, Wes Montgomery, Thelonious Monk and Bud Powell and recorded his Blakey tribute in 2019 in honor of the drummer's 100th birthday.

Rather than revisiting the Jazz Messengers' biggest hits, like Bobby Timmons' "Moanin'" or Dizzy Gillespie's "A Night in Tunisia", Breakstone focuses on compositions by former members of the band, including some that were never recorded under the Messengers banner, such as Benny Golson's swinging "Stablemates" and Horace Silver's lyrical and evocative "Lonely Woman". Lee Morgan's "Witch Doctor", the opener, serves as a no-frills bop workout for the entire trio while Golson's "Holy Land" starts with an authoritative unaccompanied solo by the leader before Wind and Zigmund join in. Breakstone also takes on some less well-known fare like the fairly straightforward early Wayne Shorter tune "El Toro" and Walter Davis Jr.'s "Splendid".

The title cut, the lone Breakstone original, is a quiet and introspective ballad, a perfect closer to this thoughtful tribute to a jazz giant and his many descendants.

For more information, visit [caprirecords.com](http://caprirecords.com)



**The Complete Morton Project**  
**Andrew Oliver/David Horniblow (Lejazzetal)**  
 by Scott Yanow

All over the world, although often below the radar of the jazz press, talented musicians have long been exploring vintage jazz from the 1920s. England has a particularly viable classic jazz scene, which includes pianist Andrew Oliver (originally from Portland, Oregon) and clarinetist Dave Horniblow. The talented pair have recorded together in several groups including The Dime Notes, The Vitality Five and Horniblow's Hot 3.

Oliver and Horniblow love the music of Jelly Roll Morton, jazz' first great composer, arranger and pianist, who died 79 years ago this month. In 2018 they performed all 93 of Morton's compositions as YouTube videos. Their single CD, *The Complete Morton Project*, unfortunately does not live up to its title but does contain 15 of Morton's pieces.

The emphasis is on Morton's lesser-known works, with only "Shreveport Stomp", "Black Bottom Stomp" and "Mr. Jelly Lord" coming close to being standards. Most intriguing are two numbers never recorded by the composer. While "Croc-O-Dile Cradle" is very much in the tradition of his 1920s compositions, "Gan Jam" from around 1940 is quite modern, influenced by classical music and a bit eerie.

Oliver can sound close to Jelly Roll Morton but is generally creative within Morton's style rather than closely copying what the pianist did on records. Horniblow, who is heard on bass clarinet on two numbers and bass saxophone during one other, plays clarinet very much in the 1920s style, hinting at Johnny Dodds, Omer Simeon and their contemporaries but mostly sounding like himself.

In addition to enjoying the frequently hot playing, a listen to *The Complete Morton Project* allows one to admire the wide range of Morton's writing, from the futuristic one-chord piece "Jungle Blues" and lowdown "I Hate A Man Like You" (which Morton recorded with singer Lizzie Miles) to the virtuosic "Finger Buster" and exciting "Black Bottom Stomp".

Now if only Oliver and Horniblow could be persuaded to record the other 78 Morton songs.

For more information, visit [lejazzetal.com](http://lejazzetal.com)



**Round Again**  
**Joshua Redman, Brad Mehldau,**  
**Christian McBride, Brian Blade (Nonesuch)**  
 by Thomas Conrad

The phrase "allstar band" is thrown around too loosely in jazz. No one would dispute that it applies here, but the people on *Round Again* constitute an allstar band with a difference. 26 years ago, they were just saxophonist Joshua Redman's young quartet. Redman says that, even at the time, he knew his first group would be short-lived. He knew his sidemen were in too much demand. They stayed together a year

and a half and made one album, *MoodSwing*, in 1994.

There are pros and cons to all-star bands. Typically, they offer major solo firepower. Typically, they lack the cohesion and purpose of a working ensemble. But the group here, 26 years on, is still tight.

*Round Again* is an impeccably executed recording, especially so given the tricky program material. Redman takes some formidable solos, primarily on his second horn, soprano, and bassist Christian McBride and drummer Brian Blade, the latter who turns 50 this month, know countless ways to swing.

But it is a curious album. You ask yourself, "Why don't I care more about this very nice record?" Maybe because it is only a very nice record. Maybe because of the tunes. There are seven well-crafted, forgettable originals, with contributions from each member of the quartet. This band could have eaten seven standards alive, but their own tunes are mostly like Redman's "Undertow": vaguely familiar melodies and erudite arrangements with fidgety, convoluted, precise unisons by Redman and pianist Brad Mehldau. Redman's "Silly Little Love Song" is, unfortunately, just that. "Floppy Diss", McBride's kinky blues, is clever and cute. The best tune is the simplest and shortest. Blade's ballad "Your Part to Play" is unfolded with sincerity by Redman on tenor.

The player who is least well served in this format is Mehldau. He usually sounds like he is in a box.

When they made *MoodSwing* 26 years ago, these guys were less sophisticated and much less famous but more likely to convey the exhilaration of discovery and the passion of inner necessity.

For more information, visit [nonesuch.com](http://nonesuch.com)



**Koneko**  
**Gato Libre (Libra)**  
 by Tyran Grillo

The eighth album by Gato Libre, since 2015 a trio consisting of trumpeter Natsuki Tamura (who turns 69 this month), Yasuko Kaneko on trombone and Satoko Fujii on accordion, is a minimal and delightful context for the patient charm of Tamura's compositions. By turns mysterious and whimsical, improvisational elements bring out the rapport of the trio, one built on deep listening, while prewritten material exploits their ability to hone in on what is most essential.

In that respect, the album's title (Japanese for "kitten") gives some insight into the blend of mystique and playfulness one experiences in these eight feline-themed scenes. Each track, in fact, is named for a different kind of cat. On the one hand, we encounter programmatic gems like "Ieneko" (domesticated cat) and "Bakaneko" (silly cat), both of which sport a range of textures and emotions while exhibiting Tamura's painterly brilliance, as well as the avant-gardism of his formative years. On the other hand, we join the "Noraneko" (stray cat) and the "Yamaneko" (wild cat) on their nocturnal adventures, rendered in exquisite detail by Fujii's starlight, Kaneko's slinking motions and Tamura's restless energy. Together, they wander through favorite haunts in search of sustenance in the spirit of survival. The latter tune feels like a folk song developing in slow motion and finds Kaneko in a particularly soulful mode.

Each musician, but especially Tamura, is content coloring both inside and outside the lines, allowing quiet atmospheres to unravel as they will until the

closing "Kanbanneko". The term refers to a cat that hangs out in a store (often seen sleeping in the window) and is well known by regular customers. Like its namesake, the music seems to insist on being left alone in a corner as the hustle and bustle of commerce hums in the background. And because the recording is only subtly processed, allowing for instruments' natural reverberations to shine through, we can be sure that every meow is heard.

For more information, visit [librarecords.com](http://librarecords.com)



**C. M. Musictrain (Revisited)**  
**Carsten Meinert (Spectator-Stunt)**  
 by Steven Loewy

This expanded reissue of Danish tenor saxophonist Carsten Meinert's long out-of-print *C. M. Musictrain* album from 1969 comes as a welcome surprise. Barely remembered outside of Denmark, Meinert was an early adaptor of some of the new waves from the '60s, absorbing the influence of John Coltrane, as evinced by Meinert's full-throated rendition of "Naima" on his seminal *To You* album, released the year before. The CD edition includes photos from the original session, in which a total of 15 players participated and modest, though valuable, new liner notes from Ole Matthiessen, who performed on the original album on Ampliano (electric piano), and, as producer of the reissue, enhanced the sound. The only person in the band who built a noteworthy international career was a young guitarist named Pierre Dørge, who went on to record dozens of albums as a leader, but for whom his contributions to *C. M. Musictrain* were so obscure that his role as a sideman is rarely, if ever, listed in his discographies.

The recording is made up of the original five tracks, including a 30-second snippet for "I'm Going to Valby by the Railroad Track", plus three additional takes of minor interest. What distinguishes the album are the original compositions and arrangements by Meinert, whose writing revels in a stew of fusion, funk and avant garde saxophone, all with an almost danceable beat. As a result, the album is surprisingly accessible and although the sound is sometimes somewhat dated (largely due to the electric piano) it is nonetheless riveting and often exciting. To put the album in greater perspective, it was recorded around the same time as Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew* and in some ways echoes its concept.

The catchy theme of the rhythmically powerful opener "San Sebastian" sets the tone, with lots of percussive support and strong keyboards, with Meinert soaring on his varitone-altered sax, a relic of the '60s. It is not hard to consider the influences of not only Coltrane, but of Pharoah Sanders, Lonnie Liston Smith and others. "Before Sunrise" features an attractive and slow Sanders-like melody in which Meinert soars above the rhythm, along the way allowing for a meaty solo from bassist Henrik Hove. The third/title track also features a solid, full toe-tapping melody with plenty of percussion and saxophone, plus some noteworthy amplified piano, solo acoustic bass and guitar while fusing rock, free-ish jazz and pop influences. "This Time" is more of the same, with skillful writing, busy percussion and attractive saxophone, bass and piano solos, mostly played with dedicated support from the ensemble.

For more information, visit [sundance.dk](http://sundance.dk)

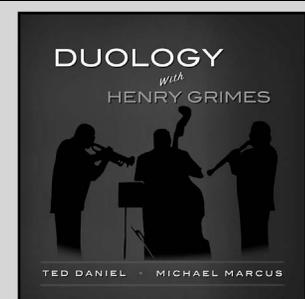


**A Rite For All Souls**  
The Mark Harvey Group  
(Americas Musicworks)  
by Donald Elfman



**For Now**  
Brian Landrus (BlueLand)  
by Marco Cangiano

## DROP THE NEEDLE



**With Henry Grimes**  
**Duology (Ujamaa)**  
by Marc Medwin

In the liner notes for John Coltrane's *Live At Birdland* album, Amiri Baraka (then Leroi Jones) referred to the "daringly human quality" of his music and suggested that with ears open to it, a listener may think of "weird and wonderful things" and possibly "even become one of them." This reviewer was reminded of those sensations and sense of becoming upon encountering Mark Harvey's extraordinary "aural theatre" *A Rite For All Souls*.

The recording is a complete and unedited performance of a concert at Old West Church in Boston (at which Harvey was an intern minister) on Halloween Night 1971. It embraces explorations of sound, spiritual, social and political direction and activism, poetry, a sense of theater and, certainly, the colors and textures of jazz and improvisational music. The musicians are Harvey (oddly credited on "brasswinds"), Peter Bloom on woodwinds and both Craig Ellis and Michael Standish on percussion (alas, the latter two, so vital to the ultimate power of this music, are now deceased). There is a dazzling array of instruments at work and play here: trumpet, flugelhorn, conch shell, saxophones, clarinet, kazoo, mbira, brake drums, iron cookware ... and so on.

The 90-minute concert opens with "Invocation" and a recitation called "Spel Against Demons" (by poet Gary Snyder). There are mysterious sounds played on flute, a length of pipe and a saxophone mouthpiece. Immediately, Baraka's words come into play as the resonances are otherworldly, yet, somehow inviting and pointing towards what else may come. Harvey is strange and wonderful on trumpet, punctuated by delicate percussion sounds. There's a trap drum solo by Ellis and that shepherds in Bloom playing tenor saxophone in a full-throated and enfolding manner. Ellis takes on Snyder's poem, a sort of anti-violence intonation, and it ends in an actual Sanskrit chant.

In the church, the four return in monk's robes and blow into organ pipes for a "Fanfare", which, evolving into a meeting of trumpet and tenor, leads to a recitation of William Butler Yeats' noted "Second Coming" poem, recited by Standish. Bloom takes off on tenor again, eddying into a more lyrical section by Harvey, who spreads his palette on trumpet and makes intensely intimate use of silence as a kind of outlining device to highlight his distinctive sounds. And so, the first disc concludes.

In the second section, we hear again the deliberate and yet subtle interaction between group and individual. There's a haunting prelude with cosmically unusual sounds that introduce Ellis reading his own "Napalm: Rice Paper", which seems like a threnody to the suffering of children, from the Vietnam War and beyond—think of all war and the unique situation in our world at present. Bloom on soprano and Harvey on French horn express sorrow and compassion and then there is a devastating percussion duet seeming to encapsulate the violence and suffering the poem has amassed.

*A Rite For All Souls* is a deeply engaging series of improvisations, sound worlds and rich musical expression.

For more information, visit [americasmusicworks.com](http://americasmusicworks.com)

This is Brian Landrus' tenth album as a leader and marks quite a departure from his highly praised *Generations*, which was performed by a 25-piece orchestra. The Brooklyn-based multi-instrumentalist and composer specializes in low woodwind family, which makes him a much in-demand performer. Recorded on BlueLand, which Landrus founded some ten years ago, this CD goes back to a core quartet, which is augmented by the trumpet of Michael Rodriguez on a few pieces and a string quartet (violinists Sara Caswell and Joyce Hammann, violist Lois Martin and cellist Jody Redhage-Ferber) arranged by Robert Livingstone Aldridge for about half of the 13 tunes, consisting of ten originals and three standards (Bronislaw Kaper-Paul Francis Webster's "Invitation" and Thelonious Monk's "Round Midnight" and "Ruby My Dear").

Although the album conveys Landrus' personal views on romance as gleaned from his own experiences, it provides for a varied and nuanced musical journey. The core quartet comprises Fred Hersch (piano), Drew Gress (bass) and Billy Hart (drums), all of whom require no further introduction. Hersch is a real asset with his subtle comping, graceful intros and exquisite solos. Gress is unfortunately penalized by a slightly off-balance sound and limited to a single solo outing, whereas Hart excels in subtleties and the capacity to adapt to and enrich every musical situation.

As to the augmented quartet, the pleasant surprise is Rodriguez' warm and supple trumpet sound and phrasing, of which it would have been pleasant hearing a bit more besides the brilliant solos in the opening "The Signs" and "J.J.". The string quartet does not always mesh completely with the core quartet, but provides emphasis and depth besides dramatic intros, such as on the title track, "For Whom" and "The Second Time". Caswell delivers a delightful solo on "Her Smile".

Landrus' nimble baritone saxophone dominates the proceedings, with his tendency to exploit the instrument's upper reaches and its more delicate aspects in contradistinction to most baritone specialists. There is no trace of zealotry and the notes flow unhurriedly. "The Night of Change" also features Landrus on alto flute, which provides an inspired pairing with muted trumpet besides a heartfelt solo contribution. But it is Landrus' bass clarinet that hits a particular chord with a dramatic solo interpretation of "Round Midnight", left hanging at the end without resolve, and an almost restrained reading of "For Whom".

As noted, the program, while coherent, leaves ample room for variety: "The Signs" comes across like a postbop standard that could have been performed by Art Blakey and The Jazz Messengers in the '60s; "Clarity" is more of a ballad, well supported by the string quartet; "The Miss", following Hersch's exquisite overture, lands on a lightly bouncing waltz showcasing Hart's nimble cymbal work; and "J.J." delivers more evocative atmospheres. Last, but certainly not least, as they say, Landrus and Hersch wrap up the CD with a wonderful duo rendition of "Ruby My Dear". There is much to listen to in Landrus' most recent effort, and there is certainly more to come.

For more information, visit [briandlandrus.com](http://briandlandrus.com). Landrus will be discussing the album and performing solo Jul. 17th at 2 pm at [youtu.be/bG7Vvodwm2I](https://youtu.be/bG7Vvodwm2I).

This vinyl-only release from the long-standing duo of multi-instrumentalist Michael Marcus (found here on clarinet) and trumpeter Ted Daniel comes from a July 2009 concert at Columbia University and features guest bassist and violinist Henry Grimes. As it turns out, this would be the last to be released during Grimes' life; he passed away in April of 2020 from complications of COVID-19. It attests both to his still-underappreciated artistry and to a duo that should be more adequately documented.

There is no doubting the Daniel/Marcus chemistry, as can be felt when the openly modal improvisation "Reconciliation" eases its way into existence. The melodies liberally peppering the album also display a tightness and focus demonstrating the duo's affinity, as does every diverse solo they play and every interaction in which they engage. Dig Daniel's vast arsenal of articulations and the way he leaps register and rhetorical topic in the proverbial single bound, or relish Marcus' highest register exhortations, which need to be heard to be believed. His dulcet tones on the head of Marcus' "Spiral Landscape" are also a wonder to behold, as is Daniel's deliciously muted horn.

Anchoring it all, from centerstage, is Grimes. As Marcus and Daniel navigate what multi-instrumentalist Cooper-Moore would call the neighborhood of history and influence, Grimes is right there with that stunning bass pizzicato and the timbrally complex arco, alternately crystalline and miles-deep, which travels all over the instrument with dexterity equaled only by invention. He is in his post-return prime on this date and lifts the group beyond itself as it creates a special kind of counterpoint that offers new aspects on each airing. The only tragedy is that his bass is undermixed and some more presence would have drawn welcome attention to every detail in the pioneering language that was uniquely his. At least his Protean liquid-gold violin, opening the second side, comes through with the clear presentation it deserves.

Despite extraordinary playing throughout, including some delightfully humorous moments from Daniel, nothing prepares for the sublimated majesty and power of Daniel's closer "Truth Telling", as muted trumpet carries the gospel-soaked exhortation along, drenched deep in a blues that somehow seems ancient and comforting as it eases from the speakers. Grimes and Daniel emote as one instrument, each cry and moan somehow anguished and sage in equal measure, a thing of beauty whose rhythmic freedom and subtlety speaks to absolute mastery. While the trio gets down in the gutbucket at various points throughout the album, particularly in Daniel's "Qusim", this finale is one of the most trenchant, heartbreaking, uplifting and downright gorgeous pieces of music to grace these ears in some time and a more fitting conclusion to the album is difficult to imagine.

For more information, visit [michaelmarcusmusic.com](http://michaelmarcusmusic.com)



**Secrets Are The Best Stories**  
**Kurt Elling (Edition)**  
**Life Of The Party**  
**OWL Trio with Kurt Elling (Newvelle)**  
 by Marilyn Lester

Kurt Elling, 2020 Jazz Journalists Awards Best Vocalist winner, has long proved himself the thinking person's jazz singer and poet/lyricist, combining intelligence and emotional accessibility in his work. His 2018 album *The Questions* tackled large social and political issues. *Secrets Are The Best Stories* takes that exploration further in an ambitious partnership and collaboration with Panamanian pianist/composer Danilo Pérez, whose music is found on several of the tracks; "Epilogo" the final piece, an evocative, soulful piano solo, smartly showcases his work. Bassist Clark Sommers, percussionist Rogério Boccato and drummer Johnathan Blake are joined on selected tracks by guitarist Chico Pinheiro, alto saxophonist Miguel Zenón and percussion master Román Díaz.

*Secrets Are The Best Stories* is much more than the sum of its parts. This inspired voice of protest emphasizes the spoken word, mostly delivered as *sprechgesang*—an amalgam of plainchant, *recitativo* and *parlando*, demanding that close attention be paid. Each of the 11 tracks reflect the expressive compositions of Pérez as well as arrangements of Wayne Shorter, Jaco Pastorius, Vince Mendoza and others and with additional narrative input from a few other sources. From the outset, "The Fanfold Hawk (for Franz Wright)" to a Pastorius melody creates a sacred experience; with multi-tracked voices, Elling's lyric is delivered like a hymn. Leading into track two, "A Certain Continuum" (Pastorius), Díaz' percussion creates a primal, tribal experience. Two purely melodic works appear near the end of the album. "Rabo de Nube", music and lyrics by Cuban artist Silvio Rodríguez, is sung by Elling in Spanish tinged with melancholy but still expressive of hope. It's also the tune that demonstrates Elling's rich baritone and vocal dynamism.

The clear standout of the album is "Beloved (for Toni Morrison)", with brilliant full-ensemble playing and Elling intensely delivering a nuanced retelling of Morrison's story through a narrative building to a stunning conclusion. Also significant is "Song of the Rio Grande (for Oscar and Valerie Martinez-Ramirez)", based on a true story. As the dramatic arc builds, Pérez' music, impelling forward like the raging river, becomes dissonant and chaotic. Elling's overdubbed harmonies intensify the text, which slams hard into its conclusion: "America, you've lost your mind". The last vocal track of *Secrets Are The Best Stories*, "Esperanto", with Elling's lyrics to music by Mendoza, returns to the beginning, to the sacred, harkening back to the mysteries addressed in *The Questions*. This time Elling answers those questions with a profound sense of what is uplifting and what is holy.

The OWL Trio, with Orlando le Fleming (bass), Will Vinson (tenor sax) and Lage Lund (guitar), in their unique marriage of two types of strings and a reed, produce a synergistic, creative interweave of smooth sound. *Life Of The Party*, featuring Elling on two of the nine tracks, offers free improvisations on original material and three standards. The latter, "We'll Be Together Again" (Frankie Laine/Carl Fischer), "Time on My Hands" (Vincent Youmans/Harold Adamson/Mack Gordon) and "The End of a Love Affair" (Edward C. Redding) are given a respectful bow to their lovely melodies, with creative ideas providing a total package

of inspired jazz originality.

Elling's poetry forms the lyric to Lund's title track and Vinson's "Perfectly Out of Place". Both tunes are fairly lyrical, in contrast to Elling in dark mode, with "getting old" a common thread in both. "These are dark times," Elling has said. Yet his *sprechgesang* vocal technique is full of energy. His narrative takes up a little less than half the run time for each track, but what he has to say and the unembellished, direct force of how he says it is powerful. The soulful playing of the trio in and around Elling's semi-sung words deftly gives support to that power. Among the other original pieces, a potent contribution is "Struggle Session" by le Fleming. His forceful bass playing drives the piece home with intense musical onomatopoeia.

For more information, visit [editionrecords.com](http://editionrecords.com) and [newvelle-records.com](http://newvelle-records.com)



**Northern Noir**  
**Ran Blake/Andrew Rathbun (SteepleChase)**  
 by John Pietaro

Throughout his storied career, the position of pianist Ran Blake, 2020 Jazz Journalists Awards Boston Jazz Hero Award winner, in the jazz pantheon has been singular, with one hand reaching into the well of modernism as a matter of course. But this isn't "Third Stream" anything; the music stands alone, bathed in the richest blue-blacks and charcoal grays. It's only fitting, then, that he's a deep aficionado of all things 'noir' with a true affection for films noir. He's explored such concepts before, yet—as always—cannot help but outdo his earlier forays.

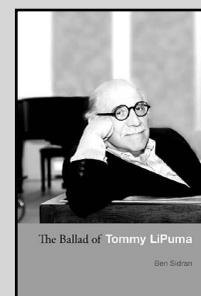
*Northern Noir* is a deep walk through not only some notable film music but also songs that bridge the era (including Thelonious Monk's "Pannonica") and originals, drawing every nuance from the period and the acoustics of the studio. The darkness at the heart of this genre is gorgeously portrayed through Blake's expansive harmonies, stealth basslines and bedazzling passing tones, which blur harmonies much as the shadows of the movies confound conception. Blake, he of the wide intervallic grasp and alternate use of space and chordal clouds, loves the intimacy of duos. While he's known for working with deeply expressive vocalists, for this outing his partner is Canadian tenor saxophonist (and film composer, not incidentally) Andrew Rathbun, whose instrumental voice is no less expressive.

Selections include powerful, perhaps definitive renditions of "Dr. Mabuse the Gambler" (Konrad Elfers), "The Spiral Staircase" (Roy Webb) and "A Streetcar Named Desire" (Alex North). David Raksin's "Laura" is performed akin to a dream soundtrack, designed to seduce and mesmerize, much like the film. And the adaptation of Bernard Herrmann's "Vertigo" score, incorporating several themes, is initially played at tempo and true to the page, before taking the listener through a night journey.

The album both opens and closes with the stirring "Strange Fruit", composed by Abel Meeropol in 1938. Both versions capture the sad urgency built into its every fiber. How prescient a statement Blake and Rathbun emit (the recording was completed in 2018) as the nation is again embroiled in mass protests against racial injustice. And lynchings.

For more information, visit [steeplechase.dk](http://steeplechase.dk)

## IN PRINT



**The Ballad of Tommy LiPuma**  
**Ben Sidran (Nardis)**  
 by Kyle Oleksiuk

An uncut gem, the music biography of the year. *The Ballad of Tommy LiPuma* is about record producer Tommy LiPuma (1936-2017) but is not a traditional biography—more compressed, more fun and less careerist. If biographies are beer then this is tequila.

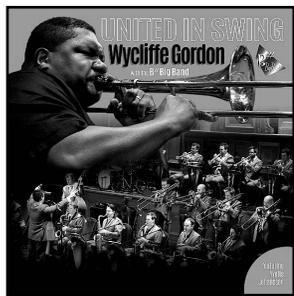
The man himself is mostly famous for having produced wildly popular jazz records in the late 20th Century. His style was unusual; he would remain on the same side of the glass as the musicians. The records he made this way were real commercial triumphs, but the highest highs of his production career are the lowest lows of the book; Natalie Cole, Paul McCartney, George Benson and Diana Krall, the artists that LiPuma won Grammys with, are great musicians but boring characters and Ben Sidran can't wring much drama or humor out of the production process.

The real content of the book is its freewheeling stories of LiPuma's personal life. The first of these begins when his father Sam moves from Sicily to America in search of the man who killed his father Giuseppe. He never succeeds. Instead he opens a barbershop in Cleveland and starts using hair tonic to make bootleg liquor. Soon he's wrapped up in something called the Cleveland "Sugar Wars", getting visits from the Feds. The book is filled with unexpected stories like this, of people going from the donkey trails of Sicily to the gangster wars of Cleveland, from the barbershop to the red carpet. During the depression, kids start out on the baseball field and end up on the iron lung. In the '60-70s, LSD-inhaling jazzniks are making piles of money and in the '80s in rehab complaining about gangsta rap.

The common element is LiPuma's sense of humor. Describing his childhood, he says: "My mother, bless her heart, could not carry a tune... and when she got a few bars into a song, apparently I told her, 'That's okay, Mommy, stop singing and I'll go to sleep.'" After his father retired from bootlegging, "the Feds continued to come by his shop every so often to check up on him. They would say, 'We want to check that delivery of hair tonic you just got.' Sam would say 'Go ahead, take a drink.'" Even among the famous and talented, there are goofs and gags: paranoid Phil Spector throws a coffee maker into a ravine because he's convinced it's a bomb. Miles Davis hears a guitarist playing too quickly and says "Man, I'm gonna send you to Notes Anonymous."

Sidran is a songwriter and used the songwriter's toolbelt to write this book. One part is vernacular language. People know where the bodies are buried, they're riding high and riding low, an honest person isn't in anybody's pocket, an ugly man has a face for radio and sadness is as deep as the ocean. Another part is simple, slapstick fart joke-level humor that most everybody enjoys. He writes all of Sam's dialogue like this: "I'm-a gonna sit down next to you and hold out-a my hand". *The Ballad of Tommy LiPuma* is very special and the world would be a better place with more books like it.

For more information, visit [bensidran.com](http://bensidran.com)



**United In Swing**  
**Wycliffe Gordon (with the B# Big Band) (s/r)**  
 by Eric Wendell

Swing is one of the building blocks of jazz, what sets it apart from other genres, especially with big band groups. As a result, big band music suffers a brand crisis as often feeling outdated. However, put the instrumentation in the hands of someone like trombonist Wycliffe Gordon, 2020 Jazz Journalists Awards Best Trombonist winner, and it feels as fresh as it ever has. On *United In Swing: Wycliffe Gordon with the B# Big Band*, Gordon and Co. brilliantly capture the fun of big-band music.

While the album does not bring anything new to big band repertoire, it's a great example of the pure joy that big band music can bring. With the rhythmic and harmonic dexterity of the Australia-based B# Big Band behind him, Gordon's rounded tone cuts right through to the core of each and every tune. An early example is the second track, "In A Mellow Tone", where the Duke Ellington-penned number showcases Gordon's snag and snarl solo approach. At 2:04, Gordon begins his prologue of barks and growls and beautifully complements the ensemble's interplay.

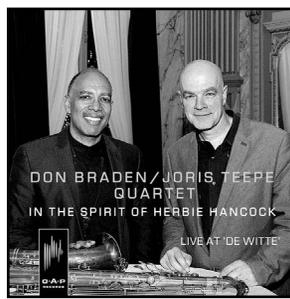
The group's rendition of "Take the 'A' Train" further displays Gordon's beautiful melodic demeanor; during his solo beginning at 1:56, he snaps, bristles

and delights, displaying the sheer joy of this tried and true jazz standard.

The rapport between Gordon and the ensemble is the clear dynamic on the album. The trombonist is most at home with the robust performance of vocalist Yvette Johansson. On "That Old Black Magic" the Harold Arlen-Johnny Mercer classic is invigorated by Johansson's gorgeous burst of bombast and nuance; the result is pure bliss, simple and purposeful in its execution. The Ellington-penned "Cottontail" is Gordon at his most fun, lively and maintaining a joyful feel with the ensemble.

This album is a shining example of the charm big band music provides. While the band is dazzling, the added component of Gordon makes the release a heart-opening triumph that will not soon be forgotten.

For more information, visit [bsharpbigband.com.au](http://bsharpbigband.com.au)



**In The Spirit of Herbie Hancock**  
**Don Braden/Joris Teepe Quartet (OAP)**  
 by George Kanzler

The most famous compositions by Herbie Hancock, 2020 Jazz Journalists Awards Best Keyboardist winner, have become part of the jazz firmament. Tunes such as "Maiden Voyage", "Watermelon Man" and "Speak Like A Child" are regularly called at jam sessions as well as being co-opted as covers for recording sessions and, as here, serving as the ballast repertoire for a semi-ad hoc jazz quartet at a quarterly concert at a private club in The Hague, Netherlands.

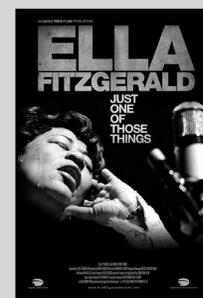
As at jam sessions, the quartet co-led by American saxophonist-flutist Don Braden and Dutch bassist Joris Teepe adapts the bare bones of Hancock's pieces to fit the parameters of their situation, in this case a quartet consisting of a rhythm section—rounded out by Dutch pianist Rob Van Bavel and American (ex-pat) drummer Owen Hart, Jr.—plus horn. Jettisoned are such trappings as the atmospheric ensemble harmonies of "Maiden Voyage" and Caribbean carnival rhythms of "Watermelon Man", yet both pieces retaining the harmonic and captivatingly melodic appeal of the composer's versions.

Braden's soaring tenor saxophone—and on "Butterfly" his flute—dominates the heads and melodies of six (out of nine tracks) Hancock tunes here while Teepe contributes the bulk (five) of the arrangements. They lean toward straightahead hardbop, leavened by the Elvin Jones-like drumming of Hart, Jr., for instance in his polyrhythmic extensions of the basic ballad pulse of "Actual Proof" behind Braden's expansive, billowing tenor solo. Also adding to the appeal of this program is the kinetically engaging Van Bavel, who rumbles with two-hand flourishes on "Speak Like A Child", encapsulates the rollicking blues affirmation of "Driftin'" and creates a swinging contrast between an improvising left hand and melody-grounded right hand on Jerome Kern-Otto Harbach's "Yesterdays", the only standard and a memorable performance all around.

The co-leaders both provide an original each: Braden's "The Ingenious Catalyst" references Hancock standards, its highlight a duologue between tenor and drums; Teepe's "Role Model" begins with a hypnotic bass solo leading to a central theme more Monk-ian than Hancock-like.

For more information, visit [oaprecords.com](http://oaprecords.com)

## ON SCREEN



**Just One of Those Things**  
**Ella Fitzgerald (Eagle Rock Entertainment)**  
 by Anna Steegmann

This gem of a film deserves a worldwide audience. Director Leslie Woodhead tells Ella Fitzgerald's story through old black- and- white shots, images and music that evoke the feeling of the time, never-before-seen performance footage, archival interviews as well as new ones with her drummer Gregg Field, pianist Kenny Barron (who played on her final album), Tony Bennett, Smokey Robinson, Itzhak Perlman, Fitzgerald's son Ray Brown, Jr., Norma Miller and others. The film is visually and musically stunning and you'll be longing for more after watching for 90 minutes.

In the opening scene, dancer Miller, age 98, recalls the Apollo Theater's first amateur night in 1934. The audience laughed at Fitzgerald, a skinny 16-year-old in a dirty dress, when she came on stage. She had planned to perform a dance but changed her mind at the last minute. She had never sung in public before yet won that night.

Fitzgerald lost her mother at age 13 and spent time in a state reformatory school for young truants where she was beaten and kept in solitary confinement. She ran away to Harlem and was homeless for a while. Winning amateur night was her ticket to a new life. She started to sing with Chick Webb's band in 1935. He was Harlem's top bandleader at the time and became her mentor. Audiences loved her immediately. In 1938 she recorded "A-Tisket A Tasket" with Webb's orchestra. The song became a blockbuster hit and reached #1 in the charts.

When Webb died at 34 Fitzgerald took over his band. Later she toured with Dizzy Gillespie and learned to scat improvise and use her voice like a bebop musician. She married bass player Ray Brown, adopted his son, divorced Brown but never stopped playing and touring with him.

Marilyn Monroe, a huge fan, helped her career by demanding that the prestigious Hollywood club Mocambo open its doors to Fitzgerald. The '50s brought her international acclaim. Her manager, Norman Granz, a righteous man and founder of Verve Records, was instrumental in her worldwide success, including her in his various Jazz At The Philharmonic tours; she performed on the world's greatest concert stages and became globally synonymous with the Great American Songbook through her volumes (Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, the Gershwins, et al.) on Verve from 1956-64. As the most popular female jazz singer in the U.S. she sold over 40 million albums in her 60-year career and won 13 Grammy awards. She never complained about her punishing tour schedule and was happiest performing in front of people.

Fitzgerald (1917-96) never led a scandalous life. She did not fit traditional beauty standards. She excelled in multiple musical genres. Duke Ellington called her beyond category. This film shows you why.

For more information, visit [ellafitzgeraldmovie.com](http://ellafitzgeraldmovie.com). To watch this movie, visit [watch.eventive.org/ellamovie](http://watch.eventive.org/ellamovie).



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*Eponymous*  
**Peter Evans *Being & Becoming* (More Is More)**  
*Reality Check*  
**Theo Hill (Posi-Tone)**  
*The Concert: 12 Musings for Isabella*  
**Jason Palmer (Giant Step Arts)**  
 by John Sharpe

Although only 24, Chicago-born, New York-based vibraphonist Joel Ross is already turning heads. He won the Jazz Journalists Association Best Mallets Player 2020 award, although that may mean slightly less to him than the similarly affirmative signing to the Blue Note Records roster, which produced *Kingmaker*, the debut from his band Good Vibes last year. With his highly rhythmic approach allied to a precise focus on tone he's inevitably in demand as a sideman too, vouchsafed by appearances alongside hometown talents drummer Makaya McCraven and trumpeter Marquis Hill. What's refreshing is that he doesn't limit himself, as shown by his participation in the three recordings at hand.

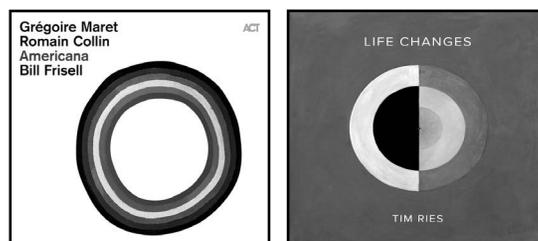
Out of left field is trumpeter Peter Evans' *Being & Becoming*, by an acoustic jazz quartet completed by Ross and two other younger players from the New York scene, bassist Nick Jozwiak and drummer Savannah Harris. Ross and Evans enjoy a predilection for both the insistently repeated motifs and sudden shifts of gear that pepper the trumpeter's five originals as they switch back, swerve and spin off the tracks. Evans' writing accentuates the percussive side of the band, with Ross' abstract comping and incisive counterpoint a major force. Each cut leaps out of the speakers in a blaze of combustive energy, lurching momentum and mutable time, studded with opportunities for the band to shine, whether alone or within the ensembles. Evans doesn't flaunt the technical prowess that illuminates his solo offerings other than in the outrageous corkscrewing between machine-gun spray and driving swing and the expressive asides, which show his command of texture and tonal variation. Highlights include: opener "Matrix", where Evans embroiders a melody reminiscent of Mussorgsky over an off-kilter clatter resourcefully tooled by Harris and Ross; the martial tattoo underpinning a slow lament on "Sphere"; and "Double Drone", which begins as a stumbling ballad before gunning the throttle in a succession of nagging riffs. Each piece jostles with event and drama, as demonstrated on "Point Of Return". Between bookending trumpet/vibraphone tandems, it encompasses shuddering paroxysms of reiterated phrases, dashing lines that propel vibraphone in cascading waves and an unaccompanied passage in which bass sighs and groans, before morphing into a chamber elegy.

Ross also plays an integral part in pianist Theo Hill's *Reality Check* and indeed some of the finest episodes on the disc stem from the lucid exchanges between the two. It seems Hill is going for a classic Blue Note sound on this, his fourth album, inescapably casting Ross in the role of an updated Bobby Hutcherson. Other modernist touches come courtesy of the leader's additional use of Rhodes and synthesizer, drummer Mark Whitfield, Jr.'s sometimes hip-hop-informed beats and bassist Rashaan Carter's fat popping electric bass. Piano and vibraphone get the lion's share of the spotlight, though all the time supported by the robustly flexible work going on beneath. Pick of the ten selections, including seven Hill originals, is the striking opener "Blue Poles", written by David Berkman, which opens out for a vibraphone solo buttressed by gaunt jabbing rhythm gradually coalescing into a stuttering swing. Ross repurposes

that stuttering figure as the basis for his sparkling runs, before Hill takes over in similar vein. While the rest of the program doesn't quite reach those heights there are still some nice moments, such as the singing rapture of "Guardians Of Light", which contains hints of a Keith Jarrett country blues, and the propulsive "Mantra", which recalls McCoy Tyner in its funky vamp and features heated intertwining by hurtling vibraphone and piano. The theme to Mulgrew Miller's "Pressing The Issue" unfurls to launch another breathless flight, in which Ross melds his individual notes into an undulating shimmer.

The ground tilts closer still to the tradition on *The Concert* by trumpeter Jason Palmer, where Ross rounds out a quintet completed by tenor saxophonist Mark Turner, bassist Edward Perez and drummer Kendrick Scott. Palmer's inspiration for the dozen compositions on the double-disc set derives from a series of empty frames on display at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, the result of an audacious heist in 1990, which netted masterpieces by Rembrandt, Vermeer and Manet among others. His pieces reside in the modern mainstream, with nods to the hardbop vernacular among his involved unison themes and strings of subsequent solos. With selections hovering around the ten-minute median, there's ample space for everyone to exhibit their wares. Ross gets to partake much of the time, either furnishing a lattice-like substructure with spare accents or unfolding into longer features predicated on tension built and released. His spot on "Program for an Artistic Soiree (Degas)" provides one of the high points, as he dances a *pas de deux* with just bass at first, before easing into an outing full of characteristic snags and spurts. Then on "An Ancient Chinese Gu", a jittery feel encourages Ross to indulge in pugilistic interplay with Scott especially. While Palmer and Turner, like Scott and Perez a regular collaborator, share an unshowy yet elegantly inventive aesthetic, they excite the most when they interweave, as on the lyrical title track and the stealthy lobe of "Self Portrait (Rembrandt)".

For more information, visit [peterevanstrumpet.com](http://peterevanstrumpet.com), [posi-tone.com](http://posi-tone.com) and [giantsteparts.org](http://giantsteparts.org)



*Americana* (with Bill Frisell)  
**Grégoire Maret/Romain Collin (ACT Music)**  
*Life Changes*  
**Tim Ries (Ropeadope)**  
 by Jim Motavalli

Coincidences abound. Fact: yesterday, by chance I listened to a new album by another European harmonica player, Hermine Deurloo. Fact: I was just reading about the recording of Dire Straits' *Brothers in Arms* and here's a new album by a Swiss harmonica player featuring that tune. The album is led by Grégoire Maret and keyboard player Romain Collin and is primarily a duet project. Don't buy it expecting the new album by Bill Frisell, 2020 Jazz Journalists Awards Best Guitarist winner. But applying new changes to *Americana* is one of Frisell's delightful obsessions and one shared by Maret and Collin. A gathering of forces seemed appropriate and with Clarence Penn on drums (used sparingly) they convened on Brooklyn's Bunker Studios.

This is lovely, delicate, calming music, appropriate at a time like this. Maret and Collin (who is French) both live in the U.S. and their simpatico playing implies regular interaction. Frisell doesn't appear on every track, but is a great asset on his own "Small Town" (playing banjo!) and "Rain, Rain".

Jazz harmonica playing is a largely European tradition—consider the great Toots Thielemans. Maret is undoubtedly influenced by Thielemans, but at least on this album has a gentler touch. The music is collectively spun, an organic weave of the players—listen to Maret's "Back Home" for a master class in subtlety. Collin writes movie scores and his "San Louis Obispo" is very cinematic, a catchy theme easy to imagine over end credits. Collin's playing is lilting and loping and a perfect foil for the other two. The hit is the take on Jimmy Webb's "Wichita Lineman". Harmonica tracks Glen Campbell's voice line by line and with equal poignancy. Then Frisell becomes the nominal lead voice, but there are no solos per se. Just that Kansas lineman, still on the line. Equally sublime is Justin Vernon/Bon Iver's "Re: Stacks".

Tim Ries is a jazz guy with a long resumé including lots of first-tier session work and holding down both saxophone and keyboard chairs in The Rolling Stones since 1999. His new album, *Life Changes*, is fascinating jazz-rock fusion, with guest star Keith Richards channeling his inner Al Di Meola. Ha ha, no it isn't. It's a straight jazz album, with not a hint of "Jumpin' Jack Flash". And the guitarist is, once again, Frisell.

All the compositions are by Ries, except "Monk's Dream", dedicated to the late Joe Henderson. And if The Stones didn't influence the music, their patronage did perhaps give Ries the wherewithal to record a lovely album with myriad name players—in addition to Frisell and Maret, they include Jack DeJohnette on drums, Scott Colley (one track) and James Genus on bass and Larry Goldings on piano and organ.

The title piece wafts in on a swaying breeze. "For Elis" (Regina, perhaps?) picks up the pace and features Ries getting his ya-yas out in an assured postbop style, followed by a nice turn from Maret. DeJohnette is strongly assertive and Goldings' slightly discordant piano dances in and out on the tail end. Ries is in full command on this album. Dig the way he comes in, burning on soprano, halfway through "Late Last Night". Jasia Ries plays the violin (at age 11, doubling her father's saxophone) on the theme to "Eliana's Song" (and, in her 20s now, sings impressively on "Bella's Lullaby"). Ries has three daughters and they get three tunes. Ries' wife, Stacey Shames, is a Juilliard-trained harp player and appears on two tracks. "Eliana's Song" rivals "Naima" for tenderness and is so memorably haunting that film directors should secure the rights. On the long (12 minutes plus) version of "Monk's Dream", Ries is on soprano and Goldings on organ, with Frisell initially in a rhythm role. When he solos later, it's (atypically for him) in a mainstream bop mode appropriate to the composition. Goldings supplies a touch of chitlins and gravy, with sublime comping from Frisell. DeJohnette is once again on fire. Great fours at the end. It's a strong piece and could have been recorded anytime in the last 40 years.

Put this album on if you had a bad day; it has an uplifting quality that never wavers. A peace piece, as it were—only the reprise of "Life Changes", with what sounds like backwards tape and a destination-out second half, disturbs the mood. Highlights include Ries' superbly melodic but muscular tenor on "As It Happens", getting driven along by DeJohnette, and Frisell's solo on "Hearing Around Corners", with more superb drumming. On the latter, Ries explores his lower register and Goldings does crazy things to an organ. According to Randy Brecker's liner notes, both tunes were written with DeJohnette in mind.

All the compositions on this album are really good. Maybe writing them is what Ries does backstage at those Stones concerts. Brazilian music was an influence and not only on "Amor Até O Fim". And Shames' harp—a resurgent instrument in jazz, thanks to Brandee Younger—adds invaluable color on another gorgeous charmer, "It's Magic".

For more information, visit [actmusic.com](http://actmusic.com) and [timries.com](http://timries.com)

## BOXED SET



Newvelle Records Presents  
Season Five

Season Five  
Newvelle Records  
by Franz Matzner

A single descriptor for Newvelle's fifth season of subscription-only LPs might be "crisp", like the first taste of a dry martini. All six albums arrive in sleekly art-directed covers. The translucent 180-gram records seem almost futuristic. And then there's the audiophile sound quality, which, even compared to other high-level production, captures in astonishing detail the roster of top-tier musicians populating the series. No common theme or style unites the albums, however, the clarity offered by Newvelle's techniques lends itself to exploration of the subtler realms over excursions into the outer reaches, making for a shared tonal quality of refinement and restraint. A survey of the fifth season's immensity illustrates the results of Newvelle's marriage of superior musicians with superior production across the six-LP set.

In the first notes of the Rufus Reid and Sullivan Fortner duo *Always in the Moment*, one discovers a richness and warmth in Reid's bass rarely

encountered outside of live performance. Fortner's delicate and exact touch rings equally clear as the duo strip tunes like "Duke Ellington's Sound of Love" and "Sophisticated Lady" to their essentials so that they vibrate with newly focused meaning. Pianist Pablo Ablondeo's *Chistreza* moves in the opposite direction, showcasing an octet with the unusual inclusion of violin, clarinet and electric bass. The album leaps with rhythmic energy as the instruments engage in a sensuous dance of exchange defined by Ablondeo's sophisticated orchestration and structured compositions. The opening "La Senal" stalks like a proud cat. The following "Karmavaleando" sprints forward, saxophones, trumpet, violin and clarinet chasing each other joyously, like children playing an elaborate game of tag. *If There Are Mountains* documents the challenging artistic conceit that Dave Douglas and Elan Mehler have undertaken, creating musical renditions of works by esteemed haiku poets and other verse. Composing and performing based on a notoriously irreducible artform seems a recipe for disaster, or at least the trite. In this case, each work is treated with deep respect. The compositions reflect haiku's distilled nature and are conveyed through concise performances the aural depth of which facilitates the instrumentalists' support of Dominique Eade's vocals, delivered with appropriate balance and lightness of touch. *Woodland* presents the Carmen Staaf Trio, which leans toward straight-ahead jazz. Her exceptional use of dynamics and tempo shifts are clearly rendered and Michael Formanek's rock-solid bass resounds warmly, especially at the low end. The trio is able to swing and engage in tight trading, like on the snappy tune "The Hunt" and is

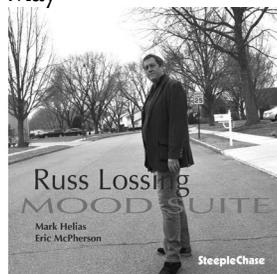
equally adept at conveying nuanced emotional states as on the melancholic "Canons", which marches forward at a somber pace while Staaf sculpts a poignant study in the interwoven threads of loss, beauty and regret. *Book of Dreams*, product of the Patrick Zimmerli Trio, is an evocative affair. Reedplayer Zimmerli's aggressive style coupled with Kevin Hays' insightful piano and Satoshi Takeishi's expressionistic percussion are displayed best on the album's slower tempos. Percussion is famously difficult to record, but here Takeishi's unique voice is revealed in exquisite detail, including elements often obscured, like the gentle overtones of cymbal work, the perfectly placed snare snap and the extended resonance of a bass drum reasserting the pulse. *Life of the Party* by OWL Trio concludes the season with a pleasurable old-school presentation accentuated by Kurt Elling's unmistakable voice, his delivery and grain like a Bukowski poem. The title piece exhibits this in spades as the trio adeptly backs Elling's reading of "The Guy Who Died" by Gregory Corso. The vocal pieces, however, are not all that define the album. The instrumental works provide a series of mellow constructions, including the aptly named "Melanchollie Willage", on which Lage Lund's cool, ever-lithe guitar lines blend seamlessly with saxophonist Will Vinson's patient delivery.

Newvelle Season Five lives up to the elevated standards established in previous seasons. Every element of production is attended to from A to Z, aiding each of the estimable musicians in expressing the scope of their talents. Candy to the ears and sustenance for the mind, it deserves close attention.

For more information, visit [newvelle-records.com](http://newvelle-records.com)

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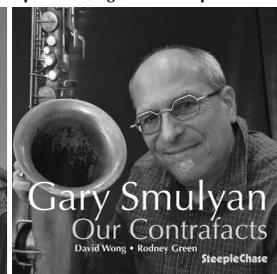
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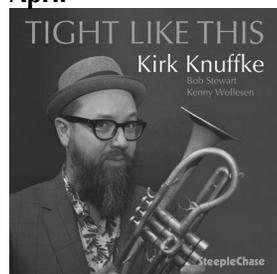


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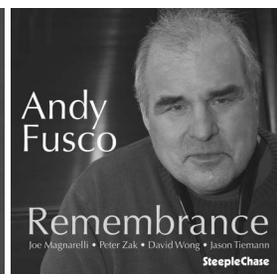
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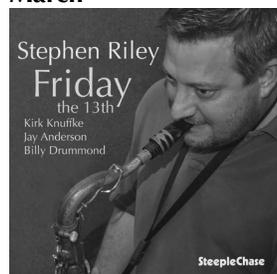


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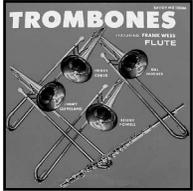


Fred Staton  
Photo by Richard Corman

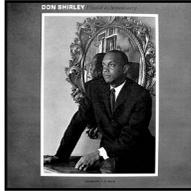


ON THIS DAY

by Andrey Henkin



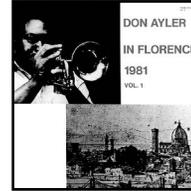
*Trombones And Flute*  
Various Artists (Savoy)  
July 18th, 1956



*Pianist Extraordinary*  
Don Shirley (Cadence)  
July 18th, 1960



*California Concert*  
Various Artists (CTI)  
July 18th, 1971



*In Florence 1981*  
Donald Ayler (Frame)  
July 18th, 1981



@ *The Village Vanguard*  
Fred Hersch (Palmetto)  
July 18th, 1997

It doesn't seem like a fair fight, pitting four trombones against a single flute but if anyone could manage, it would be Frank Wess, one of the masters. He wrote two of the five pieces, the others being one by participating trombonist Henry Coker and a pair of standards. The trombone section is filled out by Bill Hughes, Benny Powell and Jimmy Cleveland, backed by pianist Ronnell Bright, guitarist Freddie Green, bassist Eddie Jones and drummer Kenny Clarke. Wess, Coker, Powell, Green and Jones were all period players in Count Basie's band.

Pianist Don Shirley was classically trained yet, given the racial politics of his era, couldn't pursue a concertizing career, instead becoming a virtuosic jazz player with a slew of albums on Cadence from 1955-61, often in duos and trios (bassist Richard Davis' first recordings). This set, however, is a solo date with a program of standards plus "Russian Folk Song", the latter wherein Shirley's classical abilities are most apparent. His profile got a huge, if controversial, boost from the 2018 Hollywood film *Green Book*, Shirley portrayed by Mahershala Ali.

Los Angeles' Hollywood Palladium was the site for this allstar concert comprising artists who led sessions for CTI in 1971: guitarist George Benson, trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, flutist Hubert Laws, tenor saxophonist Stanley Turrentine and organ player Johnny Hammond, plus some sidemen from those dates: Hank Crawford (alto), Ron Carter (bass), Billy Cobham (drums) and Airtro (percussion). Hubbard, Turrentine and Carter contribute tunes alongside music by James Taylor ("Fire and Rain") and fellow CTI-er Deodato.

Like their contemporaries and fellow saxophonist/trumpeter Wayne and Alan Shorter, Albert and Donald Ayler did not have equally luminous careers. The younger Ayler did win out in the longevity department though his life had its own tragedy. These three concert volumes represent his sole output as a leader, seven long tunes by the trumpeter essayed by an obscure band: Abdul Rahim Mustafa (reeds), Frank Doblekar (tenor saxophone), Anthony Smith (piano), John Davis (guitar), Radu Williams (bass) and Jerry Griffin (percussion).

Of pianist Fred Hersch's few dozen albums as a leader, several entries are live from the hallowed basement that is the Village Vanguard. This set, released 21 years after the fact, is with Hersch's trio of the period, bassist Drew Gress and drummer Tom Rainey, which recorded albums for Enja, Chesky and Nonesuch. The eight-tune program is split between originals (two by Hersch, one by Gress) and standards by Cole Porter, Richard Rodgers-Lorenz Hart, Harry Ruby-Bert Kalmar, Gene de Paul-Don Raye and Harry Warren.

BIRTHDAYS

**July 1**  
†Earle Warren 1914-94  
†Rashied Ali 1935-2009  
†Ndugu Chanceler 1952-2018  
Erik Friedlander b.1960  
Sameer Gupta b.1976  
Brandee Younger b.1983

**July 2**  
†Charlie Kennedy 1927-2009  
Richard Wyands b.1928  
Ahmad Jamal b.1930  
†William Fielder 1938-2009  
Mike Abene b.1942  
Gary Dial b.1954

**July 3**  
†Johnny Coles 1926-96  
Ronnell Bright b.1930  
†Ron Collier 1930-2003  
†Pete Fountain 1930-2016  
Rhoda Scott b.1938  
Dr. Lonnie Smith b.1942  
John Klemmer b.1946

**July 4**  
†Aaron Sachs 1923-2014  
Conrad Bauer b.1943  
Butch Miles b.1944  
Fred Wesley b.1943  
Matt Steckler b.1974

**July 5**  
†Ray Biondi 1905-81  
†Bruce Turner 1922-93  
Sha b.1983

**July 6**  
†Betty Smith 1929-2011  
Chris White b.1936  
Klaus Kugel b.1959  
Torben Waldorff b.1963

**July 7**  
†Tiny Grimes 1916-89  
†Frank Rehak 1926-87  
Doc Severinsen b.1927  
†Hank Mobley 1930-86  
†Joe Zawinul 1932-2007  
Sue Evans b.1951  
Michael Henderson b.1951  
JA Granelli b.1966  
Orlando le Fleming b.1976

**July 8**  
†Bill Challis 1904-94  
†Louis Jordan 1908-75  
†Johnny Mince 1912-97  
†Billy Eckstine 1914-93  
†Ken Hanna 1921-82  
Roy Babbington b.1940  
Sakari Kukko b.1953  
Russ Johnson b.1965  
Kendrick Scott b.1980  
Tyshawn Sorey b.1980  
Matt Wigton b.1980

**July 9**  
†Joe Darensbourg 1906-85  
†June Richmond 1915-62  
†Duke Burrell 1920-93  
†Alex Welsh 1929-82  
†Frank Wright 1935-90

**July 10**  
†Noble Sissle 1889-1975  
†Ivie Anderson 1905-49  
†Cootie Williams 1910-85  
†Milt Buckner 1915-77  
†Dick Cary 1916-94  
†Major Holley 1924-90  
†Buddy Clark 1929-99  
†Arnie Lawrence 1938-2005  
†Lee Morgan 1938-72  
Brian Priestley b.1940

**July 11**  
Henry Lowther b.1941  
†Tomasz Stanko 1942-2018  
Travis Sullivan b.1971  
Will Vinson b.1977

**July 12**  
†Sam "The Man" Taylor 1916-90  
†Paul Gonsalves 1920-74  
†Conte Condoli 1927-2001  
†Big John Patton 1935-2002  
†Jean-François Jenny-Clark 1944-98  
Mark Soskin b.1953  
Ken Thompson b.1976  
Ron Caswell b.1977

**July 13**  
†George Lewis (cl) 1900-68  
†Bengi-Arne Wallin 1926-2015  
†Leroy Vinnegar 1928-99  
†Albert Ayler 1936-70  
†Earl Grubbs 1942-89  
George Lewis (tb) b.1952

**July 14**  
†Billy Kyle 1914-66  
†Alan Dawson 1929-96  
Lauren Seavian b.1979

**July 15**  
†Philly Joe Jones 1923-85  
†Joe Harriott 1928-73  
†Henry P. Warner 1940-2014  
Rodrigo Amado b.1964  
Petros Klampanis b.1981

**July 16**  
†Teddy Buckner 1909-94  
†Cal Tjader 1925-82  
Bobby Previte b.1957

**July 17**  
†Mary Osborne 1921-92  
†Ray Copeland 1926-84  
†Vince Guaraldi 1928-76  
†Joe Morello 1928-2011  
†Ben Riley 1933-2017  
†Nick Brignola 1936-2002  
Chico Freeman b.1949

**July 18**  
†Charlie LaVere 1910-83  
†Ray McKinley 1910-95  
†Joe Comfort 1917-88  
†Don Bagley 1927-2012  
†Carl Fontana 1928-2003  
†Buschi Niebergall 1938-'80s  
†Dudu Pukwana 1938-90  
William Hooker b.1946  
Theo Croker b.1985

**July 19**  
†Buster Bailey 1902-67  
†Cliff Jackson 1902-70  
†Charlie Teagarden 1913-84  
Bobby Bradford b.1934  
†Carmell Jones 1936-96  
Didier Levallet b.1944

**July 20**  
†Bill Dillard 1911-95  
†Joachim Ernst Berendt 1922-2000  
†Ernie Wilkins 1922-99  
Peter Ind b.1928  
†Charles Tyler 1941-82  
Samuel Blaser b.1981

**July 21**  
Helen Merrill b.1930  
†Sonny Clark 1931-63  
Plas Johnson b.1931  
Scott Wendholt b.1965

**July 22**  
†Paul Moer 1916-2010  
†Al Haig 1924-82  
†Bill Perkins 1924-2003  
†Keter Betts 1928-2005  
†Junior Cook 1934-92  
†Johannes Bauer 1954-2016  
Al Di Meola b.1954

**July 23**  
†Emmett Berry 1915-93  
†Johnny Hartman 1923-83  
†Claude Luter 1923-2006  
Bill Lee b.1928  
†Richie Kamuca 1930-77  
†Steve Lacy 1934-2004  
Daoud-David Williams b.1943  
Khan Jamal b.1946  
Loren Schoenberg b.1958  
Achille Succi b.1971

**July 24**  
†Joe Thomas 1909-84  
†Billy Taylor 1921-2010  
Ronnie Lang b.1927  
†Rudy Collins 1934-88  
Mike Mainieri b.1938  
Charles McPherson b.1939  
Jon Faddis b.1953  
Barry Romberg b.1959  
James Zollar b.1959  
Etienne Charles b.1983

**July 25**  
†Damel Howard 1895-1966  
†Johnny Wiggles 1899-1977  
†Johnny Hodges 1907-70  
†Jef Gilson 1926-2012  
†Don Ellis 1934-78  
Günter Lenz b.1938  
Brian Blade b.1970  
Mike DiRubbo b.1970

**July 26**  
†Gus Aiken 1902-1973  
†Erskine Hawkins 1914-93  
†Louie Bellson 1924-2009  
Charli Persip b.1929  
Joanne Brackeen b.1938  
Natsuki Tamura b.1951

**July 27**  
†Charlie Queener 1923-97  
Charlie Shoemaker b.1937  
Carl Grubbs b.1944  
Joel Harrison b.1957  
Jean Toussaint b.1960

**July 28**  
†Corky Corcoran 1924-79  
†Jim Galloway 1936-2014  
Nnenna Freelon b.1954  
Delfeayo Marsalis b.1965

**July 29**  
†Don Redman 1900-64  
†Charlie Christian 1916-42  
†Joe Beck 1945-2008

**July 30**  
†Hilton Jefferson 1903-68  
†Roy Porter 1923-98  
†Frank Smith 1927-74  
†Vernell Fournier 1928-2000  
James Spaulding b.1937  
Hal Smith b.1953  
Kevin Mahogany b.1958

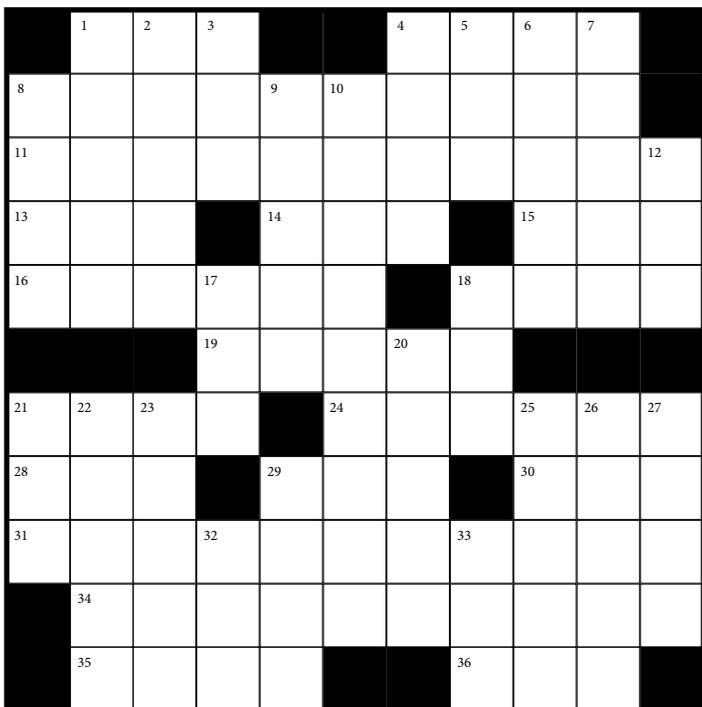
**July 31**  
†Hank Jones 1918-2010  
†Ahmet Ertegun 1923-2006  
†Bjarne Nerem 1923-91  
Kenny Burrell b.1931  
Michael Wolff b.1952  
Stanley Jordan b.1959



**NATSUKI TAMURA**  
July 26th, 1951

The dramatic quality of Natsuki Tamura's trumpet may be traced to his decade playing in the TV bands in his native Japan. His earliest work was in the late '70s-early '80s with Toshiyuki Miyama's New Herd and he attended Berklee College of Music in the '80s. His career has mostly been in avant garde circles since his 1992 quartet debut *Tobifudo*. A key moment came five years later via a duo release with pianist Satoko Fujii (who was on the 1992 date). Since then, the wife-husband team have made dozens of albums under one of their names, as a duo or in cooperative bands of varying sizes and with an international array of collaborators, playing their compositions. —AH

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- Chinese free jazz saxophonist Dan
- Narrator Wu \_\_\_\_-Ying who worked with John Zorn
- New melody over old changes
- Primordial New Orleans tenor saxophonist
- "All The Things You \_\_\_\_"
- Repeated, Monk's daughter's nickname
- Brazilian pianist Salvador or guitarist Minasi
- City where Stan Getz died
- Guitarists Gene and Mike
- 1967 Lee Morgan Blue Note album *The Sixth* \_\_\_\_
- Eyal Maoz project
- Cedar Walton birthplace
- Cuban dance music
- This phone co. has partnered with SFJAZZ
- Russian experimental sound ensembles Mork \_\_\_\_
- Elvin Jones speciality
- Plays over and over?
- Ravi to John, Makaya to Stephen
- 1993 Marcus Miller Dreyfus album *The Sun Don't* \_\_\_\_

DOWN

- Trumpeter Rudy who worked with Nat King Cole and Elvis Presley
- Photographer Adams whose cacti are on the cover of Jimmy Giuffre's *Western Suite*

- Keyboard player Horace who played with Lou Donaldson and Jimmy McGriff
- Dave Brubeck percussionist Lloyd Davis was part of this org.
- Jelly Roll Morton Orchestra tune "Big Fat \_\_\_\_"
- Use these to counter an orchestra of basses?
- Lyricist Harbach, trumpeter Radke and others
- Wrong note
- Saxophonist Greg Wall is one
- 1981 Bob James Tappan Zee album *All \_\_\_\_ Town*
- The London Improvisers Orchestra recorded an album on the \_\_\_\_ President, a decommissioned British Royal Navy ship
- Bassist Junius Paul 2019 debut album on International Anthem
- 1998 Makigami Koichi Tzadik album *Electric* \_\_\_\_
- Jeremy Steig had a band filled with this Greek mythological creature
- Forward-looking Wayne Shorter song
- 1970 Dave Pike Vortex album \_\_\_\_ of *Perceptions*
- Like most Ivo Perelman albums
- Finnish saxophonist Pentti who worked with countryman Edward Vesala
- Vocalist Cyrille
- Sarah Vaughan had lots
- Trumpeter Farmer and bassist Davis
- 1992 Steps Ahead NYC Records album \_\_\_\_-*Yang*
- Guitarist Farlow

By Andrey Henkin

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