ARCHIE SHEPP
STILL SEEKING
THE WAY AHEAD

SHABAKA Hutchings
HILLIARD Greene
ALVIN Queen
FRANK Lowe

DIGITAL ONLY EDITION
I got the feeling that’s something’s goin’ wrong
And I’m worried bout the human soul
I’ve got a feeling
If I could have had the chance to make the decision
Every man could walk this earth on equal condition
Every child could do more than just dream of a star
Bringing voices to a world that’s gettin’ old...
Do I worry do I worry yes I worry ‘bout the human soul, yeah...
I hear voices, I see people
I hear voices, I see people
I hear voices of many people, sayin’
Everything ain’t everything
Only when nature doesn’t take its natural toll, am I worried for the human soul.
Some people think that they are in their rights and on command to take a black man’s life. But let me give a rundown on how I feel.
If it ain’t natural, then it ain’t real. I wish i were better.
Almost half a century ago, Henry Hull, Albertine Robinson and Joshie Armstead sang and William Kunstler spoke Beater Harris’ words on Archie Shepp’s 1972 Impulse! album Attica Blues. Speaking about the current state of American racial strife, Shepp (On The Cover), who has been thinking about this weighty topic his whole life, is bleak in his assessment: “We were protesting then just as we are now and the amazing thing is that things have changed so little.” In this month’s cover story, the legendary saxophonist, 83 years old but with no loss of wisdom and fire, provides much needed perspective to a problem that has never seen linear progress. His words are powerful as are those of the myriad others who have spoken on the topic and fought for the cause. But just as powerful and resilient have been their opponents, as is evident in that Shepp’s fight and that of his relatives, heirs and fellow human beings is far from over.

On The Cover: Archie Shepp (©️John Rogers / johnrogersnyc.com)

Corrections: In last month’s CD Reviews, the lyrics to “Life of the Party”, recorded by the OWL Trio, were written by Jay Dragland.

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The New York City Jazz Record

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The two-disc set, out July 24, 2020, features 23 discrete pieces showcasing Spence’s versatile, fearless pianism and riveting soundscapes
Kurt Rosenwinkel, currently a professor in Berlin, was featured live (several cuts in the video stream revealed the set had been prerecorded) from his living room (Jul. 4th), a night of seemingly interminable fireworks for those sequestered in the five boroughs. The guitarist offered a few fret-board pyrotechnics of his own during an hour-long solo set of originals and standards. The logged-on crowd had grown to about 125 by the time he, after a curt greeting Sidney Lotier inspired view of drummer Carl Allen from below the perimeter of his snare drum. Given the club’s layout, once seated in real life, there is no moving around so the chance to go from Allen to a close-up of pianist David Kikoski’s fingers to straight-on and three-quarters views of the whole band makes seeing music in person superfluous.

Andrey Henkin

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**NEW YORK @ NIGHT**

**Kurt Rosenwinkel @ Live From Our Living Rooms**

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Kurt Rosenwinkel @ Live From Our Living Rooms

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**Wayne Escoffery @ Smoke**

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Wayne Escoffery @ Smoke

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THE LEGENDARY ARCHIE SHEPP!

"The marriage of Raw Poetic’s searching, socially conscious rhymes and Shepp’s sax — both his keening soprano and gruffly majestic tenor — bubbling to the surface in turn.”

**Rolling Stone**

The 66-minute recording is limber and full of chill grooves punctuated by interludes enhanced with references to Eddie Harris’ “Freedom Jazz Dance” and John Coltrane’s “GIant Steps.” Although very of its moment, the recording is in the spirit of the early ’70s, when genres didn’t need bridges to overlap and political consciousness was a given.

**JazzTimes**

The hip-hop/jazz crossover is a refreshing take on both classic rap and jazz. Shepp’s sax cuts through the rest of the band to provide passionate solos, as Raw Poetic sounds absolutely joyous.

**Newsweek**

Shepp came out of the avant-garde black-music tradition that proudly claimed and anointed John Coltrane.

**Pitchfork**

Unlike many of his peers, Shepp has long embraced poetry and hip-hop as an intuitive part of what he prefers to call African American music.

**The Washington Post**

Ocean Bridges ignores boundaries, links generations by telling a story that reaffirms family ties while blending genres, and featuring a whole lot of inspired Archie Shepp sax solos.

**The Philadelphia Inquirer**

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Of all the musicians stuck at home over the past four months, some are with musician partners, others play instruments that work unaccompanied and a few can probe the outer depths solo. But what of a traditional bassist? Imagine he or she slowly going crazy playing the Peter Gunn theme over and over and over, hoping someday to be able to support others. Just before he presumably snapped like a worn G-string, bassist Ari Folman-Cohen was liberated, holding down the low-end in the Stephane Wrembel Trio, live-streamed from Barbès (Jul. 16th, with decent sound and a few camera angles), the band, completed by second guitarist Thor Jensen, performing together for the first time in months. So excited was Folman-Cohen that he could barely sit and when he stood he boogied around the small stage, (unconsciously) did little tap-routines with his feet and nearly lost his protective mask on several occasions. That was just the visuals; while always a strong presence in Wrembel’s bands, he was unleashed, bringing rock and funk energy to French chanson and the Django Reinhardt songbook, the guitarist the undisputed master, though, refreshingly not letting it master him, expanding upon the tradition much like his inspiration. Of the hour-long show, the highlights were the trio taking “Dinah” for a long, exploratory ride but bringing her home before lights out and “Si Tu Savais”, Folman-Cohen stealing the show with his lines and Wrembel adding unorthodox effects to great effect.

(AH)
The cessation of touring during the pandemic afforded Ralph Peterson the opportunity to reunite with the members of his working quartet for a live-streamed performance from The Jazz Gallery (Jul. 9th). The group, with pianist David Virelles, bassist Dezron Douglas and drummer Johnathan Blake, opened with “D.C.G.”, an original by the leader reminiscent of the latter-day work of his father’s band with Pharoah Sanders. It began with ascendant dark-toned tenor over the trio’s ruminative rubato intro, which morphed into a serene melody played over an engaging bassline. Sadly, technical difficulties muted the audio towards the end of the saxophonist’s solo and for the next five minutes the trio starred in a silent movie before sound returned as Coltrane closed out the piece. Sequencing into Virelles’ “Tempo”, the trio got its chance to stretch, with the pianist displaying an impressive command of Cuban and jazz traditions as he melded a habanera rhythm with fluid percussive lines recalling Cecil Taylor, prompting Coltrane’s return on potent soprano. Blake’s “Rivers and Parks”, a lyrical outing with Coltrane back on tenor, swinging in the tradition, followed. Prefacing a spirited reading of McCoy Tyner’s “Fly With The Wind”, bowed bass and rumbling malleted drums solemnly introduced John Coltrane’s “Alabama”. An extended Douglas solo then led the band into his beautiful “Forligno”, before the set ended with the leader wailing on soprano on mother Alice Coltrane’s “Los Caballos”. – Russ Musto

A rollicking one-man second line emoted over Ralph Peterson’s snare drum. Accented rimshots, bass-drum bombs, woodblock and cowbell, too, called the trio to order (Jul. 3rd). This Blue Note at Home concert, happy to report, featured brilliantly crisp sound. The drummer, pianist Zaccai Curtis and his bassist brother Luques Curtis kicked “Bemsha Swing” into the new—leaping the decades since Monk revolutionized jazz. “This song is associated with Thelonious Monk, but it was composed by Denzil Best,” Peterson told the home audience, sure to represent for the noted bop drummer whose history includes writing important works. On that note, the trio ripped into the Latin-esque rhythms propelling Peterson’s “The Right to Live”, a topical work inspired by the righteous street-heat of Black Lives Matter. It, however, called on parts of jazz history long predating the current movement, with crashing harmonies and lengthy melodic lines incorporating leaps, all of which poured from Zaccai’s aerial, able hands. Peterson and Luques, throbbing gloriously, exemplified both the fight and victorious intent. This piece easily flowed into a ballad, “The Tears I Cannot Hide”; though composed several years ago, Peterson described it as, “another reflection of today’s times of social injustice”, commentary on the ongoing nature on struggle. Peterson and company also brought new life to works by late pianists Geri Allen and John Hicks, demonstrating for all the wide swathe of style, school and genre on which they thrive. – John Pietaro

This Arts for Art event (Jul. 8th) was Zoom-broadcast from four different locations with headphones and computer screens as the musicians’ only unifiers, but the distance between them was never evident. Led by celebrated baritone saxophonist Dave Sewelson, the outfit was aptly named the Music for a Free World Quartet. Avant garde vets all, the band required no prep for the single collectively improvised work offered. Opening with broken triplets across his drumkit, Marvin Bugalu Smith set the shape of the piece, quickly signaling in the entry of bassist William Parker. By the time Sewelson and trombonist Steve Swell had joined, viewers were transported back to a simpler, pre-COVID-19 time. Effortlessly, the horns traded points of taking the lead (if there is such a thing in collective work), constructing intricate lines about one another’s improvisations and pushing the music forward. At one point, the two leapt up into registers well above that of such low horns, intoning a gently whirring melisma. Parker added a third voice on what appeared to be cornet, allowing for a gripping three-voice chase with Sewelson’s use of electronic looping. Though any downside at all, the fault doesn’t lie with the players but the state of remote audio technology. Currently, such broadcasts cause drukkits to sound akin to cardboard and the bass’ depth becomes lost in the whole. One can imagine the power, reach and relevance of global feeds like this when technology finally catches up to the arts. (JP)

Ravi Coltrane Quartet @ The Jazz Gallery

Ralph Peterson Trio @ Blue Note At Home

A tribute to the recently departed pianist Onaje Allen Gumbs, where a tree will be planted and a commemorative plaque installed, alongside a performance of the Onaje Allen Gumbs All-Star Band, will take place Aug. 22nd at 120 DeKruif Place Building #7, Section One Co-op City. For more information, contact the Jazz Loft Organization (347-213-5776 or rosecridc2@gmail.com).

As part of the Charlie Parker Centennial Celebration, Charlie Parker: The Clef 10” Albums Collection will be available on Aug. 28th, a five-LP boxed set featuring “newly remastered audio from the original analog tapes and will include faithful reproductions of the original artwork and packaging. The albums will be pressed on 180-gram black 10” vinyl and will be housed in an attractive slipcase.” For more information, visit shop.udiscovermusic.com.

Trombonist Delfeayo Marsalis will celebrate the fold of his non-profit Keep NOLA Music Alive with a virtual concert Aug. 2nd at 7 pm on facebook.com/DelfeayoMarsalis. For more information, visit knoma.org.

Jen Shyu and Sara Serpa have launched M+—Mutual Mentorship for Musicians, an initiative that empowers and elevates women musicians around the world (including BIPOC and LGBTQIA2S+ across generations) in a new model of mentorship comprising four sessions per year with each session culminating in a performance of new collaborative compositions. Initial participants are Rommra Campbell, Caroline Davis, Eden Girma, Val Jeanty, Maya Keren, Erica Lindsay, Lesley Mok, Tomeka Reid, Anjna Swaminathan and Suni Tontooks. For more information, visit mutualmentorshipformusicians.org.

Entries are now being accepted for the Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition. The deadline is Sep. 8th. For more information, visit tpac.org/sarah-vaughan-international-jazz-vocal-competition.

Guitarist Pat Metheny’s ECM catalogue, 11 albums made between 1976-2015, has been made available at high-resolution formats for download and/or streaming at platforms Cobuz, HDTracks, Acoustic Sounds, ProStudioMaster, Tidal, Apple and Amazon. For more information, visit ecmlnk.to/PatMethenyHD.

Vocalist Gregory Porter sang “America The Beautiful” at the launch of NASA’s Mars 2020 Perseverance Rover Mission last month, the first recording artist ever to be invited by NASA to perform at such an event.

Bryant Park’s annual Piano in the Park series will take place through Aug. 13th. Scheduled performers, appearing Monday-Friday at 12:30 pm at the base of the William Cullen Bryant Statue include Victor Lin, Danny Mixon, Dan Manjoo, Frank Owens, Terry Waldo, Luiz Simas, Russ Kassof, Ayako Shitashiki, Charlie Jenkins, Vuka Akawa and Sue Maskaleris. For more information, visit bryantpark.org.

The 4th Annual Seifert Competition, with a jury of Ernst Reijseger, Michal Urbaniak and Miroslav Vitouš, awarded two joint second prizes of €5,000 to Austrian violinist Johannes Dickbauer and French violinist Youenn Rohaut and two joint third prizes of €2,000 to Israeli violinist Omer Ashano and French violinist Clément Janinet. The first prize was not awarded.

The International Songwriting Competition is now accepting submissions in various categories, including jazz, with or without lyrics. For more information and to apply, visit songwritingcompetition.com.

The Jazz Loft in Stony Brook was awarded a $40,000 grant from the New York State Council on the Arts for a project called “Creative Music Workshop has begun an online educational initiative drawing on CMS’ nearly-50-year history. Resources are free and available at creativemusicworkshop.com.” For more information, visit thejazzloft.org.

The Creative Music Workshop has begun an online educational initiative on CMS’ nearly-50-year history. Resources are free and available at creativemusicworkshop.com.

The board of the European Jazz Network has announced that the EJN Conference 2020, scheduled for Sep. 10th-13th in Sofia, Bulgaria, has been cancelled. For more information, visit europejazz.net.

Submit news to info@nyjazzrecord.com

What’s News

WHAT’S NEWS
A: as the first UK signing to Impulse!, British-Barbadian saxophonist and bandleader Shabaka Hutchings has become a figurehead for the breakout London scene. His activity is as relentless as his music is visceral. Sons of Kemet rides a torrent of African-Caribbean-influenced rhythm, The Comet Is Coming fuses trance, Afrobeat and electronica and latest vehicle Shabaka And The Ancestors, with a young South African crew, wades deep into spiritual jazz with diversions into Township grooves. But a broad hinterland also taking in free improvisation and guest spots with the Art Ensemble of Chicago and Sun Ra Arkestra ensures that Hutchings brings nuance to festival stages worldwide.

**The New York City Jazz Record:** What was it about jazz that appealed to you so much?

**Shabaka Hutchings:** Different elements have appealed to me at different stages in my life. At the beginning not a lot appealed to me. I got in through the more commercial elements. So when I started it was more people like Grover Washington, Jr., Maceo Parker, the Caribbean Jazz Project of Paquito D’Rivera, Greg Osby’s Man-Talk For Moderns Vol. X. And the hip-hop fusions that they were doing in the early ‘90s. But I think the initial thing that got me was the interaction between people. For instance, one of the first memories I have of a real eureka moment with jazz is with Miles Davis’ My Funny Valentine. And I think it is a Herbie Hancock solo, there’s two moments in the solo, I remember being 16 or 17 and listening to them and thinking that the whole band is really together in the climax. And it’s those magical moments where any particular group comes together and achieves something as a unit that I really appreciate.

**TNYCJR:** Who were your inspirations on saxophone?

**SH:** Exactly. It’s one of those things where for me my signing with Impulse! isn’t just about my personal interaction with it, it’s connecting the history of British jazz music with the history of American jazz music. So my signing with Impulse! is a result of all the efforts of say Courtney and Steve Williamson and Django Bates and John Surman creating a situation where at this stage someone from England has joined the big historical legacy that has built up Impulse!.

**TNYCJR:** And of course the label has a fantastic history, so there must be some resonance for you there as well.

**SH:** Shabaka And The Ancestors, whose sophomore album We Are Sent Here By History was released this year, grew out of playing with local musicians on your visits to South Africa. How has that concept developed since recording and touring?

**SH:** They all develop naturally. When I first started playing with the individual members it was with their own music and I would guest in their band and play with them at jam sessions. For the first album, I wrote music and brought it to them, we rehearsed it and then we played it. And from that point when we started touring the music started to realize itself. The sound and attitude of the band was more apparent after we recorded the first album. Now from touring and playing and hanging out together we have an idea of what we want to express, or I’ve got an idea of what can be expressed in this formation.

**TNYCJR:** Your titles are often a call to action and that carries through into lyrics and words from guest rappers, vocalists and poets as well. Do you have the message in mind when you compose the music?

**SH:** No. When I compose the music I consciously make an effort not to have anything in mind apart from making the best or the most fitting music that I can at the time. Then after the actual notes and the music is written or recorded or rehearsed, I have a process of trying to go back and try to analyze what was on my mind or what was in the air at the time of recording. That can come from conversations we were having around the time of recording, it might come from what I was talking about with friends. But it’s really a process of trying to write the music with the most integrity.

**TNYCJR:** Another Impulse! CD, My Queen Is A Reptile by Sons Of Kemet, has an unusual instrumentation with tuba and twin drums. How did it come about?

**SH:** Before I started the group I was mainly into the free improvising scene in London. So I was a member of the London Improvisers Orchestra, which had members like Lol Coxhill, Evan Parker, Steve Beresford, Mark Sanders, John Edwards, John Butcher and people like that. The main emphasis on that group and the small groups that would play concerts outside of it, was unusual instrumentation because it wasn’t trying to have the orthodox jazz formations, like the quartet with rhythm section and horn soloist. So you might have lots of these different variations on musicians, you might get a viola, snare drum and bassoon combination if they were free improvising. It becomes more about how the personalities of the musicians interact together. So that was my thinking. Who do I think would make the best combination of personalities? At the time it was the members that would be Sons Of Kemet: [drummer] Tom Skinner, [drummer] Seb Rochford [now Eddie Hick] and [tuba player] Oren Marshall [now Theon Cross]. That was the reasoning in my head when I formed the group, but looking back in retrospect I can see that there might have been various different elements running subconsciously that made me attracted to that combination, like the link to New Orleans formations, life and drums and how that actually relates to the tradition of Barbadian tub music. It’s the same formation of a bunch of drums and flutes basically and sometimes a bass instrument.

**TNYCJR:** You often sit in with Sun Ra Arkestra when it visits the U.K. What are you getting from that experience?

(Continued on page 13)
From the opening strains of Spirituals (Unseen Rain), the latest release by Hilliard Greene, the listener is compelled by something very new, but also eternally old. And in any case, utterly vital. The bassist’s second venture into solo bass recordings couldn’t have come at a better time. “It was important for me to record these pieces, largely a set of Negro Spirituals, in light of the Black Lives Matter movement,” Greene explained. “I haven’t always taken part in the protests, so I needed for my voice to be heard. I was born in the late ’50s and got a healthy dose of what segregation was like for my parents.” Greene, who was raised in Iowa (his father was a Sociology professor at the University of Northern Iowa), had a thorough awareness of the racial structure in rural America.

“I felt that I needed to present a certain way as I was the only Black person these people would ever know.” Greene, who was raised in Iowa (his father was a Sociology professor at the University of Northern Iowa), had a thorough awareness of the racial structure in rural America. The time for this is now.”

The bassist’s musical immersion during his formative years laid a cultural foundation, particularly when he was introduced to the music of Miles Davis. “I had been listening to rock and then to recordings of Muddy Waters, Willie Dixon and the ‘three Kings’: Freddie, B.B. and Albert” but when his high school music teacher played Kind of Blue for the class, he was drawn in. Greene studied both contrabass and electric bass guitar and played in the school orchestra as well as local bands. After attending college in Iowa where he studied music, Greene sought still higher education at Berklee. “I recognized that in this music, jazz, there was something I could feel a strong connection to, an art form of Black Americans.” Pouring himself into practice sessions of eight-plus hours per day, the bassist developed rapidly and began performing in the Boston area with multiple ensembles including the band of R&B vocalist Bobby Hebb, whose hit “Sunny” continued to propel club dates more than a decade after its release.

Following graduation, Greene settled in New York during the creatively fervent ’80s. “After my first two weeks in this city, I felt more comfortable here than I’d ever felt at any other time in my life.” Residing in a rented Flatbush house with other musicians just as the Downtown sound continued thriving, Greene was exposed to the music at every turn. “I was going to the Tin Palace and the Knitting Factory, but one day when I was in Grand Central Station I heard this music, incredible stuff. I ran around to find out who it was and then I had a silver dollar for spare change. It was Charles Gayle. He was homeless but then invited me to hear him play a couple of days later at First on First so, of course, I went to that club and we spoke right after.” Greene soon became a regular bassist with Gayle. “Charles was a real formative part of my education. The music took on a life of its own. We played at one place in the East Village with no heat and we wore our coats at first, but by the time the set ended, I was heavily perspiring [and] realized I could never play this way in Iowa.”

Around the same time, Greene also began playing with drummer Rashied Ali. “We rehearsed at his loft and that was an occasion onto itself. Incredible. I was just doin’ it,” he recalled. “I just wish I was more developed as a player by then. There was so much music when we played, Rashied had so much history. And he also told these great stories,” he added with a laugh, unfortunately refraining from any juicy bits of this lost history.

By the early ’90s, the bassist’s association with pianist Cecil Taylor began. He was soon elevated to the director of Taylor’s big band, which also included Steve Swell, Jackson Krall and many other notables. “Being that close to an artist like Cecil, someone of that magnitude, you learn so much.” Furthering the strength of such an experiential opportunity, Greene also played in a Taylor trio with Krall, which held court at the (old) Knitting Factory. “We did several of his compositions but there was no setlist, so I would just latch onto the key and Cecil’s momentum. His energy wave would build to a certain point and then peak. Then the next energy wave came in and we rode it together, but each time it was more powerful than before. Between tunes I would noodle a while and then we’d go again, building intensity more and more and it kept going like that. And just when I’d thought we were at the very edge, that place where we could go no further, he’d elbow accented chord clusters and bring us to a new max!”

In the years that followed, Greene’s résumé took on quite mythic proportions. In addition to serving as house bassist at Minton’s Playhouse, some of his collaborators have included Billy Bang, Barry Altschul, Leroy Jenkins, Karl Berger, Grady Tate, Vijay Iyer, Joanne Brackeen, Bern Nix, Greg Osby, Cindy Blackman, Frank Lacy, Don Pullen, Jason Kao Hwang and Kenny Barron. He also developed a penchant for working with vocalists such as Jon Hendricks, The Ink Spots, Marlene VerPlanck and, primarily, Jimmy Scott, with whom he had a 25-year association including global travel. “There are not enough words to describe the impact of that experience. He was like a second father. When I began working with Jimmy, his audience was over 50 and Black and I was in my late 20s. He did a record for Warner Bros. called All the Way (1992), which was nominated for a Grammy. That had such an impact to shift his audience to under 50 and white (laughs). That is the power of a recording.”

Greene is hopeful that the power of his latest recording, too, will carry some weight as well as his current focus of solo performances. He was recently honored by the Bronx Council on the Arts for his work with coded spirituals; he is planning on establishing global travel. “There are not enough words to describe the impact of that experience. He was like a second father. When I began working with Jimmy, his audience was over 50 and Black and I was in my late 20s. He did a record for Warner Bros. called All the Way (1992), which was nominated for a Grammy. That had such an impact to shift his audience to under 50 and white (laughs). That is the power of a recording.”

Greene is hopeful that the power of his latest recording, too, will carry some weight as well as his current focus of solo performances. He was recently honored by the Bronx Council on the Arts for his work with coded spirituals; he is planning on establishing concerts with the Council following the coronavirus restrictions on public gatherings. “There is a major place in this renewed struggle for Black lives and an equitable society wherein the music itself becomes cultural education.”

For more information, visit hilliardgreene.com. Greene is scheduled to play solo at 440Gallery Aug. 22nd. For more information, visit 440gallery.com.

**Recommended Listening:**
- Jimmy Scott — Heaven (Warner Bros., 1996)
- Gebhard Ullmann/Steve Swell 4 — News? No News (Jazzwerkstatt, 2008)
- Billy Bang — Da Bang (TUM, 2011)
- Salim Washington — Dogen Revisited (Passin Thru, 2012)
- Jemeel Moondoc/Hilliard Greene — Cosmic Nickelodeon (Relative Pitch, 2015)
- Hilliard Greene — Spirituals (Unseen Rain, 2017-18)

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“His natural swing and taste allow him to revisit well-throttled standards with gusto and originality...”

—a welcome debut by an artist who has a very well-deserved exposure and appreciation.”

—The New York City Jazz Record

watjazz.com
Archie Shepp: saxophonist, professor, uncle. The 83-year-old wears all three hats in his most recent album Ocean Bridges (Redefinition), a collaboration with his nephew, rapper Raw Poetic, and the producer/DJ Damu The Fudgemunk. As saxophonist, he accompanies his nephew’s raps and occasionally leads the band. As professor (which he was for 30 years at UMass-Amherst), he lectures about the importance of education on a track titled “Professor Shepp’s Agenda 1”. And as uncle, he exudes an avuncular warmth that flows across the album, which was spontaneously recorded and incorporates a great deal of uncle-nephew conversation caught on tape in the recording studio.

Although Ocean Bridges represents his first performance on a hip-hop album, Shepp is no stranger to rap. “I feel like one of the godfathers of rap,” Shepp says, “because I started to do this kind of thing back in the ‘60s, along with groups like The Last Poets. I infused my work with poems and statements, which were primarily at that time political... When I first started recording music, I was very accessible to the spoken word as an important adjunct to music.” In the decades since, his convictions on the relationship between music and language, particularly African American language, have only increased.

Shepp explains, “African American language lends itself very readily to musical expression” and specifically to the spontaneity of improvisation. “It comes from the heart, [and] by nature it has an iambic quality, going back to poets like Paul Laurence Dunbar. Black language often also has a quality of spontaneity... It springs out of the Black experience, which is frequently a response to what’s going on at the time...we frequently find ourselves in situations we never expected. Racism is like that. Frequently we are the victims of situations, which we have to respond to in an improvised manner. So improvisation is a fundamental aspect of the Black experience.”

Shepp has spent much of his musical career exploring and communicating this “fundamental aspect of the Black experience” via political recordings that take a strong stance on the issue of race and racism in America. One of the most beloved is Attica Blues, a 1972 album made in response to the Attica prison riots. On that album, as on many others he has made, Shepp directly confronts the political reality of his moment. Doing so is particularly important because he cares deeply about the interwoven relationship between Black music and the history of Black life in America.

He speaks of the relationship between the two with such insight that it deserves to be quoted at length: “I’ve always looked at music not so much as an academic experience, but as a life experience, as a living thing. Especially Black music, which, if you pursue it simply as chord changes, as an academic phenomenon, you miss out the real essential meaning of that music. It has a verbal basis, as well as an academic existence in notes. And over the years, I’ve begun to incorporate the verbal, linguistic, human element of that music into the notes themselves...by feeling and understanding that the music is more than notes. That some of the terrible experiences that we have had to go through, slavery and discrimination, Jim Crow, all these things, have helped to form a whole cultural outlook. One which tells a story, a story that should be told and understood by more people than it is.

Survival, identity: these are qualities that have grown out of a horrifying social experience in which people were stolen from their homes, their homeland and put on ships and sent thousands of miles away, exposed naked to an entirely different community and...survived this naked exposure. And we sang our song in a strange land, to such an extent that that song has been imitated by the strangers—and, at times, been put to very negative uses. I was looking at a program the other night, in which a Neo-Nazi was saying how he was going to a rock concert in Germany. And I was wondering, ‘gosh, rock music is actually Black music, transformed by white people and exploited. And so all these skinheads are being nourished by a Black experience.’ There’s something ironic about that and it tells us that the world wouldn’t be anything without us. It’s we who provide the songs, the sound, the energy, the creativity that inspires even the world of Neo-Nazis. They would be nothing without us.”

Shepp’s lifelong engagement with Black music and politics has been almost literally life-long—at a very early age, he was introduced to both subjects by his father. “My father was a banjo player,” Shepp says, “and through him I became interested in music... I asked him [to teach me] so much that he finally taught me the first few chords to James P. Johnson’s ‘The Charleston’.” At the same time, his father introduced him to the politics and race and made him precociously aware of their importance. “When I was in the third grade,” Shepp recalls, “my teacher asked us to write about something important to us and I wrote about the situation of race. It wasn’t a very extensive academic paper, but she was really impressed that I had these things on my mind. And she said, where did you learn about this? And I said, well, from my father and the man upstairs. Every Saturday they would have a discussion—politics and race—and put me to very negative uses. I was looking at a program the other night, in which a Neo-Nazi was saying how he was going to a rock concert in Germany. And I was wondering, ‘gosh, rock music is actually Black music, transformed by white people and exploited. And so all these skinheads are being nourished by a Black experience.’ There’s something ironic about that and it tells us that the world wouldn’t be anything without us. It’s we who provide the songs, the sound, the energy, the creativity that inspires even the world of Neo-Nazis. They would be nothing without us.”

Shepp says, “because I find it tends to be very limited in terms of what we expect from a jazz performance.” It is certainly limiting in terms of what we expect from a Shepp performance. Since the early ‘60s, Shepp has composed and performed profound, politicized music, which includes elements of the blues, spirituals, continental African percussion, R&B and now rap.

Still, after decades of labor, the saxophonist and professor says that things are not going the way he’d hoped when he was first agitating for change in the ‘60s. “We were protesting then just as we are now,” Shepp says, “and the amazing thing is that things have changed so little. We thought we had resolved the problem in the ‘60s with Martin Luther King and Malcolm and the rent strikes and all the protests—and many of them spontaneously resulted in some dramatic change in the United States. But then apparently that was all a myth, because nowadays more Black kids are being killed in the streets than during the time when I was a young man... In fact, the discourse is going back to a kind of a James Baldwin theme. We find ourselves questioning what it is to be an African American, to be Black in a white world.”

Despite this dispiriting lack of progress, Shepp does not feel that his work has been for nothing. He has regrets like anyone, but “I hope,” he says, that “as in the case of my nephew, that these things have been inspiring to people who came after me...that they will take courage and refuge in the idea that things have got to change... and that our young people should not be easily bought out, or sold out, for money or fame or success. And realize that the ultimate goal is to liberate ourselves.”

For more information, visit facebook.com/ArchieShepp

Recommended Listening:
• Archie Shepp—Four for Trane (Impulse!, 1964)
• Archie Shepp—The Way Ahead (Impulse!, 1968)
• Archie Shepp—The Tradition (Horo, 1977)
• Archie Shepp/ Horace Parlan—Trouble in Mind (SteepleChase, 1980)
• Archie Shepp Meets Kahil El’Zabar’s Ritual Trio—Conversations (Delmark, 1999)
• Archie Shepp/Raw Poetic/Damu The Fudgemunk—Ocean Bridges (Redefinition, 2019)
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Drummer Alvin Queen, born in the Bronx 70 years ago this month, is a great storyteller and so what if many of his compelling stories are from before he settled permanently in Europe circa 1979? As he enjoys his Swiss government pension and takes long walks in the Alps, he has no regrets about leaving the American cauldron behind.

Queen was a child prodigy on drums. He recorded his first album (still unreleased!) when he was 11 or 12 years old. Lest you think it was a kid’s record, consider the personnel: Zoot Sims played saxophone, Art Davis was on bass and Harold Mabern on piano, with Joe Newman acting as music director and playing trumpet. “I remember that Clifford Brown’s ‘Daahoud’ was on it,” Queen said. “We recorded it at Nola Rehearsal Studios in Manhattan. Joe Newman was on my back all the time. I’d love to hear it again—I think it would sound beautiful.”

Queen’s grandmother was music director at the Bronx church whose parishioners included Denzel Washington. His brother was a percussionist in school parades and young Queen used to steal his drumsticks and bang on the concrete. He joined the marching band himself at around age eight and remembers the orange and black uniform. On Christmas, Queen’s mother took him shopping and he saw a kid playing drums in a store window. He wanted that for himself and was soon taking lessons with that kid’s teacher. An immersion in jazz happened when his father, a bar manager, took him to the Apollo Theater. “We heard Art Blakey with his all-black uniforms. One Christmas, Queen’s mother used to take his radio to bed, so I could hear it again—I think it would sound beautiful.”

Queen’s musical associations are myriad. He recorded with a quartet led by Coltrane bassist Jimmy Garrison that also included pianist Ronnie Mathews but then in 1976 Garrison died. He played with Oscar Peterson for years between 2004 until the pianist’s death in 2007—after first saying no because “I’d heard that Oscar died.” Queen first went to Europe in 1971 with trumpet player Charles Tolliver, a collaboration documented on the Live at the Losodoth Jazz Festival and Impact albums. Queen wasn’t quite ready to move to Europe yet, but he had the wanderlust, including part of the ’70s in Montreal, Canada, playing jazz and R&B with musicians like American expatriate pianist Sadik Hakim (born Forrest Argonne Thornton). He also played with nearly every organ player, since the sound of his Swiss base, Queen traveled all over, including a fractious stint with Nina Simone and several State Department tours with Tolliver, Silver and others, including eight weeks in Africa. And he started recording music himself, on his Nilva (Alvin Queen’s album label) label and so much money playing I was able to open up the label,” he said. “We have 19 titles.” To know what Queen sounded like back then, check out the 1980 LP In Europe.

 Married to a Swiss woman and permanently settled in Geneva at the end of the ’70s, Queen found he could put youthful bad habits behind him. “I was in a better position over here,” he said. “I could cool out better, meet some new people.” Eventually, Queen gave up his American citizenship because of tax problems, but he complements his situation now.

Back in 1969, a car Queen was riding in got stopped and the police found a gun in the trunk. It wasn’t Queen’s gun, but he spent three weeks on Rikers Island. Grant Green’s lawyer got him out. That was that, but when Queen attempted to come back for a Washington, D.C. event honoring the World War I-era Harlem Hellfighters in 2017, he was denied a visa. Authorities brought up that arrest and a drug charge.

(Continued on Page 13)
The outskirts of Hot Spring, Arkansas are not usually associated with jazz, much less free jazz. But that is the home of saxophonist Chad Fowler, who is also the founder of Mahakala Music, a record label that debuted last year and focuses on the free end of the contemporary scene.

“I’m certainly not surrounded by like-minded individuals,” he says on the phone from his home. He delivers a brief history of how he got where he is: “I grew up in Arkansas, went to school at the University of Memphis, played on Beale Street…I used to organize jazz shows at the University.” Like so many musicians, Fowler eventually needed a day job. He got into tech and ended up in Berlin, working for 6 Wunderkinder GmbH, the firm that made the popular task-organizing app Wunderlist. When Microsoft bought up the software, Fowler decided to take his leave of the tech business. So he went home.

“Being in the tech world, location-based things annoy me. It’s stupid with the internet and I do all my business. So he went home. And ended up in Berlin, working for 6 Wunderkinder...”

Fowler eventually needed a day job. He got into tech and ended up in Berlin, working for 6 Wunderkinder GmbH, the firm that made the popular task-organizing app Wunderlist. When Microsoft bought up the software, Fowler decided to take his leave of the tech business. So he went home.

Along with the collapsing of Southern and international geography, the other guiding principle of Mahakala, Fowler explains, is the “Tibetan god of compassion, a wrathful emanation of something that should be beautiful and gentle.” Fitting Fowler’s expansive view, the deity is common to Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism and is one of the guises of Shiva, an embodiment of destructive and creative power.

That concept is clear on the label’s first release, Garden City. Like the emblem to the collective, the deity is present, although the focus is on its manifest interplay. The record features bassist William Parker but other than him, is, as the liner notes point out, “a decidedly Southern affair” — with Fowler, tenor saxophonist Kirk Johnson, vocalist Telma Harty Hurt, pianist Chris Parker and percussionist Alvin Fielder. The album was recorded in 2018, Fielder passed away in early 2019 and is honored on a recent Mahakala release, A Tribute to Alvin Fielder – Live at Vision Festival XXIV.

Garden City is a prototype of the Mahakala sound. The free playing has strong roots in the down-home blues style of Ornette Coleman and the improvisational interplay is seasoned with shout music and boogie-woogie. The qualities are subtle yet strong, so deep in the musicians’ DNA that they themselves may not be conscious of them.

That may imply a mastermind at work, but not all the label’s releases are direct products of Fowler’s thinking. What’s on the imprint is “a combination of my producing for the label and musicians bringing me thinking. What’s on the imprint is “a combination of my producing for the label and musicians bringing me thinking.”

As for the producing, Fowler is “really interested in putting different humans together and seeing what happens.”

Case in point: another 2020 release, More Music for a Free World was put in the can by saxophonist Dave Sewelson, trombonist Steve Swell, Parker and drummer Marvin Bugal Smith in 2018. Fowler read about it in a conversation with Sewelson that Parker published in his Conversations II book and Fowler knew he had to have it. And despite demurring that he has any particular aesthetic vision, the balance of free playing, muscular pulse and sheer soulfulness across all the label’s nascent releases show that he has a practiced ear for both the abstract and the grounded. “My desire is to do stuff that expands the common free language,” he reveals, “and strives to be beautiful.”

This past spring, the label also released an album capturing the ongoing series of duets between saxophonist Ivo Perelman and pianist Matthew Shipp, Amalgam. July saw the release of Lacrimosa, a duo album with Fowler and drummer/percussionist W.C. “Chad” Anderson. This month Mahakala is putting out an album of music from free jazz hero Frank Lowe, Nothing But Love, with contributions from Fowler, Hurt, Parker, bassist Bernard Santacruz, drummer Anders Griffen and a special appearance from saxophonist and fellow Memphian Bobby Lavell. Fowler has also put the label on all the streaming services, explaining via email that “I’m not really trying to make money—or even worried about getting my money back—on this stuff. It’s all about getting the music out there.”

Thinking about what the post-coronavirus landscape might look like, Fowler offers, “When things get back to normal, I’m really going to wrap up production” on his current studio album, “and maybe do some live things.” Like everyone else, he longs for the live music scene.

For more information, visit mahakalamusic.com

**THE NEW YORK CITY JAZZ RECORD | AUGUST 2020 11**
KEITH TIPPETT
BY ANDREY HENKIN

British pianist Keith Tippett, a key figure bridging the various jazz and art-rock scenes of late ’60s-early ’70s Britain and whose albums ranged from solo outings to massive ensembles Centipede and Ark, died Jun. 14th at 72 from a heart attack after chronic health problems.

Tippett was born Aug. 25th, 1947 in the southwestern city of Bristol. In his youth he played both traditional jazz and church organ, foreshadowing a career of eclecticism. His earliest recordings demonstrated this further: sideman appearances with Jamaica-born, London-based saxophonist Harold McNair and progressive rock group King Crimson to go along with his debut You Are Here... I Am There. In his youth he concentrated on teaching linguistic theory, returning in the mid ’80s to concentrate on teaching linguistics theory, returning in the new millennium with albums on Tzadik, Universal Music France, Sunnyside, RogueArt and, posthumously, SAVYV. Coulsid died Jun. 25th at 82.

JACQUES COURSIL (Mar. 31st, 1938 - Jun. 25th, 2020) The French-Martiniquan trumpeter was active in The New Thing in mid ’60s New York with credits as a trombonist with Buddy Rich, Charlie Ventura and Count Basie, but is far better known for his tunes, performed by Basie, Chet Baker, Woody Herman, Quincy Jones, Rolf Ericson, Bill Perkins and others, the “Great Jazz Score” from the film I Want To Live! (with such players as Shelly Manne, Mel Lewis, Bill Holman, Frank Rosolino and more) and various pieces for movies that would become jazz standards, such as “Emily”, “Close Enough for Love” and “The Shadow of Your Smile”. Mandel died Jun. 29th at 94.

GILBERT MATTHEWS (Sep. 28th, 1943 - Jun. 25th, 2020) The South African drummer made his recording debut in 1969 with Chris Schilder, had mid to late ’70s credits with Dollar Brand, Pat Matshikiza, Kippie Moketsi, Basil Coetsee and membership in Spirits Rejoice (not to be confused with fellow South African drummer Louis Moholo’s period project of the same name) then, after moving to Sweden in the late ’70s, worked with Christu Boustedt, Johnny Dyan, Anders Gahnold, Chris McGregor, John Tchicai and Roland Keijser, six albums with the collaborative Brus Trio and one date as a leader, Hot House (Flash Music, 1994). Matthews died Jun. 25th at 76.

TONY ROMANDINI (Jul. 27th, 1928 - Jun. 3rd, 2020) The Québécois guitarist had albums on EMC and RCA Victor in the ’60s and sideman credits with Maynard Ferguson, Herman Apple, Benny Barbara and Emile Normand. Romandini died Jun. 3rd at 91.


MILTON GLASER (Jun. 26th, 1929 - Jun. 26th, 2020) The graphic designer’s amorous feelings for The Big Apple were clear with his iconic I Love NY logo and founding of New York magazine but his early work had him creating album and poster art, which in the jazz world included ’50s-’60s designs for Tony Scott, Dave Brubeck, Charlie Byrd and Barry Miles. Glaser died Jun. 26th at 91.

ARTHUR HOYLE (Sep. 9th, 1929 - Jun. 4th, 2020) The trumpeter had credits in the ’50s-’60s big bands of Lionel Hampton and Oliver Nelson, sideman work during the same period with Sonny Cox and Bunky Green, membership in the mid ’50s iteration of the Sun Ra Arkestra and a guest appearance on Mike Reed’s People, Places & Things Stories and Negotiations (428 Music, 2010). Hoyle died Jun. 4th at 90.


JOHNNY MANDEL (Nov. 23rd, 1925 - Jun. 29th, 2020) The composer had early credits as a trombonist with Buddy Rich, Charlie Ventura and Count Basie, but is far better known for his tunes, performed by Basie, Chet Baker, Woody Herman, Quincy Jones, Rolf Ericson, Bill Perkins and others, the “Great Jazz Score” from the film I Want To Live! (with such players as Shelly Manne, Mel Lewis, Bill Holman, Frank Rosolino and more) and various pieces for movies that would become jazz standards, such as “Emily”, “Close Enough for Love” and “The Shadow of Your Smile”. Mandel died Jun. 29th at 94.
SH: Oh, it’s great. The main impression I get every time I play with them is that there is an internal structure allowing individuals to be themselves. I think the first time I played with them, Marshall Allen came up to me and he said, “you are thinking too much, I can hear you thinking about whether what you are playing is right or wrong.” I really took a lot from that. The main thing is he’s allowing me to enter into that unit because of who I am, so they don’t want me to consider if what I’m doing is right or wrong. They want me to just play and try to express myself as fully as possible. And that is what I feel like within that band, that is a bunch of individuals expressing themselves as fully as possible but with the communal aim of making the best kind of group music as they can. That’s something I try to carry through to all the groups in the context of the music that we play.

TYNCJR: Do you have further Impulse! releases planned?

SH: Yeah. Right now we are just about finishing the mixing of the next Sons Of Kemet album, which should be out hopefully at the beginning of next year. We did the recording before lockdown and now lockdown’s relaxed a bit we are just pressing on with the mixing and production, getting some horn parts done. I’m really excited with that and it’s going to be a great album.

TYNCJR: Excellent! Are there things you want to do that aren’t catered for by your current groups?

SH: There’s a project that I’m probably going to start towards the end of the year, which is a collaboration between myself and a Martiniquan percussionist and electronic music producer called DJ Noss. He mixes traditional Martiniquan bèlè music with electronic music in a very interactive way that I like so there’s a lot that can be done with that combination. I just get ideas all the time. I’ve got books full of ideas. But for me the main thing is just time and what I decide to focus on. So at the moment it’s just focusing on the Sons Of Kemet album.

TYNCJR: How would you describe the resurgence of jazz on the London scene?

SH: London has always had a thriving jazz scene but I think the factors around it have changed, in that there’s a bigger audience at the moment for it than there was 15 to 20 years ago. Certain musicians are playing a lot bigger spaces, so bigger, more commercial, festivals and just bigger venues. The media interest in it just wasn’t there before. When I was in college the whole narrative was that we’re not able to get instrumental music recognized by the mainstream press. There was a stigmatization around the music that it’s not for regular people. One of the big factors in the resurgence is that there seems to be an acceptance of instrumental music from a jazz background that there wasn’t before, which is heartening. I think a lot of the music that’s been pushed forward as representative of the London jazz scene is music that takes a lot of elements from the American form but uses the music that we are into in London. And I think that the audiences are appreciating that, they are appreciating the creative element to mixing up the music and finding a way of making a lot of people enjoy it in a way that they thought they couldn’t before.

TYNCJR: How does reception in NYC compare to London?

SH: The reception in New York is great. I’ve been going there quite a lot in the last couple of years and feel like the audience is growing and growing. They are starting to get an idea of what the music is and what the music is supposed to be achieving. But London for me is my favorite place to play. It’s the place where the music was formed and the audience is just the best audience. They come there to dance, to listen and be emotional with us. Whereas in the States, as far as I have experienced, there is an idea of reverence for the music in that it’s taken in a concert for people to stand and listen to the music in a very reverential fashion. In London there’s less of that. People dance to the music. They listen to it but they seem to be more engaged with their bodies. Not that all music has to have that, but for our music it does help, because it has a strong pulse to it.

Recommended Listening:
- Zed-U – Night Time on the Middle Passage (Babel, 2009)
- Sons Of Kemet – Bar (Naim, 2013)
- The Heliocentrics – 13 Degrees Of Reality (Naim, 2013)
- Sons Of Kemet – Your Queen Is A Reptile (Impulse!, 2016-17)
- Shabaka And The Ancestors – We Are Sent Here By Impulse! (Impulse!, 2018-19)

(ENCORE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10)

from a stint with George Benson, as well as a DUI. He was told he’d need a waiver from the Department of Homeland Security. It could be seen as tragic, but Queen doesn’t even vaguely resemble a tragic figure. He’s actually pretty serene. One reason is the success of his latest album, OP: A Tribute to Oscar Peterson (Stunt), recorded in Copenhagen in 2018 with Danish musicians Zier Romme Larsen (piano) and Ida Hvid (drums). “I’m a happy guy,” he said. “Happier than ever. I’ve taken up photography and I hike all the way to the top of the Swiss mountains and take pictures up there.”

For more information, visit alvinqueen.com

Recommended Listening:
- Music Inc. / Charles Tolliver – Impact (Enja, 1972)
- Alvin Queen – Aslanti (Nilha, 1981)
- Alvin Queen/Lonnie Smith (feat. Melvin Sparks) – Lenox and Seventh: The Definitive Black & Blue Sessions (Black & Blue, 1983)
- Kenny Drew Trio – At The Brewhouse (Storyville, 1992)
- Alvin Queen – I Ain’t Looking At You (Enja, 2005)
- Alvin Queen – OP: A Tribute to Oscar Peterson (Stunt, 2018)

(LEST WE FORGET CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10)

reflecting on Vietnam with Bang’s fellow veterans. In the 90s he formed the Saxem with James Carter and Michael Marcus, an ensemble consisting of saxophones accompanied by drums. He also formed a relationship with bassist Bernard Santacruz that produced three albums and a number of tours. One of his final bands was formed around pianist Bertha Hope. Lowe died of complications due to lung cancer on Sep. 19th, 2003.

Recommended Listening:
- Frank Lowe – The Flamin’ (Black Saint, 1975)
- Frank Lowe – Decision in Paradise (Soul Note, 1984)
- Frank Lowe – Bodies and Soul (CIMP, 1995)
- Frank Lowe/Bernard Santacruz – Short Tales (Bleu Regard, 1999)
- Billy Bang Quintet (featuring Frank Lowe) – Above & Beyond: An Evening in Grand Rapids (Justin Time, 2003)
Answers, while often prized, are merely end points. Questions, however, are wide-open planes. Ripe for examination and rich in possibility, questions tend to morph and multiply—and offer far more than any single person can fully understand—as life flies by. That’s something that pianist Glenn Zaleski readily acknowledges.

In the summer of 2019, barely into his 30s with a wife who was expecting, new realities quickly surrounded Zaleski. Those developments brought him back to a treasured age—“the question is more important than the answer”—and pushed him forward into different spaces. Allowing his music to absorb and refract these experiences, Zaleski laid the foundations for this compelling quintet set.

Fronting a group of familiar, Zaleski opens on “The Question” itself. One of several pieces penned during that summer of searching, it initially presents a sense of uncertainty before gelling and offering space into different spaces. Allowing his music to absorb and refract these experiences, Zaleski laid the foundations for this compelling quintet set.

Six numbers appear between those related poles, offering glimpses into the pianist’s heart, impulses, calculations and friendships. “Backstep”, a waltz that leans on Coltrane changes in reverse, puts Adam O’Farrill’s cheery trumpet in a positive light. “Smoke and Mirrors”, a (mostly) low-key look at framing social media fiction as real life, finds bassist Desmond White playing to the title in his use of a mirrored bassline. Zaleski’s gorgeous take on Dave Brubeck’s “Strange Meadow Lark” honors the dearly departed pianist in a global view of Black music in America, the other in a local view. Zaleski’s gorgeous take on Dave Brubeck’s “Strange Meadow Lark” honors the dearly departed pianist in a local view.

As for the roots, in between the 19th Century and 1969, when the album was recorded, there came Billie Holiday and Waldron looks back at his extensive experience with her by playing Ann Ronell’s “Willow Weep for Me” in an arrangement that manages a delicate balance between old school and modernism. The reissue duplicates this track with one of its extra tracks find Zaleski working with an expanded palette—the creatively colorful “Subterfuge” adds another dimension to the theme.

This is really one of the strongest statements on record of Waldron’s mature voice. Tracks like the opening “Rat Now” and “Rock My Soul” are soulful, bluesy, funky and hypnotic, one foot in the deep roots of America and the other as he leaped into the future. “Star Eyes”, all given updated readings covering a range of styles, tempo and harmonization thereby putting “new wine into old bottles.”

The closer is a blues-infused flag wave “On The Edge”. The theme is set by Farnham as he lays down an intro filled with speed and complexity.

For more information, visit summitrecords.com.

**Recommended New Releases**

- Mulatu Astatke & The Black Jesus Experience – To Know Without Knowing (Agogo)
- Conny Bauer/Matthias Bauer/Dag Magnus – The Gift (NoBusiness)
- Luigi Ceccarelli/Hamid Drake/ Gianni Trovalusci/Ken Vandermark – Open Border (Catalytic Sound)
- Paul Desmoulin – The Complete 1975 Toronto Recordings (Mosaic)
- Billy Martin – Guilty (Amulet)
- Orchestra Entropy – Rituale (Discus-Music)
- Barre Phillips – Thirty years in between (Vito)
- Adam Shulman Septet – West Meets East (Cellar Music)
- Alister Spence – Whirlpool (Solo Piano) (Allister Spence Music)

Laurence Donohue-Greene, Managing Editor

**Recommended Live Streams**

- Full Blast – Farewell Tonic (Trost)
- Jacob Getzch – Clear Line (Yesterreeve)
- Mark Helias – Roof Rights (Radio Legs Music)
- Krakow Improvisors Orchestra – SJKO at Cricoteka (Not Two)
- Joachim Kühn & Trummerschlink – Playing Probabilities (ACT Music)
- Michael Musilam/Peter Madsen – Pictures (Playscape)
- Sam Newsome Trio – Free Wyoming (Live at the Metro Coffee Co.) (s/f)
- Ana Ruiz – And The World Exploded Into Love (s/f)
- Oyvind Skarbo/Fredrik Ljungkvist/ Kris Davis/Ole Morten Vågen – Inland Empire (Clean Feed)
- Masayuki Takayanagi New Direction Unit – Axis/Another Revolvable Thing (In Concert) (Blank Forms)
- Andrey Henkin, Editorial Director

**Recommended New Recordings**

- John Fedchock & New York Sextet – Into the Shadows (Radio Legs Music)
- John Fedchock & New York Sextet Summit –_Free at Last (ECM)
- John Fedchock – Into the Shadows (Radio Legs Music)
- John Fedchock – Free at Last (ECM)
- John Fedchock – Into the Shadows (Radio Legs Music)
- John Fedchock – Free at Last (ECM)
- John Fedchock – Into the Shadows (Radio Legs Music)
- John Fedchock – Free at Last (ECM)
Maria Schneider’s *Data Lords* orchestral album consists of two contrasting suites—each its own CD—made up of pieces that are more tone poems than songs or blues. The first five-piece suite is “The Digital World,” its emphatic, signature sound dominated by Ben Monder’s electric guitar. The six pieces comprising “Our Natural World” are distinguished by the accordion of Gary Versace. Throughout, Schneider employs dynamics, contrast, time-tempo changes and tonal-timbral variations to build her pieces rather than more conventional forms. And she unleashes soloists against or within those forms on all 11 tracks.

“The Digital World” begins with “A World Lost,” a wistful piano-chords-led introduction giving way to a swinging electric guitar over rising horns, a tenor saxophone solo. “Rich Perry” eventually engulfed by the ensemble before deceleration to a guitar and rhythm section finale. The suite ends with “Data Lords,” a sometimes frenzied, high-energy evocation of artificial intelligence (AI) as predicted by Stephen Hawking. Al represented by Mike Rodriguez’ electronically enhanced trumpet and the brutal drums and brass riffs swampng Dave Pietro’s alto saxophone solo.

In between those two are three pieces devoted to questionalble aspects of the digital world as Schneider sees it. The “Don’t Be Evil” motto “mocks Google as the cartoonish overlord that it is,” according to the composer. It is her most blatantly satiric work, burlesquing elements of martial and patriotic music. “CQ CQ, Is Anybody There?” has rhythms and passages built on ham radio Morse Code (her father was a ham radio operator), with Donny McCaslin’s tenor saxophone representing the human and Greg Gisbert’s electricified trumpet AI. Today’s world of commercial and military satellites orbiting the globe is evoked by the ensemble, with Scott Robinson’s baritone saxophone embodying “Sputnik.”

“Our Natural World” takes inspiration from nature (a garden, a bird, the sky), pottery and poetry. The suite’s music is more lyrical and melodic than “The Digital World”, with some slower tempos and, in “Look Up”, the only conventional swing rhythm on the album as well as a formidable feature for trombonist Marshall Gilkes. “Sanzenin”, evoking a Buddhist garden, features accordion over a brass choir; “Stone Song” bounces syncopations deftly among Steve Wilson’s soprano saxophone, accordion, piano (Frank Kimbrough), bass (Jay Anderson) and drums (Johnathan Blake); “Braided Together” weaves ensemble textures and dynamics around Pietro’s alto. Wilson’s alto dominates “Bluebird” in interactions with the ensemble and rhythm section. And McCaslin’s tenor hails “The Sun Waited for Me”, a setting for a Ted Kooser poem in the tradition of Duke Ellington’s “I Like the Sunrise”.

*Data Lords* is available as a download, but the CD version includes a lavishly illustrated 36-page booklet with Schneider’s comments on all the pieces, numerous photographs of musicians and the Kooser poems that inspired “Braided Together” and “The Sun Waited for Me”.

For more information, visit artistshare.com

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**Fellini 100 - I Compani 35**

*Fellini 100 - I Compani 35* commemorates a pair of 2020 anniversaries: the centennial of filmmaker Federico Fellini’s birth and the 35th anniversary of I Compani, the Dutch orchestra led by saxophonist/composer/arranger Bo van de Graaf. There’s an essential connection between the two. I Compani began as a kind of tribute band, devoted to the soundtracks of Fellini’s films, celebrating particularly the director’s long-standing relationship with composer Nino Rota. During its history, I Compani has increasingly integrated original music, including compositions by its leader and others, but the Fellini-Rota connection remains a key part of its identity.

The other essential component is a special trajectory of “New Dutch Swing”, the witty orchestral curve that includes some of Misha Mengelberg’s compositions and arrangements for the Instant Composers Pool (ICP) and the radicalized village-band character of the Willem Breuker Kollektief, joined here with the influences of Charles Mingus and Carla Bley. This commemorative program, recorded live in Nijmegen on Jan. 19th, 2020, touches on all these elements and does so with a special animation, lively inventive orchestrations bursting with vital improvisation. I Compani is constructed for orchestral color and texture, with three saxophonists (van de Graaf, Frank Nielander, Ingja Rothamme), electric and acoustic bassists (Carel van Rijn and Arjen Gorzer), three pianists/keyboardists (Kees Molhoek, Guus Janssen and Leo Bouwmeester), two singers (Peter Freijsen and Serena Jansen), two drummers (Thomas Jaspers and Rob Verduren) and an individual trumpeter (Paul Vlieks), trombonist (Arjen Reeser) and accordion player (Gert Wantaar).

Rota’s art is initially celebrated with “Milano e Nadi”, a theme from Luchino Visconti’s *Rocco and his Brothers*, arranged by Vlieks and van de Graaf, immediately establishes the band’s élan, a combination of polished, rapidly shifting voices and rhythms conjoined with fierce swing, including foregrounded passages by Gorzer and van Rijn. The Fellini-Rota connection is mined repeatedly, including a brilliant minute of “Charleston di Giulietta” and the suite “Ocho e Mezzo” (*8 ½*), a van de Graaf adaptation of Bley’s arrangement for the recently departed Hal Willner’s Fellini project.

Music that springs from other sources complements the film music. Van de Graaf’s extended four-part suite “Maar Nooit Vergeten” (*Don’t Forget*) is rich in shifting moods and materials while Janssen’s four-part suite “Maar Nooit Vergeten (Don’t Forget)” complements the film music. Van de Graaf’s extended four-part suite “Maar Nooit Vergeten” (*Don’t Forget*) is rich in shifting moods and materials while Janssen’s four-part suite “Maar Nooit Vergeten (Don’t Forget)” complements the film music. Van de Graaf’s extended four-part suite “Maar Nooit Vergeten” (*Don’t Forget*) is rich in shifting moods and materials while Janssen’s four-part suite “Maar Nooit Vergeten (Don’t Forget)” complements the film music. Van de Graaf’s extended four-part suite “Maar Nooit Vergeten” (*Don’t Forget*) is rich in shifting moods and materials while Janssen’s four-part suite “Maar Nooit Vergeten (Don’t Forget)” complements the film music. Van de Graaf’s extended four-part suite “Maar Nooit Vergeten” (*Don’t Forget*) is rich in shifting moods and materials while Janssen’s four-part suite “Maar Nooit Vergeten (Don’t Forget)” complements the film music.

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**Storyville**

Storyville Record’s release of *The Duo*, 21 years after its recording, begs the question, “what took so long?” The CD, with pianist Mulgrew Miller (who would have turned 65 this month) and Danish bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen (NHØP), is a magnificent homage to Duke Ellington’s work with his revolutionary young bassist Jimmie Blanton. This 1999 effort (Ellington’s centenary year) is truly inimitable for its unique sound and musical voice.

Blanton was a wunderkind, discovered by Ellington in St. Louis in late October 1939 and hired immediately to play with the Orchestra. Blanton, initially trained on violin, applied these principles to the upright, adding pizzicato and arco techniques to the walking 4/4 time-keeping meter, sparking a major transformation in the way jazz bassists approached their craft. NHØP is possibly what Blanton could have become creatively had he lived beyond his mere 25 years. Not only does NHØP have an amazing range of technique but is also a remarkably intuitive player. Both he and Miller are wonderfully attuned to each other but, beyond that, NHØP is channeling something extra from the others, so much so that he often achieves a Zen oneness with the instrument. Like Blanton, there are times when NHØP emulates violin or guitar and even brass. His work on “Come Sunday” features fingering that a saxophonist would employ running up and down the keys. Miller’s style is akin to that of Oscar Peterson: lyrical and sometimes florid, but with a certain elegant restraint. Both have an impeccable sense of harmony and timing, often weaving in and out of each other’s output with remarkable finesse. This is especially evident on the 12-bar-based “C Jam Blues”, elevating the number to something beyond its relative simplicity.

In Blanton Ellington knew the prize he’d captured, quick to feature him out front on the bandstand. He also recorded duets with Blanton beginning in November 1939; “Blues” and “Pitter Patter Panther” are two that Miller and NHØP include here. The pair captures the fun of the latter piece in this joyous homage, Miller’s take on Ellington’s Harlem Stride style full of respect, the pianist delivering his own innovative and supportive performance on the keys. This musical deference is seen in NHØP’s “O.D. Blues”, which parallels Ellington backing Blanton out front. Another original composition is by Miller; the easy-listening “Blues in the PM’s”. Several tunes allow Miller to come forward for the bulk of play, including a swinging, exotic “Caravan” and “I Got It Bad (And That Ain’t Good)”, although taken as a whole, *The Duo* is NHØP’s. The magic created by Miller and NHØP led the pair to continue to work together until the latter’s untimely death in 2005, the former following in 2013 with his own premature demise, all the more reason that *The Duo* is a CD to treasure.
Physically difficult to play, sonically marginalized expressive work is on “Patrona”, “Rambler” and “Thing” his ornamented melodic sequences, spurred low D and C pedal tones made possible by a string his powerful yet graceful plucked attack, his robust combine originals and covers, all but one featuring orchestrator, melding sounds and textures into speak for him, as on “Water Balloon”, “Green Balloon” is more tentative, evoking the rappings of roll, a pinched growl, a model airplane motor. “Red Balloon” is a suite of impromptu miniatures realized through diverse preparations, implements and extended techniques. “Blue Balloon” reveals in fits and starts—a plethora of sounds: lions fighting in the night, an elephant’s trumpet, a drum roll, a pinched growl, a model airplane motor. “Red Balloon” is more tentative, evoking the rappings of a haunted house, the drips of a leaky faucet, bumps in the night. Drašler is not afraid to let silence speak for him, as on “Water Balloon”, “Green Balloon” or “Grandma Balloon”, where the gaps and lulls invite a response. Not a melodic player in the traditional sense, he, like Roeder, a master orchestrator, can construct and textures into dense, polychromatic soundscapes, best exemplified by the organized anarchy of “Yellow Balloon” and mellifluous cacophony of “Flying Balloon”.

Given the wide range of stylistic interests that French pianist Martial Solal (who turns 93 this month) and American saxophonist Dave Liebman have demonstrated during their respective decades-long careers, finding middle ground was not an issue during their duo performances together in 2016. An earlier CD from an August 2016 French concert, Masters in Bordeaux, was issued in 2017 to critical acclamation. This new CD is a Parisian concert recorded a few months later and eclipses the previous release. While they perform familiar standards and jazz favorites, including two songs that they tackled on the previous album, there is nothing predictable about their approaches to any of these songs, with their originals being an added bonus.

Spontaneity is the key element in each song. An off-center piano vamp and bristling, gutsy tenor saxophone quickly develop into a theme of “A Night In Tunisia” while creative use of space should be required listening for young virtuosos who haven’t yet learned to let their music breathe. Solal’s dissonant, inventive chords introduce the theme of “Stella By Starlight”, conveying a sense of playfulness, then Liebman makes his entrance on soprano to bring in a wistful air to contrast with the pianist’s humorous line.

Solal previously recorded his “In and Out” with Johnny Griffin; this version with Liebman on tenor proves to be even more striking, as his improvisational flights soar above the mysterious melody. Solal’s wistful smile is on full display in the rambunctious interpretation of “Night and Day”, as he hints at Bud Powell with a “Parianese Thoroughfare”-like run and myriad salutes to other bop greats without making them overly obvious. Liebman (on tenor) is up to the challenge and he revels in providing an inventive contrasting line while also adding his own amusing licks. Liebman’s easygoing waltz “Small One” is a terrific showcase for his soprano, with Solal’s unconventional melody, Liebman knows how to give the music a groove, textural color and when not to play. All in all, a meeting between two Chicago forces bearing fruit.

For more information, visit sunnysidediscords.com

Imaginary Archipelago

Mako Sica/Ralph M. Jones/Hamid Drake (Meta)
Balancing Tear
Mako Sica/Hamid Drake (Astral Spirits)
A Tribute to Alvin Fielder (Live at Vision Festival XXIV)
Kidd Jordan/Joel Futterman/William Parker/Hamid Drake/Mahakala
by Robert Iannapollo

Hamid Drake, who turns 65 this month, became familiar to creative music listeners with his recording debut on the Mandingo Griot Society album from 1978. Over 40 years later he’s still going strong, one of the foremost drummers in creative improvised music.

One of his bandmates on that first release was percussionist Adam Rudolph. Since that auspicious debut, their musical partnership has been particularly strong. Throughout the years, they’ve cropped up on each other’s albums and by Yusef Lateef, Fred Anderson, Pharoah Sanders and others. A long time ago, they formed Karuna Trio with reed/flute player Ralph M. Jones and released a self-titled album to great reviews. Imaginary Archipelago is the followup. This volume is dedicated to Lateef and Karuna’s music shares elements with his ventures into “non-idiomatic” improvisatory music. But all three players are strong individualists with their own ideas of how to approach this idiom.

Imaginary Archipelago consists of 11 tracks stemming from improvisations then restyled, restructured and reedited. Drake is at the forefront of electronic processing and sequencing. Rudolph is a master at this as he’s shown on his own recordings. Dividing the music into sequences from 4 to 11 minutes, he doesn’t overload it with effects or flashy editing. Each member details his corner of the triangle and the results are then enhanced by Rudolph’s post-production. He crafts a suite that flows from beginning to end as it fades into the ether. “Alima” starts with a phrase from bass clarinet that is then looped and becomes the base for the track. Electronics are added as the piece develops, featuring electronic elements. The opening theme of “Chandirasa” is succeeded by the vibrant percussion/saxophone-heavy “Suwakaba” but the sequencing sounds natural. (Incidentally, although there is post-processing involved, they do this sort of thing in real-time.) The final track was originally a love song but Imaginary Archipelago ups the ante by presenting it as a more coherent whole. This is clearly the music of a unit.

Mako Sica is a band from Chicago that has been making music in the rock mode of the Chicagoland scene for a decade, with Przemyslaw Krys Drażek (trumpet, guitar), Brent Fuscald (vocals, electric bass, classical guitar, harmonica, Tibetan prayer beads, lightbulb) and Chasen Newell (piano, cello, drums, electric piano, sound effects, synthesizer, tambourine, ukulele, acoustic bass, violin). But boundaries seem immaterial to the makeup of this group. The influence of the recently departed Ennio Morricone’s Western soundtracks informs the opener “Trapeze” with its lonely trumpet, twangy guitar and slowly developing pace. One can also hear the influence of Middle Eastern modes in their playing, especially on “Enchanted City”. Drake has recorded and played with Mako Sica before, giving them a firm rhythmic foundation without ever overpowering the band’s unique sound and approach. He knows how to give the music a groove, textural color and when not to play. All in all, a meeting between two Chicago forces bearing fruit.

The third disc featuring Drake in the drum seat is A Tribute to Alvin Fielder, recorded at the 24th Vision Festival in 2019. Fielder (who died in January of that year) was an original member of the AACM in '60s Chicago. By the time Drake began associating with AACM in the '70s, Fielder had moved to New Orleans where he, along with saxophonist Kidd Jordan, nurtured a nascent free jazz scene. Fielder was a revered drummer in AACM circles and Drake is the perfect drummer for this celebration. This disc presents the full festival set, the quartet completed by Jordan, pianist Joel Futterman and bassist William Parker. It’s a bracing, invigorating 45 minutes, weaving in and out of various moods and rhythmic sequences. Songs are referenced including “Nature Boy” (twice) and “Motherless Child”, with a digression that switches things to a swinging tempo for a few minutes. During this brief interlude, the group plays “Crepuscular Rant/Nelligle”. But basically this is free blowing of the highest order from four current masters paying tribute to a former musical comrade (Jordan and Futterman) and a musical elder (Parker and Drake).
During 1947-71, Louis Armstrong toured the world with his All-Stars, a versatile sextet with whom the great trumpeter-singer entertained millions of listeners. He put on a colorful if sometimes predictable show filled with swing standards, his hits, pop tunes, New Orleans jazz and humorous novelties. There are good and bad points to trumpetman Gordon Au’s live tribute to the Armstrong All-Stars of the ‘50s, available in time for what would have been the trumpeter’s 119th birthday this month. Au’s trumpet playing comes close to sounding like Armstrong much of the time, although without the high notes, and the joy in his playing along with the way that he improvises off the melody are similar.

It is nice to hear revivals of some tunes that Armstrong recorded but rarely played live including “Jeans and Jazz”, “Lovely We’reaving” and “Don’t Fence Me In”. The sidemen sound comfortable in this setting with clarinetist Jacob Zimmerman occasionally hinting at Barney Bigard and trombonist Lucian Cobb adding sparks (the band is completed by soprano saxophonist/clarinetist Keenan McKenzie, guitarist Jonathan Stout, pianist Chris Dawson, bassist Jen Hodge and drummer Josh Collazo). And, fortunately, no one tries to imitate Armstrong’s singing.

On the minus side, nearly every song is taken at a slow-medium tempo, one that may be preferred by some dancers but which gives this set a sameness throughout. Armstrong always varied his tempos, ranging from heated romps to dramatic ballads, never letting his show drag, like during this routine version of “Beale Street Blues”. All but 5 of the 18 songs have vocals, either from the pleasant if bland Laura Windley or Jim Ziegler and none of the soloists get to stretch out much. Many of the ensemble passages are arranged rather than jammed, which takes away from the potential excitement and spontaneity. And, with a few exceptions, Armstrong’s trademark songs are missing.

Of course, one should neither expect a group today to sound exactly like Armstrong’s bands, nor should they be expected to copy his versions of songs. But this well-meaning tribute, at its best on a mostly stirring rendition of “C’est Si Bon” and the closing ensembles of “St. Louis Blues”, could have used an infusion of excitement, humor and color. Instead of being hot, it is mostly just cool.

For more information, visit gordonauinmusic.com.

Blood Moon

Ingrid Laubrock/Kris Davis (Intakt)

by John Pietaro

“This new release is part of my series of duo albums with pianists,” saxophonist Ingrid Laubrock explained. But clearly, here’s a pairing that comes complete with might in its history. “Kris was one of the first connections I made in the U.S. when I was still commuting from London,” she says so the final product is akin to breathing in tandem. The two have enjoyed numerous performances together over a dozen or so years, when in cooperative projects like Paradoxical Frog or the LARK Quartet, Laubrock’s Anti-House and Contemporary Chaos Practices or Davis’ Capricorn Climber. This intimate set may well be the apex.

The album opens with a piece by Davis, “Snakes and Lattice”, which, filled with noir-esque phrases immediately draws the listener in. Dominated by fast melodic runs in unison, it’s reminiscent of some of those late ‘50s works that refused to be cited as Third Stream but nonetheless contain all of the ingredients of modern classical fused with jazz. Swinging even without a rhythm section, per se, it bums and careers deliciously as expansive harmonies take us along this roller-coaster ride through the dark.

And yet, it contrasts markedly with Laubrock’s first piece on the album, the title cut, which speaks to the haunting sound of Erik Satie and the band of French modernists in his wake, Les Six. Davis lays the groundwork for this deep foray, with soprano saxophone emoting out front, equal parts vibrant and sinewy, foregrounding the expected range of the horn. So tangible, so evocative is this sound, it conjures the score of a dramatic tragedy.

Later, the pair also indulge in casting soundscapes, taunting the very harmonics (is that Laubrock playing the piano?) of a dramatic tragedy. Though both Davis and Laubrock are busy composers in their own right, they are first vital improvisers and percolating talents, often uptight and up-down and carefully patient. Or color the air about one’s stereo speakers. Though both Davis and Laubrock are busy composers in their own right, they are first vital improvisers and several selections appear to be freely devised, credited jointly (“Gusset” and “Elephant in the Room”). Within the whole, such works easily reflect where free jazz took on new music with a vengeance.

For more information, visit intaktrec.ch. Laubrock’s Anti-House and Contemporary Chaos Practices stream at facebook.com/laubrock.

ON SCREEN

Kansas City - a film by Robert Altman

(by Arrow Films)

Never has a mainstream movie not about jazz been so infused with the music as Robert Altman’s 1995 film noir, Kansas City. Other movies—also roughly categorized as film noir—such as Anatomy of a Murder (Duke Ellington) and Elevator to the Gallows (Miles Davis) are suffused with jazz in their scores, but the music is mostly off-screen background. The musicians in Kansas City are seen, frequently, on screen. Jazz serves not only as the background music but also as an on-screen leitmotif. Every scene in one strand of the intermeshed plot, involving a Black gangster, Seldom Seen (Harry Belafonte), is introduced with a closeup of a jazz musician soloing in Seen’s nightclub, The Hey Hey Club. And at the very center of the film is an extended cutting/jam session (advertised on posters) between tenor saxophonists Lester Young (Joshua Redman) and Coleman Hawkins (Craig Handy).

The noir-ish plot of Kansas City concerns a kidnapping perpetrated by a young woman and self-styled “moll” Blondie (Jennifer Jason Leigh) of a laudanum-addicted politician’s wife, Red (Miranda Richardson) in order to influence the KC political machine to convince Seen to release her husband/boyfriend Johnny O’Hara (Dermot Mulroney), who was caught after robbing a customer of Seen’s gambling operation while wearing blackface. The film’s opening half-hour recounts the initial kidnapping and robbery in cross-cut scenes and chronology that eventually elide together.

But Kansas City is much more than a noir plot, even much more than an evocation of the city’s vibrant jazz scene in 1934. It is Altman’s memories of the city he grew up in, as experienced and as told to him as a child. Filming in Kansas City, his production refurbishes parts of the old Union Station railroad terminal as well as the downtown street that once hosted The Hey Hey and other jazz nightclubs. The film becomes a rich tapestry infused with all the real and fantastic memories of Kansas City percolating in Altman’s head. Blondie worships Jean Harlow, the film star who actually hailed from Kansas City, and takes her moll characters as portrayed not only in movies but also in screen magazines as her inspiration; she even takes Red to see a Clark Gable-Jean Harlow movie. When seen as reflecting those influences, Leigh’s performance is not as cartoonish as it seems. Altman also emphasizes the contrast between Blondie and her Harlow ideal by showing her throughout most of the film with ratty hair and ugly, prosthetic teeth.

The peregrinations of Blondie and Red around the city, from Union Station to a gas station (where a gangster chase and shootout happen almost irrelevantly), Charlie Parker’s mother’s home to a maternity home to Blondie’s brother-in-law’s bar, where men are brought to be taken out to vote multiple times in the election taking place, allow Altman to show us an expansive view of his remembered Kansas City. Just as the alternating scenes at The Hey Hey Club let him bring the jazz background into the foreground.

Parker is a young boy scout, carrying but never playing an alto saxophone as he watches the action from The Hey Hey Club balcony. Those he sees include Count Basie (Cyrus Chestnut), Mary Lou Williams (Geri Allen) and Joe Turner (Kevin Mahogany). We also briefly see the famously corrupt Democratic boss of KC, Tom Pendergast and his minions in smoke-filled backrooms, looking and acting remarkably like the gangsters.

The absurdist strain that runs through the Blondie-Red part of the plot comes to a deadly conclusion as the film ends, but don’t miss the end credits, over a rendition of Duke Ellington’s “In My Solitude” featuring bassists Ron Carter and Christian McBride. If you want to hear more of the music from the film, seek out Jazz ’34, a companion film of just the musicians in Kansas City performing complete versions of all the tunes heard in snippets in the movie. Unfortunately this newly released Blu-ray disc doesn’t include Jazz ’34, although it has many other additions, including Altman’s running commentary over the (repeated) full film. Comments by two critics and interviews with cast members and Joshua Redman.

For more information, visit arrowfilms.com/product-detail/Kansas-city-bluray/CD1983

THE NEW YORK CITY JAZZ RECORD | AUGUST 2020 | 17
Race relations in the United States have never been tenser than in the last few months and this work provides a much-needed pause for reflection. Gregg August is an accomplished bass player and composer equally at ease with the classical, avant garde, jazz and Latin jazz circles. Among his many accomplishments is membership in the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, JD Allen Trio (nine albums) and Arturo O’Farrill’s AfroLatin Jazz Orchestra.

In 2005 he founded his own record label, Lacuessa, for which he has recorded three critically acclaimed albums. Dialogues On Race, Volume One is the result of a commission from The Jazz Gallery and The Jerome Foundation to raise the awareness on race. In essence, it is an extended suite for a 12-piece jazz ensemble, plus 3 vocalists, strings and a narrator. August, much like fellow bassist Charles Mingus, seems to use the full ensemble as an extension of his considerable musical and technical skills as player. Tenor saxophonist Allen is the leading soloist but each of the musicians involved participate and contribute to the music with passion and brilliant leads.

The fulcrum of two CDs is the 1955 infamous lynching of a 14-year-old boy, Emmett Till, in Mississippi, which inspires three versions of “Your Only Child”, based on Marylin Nelson’s poem comparing the suffering of Till’s mother with Mary mother of Christ. The first two versions feature Frank Lacy’s harsh singing and a pizzicato solo by August. But it is the third version that strikes a chord with this listener as Allen’s tenor dialogue with Shelley Washington’s voice builds an almost tangible tension, then leaves strings and arco bass to describe a sentiment of hopelessness. In between August places a chilling rendition of “Mother Mamie’s Reflections”, where the voice of Emmett’s own mother describes the uncovering of the coffin so that the whole world could see the shame. In which her son was the innocent victim. A dramatic use of phases à la Steve Reich combined with Allen’s declamatory tenor adds tension to the drama delivering a performance that is hard to forget.

The remainder of the music is sumptuous yet somewhat somber, taking inspiration from poems by Maya Angelou (“The Bird Leaps” and “I Rise”), Francisco Alarcon (“Letter to America”) and Langston Hughes (“Sweet Words on Race”), among others. Most of the pieces are structured along instrumental opening conversations—“I Rise” is a wonderful example—followed by either singing or recitatives and/or full ensemble performances. Although Mingus comes to mind, particularly in the shifting “Sky” and “The Bird Leaps”, August’s music is more structured and programmatic, lacking orgiastic explosions and sudden changes of pace and mood. The soloists are all superb, with particular mention to Ken Thomson on bass clarinet, Marcus Rojas on tuba in “Letter to America” and Rafi Maré on trombone. This is music that should be widely disseminated and carefully listened to while put in the broader context we have been living for the last few decades. It is a project like this that gives hope for progress at last. Looking forward to Volume Two.

Benny Carter was a major force of the Swing Era although he may not have obtained the full recognition he deserved. As an alto saxophonist, he gave the instrument credibility as a jazz voice together with Johnny Hodges. And as a composer, he enjoyed success, many of his compositions becoming jazz and popular standards, four of which are included in this session.

This album for the Danish Storyville label was recorded 40 years ago this month in Copenhagen with two long-time expatriates, pianist Kenny Drew and drummer Ed Thigpen, plus local bassist Jesper Lundgaard. In this mainstream session, Carter and his cohorts sashay through the compositions in their understated way.

Side A opens with an uptempo romp of “Indiana” with swinging alto providing a hopping pulse through the initial introduction of the melody. Always inventive, Carter decorates the composition with his fertile improvisations. Drew, who was the pianist on John Coltrane’s influential album Blue Train, has a fondness for long right-hand lines and shows that disposition in his solo. After an exchange of eighties between Lundgaard and Thigpen, Carter takes the tune out with his characteristic flourishes.

The title track, a Carter original, is a softly offered bossa nova with an elegant alto tone and wondrous vibrato leading the way. Drew is thoughtfully inventive, his strong single-note playing complementary to Carter’s efforts. The side closes with another Carter number “All That Jazz”. It is offered as a vocal by Richard Boone the actor, who may best be remembered as Paladin, the errant knight gunslinger in the 1957-1963 TV series Have Gun Will Travel. He delivers the number with conviction and in tune, but there was never any chance that he would have had a career as a singer.

Side B is dominated by two classic Carter compositions, “Blue Star” and “When Lights Are Low”. The former was a hallmark track on Carter’s 1961 album Further Definitions, which in addition to Carter, featured tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins out in front of a mini-big band. In this version of the composition, Carter lays down the melody in a slow tempo, on which he provides a solo filled with arpeggios, double-time figures and extensions on the frame of the composition. Drew picks up the progression of the melody and manipulates the number in inventive ways. Carter’s out chorus repeats the melody. “When Lights Are Low” is one of Carter’s best-known compositions and has been covered by numerous jazz and popular musicians including Chet Baker, Tony Bennett and John Pizzarelli. His own interpretation is a bright tempo singer, which offers each of the players a chance to explore the notes, chords and rhythm patterns of the piece to imbue it with freshness.

This release is a limited-edition run and pressed on 180-gram vinyl wax, remastered for the best sound to complement the pressing. It also contains the original cover art and liner notes. There is also a tie in to Carter’s birthday on Aug. 8th, when he would have turned 113 years old.
in the open air.
The electricity of shared energy. Perhaps improvised in Sydney. It feels cloisteral, closed in on itself. It lacks Whirlpool to-moment discoveries.

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30 years. It is a two-CD set with 104 minutes of entirely improvised music.

Spence, who turns 65 this month, knows his way around a keyboard. Press notes state that he recorded this session “with no preparation aside from practicing particular techniques.” Some of the techniques are formidable. He can execute high-speed complexity in compound clusters like “(over)taken”. He is capable of arcane dissonance like “rejnev” and erudite harmony like “(well)spring” and powerful jolting tremolos like “(under)standing”. He derives an impressive variety of sonorities from a piano, not only with his many levels of percussiveness but also with scraping or bowing or nasal twanging from a prepared piano.

For most of the first CD, Spence keeps you, if not enthralled, then curious. You wonder what he will come up with next. But extended exposure to Spence becomes an experience more intellectual and technical than aesthetic. The 23 dark, dense, turgid, crabbed pieces sound like scientific exercises in pianistic problem-solving. Spence is entitled to his own personal concept of beauty. The prediction here is that his concept will leave many listeners out in the cold.

Perhaps one issue with this album, apart from the content, is the vibe. The musician who wrote the book on fully improvised solo piano works is, of course, Keith Jarrett. But Jarrett’s “solo concerts” are recorded live, in settings where you can hear and feel the audience responding to the creative swells and even the lulls in Jarrett’s impulsive spontaneous moment-to-moment discoveries. Whirlpool was done at a studio in Sydney. It feels cloisteral, closed in on itself. It lacks the electricity of shared energy. Perhaps improvised solo piano performances need to take place in public, in the open air.

For more information, visit alisterspence.com

Silke Eberhard’s fine work as instrumentalist and composer has won her the 2020 Jazzpreis Berlin this month, but it’s hard not to be as moved across the country to San Francisco, where he now resides. This is by far his most ambitious project and first recording with big bands, following the very successful Originals for the Originals and the quartets he shared with guitarist great John Stowell.

Zilber’s writing reflects a deep knowledge and appreciation of the jazz tradition, as many of his original compositions paraphrase and borrow from familiar chord sequences—“Fantasia on Trane Changes” and “Repressions” being clear examples of this approach. Overall, Zilber seems to prefer a middle-ground to the material, many are the highlights. From the New York band it worth mentioning opening burner “Hen House”, reminiscent of Joe Henderson’s “Inner Urge”, particularly in Zilber’s effective solo; the arrangement and solos of a complex and introspective reading of Wayne Shorter’s “Fall”; Miles Davis’ “Joshua”, based on a funky bassline by John Benitez and featuring the Rhodes piano of Mike Holober (of Gotham Jazz Orchestra); and the ingenious “The Breckerfast Club” dedicated to and based on some of the late Michael Brecker’s patterns and featuring an exciting saxophone chase.

The Bay Area band’s highlights are the heartfelt dedication “Shiva” to bassist John Shifflett, featuring Dan Feiszli’s warm bass, “Another Prayer”, a John Coltrane-inspired composition and arrangement; and “Weather Shorter”, a dedication to Shorter’s Weather Report period featuring Zilber’s soprano. Speaking of which, it is only fair to emphasize the leader’s contributions on both tenor and soprano, besides his composing, arranging and conducting. Less convincing are the readings of “Skylark” and “Over The Rainbow”, with a rather conventional vocal contribution by Joe Bagale. Overall a fine album deserving a rapid follow-up.

For more information, visit originrecords.com

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Chasin' The Bird (Charlie Parker in California)
Dave Chisholm with Peter Markowski (Z2 Comics) by Elliott Simon

With a two-month residency at Billy Berg’s L.A. Jazz Club, Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie brought bebop to the West Coast. *Chasin’ the Bird* is a graphic novel that examines a portion of Bird’s time there. The events that led up to Bird’s stay at Camarillo State Hospital, subsequent release and famous resurgent performance at Jack’s Basket Room provide fertile material for author/artist Dave Chisholm and colorist Peter Markowski to chronicle Parker’s highs and lows and add to his legend. The 2020 release coincides with the centennial of Parker’s birth and is set to include recordings from this time period.

Chisholm is a trumpet player and educator with a deep understanding of Parker’s revolutionary contributions to modern jazz but the story he tells is contemporary. Frank discussion of racial inequality and police brutality coupled with the “Breath” that comes out of Bird’s saxophone when he plays are chilling in their immediacy while Kareem Abdul-Jabbar’s foreword candidly places the past into the present. Chisholm also plays with the vagaries of memory and the astute reader can discover out-of-memory elements as six distinct narrators describe Parker’s disappearances, public nudity, drug addiction and hedonism. More interesting though, are their memories of Bird’s thirst for knowledge and quest for universal truth as they relate to his music and being Black in America. Markowski’s exceptional coloring is the soundtrack to Chisholm’s narrative and as Parker’s life spirals downward the music turns monochromatic.

Save for Gillespie, who is clearly Parker’s brother-in-arms but exits early, the narrators all end up at Jack’s Basket Room after giving singular insights into Bird along the way. Jirey Zortihian is the fellow artist who was a Bohemian paradise and the setting for a Parker performance that literally turned orgasmic. He and Parker debate the universality of art in the context of the origins of the universe. The “fan” is photographer William Claxton, who lives with his parents in suburbia. His interactions with Bird are among the most interesting and with Claxton’s parents away Bird crashes at their house, turns young white suburban kids on to Bach and tells them to remember everything that they practice and then forget it all when you start to play. He and Claxton discuss race in America with Parker opining, “Racism isn’t always loud…it’s the quiet kind that makes it impossible to relax.” Sculptor Julie MacDonald is the “lover” who exposes Parker to her world before the inevitable breakup while John Coltrane, after a heated argument over Parker’s admiration for “old white European musicians”, sees the future of Black American music after hearing Parker play. Ross Russell, the founder of Dial Records who recorded Parker’s most iconic sides, is the “record executive” who takes the reader through Parker’s crash and burn and subsequent rebirth. Parker’s legend is ever expanding and *Chasin’ the Bird* is a unique addition to canon.

For more information, visit 2Comics.com

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Crossings

Veryan Weston (HiHead)
Crucial Anatomy
Last Dream of the Morning (Trost)
Shifa: Live at Cafe Oto
Rachel Musson/Pat Thomas/Mark Sanders (577 Records)
by Marc Medwin

It is easy for the reviewer, confronted by music difficult to understand, to fall into the regrettably common dismissal of writing that concerns diversity and versatility at the page and hope they stick. Mark Sanders removes all guilt from that verbal association, because it would be difficult to imagine a more multivalent presence in the drum chair. He can make a “New Thing” blowing session swing and a delicately free improvisation shimmer, but he also interjects powerhouse time drumming with just the right balance of groove and freedom to keep a rock-solid sense of swing fresh. This entire continuum of possibility is reflected on these discs, revealing a cross-section of his talent as we celebrate his 60th birthday.

While his wonderful trio with bassist John Edwards and pianist Veryan Weston is not represented, per se, two of the albums do allow audition of his work in that illustrious company, though the ever-adventurous Weston is at a keystone on *Crossings*. The nine pieces offer up a bewildering but sometimes whimsical array of influence, none more so than on “Extinction”. Dig that opening bass groove Weston is laying down, redolent of nothing so much as Stevie Wonder’s “Superstition”, with Sanders only too willing to join in the fun. The funky groove just begins toizzle when cellist Hannah Marshall intones the words of William Butler Yeats: “Had I the heavens’ embroidered

"Kalimba Setting". Who’s got the melody anyway, when cellist Marshall and trombonist Butcher’s nearly inaudible rustlings liquify the air, initially charted by AMM or Group Ongaku. While Edwards and Sanders are as tight as ever, as their loose laminarity. Beyond all of this is the iridescent opening of “Spike Oil”, where the obvious percussion comes disappearing again to return in various transformations. Edwards and Sanders are as tight as ever, as their loose womb-secure interplay opening the microtonally transparent clarity of malleted toms and blocks, that articulation, flutter-tonguing his way toward rapture does something similar via staggeringly fast clicks made by movements of a steel ruler; Butcher crosses

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Vanishing Light in the Tunnel of Dreams
Pinkish Black/Yells at Eels (Ayler)
by Alex Henderson

Vanishing Light in the Tunnel of Dreams brings together two very different groups: experimental rock duo Pinkish Black (Daron Beck, keyboards, synthesizer; Jon Teague, drums, synthesizer) and avant garde jazz trio Yells at Eels (Dennis Gonzalez, trumpet, percussion, who turns 66 this month; and sons Aaron, electric bass, acoustic bass, vocals and Stefan, drums, percussion, marimba). This recording mixes electric avant garde jazz with elements of progressive rock, space rock and funk, the eclecticism partially from the variety of instruments in use. Some of the synthesizers emulate the sound of a crunching rock guitar and, as such, moody offerings such as “The Sorrow of Guernica”, “Slow Cascade of Tears” and Middle Eastern-flavored “Heatstroke Mirage” have a great deal of rock energy to go with their electric avant garde jazz improvisation.

The word “moody” definitely applies throughout this CD. “Meditation”, the title track and other selections favor the more contemplative and restrained side of avant garde jazz. Darker emotions are often expressed and some of the harmonies recall classic Pink Floyd albums of the ’70s such as Dark Side of the Moon, Animals and Wish You Were Here while the influence of Miles Davis’ fusion dates of the 70s-80s is impossible to miss during Gonzalez’ spare, introspective trumpet improvisations on “The Sorrow of Guernica”, “Meditation” and other selections.

The members of Pinkish Black and Yells at Eels aren’t afraid to incorporate many different types of music and the result is an appealing, unexpected departure from the groups’ own releases.

For more information, visit 4headrecords.com, trost.at and 577records.com

For more information, visit ayler.com

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For more information, visit ayler.com
Astonishments
Steve Swell Quintet Soul Travelers (RogueArt) The Center Will Hold (featuring Andrew Cyrille) Steve Swell (Not Two) by Mark Keresman

Not to burden trombonist Steve Swell with titanic Astonishments of vibrancy and free of self-absorption, drawing attention to himself, a true team player. Full Cleaver—clean, sharp and churning without overly obliquely Charlie Parker-flavored swing, robust and vocalized tone, one of the most distinctive around, and possesses a hearty, rippling, vibrant, somewhat an associate of Archie Shepp in the ‘60s). Swell Jimmy Knepper and Grachan Moncur III (like Rudd, to the worldly, cutting-edge personship of Roswell guesses—fun, substantial and substantially fun. gems that lay down good times while keeping you

heard the harmonica referred to as the "Mississippi ensemble playing, the "saxophone" (this writer has Ariel Bart plays in a way that texturally enriches the conventional Swell effort. The instrumentation, homage to free jazz masters past and present and the a viable feeling of forward motion as Conquest pays homage to free jazz masters past and present and the muese(s) that drove them, Swell sounding out bristling trombone in punctuation. "Sketch 7" finds the leader front and center, leading a twisty bit of freebop, driving and punchy, pianist Dave Burrell optically hanging out percussive chords, alto saxophonist Jemeel Moondoc delivering obliquely Charlie Parker-flavored swing, robust and lithe. Parker buzzes a brief solo and Cleaver is, well, Cleaver—clean, sharp and churning without overly drawing attention to himself, a true team player. Full of vibrancy and free of self-absorption, Astonishments is a consistently bracing and fascinating listen.
The Center Will Not Hold is a slightly more conventional Swell effort. The instrumentation, however, veers off the beaten path—this is perhaps one of the rarest of birds, as this session features harmonica not employed in any sort of bluesy or rootsy manner. Ariel Bart plays in a way that texturally enriches the ensemble playing, the "saxophone" (this writer has heard the harmonica referred to as the "Mississippi saxophone") to Swell effect. Thus it is called "Movement V", but the lasting impression is like both takes of the previously unreleased ballad that was issued on Survival). In retrospect, Coltrane’s desire for having two drummers seems less relevant than his admiration for Ali’s ability to play "multi-directional rhythms", which allowed the leader to go take any rhythmic path at any time. This seems key, not only in contrast to Jones, who always implied a given time and usually stated it, but also to the continuous flow of a Sunny Murray or the total abstraction of the young Milford Graves. And we certainly heard how Coltrane thrived in Ali’s rhythmic universe on the late quintet recordings and especially the duos on Interstellar Space (recorded in early 1967 but not released until 1974). He hadn’t intended simply to replace Jones with Ali, but in retrospect each drummer was perfect for Coltrane’s purposes when they were in the band. Just as Coltrane was making his last live appearances, Ali began leading his own dates in clubs around New York and we now have a live recording of the first of these, recorded at Slugg’s/Salamon in May of 1967. The leader gave this release is enormous, for several reasons. Not least of these is the chance to hear more of trumpeter Dewey Johnson, who made such a strong impression on Ascension, as well as the young Stanley Cowell on piano and little-known tenor saxophonist Ramon Morris (who had a brief tenure in Art Blakey’s early ‘70s Jazz Messengers). Of these three Cowell plays the most consistently interesting solos, though honestly bassist Reggie Johnson threatens to smoke everyone when his turns come around. If Dewey Johnson’s Ascension cameo left us wanting more, his longest soloes here risk having the opposite effect, not so much because he lacks imagination as because he doesn’t seem concerned with pacing the development of his ideas, which often come out as a series of brief, abstract statements that are all but disconnected. When he does find the magic to make this demanding approach build, the results are arresting (his Side D solo is the best example). Morris at this stage was a late-period Coltrane disciple with a strong sound and impressive technical command, but even though he seems to do everything right, the listener may again find attention wandering after four or five minutes. Both horns do alter their approaches for “Ballade” to good effect. Morris’ solo on this is not only engaging but, in places, downright moving. Here again, though, Reggie Johnson seems to be operating on a different level from the preceding soloists. The horn players benefit greatly from Ali’s support but in a way that is hard to hear much of the piano and bass accompaniment except on this quiet track because the recorded balance favors the drums. Caveats aside, First Time Out is easy to recommend to serious free jazz fans, especially those who are focused on originality and are not so their two Johnsons. While this previously-unissued record will be welcomed by devotees of the genre, Duo Exchange with Frank Lowe is a masterpiece and having it expanded to two-LP length qualifies as an event, particularly since the 1974 recordings that were issued on Triple Point in 2014 was for some unknown reason, shorter than the original LP by ten minutes. People seem to have been confused by the fact that, while the LP listed Side A as “Exchange Part 1” and Side B as “Exchange Part 2”, each side had two tracks, so simply looking at the track listings for the release doesn’t warn listeners that two shorter pieces were excluded. These provided a change of pace from the fury of the longer tracks, one featuring Lowe on Japanese flute (“Movement IV” here), and the other (now “Movement II”) on tenor, evoking the great reed, John Webster. This was the first release on Survival Records, which was intended to be a joint enterprise for Ali and Lowe. After this initial release, however, the saxophonist left the label to the drummer (though it’s since 1974 session that was issued on Survival). Duo Exchange was released in 1972, released the following year, and enthusiastically received by free jazz listeners, but before the dust had settled on Interstellar Space was complete, Ali and Lowe no longer wanted to build on what they had done together. All of this helped keep Duo Exchange from getting the attention it deserved. Since comparisons to Interstellar Space are probably inevitable, the first thing we should observe about this exercise is that Lowe does not suffer from the juxtaposition. For one thing, he comes as much out of John Gilmore, Albert Ayler, and Pharoah Sanders as he does out of Coltrane and, for another, Ali mixes in other approaches here besides the multi-directional rhythms we hear on Interstellar Space (even including straight timekeeping), so the comparison is not as direct as it would seem. But the main point is that Lowe was a giant in his own right, someone whose own voice was already well defined, with a sound that could build on what he had done but would not be so much because he lacked imagination as because he doesn’t seem concerned with pacing the development of his ideas, which often come out as a series of brief, abstract statements that are all but disconnected. When he does find the magic to make this demanding approach build, the results are arresting (his Side D solo is the best example). Morris at this stage was a late-period Coltrane disciple with a strong sound and impressive technical command, but even though he seems to do every-thing right, the listener may again find attention wandering after four or five minutes. Both horns do alter their approaches for “Ballade” to good effect. Morris’ solo on this is not only engaging but, in places, downright

For more information, visit roguart.com and nottoo.com
Live at the Apollo Theater
Kamasi Washington (Amazon Prime)
by Eric Wendell

“It’s just fun creating with people that can create... that can create themselves.” So says bandleader Kamasi Washington 22 minutes into the concert film/documentary Live at the Apollo Theater. The quote is a fitting description of not only the film but the generosity and respect that Washington has for his band and for the creative spirit of jazz.

When Washington released his debut album The Epic in 2015 he wasn’t kidding: the sheer spectrum of sound that he created included jazz, psychedelic rock and contemporary concert music. With the film, director Michael Garber brilliantly shows said spectrum of sound along with a visionary flair that beautifully showcases Washington and Co.’s talents.

Filmed on Feb. 23rd, 2019, the concert footage is intercut with Washington exploring Harlem, where he speaks about the importance of the neighborhood and its cultural heritage. While the documentary portion of the film shows Washington as the human, as the proponent of jazz as an art form, the precious time away from the concert portion of the film is felt at every moment.

Washington begins the film with “Show Me The Way” from his latest release Heaven and Earth. The future-bop feel excellently showcases Washington’s solo style: a swashbuckling blend of classic bebop phrasing with next-level funk flavors. On the subsequent “Connections”, Washington’s slow burn of gentle neo-soul to midtempo R&B shows how adept he is at allowing the music to breathe, to let the sonority of the players bring it all to life.

What is most striking is how warm and generous Washington is to his bandmates, giving several of them their time in the spotlight to shine. Most notable is his appreciation of his wife Pernice’s talents. Washington released his debut album Heaven and Earth in 2015. It was a critical and commercial success, earning him widespread praise for his innovative approach to jazz.

Throughout the pair alternate between the expected call and response between Rempis’ chuntering baritone and Rosaly’s sudden rejoinders, which speaks volumes about their masterful pacing on these long forms. The album ends with a gloriously playful duo "Air In Between" stretched out until almost translucent while "Aethelthia" incorporates passages of mournful lyricism and only works up to something of a crescendo at the very end of its 32-minute span.

The work of Chicago reedplayer Dave Rempos enjoys the regular place in these pages. He allies a prodigious talent to a fervent work ethic, manifest in extensive curatorial activity, a normally hectic touring schedule, exponentially multiplying collaborations, and a consequent plethora of documentation. For the last, he reaps the benefits of running his own Aerophonic Records, giving him flexibility and creative control over what makes it into the public domain. But whether partnerships come long established or freshly minted, his improvised encounters are always worth hearing.

It’s almost 20 years since Rempos first met drummer Frank Rosaly. In spite of multiple hookups, Codes/Myths represents only the duo’s second recording in that period. It’s a 2018 live date from Chicago’s Elastic Arts, captured during Rosaly’s brief return to The Windy City after relocating to Amsterdam in 2016. The double-album contains two sets, each disc comprising one lengthy excursion, around the half-hour mark, and one shorter, around ten minutes. Rempos displays all the tools in the avant reed player’s armory, but uses them as means to an end, making music with tension and release, light and shade, overblown excitement and freewheeling narrative drawing on the tradition. Rosaly attends to detail and variety of resonance, pitch and surface but alchemically creates a changing and waning pulse from sometimes unlikely components.

Baritone saxophonist Jon Pål Inderberg, who turns 70 this month, is a veteran of the Norwegian jazz scene and this album documents his most recent trio, a sterling group that made its recording debut in 2016. They expand the frame with a collection of sounds that celebrate both the jazz and Nordic traditions, all with a sense of adventure. Thus, despite the fact that there is traditional music of several stripes—from the jazz world there is music by the recently departed alto saxophonist Lee Konitz (with whom Inderberg worked and released a live album from the 2005 Oslo Jazz Festival), late Swedish baritone saxophonist Lars Gullin and pianist Thelonious Monk—it sounds fresh and different.

The two tunes from Konitz are ‘typical’ takes of contrafacts, the kind that the late saxophonist did on the changes of standards. “No Splice” is derived from “You’d Be So Nice to Come Home To”, opening with a richly pulsing solo from bassist Trygve Waldemar Fiske and moving out into a dancing, boppish play on the Cole Porter standard. Drummer Håkon Mjåset Johansen enters in a flurry and the tune is pushed into spirited improvisation, solo by Inderberg that leads all the way to the close. A similar play of happy happens in “It’s You” (on “It’s You or No One”) with bass leading the way again and all three capping over the Julie Slyne-Sammy Cahn classic. Monk’s light, swinging “Pannonica” is a breezy affair with a pointed bass solo and more inspired work all over the baritone while Gullin’s delicate ballad “Merlin” emerges from Inderberg’s dark and rich playing on the traditional Norwegian tune “Sorgenlat”. And there’s more rich variety from the Norwegian folk tradition: the opening “Den Lyse Dag Forgangen Er” throbs with energy as Inderberg sails over drums with a plaintive air; two “Bykle” tunes pay tribute to a village in the country and “Draumkveldetonar Del 1” and “Draumkveldetonar Del 2” are related to a medieval Norwegian poem and suggest the mystical with delicately pounded toms and Inderberg’s visionary improvisation, ranging from the full-throated to the whispering.

The album ends with a gloriously playful duo composition by Inderberg and Johansen, “Presentation”, in which the leader is all over his baritone combined with some truly wacky vocalizing. It’s a dazzlingly animated close to this beautifully concise undertaking.

For more information, visit ampmusrecords.com
Edward Brian “Tubby” Hayes (1935-73) was arguably the top British jazz musician of 1955-65. During a period when British players had to move to the U.S. in order to be accepted as world-class musicians (most notably George Shearing, Marian McPartland and Victor Feldman) and when its modern jazz scene had a general inferiority complex, Hayes, who made a strong impression during his infrequent visits to the U.S., chose to stay in England and be the biggest fish in a small pond.

A tenor saxophonist who could play as fast as Johnny Griffin and whose ability to articulate individual notes at rapid tempos is a bit reminiscent of Sal Nistico (whom he preceded), Hayes was also a skilled vibraphonist, flutist, soprano saxophonist, big band arranger and composer. A professional musician by the time he was 15, he co-led The Jazz Couriers during 1957-59 with the slightly older Ronnie Scott, who was considered England’s top tenor before Hayes’ arrival. While his boppish recordings from the ‘50s have mostly been reissued, Hayes’ important work for the Fontana label in the ‘60s has, with only a few exceptions, been scarce ever since their original release.

The Complete Fontana Albums 1961-1969 is a compact but attractive 13-CD boxed set with impeccable sound quality and packaging, including a 148-page booklet with very extensive notes by Hayes’ biographer Simon Spillett. The artwork for the ten original LPs is reproduced in miniature with alternate takes from the sessions added. The 100% Proof album with its extra material becomes a two-CD set and the box also includes the twofers Grits, Beans and Greens, which was only recently discovered.

The Anthony Braxton Project

Thumbscrew (Cuneiform)

Even Better

Michael Formanek’s Practical Trio (Intakt)

by Tyran Grillo

Thumbscrew is the collective name of Tomas Fujiwara (drums and vibraphone), Mary Halvorson (guitar) and Michael Formanek (bass). This latest album, dedicated entirely to composer Anthony Braxton, grew out of an artist residency at Pittsburgh’s City of Asylum and under its auspices takes on the darkest implications of the trio’s moniker, which in these divided times feel more relevant than ever. Implications of history, and all the violence and trauma that go along with it, feel relevantly addressed. Whether by design or accident (or both), such confluences of the actual and its interpretation walk hand-in-hand down roads paved in self-reckoning. Such is the power of Braxton’s portals, through which the trio step with one eye open. Between the jaunty edges of “Composition No. 52” and nocturnal swing of “Composition No. 79”, there is so much to chew on that you’ll want to dry the rest and save it for treks yet to be taken. Throughout, drums and bass create a tacitile foundation for guitar’s exegeses, which are the veritable nervous system of this nascent organism. Whether setting up the inhale of Composition No. 52 or exhale via electronic enhancements or stirring the waters of “Composition No. 61” as if said waters might evaporate and therefore enhance or stirring the waters of “Composition No. 52” and “Still Here” with intuitive integrity, cheek of “Apple and Snake”. Halvorson, for her part, rips through the opener (“The Late One”). He also takes from the sessions added. The last of the selections is fresh versions of jazz standards including a blazing “Sonnymoon For Two” (featuring both Hayes and Scott on tenors), “Bluesology” and “Milestones”. The lengthy title cut is an exhilarating tour de force for Hayes, one of the recorded highlights of his career. A second disc of previously unreleased music (with alternate takes, edits and three new pieces) is a welcome addition.

The Lost Fontana Studio Sessions 1969

Mexican Green

from 1967 finds Hayes (like Stan Getz of the era) successfully exploring aspects of free jazz and postbop with a young rhythm section (pianist Mick Pyne, bassist Ron Mathewson and drummer Tony Levin) while still holding on to his hardbop roots and musical identity. He really stretches out on the frequently free 14-minute title track. Hayes’ Summit is the classic Hayes Fontana albums. In contrast, The Orchestra has his big band playing pop tunes of the era and, although pleasant, their versions of such songs as “Hey Jude”, “Up Up And Away” and “These Boots Are Made For Walking” will not excite anyone. This is typical of what record labels were expecting of creative jazz artists by the late 60s, trying hard to jump on the rock bandwagon no matter how instantly dated it sounded.

The rise of rock and avant garde jazz, his drug problems and gradually worsening health due to a weak heart resulted in Hayes losing his recording contract and passing away when he was just 38. The last two CDs in this set, Grits, Beans and Greens (also called The Lost Fontana Studio Sessions 1969 and not available as a CD, although recently) hint at a future that never was. It features Hayes and his quartet of Pyne, Mathewson and drummer Spike Wells on 18 performances that only comprise five different songs with quite a few alternate takes, mostly holding one’s interest. It shows how much Hayes held out. Hayes still had a great deal more to contribute. He desires to be remembered and this perfectly conceived Fontana set (little publicized in the U.S.) should be on many Top-10 lists.

For more information, visit cuneiformrecords.com and intaktrec.ch

CD Box Set

The Complete Fontana Albums 1961-69

Tubby Hayes (Fontana - Decca/Universal)

by Scott Yanow

For more information, visit decca.com
Trumpper Ted Curran made two albums for Dutch Fontana in the mid-'60s, each with a variation of the Mariët Röling lithograph for a cover. The first is with Curran’s partner of the era, tenor saxophonist Bill Barron, plus the rhythm section of bassist Herb Busheler and drummer Dick Berk that appears on Curran’s 1965 Atlantic album The New Thing & The Blue Thing (with Barron plus French pianist Georges Arvantilas). The setlist is two pieces by Barron and four by the leader, three of them future staples of his repertoire, including the title track.

Bill Colé is notable for his work on a wide array of reed and wind instruments. For this Dartmouth College concert, Colé restrains himself to Ghanian flute, Chinese musette, Indian shenai and vocals. His mates are equally flexible: tenor saxophonist Sam Rivers also plays piano while drummer Warren Smith adds kettle drums, marimba and percussion for a panoply of textures across the nearly 43-minute title improv, named after the fact for this 1980 release. Of note: this is the first of only two LPs issued by the college’s in-house imprint.

When the case on jazz is closed, John Zorn’s Massada Quartet, shown here among the Top 10 seminal groups, not only for its longevity (1994-2013) and/or over a dozen albums made for DIW and Tzadik, but also for beginning Zorn’s massive Massada composing project, 613 pieces across three books. The quartet of Zorn (alto saxophone), Dave Douglas (trumpet), Greg Cohen (bass) and Joey Baron (drums) made 10 CDs in quick succession from 1994 to 1997. Named for the first ten letters of the Hebrew alphabet, of which this is the eighth, comprising 10 Zorn pieces.

On This Day by Andrey Henkin

MISCERLANY

Hamy and Getz
Lionel Hampton/Stan Getz (Nogran) August 1st, 1955

Lears for Deっぷ
Ted Curson (Fontana) August 1st, 1964

The First Cycle
Bill Cole (Music from Dartmouth) August 1st, 1973

Live At Abe Hill
Elvin Jones (Polydor) August 1st, 1985

Mazada Hot
August 1st, 1996

The Spanish drummer and percussionist, long based in France, has been active since the mid-70s, a veritable who’s who of genres, including improvised music with a large cast of international collaborators. He debuted as a leader with a solo drum, Elts, Elts, Elts, Songs, for Leo Lath in 1997 while recording in Côte d’Ivoire with Claudio Tournier and Claude Tchamitchian. He has made many records for Leo Lath, plus dates for Xaba Jazz, Ceremony, Sources, Maria and Not Two with various groups while working with Hans Koch, Barry Guy, Agusti Fernandez, Joachim Kuhn, Sylvain Kassop, George Lewis, Joe Fonda, Guillermo Gregorio, Mark Feldman, Sabino Fuji, Jean-Marc Foussat and many others. — JHH

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ACROSS

1. Orig. that presents the Vision Festival
2. Old Dixieland standard “Let’s Sow a Wild ___”
3. Throab Sanders’ song from Jewels of Thought
4. Like Director and OHJ’s label
5. A what does a musician use for at The Stone
6. What a musician can prevent moths from eating your clothes?
7. Type of sound file
8. Large cast of international improvised music with a
9. Harold Cole
10. Musicians’ office?
11. Can prevent moths from eating your clothes?
12. Traditional sound file type
13. Member of John Coltrane’s quartet
14. ‘Hum, Hum, Hum ___’
15. Members’ office?
16. At The Stone
17. A what does a musician use for at The Stone
18. ‘Hum, Hum, Hum ___’
19. A what does a musician use for at The Stone
20. Musician’s office?
21. A what does a musician use for at The Stone
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60. A what does a musician use for at The Stone

DOWN

1. Monogram of this gazette’s Editorial Director
2. Type of sound file
3. Percussionist Don’s real name?
4. ‘Hum, Hum, Hum ___’
5. Musicians’ office?
6. Member of John Coltrane’s quartet
7. Traditional sound file type
8. Large cast of international improvised music with a
9. A what does a musician use for at The Stone
10. What a musician can prevent moths from eating your clothes?
11. Musician’s office?
12. Member of John Coltrane’s quartet
13. Member of John Coltrane’s quartet
14. A what does a musician use for at The Stone
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By Andrey Henkin
visit nyjazzrecord.com for answers

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