REGINA CARTER
ELECTORAL COLLAGE

DIGITAL ONLY EDITION

GARY SMULYAN
JOSH SINTON
MWATA BOWDEN
KENNY KIRKLAND
Ornette Coleman helped pioneer the musical concept of “Time, No Changes”. That phrase seems tragically apt these days as weeks and months blend together and the hope for a real return to normalcy seems distant and illusory.

But, for perspective, we think back to October 2016, four years/48 months/208 weeks/almost 1,500 days ago. At the time, a transformative presidential election was in its final stages but not how many thought it would transpire. Instead of a groundbreaking first female president and a hope for a continuation of progress, the United States regressed. Think of all that has happened in the time since that month...and shudder. The last four years have seen this country abandon its allies, abrogate its responsibilities and present a dark, apocalyptic image to the world. Truths once held to be self-evident, enshrined in our Declaration of Independence as protection against a tyrannical king and bought with the bloodshed of patriots, are now once more assailed by a despot, one who is being supported from within by a new generation of Royalists, now motivated by greed and personal benefit to be accrued by promoting divisiveness and fomenting hatred. And add to this a once-in-a-lifetime health crisis and change—almost exclusively for the worst—has been the feature of recent time. But there are those who have been fighting, whether from the beginning or drawn to the battle because of newly acquired awareness.

In a month, the most consequential presidential election of our time—and perhaps in our country’s history—will take place. There is no luxury of apathy and inaction, for feeling like things cannot get any worse. They can and most certainly will if we do not remember the fathers and mothers of this country and vote to make America America again.
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Timeless, swinging, heartfelt, and resonant. Those are just a few fitting words to describe the exceptional live recordings released through Cellar Live, the stellar studio sessions put out through Cellar Music, and the revelatory archival recordings shared with jazz lovers through Reel to Real Recordings. Together, the three imprints make them one of the most active and successful independent jazz labels in North America.

cellarlive.com
Pianist Noah Haidu has etched out an uncompromising identity as a pianist and composer by balancing cutting edge songwriting with stirring improvisations. On his new Sunnyside release **Doctone**, Haidu reaches a new level of self-expression while exploring the work of one of his major influences, the late Kenny Kirkland.

Haidu’s choices of collaborators added perspective to this passion project. Billy Hart is a relentlessly creative and vital drummer who both Haidu and Kirkland worked with early on in their development. Bassist Todd Coolman propels the band forward with a fluid, effervescent beat; tenorist Gary Thomas brings his remarkable language to Kirkland’s compositions; while contributions by saxophonist Jon Irabagon and percussionist Daniel Sadowick stretch the tonal palette. The masterful yet gritty alto/soprano saxophonist Steve Wilson seems to “breathe” the music rather than play it.

**NOAH HAIDU**
**DOCTONE**
SSC 1595
AVAILABLE 10/02/20

As New York City returns to ‘normal’, phase by phase, and jazz performances have moved from solo live-streams to artists interacting from remote locations (only marginally successful, at best), to combos playing together in a (mostly empty) club, one key ingredient is still missing: us, the live audience. Thankfully in these deficient times we have groups like the Billy Hart Quartet (comprised of the drummer/leader, tenor saxophonist Mark Turner, pianist Ethan Iverson and bassist Ben Street), an exceptionally simpatico combo quite capable of generating that sorely missed X-factor, in spite of the empty chairs. They were the first to live-stream at the Village Vanguard and they followed up with two numerous sets at The Jazz Gallery (Sep. 10th). Performing all original material—Hart’s “South Hampton”, “Song for Balkis”, “Ohnedaruth”, “Duchess”, “Amethyst”, “Teule’s Redemption” and “Irah”; Iverson’s “Showdown” and “Neon”; Turner’s “Sonnet for Stevie” and “Nigeria”—the quartet took its cues from Hart who, without ever overplaying, added just the right drum touches in those places they were most effective. Turner and Iverson, each highly disciplined and imaginative, provided the twin poles of improvisatory exploration: Turner cool but intense, deploying the quicksilver logic of a speed chess master; Iverson abstract but ebullient, working out ideas with similarly steely logic (and humor), editing himself in transit, pruning and shaping his thoughts to form crystalline statements.

—Tom Greenland

**SAM DECKER**
**SHROVE**
SSC 1591
AVAILABLE 7/1720

The Illinois-bred, Brooklyn-based Decker focused the past six years on developing music that blended his fascination with folk-inflected sounds of composers like Stravinsky, Bartok and Shostakovich with the color and power of improvised music. The outcome is his first release that fits squarely in the jazz realm of composition meeting improvisation, namely, **Shrove**. Decker wanted to find a way to create simple pieces, without many of the complex rhythmic and harmonic trappings of contemporary jazz, that gave the improvisers freedom within an aesthetic.

Decker and clarinetist Michael Sachs began playing Decker’s pieces together as he experimented with different instrumentations. Over time an ensemble emerged as a brilliant rhythm section of bassist Areyh Kobrinsky and drummer Nathan Ellman-Bell were assembled. Eventually Dow Manski was added on piano, who has a fantastic harmonic sense and a mindful approach to ensemble playing that Decker knew would provide for more orchestral possibilities without taking up too much space.

Decker’s pieces focus on developing a high energy atmosphere through rhythmic and temporal exploration before bringing in the horns. Each movement is a unique sound world with a lot of different color palettes and textures. It was recorded at Soup & Bones, the club run by saxophonist Nick DeMott in Brooklyn that was a popular space for young musicians to perform.

One of the perks of being a NYC-based jazz writer is knowing that, sooner or later, some young musician will roll into town and surprise you with their talent and originality. The Festival of New Trumpet Music—online because of the pandemic—dedicated its “Emerging Voices” program (Sep. 12th) to such young talents. Hosted by trumpeter Bria Skonberg, it presented prerecorded remote group sessions to which each musician added their part, starting with a ‘click track’ provided by drummer Darrian Douglas. The three invitees were Lessee Vonner, Brandon Woody and Summer Camargo, each interviewed and spotlighted on an original tune with the house band (pianist Chris Patalish, bassist Endea Owens, Douglas). Skonberg began with her arrangement of “Limehouse Blues”, showing herself a ‘queen’ in the tradition of New Orleans brass kings. Vonner, a soft-spoken but thoughtful stylist, played her song “Waltz for Jim”. Woody played “We Oh-ta BEHN-Gah”, dedicated to the Mbuti former slave once exhibited at the Bronx Zoo monkey house; unlike the others, he performed with his head down. The same story as to Iverson had more mojo from the get-go, his assertive legato tone redolent of Woody Shaw. The four horns joined for “Centerpiece”, Camargo making a cameo before being featured on “Girl in the Jeep”, showing via precocious chops and expressivity why she deserved the anchor spot. There was no amplification yet the park was remarkably hushed, so much so that bass solos were perfectly audible from a (social) distance. The benches were full of dedicated listeners and many more stopped on their strolls to take in the show for a bit. The trio played tunes by Wilson (“Dewey’s Spirit”, “Wind Spirits”), Tony Williams (“Pee Wee”) and Jones (“Leap”), plus a contrafact of “Just Friends” Wilson dedicated to COVID-19 fatality Lee Konitz. To have a tableau larger than a computer screen and to feel natural dynamics rather than experience computer glitches was glorious. At the end of the first set, a young boy passing with his mother ran into the midst of the trio and jitterbug-waltzed with abandon. He was dancing for all of us.

—Andrey Henkin

**NEW YORK @ NIGHT**

**NOAH HAIDU**
**DOCTONE**
SSC 1595
AVAILABLE 10/02/20

**We’ve both played all over the world but just playing a few blocks away from home feels like a brand new outing in this time.** So did reedplayer **Ned Rothenberg** introduce his duo concert with pianist **Sylvie Courvoisier** at Soapbox Gallery (Sep. 3rd). Six months into lockdown, the venue had their presentation down to a science, highly professional and intimate execution of the technical aspects with good sound and four camera angles. Another selling-point to the show was that this was the first time the pair had played as such, a fine opportunity for the juxtaposition of Courvoisier’s sharpness and Rothenberg’s rounded corners on bass clarinet, clarinet, alto saxophone or shakuhachi. The set began with Courvoisier’s “South Side Blues”, Rothenberg on bass clarinet, dramatic swells leading into a dirgey theme. Rothenberg premiered his “Bob and Weave”, this conceptual piece broken into short unaccompanied clarinet pieces. Another Rothenberg premiere, this one untitled and its composer on alto, was a pastoral scene yet with some prickly bushes and a lovely quiet portion reminiscent of Rothenberg’s work with Evan Parker (with whom Courvoisier had also partnered). Solo piano and alto pieces, the former wooden and mystical, the latter a circular breathing feature, bockended a song with Rothenberg on shakuhachi that was no less than a sacrament. Two more Courvoisier pieces and one by Rothenberg (dedicated to Irving Stone) closed out the hour. Someday we will see this pairing in person.

(AH)
Masked and socially distanced, Houston Person with the Emmet Cohen Trio took to the Birdland Theater stage (Sep. 15th) for a live-streamed set that found the intergenerational quartet digging into the four Bs of mainstream jazz repertory—bebop, ballads, bossas and blues. They got things started with Person’s “Why Not”, a medtempo groove showcasing the tenor saxophonist’s warm, soulful sound, ably accompanied by the trio of Cohen (piano), Yasushi Nakamura (bass) and Evan Sherman (drums), the former two both soloing lyrically before Person and Cohen engaged in a series of four-bar exchanges with the latter. The trio was featured on Cohen’s hip arrangement of the traditional Jewish prayer “Hatzki Kaddish”, the pianist moving between classically and liturgically-tinged passages along with some fiery bebop and stride piano interpolations. Person returned to the stage for an inspired reading of the Richard Rodgers-Lorenz Hart standard “Isn’t It Romantic”, spinning out inventive, melodically appealing lines. The group then segued right into a buoyant rendering of the Benny Carter-Sammy Cahn bossa nova “Only Trust Your Heart” and a stirring rendition of the Lady Day-linked ballad “Maybe You’ll Be There”. They swung hard on a lively version of “Lester Leaps In” with Sherman showing his stuff with an energetic solo. After Person noted, “We haven’t played a blues yet”, the band closed out in classic form doing just that, getting down on what he called “some kind of blues”. – Russ Musto

Arts for Art (AFA) engages in a people’s culture and its sub-group, Artists for a Free World (AFW), was founded as an avant jazz second-line for the Women’s March. Recently, breaking out of months of lockdown, AFW began hosting outdoor concerts of protest music at Clemente Soto Velez Cultural Center. Bassist/poet Larry Roland is a link between the revolutionary New Thing of the earliest 70s and today’s downtown rads, so his set (Sep. 12th) was ripe with dissent. After a greeting by AFA administrator Patricia Nicholson Parker reminding the crowd to vote, Roland, reedplayer J.D. Parran and drummer Jackson Krall cast a tapestry of percussion, which climaxcd into a tenor saxophone improvisation. By the time the rhythm section tore into this, the atmosphere was electric. When the dynamics dropped down to pianissimo, Roland took the microphone, releasing a brand of spoken word dripping with the stern intonation of Archie Shepp at Newport. “In the flickering dim of this unemploved time... battling a racist virus with no reparations for a vaccine.” Krall floated over his kit with mallets as Parran enchanted on bass kalimba and native flutes, breathing raw leastlessness. “…holding the American Dream hostage,” Roland emoted, “stopping stock prices on keeloid backs.” The other sets, too, produced aural enlightenment: duo of drummer Whit Dickey and trombone wizard Steve Swell and trio of soprano saxophonist Sam Newsome, bassist Hilliard Greene and drummer Reggie Nicholson. – John Pietaro

The Labor Day (Sep. 7th) edition of the long-running Monday Night series Live From Emmet’s Place took on an added holiday spirit as host Emmet Cohen had tenor saxophonist Tivon Pennicott join his group with bassist Russell Hall and drummer Kyle Poole for a live-streamed show, in conjunction with Jazz at Lincoln Center, dubbed “Celebrating Sonny Rollins at 90”. The 2019 Cole Porter Fellowship recipient kicked things off with a couple of trio outings, beginning with “Time On My Hands”, which Rollins recorded early in his career. They followed with a mashup of the Ahmad Jamal-associated classic “Poinciana” and Cedar Walton’s “Ugetsu”. Pennicott then joined the festivities, getting started with a solo recital of the melody of “Moritat (Mack The Knife)”, taking his time stretching out on the changes with the trio’s fine backing. Next the quartet fell into classic bebop mode, swinging mightily on “Without A Song”, another Rollins staple, Pennicott quoting “Rockin’ In Rhythm” and “It Could Happen To You” à la Sonny. Noting his appreciation of Rollins’ ballad playing, Pennicott took a turn on “Everything Happens To Me” (the band had unfortunatelyfreewheeling take of Rollins’ “Pent Up House”. Cohen noted the enduring relevance of Rollins’ “Freedom Suite”, dedicating his compelling arrangement of the masterpiece to Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and other slain Black Americans. Joe Saylor sat in for Poole on “St. Thomas”, then alternated with him to end the show with one more Rollins classic, “Oleo”. (RM)

The 2020 Vision Festival, “Healing Soul” will take place live (limited capacity) and online Oct. 8th-12th at La Plaza at Clemente Soto Velez Cultural Center featuring performances by Olivia Lake, Andrew Cyrille, Amina Claudiy Myres, William Parker and others. For the complete schedule and to buy tickets for in-person or virtual attendance, visit artsforart.org/healingsoul.html.

The 2020 Jazz Gallery All-Stars will perform a live-streamed concert from Washington, DC’s Kennedy Center on Oct. 8th at 8 pm. The band will be Miguel Zenon (alto saxophone), Melissa Aldana (tenor saxophone), Joel Ross (vibraphone), Charles Altura (guitar), Aaron Parks (piano), Ben Williams (bass), Kendrick Scott (drums) and guest Renee Neufville (voice). For more information and to buy tickets, visit kennedy-center.org/whats-on/on-stage/jazz-gallery-all-stars-73512.

The 2020 European Jazz Network Award for Adventurous Programming has been given to Porto & Bess (Vienna, Austria) and Victoria - Nasional jazzscene (Oslo, Norway) while JazzDanmark was given the Award for Music & Community. For more information, visit europejazz.net.

Copenhagen, Denmark’s Jazzhus Montmartre, open since 2010, when it was revived after a 15-year absence, has closed its doors due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Alternative Guitar Summit 2020 will take place online from Oct. 10th-12th with masterclasses, performances and Q&As by Lionel Loueke, David Tronzo, Sheryl Bailey, Adam Rogers, Tim Miller, Joel Harrison, Glad Heikeselman and guest Anupam Shobhakar. For more information and to register, visit alternativeguitarsummitcamp.com/ags-online-2.

The Louis Armstrong House Museum has named Regina Bain as its new Executive Director.

Dizzy’s Club is the latest pandemic-shuttered NYC venue to begin offering live-streamed events, starting Oct. 1st with Catherine Russell Trio and continuing each Thursday. For more information, visit jazz.org/livefromdizzyz.

Ann Arbor, Michigan’s EdgeFest’s 24th edition will be virtual, with concerts on Oct. 23rd, Nov. 20th, Dec. 18th, Jan. 22nd, Feb. 19th and Mar. 26th, hosted on the Kerrytown Concert House website. For more information, visit kerrytownconcerthouse.com/edgefest.

Pianist James Cane was also the curator of the long-running Konceptions series in various Brooklyn locations, has opened Piano Works, a workshop and showroom in Industry City in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. In addition to sales and repairs, Caney eventually hopes to use the space for concerts and workshops. For more information, visit jamescane.net/pianoworks.

City Winery has unveiled its Signature Series, fine wines with label artwork designed by acclaimed artists, with the debut collection Portraits in Jazz by William Horberg, benefiting the Creative Music Studio. For more information, visit citywinery.com/newyork/wine-shop/signature-series.html.

Winners of the 2020 Unsigned Only Music Competition have been announced. In the jazz category, first place went to saxophonist Tam Hutcherson (JS) and second to pianist Hildemaro Alvarez (Venezuela). For more information, visit unsignedonly.com.
Gary Smulyan, one of the premier masters of the baritone saxophone in the world of jazz today, has not only been a leader, but also has worked with a host of legendary musicians in a career spanning decades, including membership in the Woody Herman Orchestra, Charlie Persip Superband, Mingus Big Band, Carnegie Hall Jazz Band, Joe Lovano Nonet and Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra/Vanguard Jazz Orchestra. His close collaboration with arranger Mark Masters, begun around 20 years ago, has produced a catalogue of excellence in music, the latest being the just-released Night Talk: The Alec Wilder Songbook featuring Gary Smulyan (Capri), transformations of nine tracks of Wilder’s songbook staples into lushly creative jazz standards. In this interview, we ask him about that process, working with Masters, his relationship with the baritone saxophone and more.

The New York City Jazz Record: Night Talk was recorded in one very short studio session. How was producing a level of excellence accomplished in such a brief time?

Gary Smulyan: Short sessions are not untypical for jazz recordings. You have to work with the time slot you’re given. In this case we did have a concert of the music beforehand and a run-through, so there were a couple of passes. Also, with this ensemble there was a high level of musicianship involved; we’ve worked with each other before and know each other’s styles, which helped us be spontaneous, blend each of our sounds in the moment and capture the performance as you hear it. Any recording, actually, is a snapshot; it’s about capturing the music at a very specific point in time, whenever that is.

TNYCJR: Why do you think Mark isn’t as well known as he should be?

GS: Part of it is that he’s not a bandleader. He’s a West-Coast-based arranger that works from home, so he’s not out front of a group or touring. As a leader there are a lot of non-musical things beside the music you have to deal with. Mark certainly has the repertoire and the knowledge to do that, but he’s happy to be doing what he’s doing. It’s the most meaningful and purest pursuit for him. His arranging evokes his deepest feelings, so he has no need to get out and put himself forward.

TNYCJR: Why Alec Wilder? Who chose him and the specific tunes of Wilder’s catalog for this recording?

GS: Alec Wilder is also very hard to put in a box. He wrote American Songbook standards just as songwriters like Cole Porter did, but all also types of classical music, children’s music and more. Jazz musicians have always loved Wilder because the musical forms are interesting, the harmonies are interesting and there’s always something surprising in the music. Basically, it was Mark’s idea to record Wilder, with some influence from saxophonist Gary Foster. Mark was interested in arranging the baritone in and around Wilder’s tunes, especially the lesser-known standards, and in creating something you wouldn’t usually expect a baritone to play. Our focus was on producing beautiful melodies and beautiful harmonies and Wilder’s music very much lent itself to that.

TNYCJR: What’s your favorite track on the album?

GS: That’s a hard one to answer, but I’ll say “Ellen” and “I’ll Be Around”. When I was younger, I really loved to play fast, but the older I get I appreciate ballads more and more.

TNYCJR: Let’s talk about your tone. You excel at beautiful melodies and harmonies.

GS: Actually, I wasn’t initially interested in the baritone. I was studying the alto sax and intended to make that my instrument. I idolized Phil Woods and did everything I could to be Phil Woods, from wearing the same leather hat to having my mouthpiece on the same angle! When I was in my senior year in college, I got the opportunity to join Woody Herman’s Young Thundering Herd but they didn’t need an alto player. They had Joe Lovano and some other great players like bassist Marc Johnson and drummer John Riley. It was an opportunity I couldn’t let pass. So they needed a bari player. I didn’t own a bari and had no idea what it was even supposed to sound like. I had to dive deep into the whole lore of the instrument and learn what it was all about from scratch. As a youngster I never would have believed this was going to be my direction in music and all because of one fateful phone call. The lesson is there are things that are life-altering that could happen to you just by saying yes and being receptive. I think that’s also a key to making a good sound, being open and trying new things. And as you mature, the tone changes because you bring more to it. I feel that it’s such an honor and humbling and even surreal beyond belief that I’m even allowed to do what I do. I have such gratitude. I really feel that.

TNYCJR: I presume in your initial studies of the baritone, you studied the work of other players?

GS: Absolutely. Gerry Mulligan, of course... Pepper Adams...many others. But Pepper had a very big influence on me. When he died, I recorded an album with eight pieces he composed. He was known more for hardbop than being a melodist, like Mulligan, but his work was seminal and certainly helped shape my playing. I think for young musicians it’s a big part of learning to find somebody’s playing you love and try to imitate that. Having that foundation is the way your own sound can emerge and develop and become dynamic. Even Charlie Parker had his heroes when he was young and starting out.

TNYCJR: You’re a big fan of contrafacts and your own album, Our Contrafacts [SteepleChase, 2019], has also been recently released. Tell us a bit about that pursuit.

GS: That’s a rabbit hole I jumped down without intending to go there. Contrafacts had intrigued me for years, especially the obscure ones. Quite a few years ago on the Hidden Treasures [Reservoir, 2005] album, with Christian McBride and Billy Drummond, we explored contrafacts. Along the way I came across a book about contrafacts written in 1970 by a pianist and psychiatrist named Maurice Markewich. It’s long out of print but is kind of my bible. Eventually I recorded Alternate Contrafacts [SteepleChase, 2017] some years later, with bass and drums again, this time David Wong and Rodney Green, and it just seemed right to finally compose our own contrafact, which we did for Our Contrafacts. The fact is you can copyright a melody but not a chord progression. That’s why there have been so many contrafacts over many years. For every known contrafact there are plenty more that drifted into obscurity.

TNYCJR: Most of the titles are puns/hints about the original, underlying tune, such as “Miles Tones” and “Tritonious Monk”.

GS: You got that—that’s terrific! That was part of the fun.

TNYCJR: Your upcoming concert of The Mark Masters Ensemble, Night Talk: The Alec Wilder Songbook featuring Gary Smulyan will be live-streamed later this month.

GS: It’s part of the William Paterson University Jazz Room Series at Home. We couldn’t do a live performance, of course, because of COVID, so this will be a kind of record release party and the first time the music is being officially pushed out.

For more information, visit garysmulyan.com. The Wilder project live-streams on Oct. 25th at upju.edu/peppresents/jazz-room-series

Recommended Listening:

- Mel Lewis Sextet—The Lost Art (Musicmasters, 1989)
- Gary Smulyan Nonet—Songbook (SteepleChase, 1993)
- Gary Smulyan—Hidden Treasures (Reservoir, 2005)
- Gary Smulyan/George Cables—Two For Thad: Remembering Thad Jones (Edition Longplay, 2015)
- Gary Smulyan—Our Contrafacts (SteepleChase, 2019)
Brooklyn-based baritone saxophonist and bass clarinetist Josh Sinton is a man who thinks deeply about what he does and follows his own path. That’s as evident in talking to him as it is in listening to the adventurous music that is the result. While studying at the New England Conservatory (NEC) in Boston he met soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy, whose compositions provided the repertoire for his group Ideal Bread, which first put Sinton on the critical radar. Since then he’s worked with Darcy James Argue, Nate Wooley and Anthony Braxton while leading diverse projects under his own name, the most recent of which he’s issued on his own freshly inaugurated label.

His love of jazz came courtesy of an older friend he’d hang out with after school. Sinton details the exact moment, on hearing “Ballade,” an October 1950 duet between Charlie Parker and Coleman Hawkins. “Parker comes in and it’s kind of thrilling and terrifying. He’s not just playing double time, but quadruple time through parts of it. But he’s so relaxed. I just put my book down and my eyes started going wider and wider until they were the size of saucers. I felt like I could actually hear it for the first time. The speed of it was daunting. I still have a deep and abiding love for that particular track.”

From there his father’s record collection helped fuel a fascination leading to study at the University of Chicago, supplemented by practical lessons at the AACM school from the likes of Mwata Bowden, Steve Berry, Vandy Harris, Ed Wilkerson and Ernest Dawkins. “I realized that they’re all, for the lack of a better term, bebop babies. To a person, everyone of them, that was their fundamental.” Processing how this related to their novel approaches to structuring musical thought came from attending shows, the AACM 25th Anniversary concerts being a defining experience.

After playing for dance and theater and in jam sessions around town, Sinton decided to undertake further study to address technical shortcomings, this time at NEC where he encountered Lacy. “He arrived in my final year. Without realizing it I was very primed for what he taught. I wanted the music I made to be what he taught. I wanted the music I made to be something that right now means most to me. Sometimes for an emotional reason, the Steve Lacy étude that’s on there. Other reasons, like the technical thing, David Lang’s ‘Press Release’ piece I’ve been working on forever. I enjoy the idea of trying to play counterpoint on a monophonic instrument.” Other videos present pieces by Anthony Braxton and Tim Berne, as well as from less expected sources, such as Dan Penn’s hit for Aretha Franklin “Do Right Woman, Do Right Man”. Paradoxically, the sophisticated production values meant the project has been on hiatus during the lockdown.

But that has not prevented Sinton from pulling together a new release, cérémonie musique on his own Form is Possibility Recordings, by a trio completed by guitarist Todd Neufeld and electric bassist Giacomo Merega under the moniker What Happens In A Year (a live release event will be held at Industry City in Brooklyn on Oct. 18th; check Sinton’s website for more information). Sinton’s original concept was to create music that was very quiet, contained silence as an intrinsic structural element and used very fast tempos when possible. “I tried to think of people I could do that with and I knew both Todd and Giacomo. My initial idea was that I would just go in and personally play using those three criteria. I had a hunch from having heard them play that they would respond in sympathetic ways that would work well. And that I would record the first couple of sessions and from that generate some compositions for us to play. But after the second one, I was like I don’t need to write anything for this group. We are exactly where I wanted to be.”

Future plans include more from the Predicate Trio. “I out of the blue got this small but generous commission from a group called The Jazz Coalition, so I’m reconvening the Predicate Trio for that. As much as I enjoyed the last record, there are issues, concepts and some dimensions that I didn’t work hard enough to develop and really clarify.” While Sinton wields the bass clarinet as a passport to more work, his love of the baritone saxophone came as an epiphany. “I was 25, living in Chicago, struggling with playing the alto saxophone, woke up in my apartment and the first thought that came to my mind went something like: yeah, I should be playing baritone saxophone. I have an unabashed, unrestrained, unreasonable and irrational love of the instrument. I don’t understand it, it just means the world to me. If I have a calling in this life it is to play baritone saxophone.”
Music has been an encompassing presence in Regina Carter’s life since she was two years old. Her journey has been colored by the bowing of the violin, which she began playing at the age of four, and has allowed her to create a lifelong soundtrack to her unique journey. Carter is accomplished and has had a lengthy, successful recording career, which stands as a testament for her talent and love for people and collaboration. Throughout her career, she has been open to performing diverse genres as her musical talents have spanned across R&B, avant chamber music, funk and reimagined arrangements of traditional African music.

Her music has taken her all over the world but Carter, as of late, has taken on a duty and responsibility to use the platform she has earned from the fruits of her hard work and philanthropy to inspire people to engage with one another and their communities in America in a way that promotes unity. Her new album, Swing States: Harmony in the Battleground (Tiger Turn Productions-eOne) has a very specific purpose: to encourage as many people as possible to vote.

The Regina Carter Freedom Band consists of John Daversa (trumpet and flugelhorn), The Late Show with Stephen Colbert bandleader Jon Batiste (piano), Kabir Sehgal (bass and percussion), Alexis Cuadrado (bass), Harvey Mason (drums) and guest tenor saxophonist Brian Correll. The aim for this album and all-star musical lineup may have initially been to make a clear and well-executed message of voting but, in the preparation for the release of the album, the world was afflicated with the COVID-19 pandemic and an international outcry of protests and demonstrations in the wake of the killing of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and many other Black people slain at the hands of the police. Carter’s concerns emerged long before the protests as she discovered the large numbers of people who did not vote in the 2016 election. “Voting is a civic duty and an extremely important responsibility, even more so now as we are living in surreal times...we have become a divided country of Red vs. Blue, Us vs. Them or Not Our Kind and that pot is starting to boil over,” says Carter.

Another coincidence, if not a predetermined synchronicity in regards to the timing of the release of Swing States, Carter’s hometown of Detroit, Michigan is submerged in recent controversy as 72% of Detroit’s absentee voting precincts did not match the number of ballots that had been cast for the primary election. There were a record number to the fear of being in tightly packed voting locations amid the pandemic. The city is doing its best to be prepared for the upcoming presidential election but, because of these unprecedented times, the future, in so many ways, is unpredictable and therefore, practically unreliable. But this should not deter the American people from voting.

In a broader sense, “Many Americans are concerned about voting in November amid the coronavirus pandemic and worries over the U.S. Postal Service’s capacity to deliver ballots on time. Democrats, however, are more concerned than Republicans about the ease of voting and the broader integrity of the election. Public attitudes about several voting-related policy proposals—from automatically registering all eligible citizens to vote to expanding the availability of ‘no excuse’ early and absentee voting—also differ sharply by partisan affiliation,” writes John Gramlich for the Pew Research Center. The research shows people are in need of harmony and Carter is taking it upon herself to help lead our country into a new era of more positive partisan relationships, predicting the need to communicate togetherness with her listeners and musical community through this album as the proverbial battleground that exists within the realm of voting via racism, discrimination, prison industrialization and immigration.

In fact, the origin of the project began with a conversation and collaboration at the Mexican border. Carter worked with album’s executive producer Sehgal on Arturo O’Farrill’s collaborative project, Tandango at the Wall: A Soundtrack for the United States, Mexico and Beyond (which premiered on HBO on Sep. 25th).

Kabir and I were talking and he asked what my next project was going to be. I had something completely different in mind that I was working on but [Kabir] and I were having a political discussion and he asked me if I voted. I said, “Of course.” I was expressing my dismay that so many African Americans didn’t vote. Being an African American woman, it took so much for us to get that right. Kabir asked me if I was interested in making an album on the topic of voting and I thought it was a great idea. That conversation lasted for about a year before we ended up in the studio,” said Carter.

The album is made up of songs she selected, offering official (and some unofficial) songs of the election “swing states”. She chose to represent her Michigan, a swing state with 16 pivotal electoral votes, by including Marvin Gaye-William Stevenson-Iby Jo Hunter’s “Dancing in the Streets.” Other songs that are included on the album are Eddie Khoury-Ronnie Rossa-J.S. Hubbard’s “On Wisconsin”, Stephen Foster’s “Swannee River” (Florida), John Denver-Mike Taylor’s “Rocky Mountain High” (Colorado), Jimmie Davis-Charles Mitchell’s “You Are My Sunshine” (Louisiana) and Daniel E. Kelley-Brewster M. Higley’s “Home on the Range” (Kansas).

The opening monologue lends insight into Carter’s childhood memories of the discrimination African Americans faced within the democratic system of the U.S. She speaks candidly about growing up in a diverse neighborhood with children of many different backgrounds whose lineage was from countries like Greece, Poland and Mexico. She recalled living in peace with other families until it became an election season. This was the time when people’s differences became a hindrance to harmony and Carter wants for others to be able to vote but also respect one another’s differences even when voting preferences don’t align. She understands that her right to vote comes from the years of protests and demonstrations that her parents, grandparents and great grandmother participated in and that sacrifices that many were forced to endure to gain the right of suffrage.

Black women were legally granted the right to vote 100 years ago when the 19th Amendment prohibited the government from using sex as a criterion for voting rights. But, Black women were disenfranchised and mostly unable to vote for another 50 years due to the dual impact of “othering” and discrimination. “The 19th Amendment did not eliminate the state laws that operated to keep Black Americans from the polls via poll taxes and literacy tests—nor did the 19th Amendment address violence or lynching. Some African-American women will vote with the 19th Amendment... But many Black women faced the beginning of a new movement for voting rights in the summer of 1920 and it’s a struggle they will wage alone...,” said historian Martha S. Jones to TIME Magazine in 2020.

It is true that voting numbers of African Americans were quite low during the 2016 elections, but in contrast, it has been Black women who have been leaders in grassroots voting initiatives and record numbers of Black women are being voted into office, including Senator (now Vice Presidential nominee) Kamala Harris. No matter what the platform looks like or how prominent it is, Black women are creating spaces for not only the Black community, but anyone who has interest or passion on the subject of voting to be able to share their voice and do the work that needs to be done in order to work towards a fair and equitable future for all.

Of course, the conversation of voter discrimination and disenfranchisement should not be overshadowed, but Carter wants to spread a message of encouragement to the American people. The swing states are key elements in the structure of elections and to pay homage to them shows that the Regina Carter Freedom Band wants to hone in on information voters should know and understand. Offering a level of education about the importance of swing states just by creating music that can cause listeners to learn more about the voting process makes Carter’s work a civic offering along with being a piece of creative art.

“Do I consider myself an activist? In a way, I guess I am, through my music and through volunteering and giving money to organizations. I’m not out protesting but there are several ways to be involved. So yeah, I do consider myself an activist.”

For more information, visit reginacarter.com

Recommended Listening:
• Swing Trio of New York — Intermobility (Arabesque, 1992)
• Quartett Indigo — Afrika! Afrika! (Savant, 1997)
• Regina Carter — Rhythms of the Heart (Verve, 1998)
• Kenny Barron/Regina Carter — Firefall (Verve, 2000)
• Regina Carter — Reverse Thread (eOne, 2008)
• Regina Carter — Swing States: Harmony in the Battleground (Tiger Turn-eOne, 2019)
Matthieu Bordenave
La traversée
September 18
Matthieu Bordenave tenor sax Patrice Moret double bass Florian Weber piano

Michel Benita Quartet
Looking at Sounds
September 25
Michel Benita double bass, laptop Matthieu Michel flugelhorn Jozef Dumoulin Fender Rhodes, electronics Philippe Garcia drums, electronics

Matthieu Bordenave
La traversée
September 18
Matthieu Bordenave tenor sax Patrice Moret double bass Florian Weber piano

Keith Jarrett
Budapest Concert
October 30
Keith Jarrett piano

CRISS CROSS JAZZ


All information about Criss Cross Jazz is available on the website.

There's still more to come, stay tuned!

www.crisscrossjazz.com

Founded in 1980, Criss Cross Jazz has released more than 400 albums from artists such as Jimmy Raney, Cedar Walton, Warne Marsh, Clifford Jordan, Kenny Barron, David Binney and Wycliffe Gordon. The Criss Cross Jazz label will be continued to keep the legacy alive.
It’s hard to say which is more noteworthy, that last year Chicago saxophonist Mwata Bowden put out a remarkable record of innovative and eminently listenable jazz compositions that went almost entirely unnoticed or, that at 71, it was his debut as a leader. Whichever focus one picks, the mitigating factors aren’t hard to uncover. For the former, his *1 Foot In 1 Foot Out* was released by Asian Improv (a small operation nevertheless instrumental in documenting the work coming out of Chicago’s Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians [AACM] for more than 20 years, dating back at least to the 1999 release of *Power Trio Live at Unity Temple* with Bowden joined by bassist [and label president] Tatsu Aoki and drummer Affifi Phillard) and a tour to support the new album was necessarily curtailed by the coronavirus pandemic.

As for the latter point, it’s perhaps a more delicate subject, but Bowden is forthright when asked why it’s taken so long for him to release a record under his own name. After all, he was a key member of Ed Wilkerson’s famed 8 Bold Souls in the ‘90s, during which time he also served as the AACM’s chairman, overlapping with his beginning as a lecturer in the Music Department at the University of Chicago. And as one of the most lyrical saxophonists in a scene rife with fervent horns, he certainly had opportunity and audience, at least on a local level.

So what took him so long? “That’s a hard one for me to answer,” Bowden said. “I came up as an AACM member. That collective really perpetuated individuality and ownership of your stuff. That’s been me being overly critical of my own work.”

LeFemque project. It was that work, in fact, which led to his association with Sting, who employed Kirkland in hit albums like 1985’s *The Dream of the Blue Turtles*, 1987’s *Nothing Like the Sun* and 1991’s *The Soul Cages*. In 1991, Kirkland recorded his first and only studio album as a leader on GPR produced by trombonist Delfeayo Marsalis (Wynton and Branford’s younger brother). Kirkland spent most of the ’90s as a sideman, working with alto saxophonist Kenny Garrett, drummer Jeff “Tain” Watts, trumpeters Terence Blanchard and Arturo Sandoval and others. Kirkland was only 43 when he died of congestive heart failure on Nov. 12th, 1998.

Kirkland’s legacy is the subject of pianist Noah Haidu’s *Doctone* (Sunnyside), a multimedia tribute that includes a CD, a film directed by Jeffrey Chuang and a book. In a trio with bassist Todd Coolman and veteran drummer Billy Hart, Haidu interprets pieces Kirkland wrote for his 1991 album as well as for albums that featured him as a sideman. Haidu also features guest saxophonists like Steve Wilson, Gary Thomas and Jon Irabagon. Haidu, who will pay tribute to Kirkland in a Feb. 21 show at the Bushwick Public House, said, “I listened to it a couple years later and I thought, ‘hmmmm, and I listened to it a couple more years later and I thought, hey, this might really work,’ he said.

“For more information, visit mwatabowden.com

Recommended Listening:
- **Douglas Ewart & Inventions/Clarinet Choir** — *Red Hills* (Arawak, 1983)
- **Power Trio** — *At Unity Temple* (Asian Improv, 1997)
- **Tatsu Aoki, Mwata Bowden, Paul Kim, Hide Yoshihashi, Patti Adachi, Robbie Hunsinger** — *The MIYUMI Project* (Southport, 1999)
- **Nicole Mitchell & an_ARCHE NewMusic Ensemble** — *Arc Of O* (Rogue Art, 2010)
- **Mwata Bowden — 1 Foot In 1 Foot Out** (Asian Improv, 2019)

**For Lest We Forget: Kenny Kirkland**

As a sideman for trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, pianist Kenny Kirkland played a role in the straightahead bop revival of the ‘80s. But he was an eclectic, versatile musician also remembered for his work in fusion groups to his years backing pop-rock superstar Sting.

Born in Brooklyn in 1955, Kirkland (who would have turned 65 in September) made his presence felt in the late ‘70s through associations with well-known fusioneers Polish violinist Michal Urbaniak and Czech bassist Miroslav Vitouš but took a more straightahead approach when, in the ‘80s, he played on albums by Marsalis and his older brother, tenor saxophonist Branford. The former, more than most, was responsible for the rise of players journalists dubbed the Young Lions: traditionalists in their 20s setting out to recreate the jazz of the ‘50s-’60s. But while Wynton saw himself as strictly a traditionalist, Branford made no secret of his interest in rock, R&B and hip-hop and Kirkland shared that outlook, appearing on his funky Buckshot

**Recommended Listening:**
- **Michal Urbaniak — Urbanski** (Inner City, 1977)
- **Miroslav Vitous — Miroslav Vitous Group** (ECM, 1980)
- **Wynton Marsalis — Black Codes (From The Underground)** (Columbia, 1985)
- **Kenny Kirkland — Eponymous** (GRP-Verve, 1991)
- **Robert Hurst** (feat. Kenny Kirkland & Elvin Jones) — *One For Nobakot (DWR Columbia, 1993*)
- **Branford Marsalis — Requiem** (Columbia, 1998)
The long, slow (supposed) death of the record business is, on the ground, in the midst of a long, slow revival, fueled by the return of vinyl LPs as the recorded medium of choice for music fans. This renaissance has been driven in great part by small, independent, specialty labels that proliferate in what has turned out to be fertile niches.

One of these newer labels is Tidal Wave, based in Belgium. It launched in October 2016 and produces archival releases, bringing forth recordings never before released (some not initially recorded for release) and reviving albums and musicians who have been lost to time. And, unusual for the current moment, Tidal Wave does not release music digitally. It’s something you can hold in your hands or nothing at all.

“We pretty much do a lot of exclusive editions, colored vinyl,” explains Phil Merckx, a partner in the label and principal manager. “We sell in record shops, by subscription services, through our online shop.” For the stores, their “worldwide, exclusive distributor” is Light in the Attic Records, a label that itself is a leader in reissuing archival material. “Once in a while we do a few hundred CDs, because it’s in the contract, but 99% of the time it’s vinyl. Out of the 60 something releases so far, that’s maybe two issued on CD.”

For Record Store Day last August, Tidal Wave issued Thelonious Monk: Palais des Beaux-Arts 1963. The album, a never-before-heard concert from Monk’s Quartet, with Charlie Rouse, John Ore and Frankie Dunlop, is a collaborative release with the Flemish Radio and Television (VRT) and Bozar (Centre for Fine Arts Brussels) and produced with the imprimatur of the Thelonious Monk Estate. The provenance, from the vaults of VRT, promises more to come, but that possible future is currently on pause. “That was the first time we were able to work with an untapped archive, something that had never been released in any format,” Merckx says. “Hopefully there’s more of that, it’s a national pride thing, national broadcasts, it’s a big deal, man. And they have so much stuff! TV, radio, since about 1929 or something—80 years of TV and radio that they’re digitalizing one day at a time.” But, with COVID-19, a planned visit to the archives has fallen through.

Prior to the Monk, Tidal Wave’s discography still tapped into some truly hidden and unknown gems. The first record was A Very Rare Evening, a live date from Nina Simone. “We got our first break through working with the legendary Gene Perla of PM Records,” Merckx says, “on a really intimate album of a late 60s European session that wasn’t available on the market since 1979. It got a lot of good press and surely put us on the map. Doing a Nina Simone record as your first release is everything a start-up label can dream of. Really humbled that we were involved in that so early and to have reissued the 1974 solo debut album Some Shapes To Come by Steve Grossman, who sadly passed this August.”

Merckx described how they “acquire our licenses mostly through email and phone contact but we’ve had the odd letter and fax…as you well realize these people come from another era. Most are in their late 70s, our oldest licensee is Byron Pope and at 86 he still does yoga daily. An example to us youth!” The label goes beyond jazz but stays within the universe of African-American music, with albums of soul and funk, in the extended sense. It’s all stuff Merckx heard growing up with a father who was a fan. “Currently,” Merckx says, “we’re working on getting some quite pressed soul and P-Funk records released into the world. As well as expanding our African music section with Afrobeat from Nigeria, Zambia and South Africa.” For jazz, coming up will be a reissue of Chicago-based drummer Frank Derrick and his orchestra, Total Experience. Merckx describes the album as “a rare sought-after private press record from 1974…[Derrick] played with a lot of greats from Cab Calloway to Eartha Kitt.” Most recently, Tidal Waves has put out an album and a 45” from little known soul-jazz saxophonist Quinn Harris, his Statements, released in 1975, and apparently quickly forgotten and the A/B sides of “Protect Me From Myself” and “I’ll Always Love You,” in editions of 500 black vinyl (and 100 clear vinyl) and 250 copies total, respectively.

How this stuff turns up is part of the label’s special quality. “Besides being collectors ourselves, we have a vast network of fellow collector friends, DJs, diggers and dealers and all-around music freaks to find interesting releases,” Merckx says. He adds that, “Matt Sullivan at Light in the Attic has been a good friend and inspiration and also Etohen Alapati from New Again Records has been a great supporter and collaborator.

Even after 60 releases and a peek into the VRT vaults, Merckx is humble. “Our goals,” he says, “are just to be able to release interesting records and unearth stuff that has gone under the radar. Having fun in the process while doing this is also a must for us…it’s a passion and not just a job!”

For more information, visit tidalwavesmusic.com
Charli Persip, legendary drummer active since the mid '50s with a discography numbering in the hundreds as a sideman yet still finding time to lead bands, died Aug. 23rd at 91.

Persip (who changed his name from Charlie in the '80s) was born on Jul. 26th, 1929 in Morristown, NJ. He was self-taught as a drummer, picking things up in his high school marching band and then later the stage band. After graduation, he played around the Newark area in various R&B bands before getting his first real jazz job with Dizzy Gillespie in 1954, both in the trumpeter's orchestra and smaller bands. It was from Gillespie that he learned an important lesson, one which he used for the title of his 2003 book *How Not to Play Drums: Not for Drummers Only*. As he told our George Kanzler in a 2009 interview, "When I got in his band I knew all the arrangements; I loved that band pretty well and be doing a great job but now that you aside and said, 'You seem to know the arrangements and I thought I played my ass off. Dizzy pulled me band I knew all the arrangements; I loved that band pretty well and be doing a great job but now that you aside and said, 'You seem to know the arrangements and I thought I played my ass off. Dizzy pulled me out and I had to think about what I was doing and learn what not to play.'"

From there Persip would go on to work with an encyclopedia's worth of jazz stars. Modern Jazz Sextet, Hal McKusick, Quincy Jones, Lee Morgan, Jimmy Cleveland, Joe Newman, Sonny Stitt, Benny Golson, Kenny Dorham, Candido, Harry "Sweets" Edison, Melba Liston, Jerome Richardson, Randy Weston, Dinah Washington, Gene Quill, George Russell, Curtis Fuller, Ernie Wilkinson, Bob Brookmeyer, Leo Wright, Johnny Griffin, David "Fathead" Newman, Al Cohn, Red Garland, Slide Hampton, Clark Terry, Oliver Nelson, Cecil Payne, Don Ellis, Cannonball Adderley, Dizzy Reece, Roland Kirk, Mal Waldron, Ron Carter, Art Farmer, Milt Jackson, Kenny Burrell, Sonny Rollins, Bill Barron, Erroll Garner, George Benson, Archie Shepp, Albert Dailey, Frank Foster, Mary Osborne, Craig Harris, Sherman Irby, Makanda Ken McIntyre and many others. In between all those sessions, Persip made several of his own dates for Liberty, Bethlehem, Stash and Soul Note and led his Supersound Big Band for decades, which as he recalled to Kanzler, "started out as trumpetman Gerry La Furn's rehearsal band in the late '70s and I became the drummer in 1979. The idea was to make it the resident band at Manhattan Plaza, but things didn't work out and when Gerry wanted to keep the band together he asked me, since I had the bigger name at the time, to be the leader. So the first time we made was co-leaders... I took the band over and made some personnel changes and Frank Foster gave me seven arrangements, then fired me from his Loud Minority band because he felt I should have my own band." Asked about the goal of the band, Persip stated simply, "To play music starting from the bebop era and into whatever the music is now and hopefully something into the future."
October 1
Andrei Paquin 1926-2014
Dave Holland b.1946
Mark Helias b.1950
Tony Damus b.1955
Fred Loeborg-Holm b.1962

October 2
Wally Rose 1913-97
Phil Ullman 2002-2008
Howard Roberts 1929-92
Ronnie Ross 1953-91
Peter A. Schmid b.1959
Django Bates b.1959

October 3
Clifton Anderson b.1957
October 5
Robert Hurst b.1964

October 6
Norman Simmons b.1929
Steve Elmer b.1941
Masahiko Satoh b.1941
Mark Whitfield b.1966

October 7
Freddy Cole 1902-2014
Billie Higgins 1930-2001
Lester Bowie 1941-99
Fred Hopkins 1942-99
Federico Ughi b.1959

October 8
Manny Albright b.1940
Marian McPartland b.1940
Bob Haggart b.1941
Mike_allison b.1941
Don Ryan b.1941

October 9
Jimi Hendrix b.1942
Saxophonist Konitz

October 10
Pat Martino's debut for Prestige

October 11
Nick Stephens b.1946

October 12
Billie Holiday 1915-59
Johnny Hodges 1918-85
Earl Hines 1906-2003
Billie Holiday 1915-59

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October 14
Vocalist Dobbs of the Dutch Swing College Band

October 15
Pianist Yul Anderson's record label

October 16
Brian Ferguson b.1953

October 17
Alyce Christian b.1953

October 18
Bill Evans 1929-88

October 19
Bob Berlin 1940-2004

October 20
Kurtis Blow 1965-2004

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Kurtis Blow 1965-2004

October 22
Pat Metheny's debut for Prestige

October 23
AFLC

October 24
Dayre Jones b.1983

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Mats Gustafsson b.1964

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Bobby Few b.1935

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Johnny Hodges 1918-85

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Donald Byrd b.1937

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Randy Brecker b.1947

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Glen Moore b.1941

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Clifford Brown 1930-56

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Pianist Noah Haidu has made the first album dedicated to the compositions of the late Kenny Kirkland, whom he calls “the most unique composer and pianist of his generation.” He adds, “Because he died young and avoided the spotlight, his brilliant compositions have been overlooked for too long.” The Doctone project includes an original book by Haidu and documentary by Jeffrey Chuang, released on Sep. 28th, 2020, which would have been Kirkland’s 65th birthday.

Doctone finds Haidu, a fine pianist in his own right, leading a group of veterans in an emotionally gripping and diverse expressive set of 11 compositions both accessible and artistically challenging. The opening “Doctor of Tone” is one of lyrical longing, a brief prelude setting the tone for what is to come—intelligent and melancholy at the untimely loss of Martini. “Midnight Silence” is a gorgeous celebration of the majesty of Kirkland’s sense of harmony as well as this group’s ease in switching harmonies and tempos while presenting expressive solo and group statements. Haidu is fluid and thoughtful backed deftly by bassist Todd Coolman and drummer Billy Hart and guest Steve Wilson offers a powerful and gritty solo on soprano saxophone.

The riches in Kirkland’s music abound here: “Blasphemy” is a gorgeous and dark exploration with eerie keyboard sonics and lush tenor of Jon Irabagon; there’s quirky funk in “Steepian Faith”, which ultimately leads back to a solid groove; “Dienda” unfolds its mysterious shapes and colors in two parts with the obscurities leading to an almost churchy ¾ chorus; “Mr. J.C.” is Mr. Coltrane with the rich and unique tenor of Gary Thomas and an impassioned solo by the leader; “The Tonality of Atonement” is quiet and thoughtful while suggesting otherness; “Chambers of Tain” and “Fuchsia” are rhythmically audacious with some fiery work by Hart on the former and Thomas on the latter. Finally the album concludes with the delicately sad yet also hopeful “Chance”, a beautiful return to the trio. And thus is Kirkland’s brief but shining life and career brilliantly celebrated.

For more information, visit sunnysiderecords.com. This project live-streams Oct. 1st at villagevanguard.com.

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Just over 100 minutes of music in all—with an excellent quartet behind him: Aaron Parks (piano), Ben Street (bass) and Gregory Hutchinson (drums). The album begins with “Smoking Gun”, a variation on Thelonious Monk’s “Evidence” led by bouncing bass. The piece has a light, skipping rhythm, which transforms the twists, turns and pauses of Monk’s melody into something to be navigated like a particularly challenging Formula 1 race track. Stephens has a quick, precise style on the tenor, notes emerging with deceptive casualness. For the second track, “Tarifa”, he switches to soprano, on which he has a squawking tone like a surly bird. Later in the set, on “Radio Active EarWorm”, Stephens plays the Electronic Wind Instrument, which sounds like a synth and gives the track a feel somewhere between ’70s fusion and Quiet Storm R&B. If Street had opted for an electric bass, this piece could absolutely have been an outtake from an early Stanley Clarke solo album.

His bandmates are perfectly chosen. Parks has a powerful chording style that transitions easily into a melodic, Vince Guaraldi-esque solo voice. Street is confident, happy to provide the foundation for a vamping piece like “Tarifa” or swing hard on “Loosy Goosy” and his tone gleams like polished mahogany. Hutchinson is hard-hitting, managing to stay out of his own way, never going so over the top with his soloing, even when striking sharp notes on the snare’s rim, that he seems like he’s angling to be the leader. He’s just being the best possible drummer for this quartet. It would be great to get back to the Village Vanguard and see a band this good on its stage. Until then, this two-CD set will have to suffice.

For more information, visit daynastephens.net. This project live-streams Oct. 2nd-3rd at villagevanguard.com.

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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 definitely deserves wider exposure and appreciation.”

—The New York City Jazz Record

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**Broome** (Jazz Edit) | **Broome** ( Saxophone Edit)

Andreas Schulz (feat. Paul Engelmann) (One Music Prod.)

by Anna Steegmann

Germans Andreas Schulz (drums) and Paul Engelmann (alto saxophone) have worked together for eight years as a duo, in large ensembles, jazz quartets and international big bands. They have remarkable chemistry and a unique sound. Broome is a project of six albums based on six compositions by Schulz. Jazz Edit and Saxophone Edit are available now, Piano Edit will be released later this year followed by three releases in 2021.

Schulz was inspired to create Broome in 2019 while living in New York and L.A. Jazz Edit features nine tracks. The listener might detect their influences: the ’60s work of John Coltrane and Ornette Coleman. Schulz and Engelmann seem to improvise freely, then suddenly, mysteriously, melodies manifest. The first track, “Ytr.Cbs. Manhattan”, is captivating. Drums and saxophone create such a rich sound, they almost become one instrument. “20021” evokes a day of rapidly changing weather; the drums suggesting thunder, gushing rain, the saxophone rays of sunshine breaking through. “505051” seduces with its exquisite rapidity changing at an almost churchy ¾ pace to a gentle crescendo.

**Recommended New Releases**

- Lina Alenmann’s Ohrenschmaus — Rats and Mice (Lumo)
- J.D. Allen — Tody/Die Dreaming (Savant)
- Golpe! + Masa Kamaguchi— Totem (Robalo)
- Jimmy Heath— Love Letters (Verve)
- Daniel Humair/Samuel Blasen/Heiri Känzig—1291 (OutNote)
- Bruno Rábega/Jason Robinson/ Bob Weiner — The Urgency of Now (Creative Nation Music)
- Eric Revis— Slipknots Through A Looking Glass (Pyroclastic)
- Maria Scheider Orchestra—Data Lords (ArtistShare)
- Triage (Dave Rempis/Jason Ajemian/ Tim Daisy)—Live at the Velvet Lounge (Aerophonic)
- Matt Wilson— Hug! (Palmetto)
- Laurence Donohue-Greene, Managing Editor

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**Recommended New Releases**

- Susan Alcorn Quintet—Pedernal (Relative Pitch)
- Anteloper— Tour Beats Vol. 1 (International Anthem)
- DUX Orchestra—ducks walks dog (with mixed results) (NoBusiness)
- London Jazz Composers Orchestra—That Time (Not Two)
- Billy Martin—Guilty (Amulet)
- Merzbow/Mats Gustafsson/Balázs Pandi—Cutting Open (Raus/NNoise)
- Hedvig Mollestad—Ekhidna (Rune Grammofon)
- TOC & Dave Remps—Closed For Safety (Panoramic)
- Cat Toren’s Human Kind—Scintillating Beauty (Lumo)
- Alan Wakeman—The Octet Broadcasts (1969 and 1979) (Gearbox)

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Andrey Henkin, Editorial Director
Aaron Parks is a much in-demand pianist with a rapidly growing discography, both as a solo leader or in a group, under various labels, including the iconic ECM. His style has absorbed all the great jazz pianists of the last 50 years but it is also close to certain impressionism à la Ravel, mainly in his trio and solo outings where his rubato is more discernible. His most characteristic qualities are a relaxed and unhurried approach, whereby technical considerate prowess is always at the service of the music; capacity to make sound simple even the most arcane metric and chord sequence; and constant emphasis of the melody over other considerations. On top of this, he has developed a remarkable ability to transmit his vision not only to his partners in his own projects but also in groups where he is merely a member. This is evident from the three CDs considered here, which in spite of the apparent diversity in instrumentation and inspiration, reveal a coherence in their approach and style reflecting in no little part Parks’ presence. "Dreams of a Mechanical Man" is the second CD by Parks’ Little Big quartet and showcases his more eclectic side, including the use of electric keyboards. In this sense, this CD may mark a departure from his more intimate and impressionistic ECM recordings but, in reality, there is a continuity and consistency reflecting his own musical persona. While Parks credits Pat Metheny, philosophers Carl Jung and George Gurdjieff and band Blonde Redhead among his sources, his music escapes any categorization and evolves unerringly in its originality. Take “Solace”, for instance: a piano solo intro leads to a folk-inspired song delivered in unison by piano and Greg Tchuoy’s guitar, with David Ginyard’s bass and Tommy Crane’s drums coloring around the folksy melody. Parks’ impressionism comes out in the title track whereas “The Ongoing Pulse”, after the initial bells and chimes, brings another song-like tune with Parks and Tchuoy shining throughout. The tightness of the group— they have been touring intensely for the last two years—is evident in “Is Anything Okay?” and “Where Now?”, two spontaneous and rather spacey improvisations in which they can stretch out while listening to and relying on one another. The same qualities emerge in “Storyteller”. “My Mistake” has instead a dark blues feeling reflecting a piano pattern over which guitar screams. “Unknown” wraps up with a dreamy atmosphere and beautiful solo and vocal intervention by Parks a CD so full of music it will take a few listens to absorb fully.

Pistils is Rajiv Jayaweera’s debut album. A New York-based drummer of Sri Lankan origins raised in Australia, Jayaweera finds inspiration in his family history but also present-day New York. His is a delicate approach, almost intimate, as evident in the two versions of the title track—the first one benefitting from Lara Bello singing in an undecipherable language and the second relying on Chris Creek’s fluid tenor sax. Jayaweera is not bound by any solos, except for a brief temple drum introduction and an interlude in “Ellistanssia”. But the relentless, shifting and yet almost understated pulse is certainly at the center of his project. Subtlely is the defining quality of Jayaweera’s approach to percussion and is reminiscent of Paul Motian. The musicianship is so smooth it not be more inherent to Jayaweera’s vision. Of note are Cheek’s numerous and enjoyable solos along with his blending and conversing with Hugh Stuckey’s guitar. Parks displays his personal approach as he seems particularly at ease with the material; “Galadari” and “The Elephant”, which denote a jazzier flavor, could have been composed by Parks himself to the extent that rather complex rhythmic figurations are delivered with utter fluidity and simplicity. A very promising debut.

Tom Guarna’s “Spirit Science” is possibly the more mainstream album of the three, but this should not detract from its very high quality. Guarna is a well established Brooklyn-based guitar player with a very melodic approach. He seems to have found a kindred spirit in Parks given his interest in seeking simple melodies with an emphasis on the song form. The nine originals take inspiration from sacred geometry or spirit science but, in spite of the stated programmatic approach, it is an overall melodious quality that dominates. Guarna’s partners share his vision and provide empathetic contributions. Ben Wendel’s tenor saxophone, at times sounding like Jan Garbarek, is particularly inspired, alongside Parks’ keyboards. The use of the Rhodes piano and synth adds depth and broadens considerably the group’s palette while providing a counter balance to Guarna and Wendel’s more assertive attacks, as in the opening “Trion Re” and “Metatron’s Cube”. It is also remarkable how well Parks’ approach to acoustic piano transposes onto keyboards—listen for instance to his synth solo in "Platonic Solid", Joe Martin’s bass and Justus Faulkner’s drums are very congenial and excel in “Genesis” and the title track. Medium to up-tempo prevail, except for “Reflection (for Kofi Burbridge)”, with bassoon (Wendel) in evidence; “Source”, where heartfelt guitar and saxophone solos are accompanied by exquisite piano arpeggios; and closing “Lullaby for Lena”, Guarna’s rescue dog. A very enjoyable recording.

Composing for large jazz ensembles is especially challenging in the modern era yet the jazz world is better off having ambitious young composers like Daniel Hersog, who are up to facing the many obstacles. Driven in part by the tumultuous events in large cities over the past couple of years, Hersog created a provocative, diverse suite to convey his impressions without the all too often “in your face” commentary. What is apparent after the first few hearings is that not only did he recruit top-notch musicians to compose a piece but also they believed in the music and put their own stamp on it, whether in individual solos or the ensembles. While pianist Frank Carlb erg and tenor saxophonist Noah Preminger are billed as the featured soloists, the collective vision is in as much in the colors within each track, in addition to superb solos. “Cloud Break” is a brisk opener, which blends hope with touches of danger on the horizon, accentuated by Brad Turner’s spirited trumpet and emotional tenor. “Motion” was inspired by Keith Jarrett and though Carlb erg has a most engaging feature with the rhythm section, Preminger’s twisting, sometimes gritty line provides a playful contrast to the pianist. Carlb erg’s poignant solo introduction to the ballad “Makeshift Memorial” sets up a lush, heartfelt theme, putting the spotlight on Hersog’s gift for writing for brass and reeds, with Preminger’s piercing solo as its centerpiece. The title track is full of fury with its darting piano, ominous horns and vocal-like tenor, as Hersog brilliantly tells his story without lyrics. The sole standard, a dark setting of Jerome Kern’s “Smoke Gets In Your Eyes”, by a mournful air that Carlb erg conveys through dissonance, though the rich ensemble background adds to its appeal.

For more information, visit ropeadope.com, frankcarlb erg.com/live-streams Oct. 15th at soapboxgallery.org.
60 years ago, 17 sub-Saharan African countries gained independence. Because jazz owes so much of its rhythms, textures and spirit to pan-African cultural influences, it is only fitting to honor these national victories, ones that champion those same qualities of freedom and individuality so essential to jazz.

Nigerian trumpeter Etuk Ubong, raised in Lagos, combines highlife, Afrobeat, Ekombi (a regional style from Akwa Ibom, his birth state) and jazz to concoct a familiar yet fully original hybrid. The music on Africa Today, recorded direct-to-disc in Haarlem with Dutch musicians and others from Nigeria, Mali and the UK, spills out of the vinyl grooves like a torrential flood. The five-horn front line plays lively unisons, syncopated chorales and call-and-response figures, digging into extended riff sections with a loose-is-tight attitude; the three-man percussion team hits even harder while organ player Jack Stephens Oliver adds a low-end squelch that fills the cracks. Like Fela Kuti, Ubong’s (English) lyrics are politically charged, speaking to current problems in Africa, though his rapping/singing sounds less acerbic, more optimistic. One might wish for more of his sweet sounding, birdlike improvisations, but here feel and flow take priority over exploration.

Rejoice arose from a 2010 London recording session led by Nigerian drummer Tony Oladipo Allen and South African trumpeter Hugh Ramapolo Masekela that was exhumed, overdubbed and released ten years later, two years after the latter had passed. A liaison of legends—Allen, director of Kuti’s band in the ’70s, chief architect of Afrobeat rhythm; Masekela, at the forefront of South African jazz for over 60 years—the session is fun and funky, exuding the heady, down-home high energy and improvisational energy of early Meters recordings. Based around polyrhythmic thrusts and sunny song readings (all co-credited to the leaders) followed by extended inventive flugelhorn solos lined with melodic sequences colored by long digital delay effects, the tracks are thickened by long digital delay effects, the tracks are thickened

Among the highlights is Greve’s “Low”, like all her compositions infused with a vague sadness, which nevertheless incorporates a perky countermelody, doubled by Tordini, who squeezes knotted asides into the flow. Later there’s a feature for Greve notable for the high cries and wavering vulnerability with which she stretches her almost classical timbre. Sperrazza’s concluding title cut is another peak, a thing of melancholy beauty, leavened by a lovely consolatory tangle.

The band presented much of the repertoire from the disc in a celebratory live-stream from Barbès (Aug. 21st, but still up on YouTube at the time of this writing), which emphasized the collective ethos all the more clearly. Apart from those numbers already mentioned, other memorable episodes included Tordini’s “Zuppio”, which blossomed first into a series of rippling patterns from Sperrazza and then later into another purposefully wiry solo for the author’s pizzicato, both becoming subsumed by thorny interplay, enlivened by Greve’s overblown flurries, before the final recapitulation.

Unsurprisingly they saved their theme tune to nearly the end, giving it a reverential reading, though one both animated and restrained. But it wasn’t the last word. That went to a song not on the record, being a soulful cover of Cindy Walker-Eddy Arnold’s “You Don’t Know Me”, a tune turned into a Billboard hit by Ray Charles in 1962, whose vocal delivery made feel for a tender close to the hour-long performance. While in her poem Evans likened The Choir Invisible’s music to the gladness of the world, this threesome’s take is rather more contemplative though, nonetheless, uplifting and inspiring.

Bird has always been the word for Champian Fulton. The pianist-vocalist was, quite literally, ushered into existence with Charlie Parker serving as a soundtrack. She’s been drawing inspiration from his work ever since so it’s only fitting that, as the world recognizes the pioneering saxophonist’s legacy with centennial celebrations of varied sorts, Fulton salutes him in style.

The arrival of this album, coming one day before Bird would’ve turned 100 (Aug. 29th, 2020) and the concert celebrating its release, recorded at Birdland (Sep. 1st), buttress Parker’s strong position and broaden Fulton’s standing as a supreme stylist and interpreter. Blending relaxed and romantic tides with artistic strides that seduce and swing, her music—pure Parker with personal touches—wins as it begins: in the case of the album, the starting point is a “Just Friends” that goes down nice and easy; and with the concert, it was a “Dearly Beloved” opening the door. In both instances, a magic lingers, or lingered, in the music.

The bulk of Birdsong came into play during the 60-minute performance. Whether sharing Jay McShann-related folklore about the origin of Parker’s nickname, referencing dates on the Dial imprint, discussing an immortal marriage between horn and strings or simply noting that “Quasimodo” is built on the harmony of “Embraceable You”, she managed to add volumes about the honoree in a most casually conversant manner.

With more than 15 years of bandstand bonding with bassist Hide Tanaka and drummer Fukushima Tainaka, a lifetime of experiences with her father, trumpeter Stephen Fulton (who sticks to flugelhorn for this project), and a strong rapport with tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton, who was absent from the release show but appears on the majority of the album’s tracks, Fulton is always in comfortable company. Whether sprinting through “All God’s Chillun Got Rhythm”, coolly exploring the contours of “Out Of Nowhere” or touching on central meaning during “If I Should Lose You” and “My Old Flame”, Fulton manages to charm and delight...like Bird in fine flight.

For more information, visit champian.net
“Work is not a job.” “Work releases the inner child.”

“Work is our spiritual connection with life.” “Work heals wounds.” “Work gives us our dignity and purpose.” The inner panel of saxophonist Ray Blue’s recent CD is crowded with these statements. They don’t describe work as people most often think of it — “work is not a job” — but they do describe the kind of communal labor that goes into raising a family, teaching, cooking, gardening and (surprise surprise) playing music.

Well, maybe not all music, but certainly this calm, confident album of ballads, most of which come from the American Songbook and from the traditional songbook of jazz standards. Blue is highly conversant with this pairing of traditions and at the virtual White Plains Jazzfest last month, after a skillful Zoom performance of “Our Very Own”, a ballad that could easily have appeared on a Blue, he briefly discussed the relationship between the two songbooks. Although the American Songbook technically does encompass jazz standards, along with other, usually lyrical popular songs from the early 20th Century, Blue rightly treats them as different things in the eyes of his students. “It’s important for students to be connected to the American Songbook, in addition to the jazz standards,” he said. He also mentioned that he likes to teach his students ballads because they require slow, difficult, careful playing, which counteracts the common music student’s desire to play quickly right off the bat.

Blue is certainly comfortable with the slow pace of the ballads he plays. At its few low points, that slow pace brings down the album — but on a 64-minute collection of songs it’s very possible to skip tracks and still have much more to hear. At its high points, though, Work is basically perfect. The opening title track (Blue’s composition, vaguely reminiscent of Sonny Rollins’ “St. Thomas”), is a beyond brilliant piece of music. If the album isn’t your cup of tea, however, you’d still be never repeats the incredible high of that first track. If the album is your cup of tea, you should save it until “St. Thomas”), is a beyond brilliant piece of music. If the album is your cup of tea, you should save it until the album isn’t your cup of tea, however, you’d still be severely depriving yourself by not listening to “Work”.

For more information, visit resonzarecords.org

Guitarist David Gilmore paid his dues as a member of the sadly underrated 1990s fusion combo Lost Tribe and as part of the M-Base Collective. With those bands, he explored and reinvented the concept(s) of fusion. With From Here to Here, the first release from Criss Cross after founder Gerry Teekens’ death last October, he inhabits straight-up jazz territory, albeit in a postbop zip code.

The festivities begin with the briskly swinging “Focus Pocus”. Gilmore drives the piece with a surging theme, ably enabled by tight focus from his band of pianist Luis Perdomo, bassist Brad Jones and drummer E.J. Strickland. “Child of Time”, with its autumnally bright theme and sparse acoustic guitar picking, could be a radio hit, a leisurely tempo offset

For more information, visit crisscrossjazz.com

Pianist Bob James is probably best known for the six albums he released between 1974-78, which included frequently sampled jazz-funk pieces like “Nautilus”, “Westchester Lady”, “Take Me to the Mardi Gras” and “Angela”, the latter of which served as the theme to the popular sitcom Taxi. In the smooth jazz world, he’s also known as a founding member of Fourplay. But a decade before his commercial breakthrough, but the main problem is the deeper group feeling on the live tracks. Still, with two unheard tunes and plenty of great blowing from one of the great blowing bands, one can’t imagine many dissatisfied customers. What might have seemed like a fairly average release in 1959 sounds like much more than that in 2020, there’s just no getting around it.

For more information, visit resonzarecords.org

The appearance of a previously unreleased studio date from a short-lived edition of The Jazz Messengers led by drummer Art Blakey (born 101 years and dying 30 years ago this month) can only be great news for modern jazz fans. Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers at the Jazz Corner of the World that were recorded in April 1959, it’s easy to see why this session from the previous month was left on the shelf at the time, since most of the program was repeated on the live date. To give a little more context, the Messenger’s were a heavily recorded outfit throughout this period, both in the studio and on stage; this same lineup with Benny Golson instead of Hank Mobley on tenor saxophone was recorded about ten times during the last three months of 1958 and the subsequent editions in which Wayne Shorter replaced Mobley made dozens of records. Of course Mobley had played in the earlier Messenger lineups in 1954-56 and recorded with both Blakey and trumpeter Lee Morgan on plenty of other occasions, but the fact that we can now admire a discography of the Jazz Corner band is exciting, especially as the two tracks that did not get played on the live date have never been heard elsewhere. Those would be the talky original by pianist Bobby Timmons, “Quick Trick”, and the way-uptempo blues line “Jimerick”, of unknown provenance. These fit very well with the three Mobley numbers we know from the Birdland record (“Hipsippie Blues”, “M&M” and “Just Coolin’”) and the hip arrangement of the 30s pop song, “Close Your Eyes”, which usually gets a

Autumnally bright theme and sparse acoustic guitar picking, could be a radio hit, a leisurely tempo offset behind him. (“Indian Summer” is a simmering ballad.) There’s nothing revelatory here, but it’s nice enough.
Trumpeter Eddie Henderson, who turns 80 this month, has been recording for five decades, beginning with Herbie Hancock in 1970, and has played with most of the giants of hardbop and 20th Century jazz, knee-deep in fusion in the '70s-80s but landing firmly in the hardbop/postbop mainstream over the last 30 years. This is the second album by his quintet with super-sideman pianist Kenny Barron, alto saxophonist Donald Harrison and drummer Mike Clark. New to the group this time around is bassist Gerald Cannon.

The repertoire includes two pieces from Barron’s book, one each from the leader and Harrison and a tune from both Henderson’s wife Natsuko Henderson and his daughter Cava Menzies.

However, the four tracks that distinguish this date are ballad standards, all brought to fully burnished life by musicians to whom they obviously resonate deeply. Henderson has always been a swinging “cooker”—he’s even a member of the band The Cookers—but his ballad prowess has grown steadily in recent years. Harold Arlen’s “Over the Rainbow” is delicately limned by open trumpet in a quartet version also notable for Barron’s logically lyrical solo. Richard Rodgers-Oscar Hammerstein’s “It Might As Well Be Spring” adds a rhapsodic alto solo to the proceedings while Billie Holiday’s “God Bless The Child” finds Henderson with Harmon mute, alternating solos with alto and piano. The album closes with Charlie Chaplin’s “Smile”, a ruminative duet from open trumpet and piano.

The non-ballads provide plenty of variety, from the leader’s shuffle title tune and Harrison’s “Burnin’ to Barron’s fleet “Flight Path” and tropically-themed “Cook’s Bay”. Menzies’ quirky-tempoed blues “By Any Means” and Natsuko Henderson’s boogalooinfected swinger “Boom” with forceful solos from trumpet and piano. What distinguishes this album from similar fare is both the variety of the repertoire and prominence of memorable ballad tracks.

For more information, visit smokesessionsrecords.com

Over the past few years, clarinetist/tenor saxophonist/flutist Eddie Daniels, who turns 79 this month, has immersed himself in the music of Brazil. In 2018, he recorded Heart Of Brazil: The Music Of Egberto Gismonti and he now directs his talents to the music of another eminent Brazilian composer with Night Kisses (A Tribute to Ivan Lins). Lins’ compositions have found favour broadly in North America as they have been covered by many bold faced names in both jazz and popular music.

Daniels is supported by a couple of highly respected jazz pianists and Grammy winners in Bob James and Dave Grusin, the rhythm section of pianist Josh Nelson, bassist Kevin Axt and drummer Mauricio Zottarelli, plus the strings of the Harlem Quartet.

Opener “A Vos Do Povo” (The Voice Of The People) features flute sailing over the ensemble with a glittering edginess. The swirling rhythmic undercurrents of the number demonstrate an understanding of the Brazilian music traditions. Grusin teams with Daniels (tenor) to give a sympathetic and lyrical reading to “Mãos de Afeto” (Hands Of Affection).

The evocative harmonic coloration combined with the propulsive and changeable rhythms of Lins’ compositions provide a sound garden which Daniels, now on clarinet, can explore in his broad and expressive style. “Pano de Fundo” (Backdrop) and “Vilas Içadas” (Hoisted Sails) are contrasting themes where Daniels’ control of timbre, tone and fluidity are on full display. Another clarinet track is with James, “Lembrã”, an evocative and intimate theme with a bossa nova beat.

The final track in this session is “Ivante” wherein Daniels, Grusin and James bring their talents together. Driven by a simple samba beat the principals show a sense of a shared pursuit as the theme unfolds. By way of his clarinet, Daniels is equally focused on the melody and texture while both Grusin and James are paradigms of piano smarts and comportment.

For more information, visit resonancerecords.org

Shuffle and Deal
Eddie Henderson (Smoke Sessions)
by George Kanzler

Night Kisses (A Tribute to Ivan Lins)
Eddie Daniels (Resonance)
by Pierre Giroux

US distribution: Stateside
www.statesidemusic.com email: info@statesidemusic.com
Strange Unison is a winner—there’s a certain promise when musicians who can expand the edges come together for a more familiar aesthetic and it’s a real pleasure to hear these guys dig into lovely blues (“Light Down the Line”) and numbers that swing with a certain tightness, even as the pulse and meter shifts around, like “Johns andMarks”. Like Roof Rights, while Malaby takes most of the lead in expression, Helias is the navigator with a firm, clear, confident hand on the tiller. These albums show him as the kind of bassist anyone would like supporting their musical ideas.

For more information, visit markhelias.bandcamp.com

If there’s any time to expect Gustafsson raging with the throttle open, it’s in a meeting with Japanese noisemeister Merzbow. Backing by powerhouse Hungarian drummer Balázs Pándi would seem like a surefire deal, which is what makes Cats Open the biggest surprise of the three. It’s not that the four long tracks (filling four sides of a double-LP and also available on CD and download) are so easy to receive, but they don’t hit as hard, more a walk in complete darkness than freelfall or rocket blast and indeed not as hard as on their 2013 session Cats (also RareNoise). It’s easily the most unnerving of the three titles here, all the more so for its rounded edges.

For more information, visit underfloorecords.com and rarenoiserecords.com

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Angels Around is Kurt Rosenwinkel’s dozenth album as a leader, the first for his own Berlin-based Heartcore label and a return—of sorts—to his roots: standards played in trio format. The guitarist’s followers may be reminded of his first release, 1996’s East Coast Love Affair, recorded live at Smalls, or 2009’s Reflections, both trio outings and, like the current album, focused on covers with one or two originals. What hasn’t changed is Rosenwinkel’s way with the Great American (jazz) Songbook—a canon including works of Thelonious Monk and Wayne Shorter alongside those of Jerome Kern and George Gershwin—as well as his startling ability to reveal deep roots in and affinity for the tenets of bebop while simultaneously espousing a highly personalized and perpetually contemporary vision. What has changed—and this is clearly heard on intervening recordings—is the shape and quality of his tone, which has moved from the dry clarity of the earlier efforts to an increasingly wet sound, less distinct perhaps, but full of character. Here his pick attack is often so buried under a filter of synthesizer and other signal processors that, when heard in the context of his seamlessly interpolated harmonic and melodic ideas, suggests a keyboardist rather than a guitarist.

With Italian bassist Dario Deidda and drummer Gregory Hutchinson (who appeared on Reflections), both strong yet tacit players, Angels Around contains consistently excellent guitar playing throughout, from the adroit intermixing of solo and background roles on the bossa-nova-esque reading of Monk’s “Ugly Beauty” to the effusion of bop-laced lines on Paul Chambers’ “Eaze It!” and attractive harmonization of Charles Mingus’ “Self Portrait in Three Colors” (a prime instance of how easy it is to forget that Rosenwinkel is playing guitar, not keyboard). The uninspiringly titled original “Simple #2” is, in fact, one of the more inspired pieces, segueing from a “Smoke on the Water”-style heavy metal riff riddled with shredding pentatonic minor runs to a loping ‘alt-jazz’ waltz. Joe Henderson’s “Punjab” juxtaposes, again, an older jazz ethos with a newer, less jazzy feel and includes Bill Evans’ “Time Remembered”, a sort of ‘rock-boss’. recalls Pat Metheny’s tone and lyricism. The title/finall track, by Deidda, a prog-rock ballad, boasts a finely coiled, shape-shifting guitar solo reminiscent of Larry Carlton’s fiery melodic style.

For more information, visit heartcore-records.com

Worn Kissed.
Mats Gustafsson (Underflow)
Live at The Underflow Record Store and Art Gallery
David Grubbs/Mats Gustafsson/Rob Mazurek
Cats Open
Merzbow/Mats Gustafsson/Balázs Pándi (RareNoise)
by Kurt Gottschalk

In times like these, maybe what we need, whether we know it or not, is a soft and placid Mats Gustafsson. The relentless Swedish reedplayer, who turns 56 this month, has one of the most recognizable tones around today, largely but not entirely due to the sheer force of his blowing. But three recent records show a surprising—well, not quite softness, but a sort of pliability. The gentler side of Gustafsson, rest assured, still has a jagged edge. These albums—a solo and two trios—aren’t exactly easy listening, but are refreshing in a terrain he traffics less often.

Worn Kissed. can be heard as an environmental record and, in fact, could best be heard in a space with other sounds: birds, foghorns, maybe a smoke alarm. Side One is occupied by “The Hypnagogic Puzzle”, referencing the state just before sleeping. 22 minutes of extended silences are interrupted by very brief passages of flute, electronics and deep inhalations. The little puzzles of prolonged silence, not even minutes, really, make for a fantastic suite of disorientation and consciousness subsumed. The flip goes a bit darker, with two pieces for baritone saxophone and more sparing use of electronics and named (like the first piece) and the album’s second longer composition, the contemporary Swedish artist Edward Jarvis (b. 1964, the same year as Gustafsson). The album comes not just with a 48-page book of Jarvis’ paintings but a 500-piece jigsaw puzzle of one of them, housed in a handsome, gold-embossed black box, released in conjunction with a show of Jarvis’ paintings at the Underflow Record Store and Gallery in Athens.

Underflow is also responsible for a trio release by Gustafsson, guitarist David Grubbs and piccolo trumpeter Rob Mazurek (who also plays wooden flute and percussion), recorded in 2019 and titled simply Live at The Underflow Record Store and Art Gallery. Gustafsson again plays flute and baritone, along with a hybrid fluteophone (a flute body with a saxophone mouthpiece) and he and Mazurek both employ live electronics. Guitar is amplified as well, but the session nevertheless turns out to be a fairly low-key set of four abstract improvisations: “City Stone Sleep”, “Goats and Hollers”, “Creep Mission” and “Not in a Hall of Mirrors” (2016-17). Extended solo passages serve to keep things on the quiet side while the group explorations have a pleasant way of wandering aimlessly but in sync. The simpler LP package here comes with a cover painting by Mazurek dedicated to late fellow trumpeter Bill Dixon and both Underflow titles are available for streaming in full on Bandcamp.

For more information, visit markhelias.bandcamp.com

Bassist Mark Helias, who turns 70 this month, has been a major figure in modern jazz since the mid ’70s when, fresh out of graduate school, he joined Anthony Braxton’s ensemble. That in no small way led to the collaborative trio BassDrumBone with trombonist Ray Anderson and drummer Gerry Hemingway. Along with that group, Helias has been making music steadily in another trio setting, Open Loose, with tenor saxophonist Tony Malaby and drummer Tom Rainey.

These last two groups make up a substantial part of his discography and Strange Unison is one of some 20 albums that Helias is either rereleasing or bringing to light for the first time, through his own Radio Legs Music label. The trio album was initially put out on CD in 2008 and it and the other two records under review here are all available digitally—remastered by Helias—via his Bandcamp page.

The other two releases are belated debuts; the solo disc Available Light was recorded, according to the album notes, “in the late 1990s” in Helias’ East Village recording studio (Available Light). The other, Roof Rights—made with the bassist leading a sextet—comes from the 2000 Wanggaratta Jazz Festival in Australia. Malaby plays tenor in this band, along with alto saxophonist David Ades, trumpeter Scott Tinkler, trombonist James Greening and drummer Gerald Cleaver is in for Rainey.

Though just scratching the surface of Helias’ musicianship, these three recordings do add up to a pretty deep look into his work. Roof Rights is an immediate stand-out for the size of the group and what it can do. The configuration came from adding three Aussie horn players to the core Open Loose trio and as Helias writes in the notes, “the conviction and accuracy achieved by the sextet”, after a couple hours of rehearsal, “is astounding”. It really is and Helias’ charts have a lot of say in the matter. His skilful contrapuntal writing makes this sound like a bigger group than it is; one is surprised to confirm that this is just six musicians, not a big band. There’s some freedom inside the music, but this is stuff with a clear harmonic and rhythmic profile. Ades adds a surprising textural color to his alto solo with a bite akin to that of Henry Threadgill and the piano-less textures, Cleaver’s rolling drumming and the sense of soul and fun make this an unexpected response to Threadgill’s Sextett albums of the same general era. It’s only at the end, with the anticlimactic “End of the Middle/Bling Bang”, that the lack of group expression shows. This is more of a ballad number and it sounds like the band just doesn’t have the ensemble foundation needed to sustain the slower, softer mood. But everything else benefits from great energy, cohesion and the feeling that all are having a terrific time.

Helias’ thoughtful solo album opens with Don Cherry’s lovely “Arabian Nightingale” and, except for one other track, fellow bassist Oscar Pettiford’s “Laverne Walk”, all the tunes are originals. A lot of the music seems less about playing compositions than working through improvisational ideas and technical issues on the bass. Helias shows masterful arco on tracks like “Nocturnal” and his jete bowing on “Ricochet” proving some solid and becomes a fascinating musical idea in and of itself. Beautifully recorded, an album of solo bass music may not be to everyone’s liking, but this is a fine example of the art.

Open Loose is a slightly mis-named band, especially compared to the very loose, rollicking BassDrumBone. This is a trio that plays not just together but connected through deliberate musical material.

Roof Rights | Available Light | Strange Unison
Mark Helias (Radio Legs Music)
by George Garella

Mark Helias (Radio Legs Music)
In an enduringly successful career, spanning well over a half-century, singer-songwriter Peggy Lee proved herself a versatile artist worthy of legend status. The celebrations for Lee's centennial year (she was born on May 26th, 1920) have already included releases of Ultimate Peggy Lee and Peggy Lee Decca Rarities; they have now been joined by The Capitol Transcriptions 1946-1949, a curated collection of 72 tracks featuring 55 songs. This sliver of Lee’s vast legacy of recorded work is a delightful window into the career on an icon in the making; by the end of her life she’d written over 250 songs and recorded more than 1,100 masters.

This compilation is taken from the body of masters created by Lee for Capitol’s Transcription Library Service: 16-inch, 33-rpm discs made exclusively for radio airplay by subscribing stations. In them, a fresh-voiced, young Lee is radiant with the talent that would shortly ripen and mature into a more assured mystery of jazz and popular music. Most of the sessions were arranged by Henry J. “Heinnie” Beau (with a few by Frank DeVol) who wrote with a keen ear to the stylistic expectations of radio audiences. The musical backing for most of the transcriptions consisted of pianist Buddy Cole’s Four Of A Kind with Dave Barbour (guitar), Phil Stephens (bass) and Tommy Romersa (drums). In 1949 the small group makeup was Barbour and George Van Eps (guitars), Phil Stephens (bass), Hal Schafer (piano) and Nick Fato (drums). These sessions were arranged by Heinnie Beau and are notable for beautifully crafted enhancements and solos by Barbour.

However, for two Summer 1946 sessions the musical backing was expanded by DeVol and His Orchestra with Barbour, Stephens or Fred Whiting, Cole, Romersa or John Cryz, Skeets Herfurt, Jacob Kasper, Jules Kinsler, Ron Perry, Ted Romersa, Paul McLarand, Joseph Palange and/or Leonard Mach (reeds); Abe Benike, Van Rasey and Irv Shulkin (trumpets); George Lash, Frank Zentner (violin); and/or Paul Weigand (trombones); Richard “Dick” Perissi (French horn); Victor Arno, Joseph Livoti, Joseph Quadri, Henry Sugar and/or Walter Edelstein and Ted Rosen (violins); Jacob Kaz, Paul Lowenkrond and/or Elizabeth Sugar (violas); and Fred Goerner, Joseph Saxo and Julius Tannenbaum (vocals).

The collection is a tasty smorgasbord of tunes, with novelty songs, gospel and folk among a goodly number of standards. About half the tracks are A-list songbook fare still popular today, including “S Wonderful” (George and IRA Gershwin), “Come Rain or Come Shine” (Harold Arlen-Johnny Mercer) and “I Get a Kick Out of You” (Cole Porter), mostly arranged with a jaunty light swing. Many of the other numbers are popular songs of the day, which eventually drifted into relative obscurity, such as “The Best Man” (Ray Alfred-Fred Wise), “Just Like a Gypsy” (Norah Bayes-Seymour Simons) and “I’ve Had My Moments” (Walter Donaldson-Gus Kahn). Two of Lee’s own works are represented, with “Don’t Be So Mean To Me” (Larry Clinton-Willard Robison) and “I’ve Got It Bad (And That Ain’t Good)” (Duke Ellington-Paul Francis Webster). She proves she can hold a torch and sing the blues with the best of them in “A Nightingale Can Sing the Blues” (Dick Charles-Lawrence B. Markes, Jr) and “Lonesome Road” (Gene Austin-Nathaniel Shilkret). Even the unusual choice of the traditional Irish folk standard “Molly Malone” is delivered as an impassioned story, as is the novelty tune “This Little Piggie” (Harold Lewis-Tom Conolly-Leslie Barton).

Lee can also turn a song on its head. The normally melancholy-happy song, “Blue Skies” (Irving Berlin) is infused with joy, despite its minor key, while the up-tune “I Only Have Eyes for You” (Al Dubin-Harry Warren) is given a jaunty light edge. With “I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart” (Ellington-Henry Nemo-John Redmond), Lee proves to be one of the few interpreters of the Ellington songbook truly to understand how he wrote the blues into a great deal of his compositions. While there’s light swing to be heard over the 55 songs, none can be considered truly jazzy. Lee does approach the idiom though, in a creative “Swing Low Sweet Chariot” (traditional). There’s also a terrific novelty tune “All the Cats Join In” (Eddie Sauter-Alec Wilder-Ray Gilbert) that tips its swingin’ hat to the jazz crowd.

For more information, visit udiscovermusic.com

William Claxton (Oct. 12th, 1927 - Oct. 11th, 2008) described his aesthetic as “jazz for the eyes” and valued himself “a jazz photographer” as opposed to a “photographer of jazz”, developing his vision in conjunction with the improvisatory nature of the music. And, as in jazz itself, where a piece is manifested within the framework of an arrangement, Claxton’s images achieved their singularity as a result of the locale in which they were photographed. A lifelong California resident, Claxton utilized his home state’s sun-drenched atmosphere to create an impressive body of work, the lively brilliance in stark contrast to the enigmatic smoky darkness of iconic peers Roy DeCarava, Herman Leonard and Francis Wolff. As quoted in Howard Mandel’s introduction to this 162-page volume of 164 photos depicting more than 65 different artists, Claxton once declared, “Being on the West Coast, I wanted to bring out the fact that musicians were living in a very health conscious environment. So I purposely put them on the beach or in the mountains or on the road in their convertibles.”

What may be the most familiar of all the photos, culled from Claxton’s tenure as house photographer for Pacific Jazz, is Chet Baker, grasping the sail of a boat with one hand, as he holds his trumpet in the other, blowing it out into the sea. Baker appears in myriad settings in 25 different pictures, including the earliest one, from a 1953 Pasadena Just Jazz concert as a member of the Charlie Parker Quintet. Other classic shots include a young Ornette Coleman (from The Shape of Jazz to Come), Thelonious Monk hanging off a cable car, Sonny Rollins beneath a Mojave Desert cactus arch and the Montgomery Brothers under the Golden Gate Bridge. There are plenty of West Coast concert, club and studio photos, among them a Clifford Brown-Max Roach record date and a Cannonball Adderley Quintet show at the Monterey Jazz Festival. A 1959-60 cross-country trip yielded striking shots of Jackie McLean performing in The Connors in New York or at Bill’s Club and Lee Morgan playing a club in Philly; Charles Mingus and Eric Dolphy hanging in Newport; and the Ramsey Lewis Trio on a Chicago boulevard. All this and so much more here to hear with your eyes.

For more information, visit victo.qc.ca

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The Complete Alain Jean-Marie Biguine Reflections

by Alex Henderson

Afro-Caribbean music has been influencing jazz for generations and one veteran who has found a great deal of inspiration is pianist Alain Jean-Marie, a native of Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe, who turns 75 this month. The Complete Alain Jean-Marie Biguine Reflections, a four-CD set, compiles all five albums Jean-Marie recorded for his ambitious Biguine Reflections series. Although this collection spans a 21-year period, 1992–2013, there isn’t much variation in the lineups—Jean-Marie, who composed much of the material, leads trios with Eric Vinceno (bass) and Serge Marne or Jean-Claude Montredon (drums)—or the theme: hard-swinging postbop with Afro-Caribbean influences, especially Creole biguine music. Nonetheless, there is a fair amount of variety: a festive, celebratory exuberance to up-tempo tracks like “Soufrière”, “Bégonia”, “Enjoy Life” and “Chôfê Bigin La” yet more introspection on “An Ti Kaz’La”, “N’Athalsie” and “Cécilia”.

“Sainte Marie” has a mood similar to trumpeter Kenny Dorham’s Brazilian-flavored standard “Blue Bossa” while the pianist’s improvisations on two different versions of “Haiti” (from Biguine Reflections II and Biguine Reflections IV: Delirio) recall pianist McCoy Tyner on John Coltrane’s 1960 recording of Richard Rodgers-Oscar Hammerstein’s “My Favorite Things”. “Doudou pa Pêtrê”, “Biguine Esperanza” and “Jean Claude” have a strong Latin influence while a fierce, R&B-ish mood prevails on “Jumpin’” and “Antilope”. Jean-Marie sometimes incorporates elements of European classical music: “Fête a la Guadeloupe”, for example, has a similar feel to Ludwig van Beethoven’s “Bagatelle No. 25 in A minor”, a.k.a. “Für Elise”.

The song titles are in different languages: English, French, Creole, reflecting the multicultural outlook Jean-Marie brought to his recordings. Much of his inspiration has come from American jazz but his willingness to draw on his Caribbean background has been one of his strong points, especially mindful of parts of the Caribbean where French or Creole is spoken. Although a four-CD set like this isn’t designed for listeners who have a more casual interest in the pianist’s work, the performances are quite consistent. Hardcore followers will be glad to have all five of the Biguine albums together in the same collection.

For more information, visit fremeaux.com

The Complete Alain Jean-Marie Biguine Reflections

by Jim Motavalli

New Stories is a Seattle-based trio that loves to work with guests. Marc Seales (piano), Doug Miller (bass) and John Bishop (drums) made six albums with the late bebop saxophonist Don Lanphere, another with singer Mark Murphy (Grammy-nominated Song for the Geese) and four under their own name. Telling all kinds of new stories, they’ve worked with Tom Harrell, Nick Brignola, Slide Hampton, Jon Faddis and Larry Coryell. Speakin’ Out recently collected its 20th anniversary, recorded with guest Ernie Watts in 1999. The West Coast saxophonist deserves the co-billing on the cover, because he really raises the temperature on this date.

Watts, who turns 75 this month, is a national treasure worth discovering. For two decades, he was buried in The Tonight Show band and spent 25 years as a relatively anonymous studio musician in L.A. Watts has been making up for lost time since the mid ’80s, playing straight-ahead jazz with the fire of a much younger man. Listening to him record the trick, head on Miller’s title song and then rip off a high-energy solo with growls, upper-register cries and low-down whispers. Watts (who survived Buddy Rich tours) appears on five of the nine tracks. On Miller’s “Apparitions” he’s in a pensive mood and gives a master class in translating yearning to a reed instrument. Miller, great throughout, has a fine probing solo as well. “The Jordy Strut” (another Miller piece) is funky soul-jazz recalling Horace Silver and Cannonball Adderley. Remember when they said stuff like this was “selling out”? There’s nothing at all wrong with the material that doesn’t feature Watts, but he adds a lot. Pat Metheny’s “In Her Family” shows off Seales’ melodic, Bill Evans-influenced style. He’s a fine pianist, with compositional chops showcased on “Blue” and “Highway Blues”. The former is also a strong showcase for both Seales and a burning Watts.

It’s nice to see this album get a second trip ‘round the park. It’s meaty work, featuring a saxophone player who sounds good to be back in his native element.

For more information, visit originarts.com

Speakin’ Out

New Stories with guest Ernie Watts (Origins) by Jim Motavalli

This affirmative documentary on singer Peggy Lee (1920-2002) is compiled from sources that include home movies, talking head interviews and generous clips of performance. The latter—almost all from her first quarter-century as a singer—save the hour-long film from being a complete hagiography. In between accolades from musicians, fellow singers, arrangers, conductors, songwriters and family members, we hear all of—or at least long snippets—a dozen and half songs from Lee, ranging from her first hit with Benny Goodman, “Why Don’t You Do Right” from 1942, to a “Wind Beneath My Wings” from 1984. The documentary is assembled as a loosely chronological biography, although most of the details are about her professional rather than personal life, with the notable exception of comments from her (now deceased) daughter and granddaughter and those home movies. Shaping it into parts are the verses of “Is That All There Is?”, circa 1970. Interestingly, although Lee did, as Margaret Whiting is seen saying, “write hit after hit after hit” (lyrics mostly), “Is That All There Is?”, positioned in the documentary as her signature song, was written by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller of Coasters fame. And “Fever”, which gives it its title, was an R&B cover. Lee “was one of those innovators who changed the face of popular music and even made songwriters who wrote those songs look and say ‘that’s better than I thought it was’,” says Michael Feinstein. Billy May says, “she was a good musician, way ahead of the popular music of her time.” Nancy Sinatra says, “she was the epitome of technique and sexuality.”

But the proof is in the pudding and that is the melodic line robust yet with a tinge of wistfulness. Soon the emotive drift changes, becoming more dramatic, as if heralding a coming storm, Goykovich following suit. The track seems almost like a miniature symphony, going through hills and valleys, hushed lulls and passionate roars. “East of Montenegro” has a loping groove and compact, torrid trumpet.

One of the album’s finest aspects is how orchestration is employed. Many of Goykovich’s arrangements are an intrinsic component to Goykovich’s presentation, contributing to an overall tone of class and opulence without schmaltz or ostentation.

For more information, visit jazzrecords.com/enja

This affable documentary on singer Peggy Lee (1920-2002) is compiled from sources that include home movies, talking head interviews and generous clips of performance. The latter—almost all from her first quarter-century as a singer—save the hour-long film from being a complete hagiography. In between accolades from musicians, fellow singers, arrangers, conductors, songwriters and family members, we hear all of—or at least long snippets—a dozen and half songs from Lee, ranging from her first hit with Benny Goodman, “Why Don’t You Do Right” from 1942, to a “Wind Beneath My Wings” from 1984. The documentary is assembled as a loosely chronological biography, although most of the details are about her professional rather than personal life, with the notable exception of comments from her (now deceased) daughter and granddaughter and those home movies. Shaping it into parts are the verses of “Is That All There Is?”, circa 1970. Interestingly, although Lee did, as Margaret Whiting is seen saying, “write hit after hit after hit” (lyrics mostly), “Is That All There Is?”, positioned in the documentary as her signature song, was written by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller of Coasters fame. And “Fever”, which gives it its title, was an R&B cover. Lee “was one of those innovators who changed the face of popular music and even made songwriters who wrote those songs look and say ‘that’s better than I thought it was’,” says Michael Feinstein. Billy May says, “she was a good musician, way ahead of the popular music of her time.” Nancy Sinatra says, “she was the epitome of technique and sexuality.”

But the proof is in the pudding and that is the many performances that affirm her position in the pantheon of American popular song. We see her doing her early hits with first husband Dave Barbour (and only one of four mentioned by name), including “It’s A Good Day” and “I Don’t Know Enough About You”. There’s a striking, dispassionate, against the grain take on “Love Is the Thing” sparkling duets with Mel Tormé, Andy Williams and Judy Garland; “Fever” with just bass and hand drums; and “I’m Gonna Go Fishin’”, her lyrics to a Duke Ellington melody.

For more information, visit peggylee.com/fever-the-music-of-peggy-lee-2020
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Linernotes

“Monk’s Music is Timeless, Yet It’s Rarely Been Delivered with This Much Spirit and Freshness.”
– Jim Hynes, Glide Magazine

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There are times when the old adage “less is more” holds true, or at least it works as a frame. According to guitarist John Scofield’s notes, this set of nine Steve Swallow tunes was recorded in an afternoon, simply, with very little preparation. There was certainly no need to acquaint the bandmembers—bassist Swallow, who turns 80 this month, and drummer Bill Stewart—who’s long association last bore recorded fruit on Country for Old Men (Impulse, 2016), an absolute hoot of an album whose whimsical openness of spirit was matched by a depth of exploration typical of all three of these veterans. They return in similar form to pay deeply smiling homage to a giant fortunately still with us.

The trio plays as easily as they let loose completely and the abandon and control in such extraordinary symbiosis is largely due to Scofield’s boundary-busting influence. He guides the achingly iridescent “She was Young” from a wistful ballad, far different from its more orchestral version on Home (ECM, 1979) toward eventual catharsis. After Swallow’s poignantly minimal solo and after Stewart has switched from brushes to sticks and back, Scofield’s sly wit rears its head with a series of what the academic might be forced to label ascending superblends, like Chuck Berry on “Deep Feeling”, whose slightly distorted grist propels the group into a funky frenzy as loose as it is vibrant. Scofield’s shifts in sonic body and heft are as subtle as his articulational arsenal is immense. Swallow and Stewart groove, sway and syncopate each moment to breaking point, stretching time only to slide it back into place with the effortlessness of breath and persuasiveness of speech. Scofield’s diads and chords, emerging from him with similar finesse, push the tune’s harmonies beyond themselves to the point that the music is far enough ‘inside’ to be ‘outside’.

This version of “Awful Coffee”, so different from the rendering with Carla Bley’s big band (Apparitions Night; WATT Works, 2002), is a hard-swinging tacker, including Swallow’s best soloing on the album. Each organ-like tone he plays is both foundational and a jumping-off place for the subtle magic Scofield and Stewart lay down behind him. Yet, nothing prepares for the loosening of rhythmic structure and final dissonance that hits with the invigorating whoosh of a cold shower.

What we are given is a kind of career retrospective as viewed through the lens of an afternoon shared by old friends who, despite Scofield’s acknowledgement of Swallow’s continued mentorship, have long bypassed the teacher-student barrier. Tracks from throughout the illustrious bassist’s career, such as a revisitation of the Old Men matrix, eventually leads to wild sounds with Lonberg-Holm keeping up the pace with stretched, sinewy lines and the abandon and control in such extraordinariness.

Memories of a Tunicate is his third duo recording with reedplayer Peter Brötzmann. Those who have closely followed the German over the years will notice a more nuanced, less harsh mien than on his early recordings, a function of maturity or perhaps of an ever-ending quest for a perfect sound. Lonberg-Holm is a great foil, easily matching the intensity of the saxophonist with amplified, twisted sounds that grate and ingrate while never losing a step. When he solos, as on “Octanemia”, the marvelous way he stretches and twists notes is impressive and when matched with Brötzmann’s blowing, there is eerie a synchronicity between the two. For example, on “Pyromones”, gentle clarinet eventually leads to wild sounds with Lonberg-Holm working up the pace with stretched, sinewy lines while tempestuous “Aplousobranchia” matches the two in a machine-gun-like explosion.

Swallow Tales, recorded at the DOM Cultural Center in Moscow, is the ninth recording in ten years from Ballister: Lonberg-Holm, Dave Remps (tenor and alto saxophones) and Paal Nilssen-Love (drums). With Remps, you know there will be fireworks and while that is true here, there is also more variety than we have come to expect. Lengthy opener “Fuck the Money Changers” clocks in at almost 40 minutes and fills up most of the set; based on the intensity, the “money changers” never had a chance. Remps scorches on tenor with his partners as full contributors, providing splendid thrusting support. Along the journey, the tempo lets up, an opportunity for a more tempered mode. The busy “Hotel Mary Poppins” exposes a more hardbop side of Remps, accentuating his attractive tone, but he still manages to slash away, crushing pianist Lonberg-Holm yielding an inch. Closer “Old Worms” is as intense as it gets, Remps delivering his singular screeches and wails, Nilssen-Love crank up the heat and Lonberg-Holm adding untold power through distorted electronics. These “old worms” still have a lot of life left in them!

The Avondale Addition is Stirrup, a Chicago-based trio led by Fred Lonberg-Holm, with Nick Macri (bass) and Charles Rumback (drums), joined by a stellar sextet of Jen Clare Paulson (viola), Zoots Houston (electronics), Keefe Jackson and Mars Williams (reeds), Russ Johnson (trumpet) and Peter Maunu (guitar/violin) adding considerable depth. Lonberg-Holm composed most of the pieces but left his cello at home to direct and sculpt, using his “lightbox operator”, which utilizes signs and lights. The playing is tight and the songs, especially those with strong melodic elements, generally accessible. There is lyrical exposition, exciting juxtapositions, lots of power tempered by long flowing lines and strong solos from Paulson, Jackson, Williams and Johnson. Macri and Johnson anchor the jazzy in-and-out rhythms and the improvisations move effortlessly, sometimes collectively, sometimes hard and fast, at other times supple and enchanting, resulting in a strong contender for Best Album of 2020.

For more information, visit relativepitchrecords.com, aerophonicrecords.com and cuneiformrecords.com

Fred Lonberg-Holm, who turns 58 this month, has built a reputation as a consummate cellist yet refers to himself as the “anti-cellist”, stretching the capabilities of the instrument. The recordings below present him in different contexts with small groups.

Memories of a Tunicate, available now

Swallow Tales
John Scofield (ECM)
by Marc Medwin

Memories of a Tunicate
Peter Brötzmann/Fred Lonberg-Holm (Relative Pitch)

Znachki Stilagu
Ballister (Aerophonics)

The Avondale Addition
Stirrup * 6 (Cuneiform)

by Steven Loewy

For more information, visit ecmrecords.com
Harmonica has long been a niche instrument in jazz, with the late virtuoso Toots Thielemans setting the standard for players who followed. While a few others have made somewhat of an impact on the instrument, no one has come close to becoming the dominant player since Thielemans died. The arrival of Yvonnick Prené a few years ago brought forth a musician who is not only a skilled instrumentalist, but also someone able to take it in new directions as well. Joined by the versatile organ player Brian Charette and skilled drummer Jordan Young, Prené has a respect for his elder’s contributions but is finding his own path as an arranger and composer.

Harmonica typically hasn’t been heard in a trio with organ and drums, though it is a setting worthy of further exploration. While Prené chose a pair of jazz standards for the session, he also wrote a diverse group of songs for this trio. “Ready, Steady, Blow” is pure fun, a brisk hop tune with Prené overdriving a second line in spots to provide a bit of harmony while he and Charette play engaging solos fueled by Young. “New Yorker” has a funky urban vibe that lends itself to both harmonica and organ.

The late Bill Evans’ “Very Early” is recognized as one of his landmark compositions, which Thielemans, who played with Evans, covered in an Evans medley with Kenny Werner. This gem is a springboard for Prené’s improvising, marked by his sunny, playful tone, Charette taking chances in his solo. The latter contributed “Ain’t On A Sunny String”, a rapid-fire reworking of Sonny Rollins’ bop classic “Airegin” with some of Prené’s most impressive playing on the date, including a quick detour into Dizzy Gillespie’s “Dizzy Atmosphere”. The leader’s bop chops are also highlighted in an easygoing rendition of Miles Davis’ 1947 work “Milestones”, with Charette’s constantly shifting palette providing a perfect backdrop. Prené wraps the date with “Bad April Fool”, a lively original that acknowledges his roots in blues.

For more information, visit steepelchase.dk

poems by e e cummings. Three others have individual songwriter credits. So even counting the two with poems, only four tracks can be categorized as “free improvisations”. They include “Fun” incorporating electronic sounds and percussive scat, and “Yak’n”, pitting open trombone and wordless vocal scatting with deep, descending piano passages culminating in an ecstatic, rising wordless vocal. Neumeister’s “Golfer’s Noob” is a ballad in contrast to the two standards, crooned wordlessly by Clayton and the trombonist before and after a rhapsodic solo from Pauer.

The two largely improvisatory pieces with poems and two standards are the most memorable and arresting tracks. Clayton clicks and taps out a chirpy rhythm before singing, in a cubist fashion, cummings’ poem: “love is a place / & through this place of / love move / (with brightness of peace) / all places / / yes is a world / & in this world of / yes live / (skillfully curled) / all worlds”. She conveys hints of birdsong on the other cummings’ “may i be gay / like every lark / who lifts his life / from all the dark / who wings his why / beyond because / & and sings an if / of day to yes”. Henry Mancini-Leslie Bricusse’s “Two for the Road” is given a clear, clean lyrical vocal, Neumeister on plunger mute. And Jimmy Van Heusen-Johnny Burke standard It Could Happen To You combines another “classic pop-jazz” vocal with sly variations on the word “it” as well as improvised solos from all, including scat from Clayton.

For more information, visit meisteremusic.bandcamp.com

This double-LP from a group led by bassist Luke Stewart demonstrates to the listener just how good it is when it gets to the final track on the very last side, “The Scene”. Previous tracks, from the opening “Awakening the Masters” through the two parts of “Harp and Concrete Silhouette” (Stewart composed all the music), explore the kind of muscular freedom and fiercely hypnotic, loping groove that one hears in the small groups anchored by bassist William Parker and drummer Hamid Drake. And like that pair, Stewart and drummer Avreeayl Ra switch from laying down the time and rhythms to free contrapuntal response to the horn players, all the while maintaining their own integrity as a rhythm section.

“One thing”, then, opens coda-like, with static tremolos from the horns over arco bass. There’s been plenty of free interplay up to now, but this sound opens, spontaneously free, with no ground or pattern or riff as a guide. The character is so different that the first response is discomfiture, “a what is this doing here?” feeling. But the playing is so fine that, within a couple of minutes, the feelings that have come out from the preceding music return and the album becomes that much more substantial an experience.

“Exposure Quintet is quite an experience too, the kind of album that demands and rewards concentration. Stewart is still a relatively new—and probably highly active—presence on the scene. He’s part of two of the most exciting contemporary ensembles, Irreversible Entanglements and Heroes Are Gang Leaders, as well as his own duos and other collaborations. He’s a terrific ensemble player in those situations and here he’s just a bit more prominent, the leader without being the lead voice.

There’s both fire and serenity to his playing and that’s amplified by the meaty, brawny playing of reedplayers Edward Wilkerson, Jr. and Ken Vandermark. Pianist Jim Baker at times gets swamped by the personalities herein, but nothing but strength comes to the fore here. This is concentrated, intense music-making.

For more information, visit astralspiritsrecords.com. Stewart live-steams Oct. 3rd at roulette.org.
As befits two countries having, to quote Winston Churchill, a “special relationship”, British jazz musicians have been among the most accepted within the American jazz world going back decades, whether it be transplants like Marian McPartland, Victor Feldman or Dave Holland or visitors such as Tubby Hayes, Evan Parker or Shabaka Hutchings. And while many British jazz players are known entities to American listeners, whether the style is bebop or free improvisation, the history of English jazz is so rich that some names have not quite made it into the household.

One is tenor/alto/soprano saxophonist and clarinetist Alan Wakeman, who turns 73 this month. His discography is typical of the peripatetic UK jazzer in the ‘70s-80s: Graham Collier, Barry Guy, John Dankworth, Chris Laurence (bass) and Nigel Morris (drums). The London Jazz Composers Orchestra (LJCO), two pieces each from 1972 and 1980. Given that previously we only had LCJO’s debut (Ode, Incus, 1972) from its beginnings, the chance to hear the band several months later in performance from the Berliner Jazztage and Donaueschingen Musiktag is fascinating, while the 1980 live and studio dates offer a chance for comparison with Stringer (FMP, 1980).

There are participants appearing on the Wakeman Octets and, again, others from various realms of British jazz of the periods. In 1972, the band, quite similar to that on Ode, is conductor Buxton Orr; trumpeters Kenny Wheeler, Harry Beckett, Mark Charig and Dave Holdsworth; trombonists Rutherford, Nieman and Mike Gibbs; tuba player Dick Hart; saxophonists Osborne, Wakeman, Trevor Watts, Evan Parker, Dave White and John Warren; guitarist Derek Bailey; pianist Howard Riley; bassists Guy, Laurence and Jeff Clyne; and drummers Lytton and Tony Oxley. The 1980 group is trumpeters Wheeler, Beckett, Charig and Dave Spence; trombonists Rutherford, Nieman and Alan Tomlinson; tuba player Melvyn Poore; saxophonists Watts, Parker, Brötzmann, Larry Stabins and Tony Cox; pianist Riley; violinist Philipp Wachsmann; bassists Guy and Peter Kowald; and drummers Oxley and John Stevens. If those lineups don’t add milk to your tea, the release is also unusual within the LCJO discography for including, alongside Guy’s “Statements III” from 1972, pieces by the participants: Wheeler’s “Watts Parker Beckett to me Mr Riley?” (1972) and Rutherford’s “Quasimode III” and Riley’s “Appolysian” (both 1980). The LCJO is right there with the Globe Unity Orchestra in terms of its significance and influence and it is wonderful to be able to fill in the timeline of the group’s development.

For more information, visit gearboxrecords.com and nottwo.com

The Alternative Guitar Summit and Music Masters Collective have partnered to present the second installment of Alternative Guitar Summit 2020: Online! taking place Saturday, Oct. 10 through Monday Oct. 12.

Spend three days of masterclasses, performances, and live Q&A’s with guitar masters: Lionel Loueke, David Tronzo, Sheryl Bailey, Adam Rogers, Tim Miller, Joel Harrison, Gilad Hekselman, and guest Anupam Shobhakar.

You can access replays of all sessions for 30 days following the event!

For more info and full schedule: https://www.alternativeguitarsummitcamp.com/

You are able to purchase and enroll in each of the three days individually. By registering for the event, you will have the option to purchase additional Small Group Sessions (limited to ten participants per session) and get personalized feedback.

24 OCTOBER 2020 | THE NEW YORK CITY JAZZ RECORD
Austrian saxophonist Max Nagl, who turns 60 this month, has been releasing diverse recordings for years and his latest is no different, an infectious blend of free jazz, punk and rock-inflected influences across an addictive melange of delectable vignettes. Averaging less than three minutes apiece, Nagl’s songs offer enough action to satisfy the most attention-addled ears. By combining solid melodies with varied instrumentation and sudden changes in genre and velocity, Nagl keeps listeners engaged.

Opener “So Grand” hearkens back to Carsten Meinert’s seminal, recently reissued C.M. Musictrain in its essential melodic sound. The title track features fluttering saxophone juxtaposed against hardcore guitar ruminations played by the leader. The tunes are generally danceable and accessible, but the changes are rapid: hardbop alto phrases can morph to falsetto screams, with the hard-pounding drums of Herbert Pirker underpinning spirals of crushing sound.

Nagl lowers the volume and the speed on “Stein”, lovely backing from the keyboards of Clemens Wenger providing an attractive throw-back feel. In contrast, “Blistiiff” offers a light funky groove. The repetitive phrases of upbeat “Amalienbad” offer a touch of Klezmer while “Klepto” is off to the races with forward-thrusting percussion and pounding drums lighting a fire under soaring saxophone. Contrast that with the electric piano sounds of “Syrup”, which, while not quite titular, is mostly a gentle rumination from alto and keyboards.

The results are eclectic, fun and often exquisite, sometimes understated and at other times muscular and whimsical. With good melodies, fine writing and a seemingly unlimited imagination, Nagl’s modest yet totally inventive collection is a fine addition to his continually evolving, unpredictable and difficult-to-pigeonhole oeuvre.

For more information, visit jazzwerkstatt.at

The music of Thelonious Monk, who would have turned 103 this month, provides the repertoire for these albums, each presenting a distinct approach and instrumentation: saxophonist Teodross Avery presents Monk’s tunes, mainly Wayne Escoffery but also his 11 Monk tunes, primarily Wayne Escoffery but also his 11 Monk tunes, primarily Wayne Escoffery but also his 11 Monk tunes, primarily Wayne Escoffery but also his 11 Monk tunes, primarily Wayne Escoffery but also his 11 Monk tunes, primarily Wayne Escoffery but also his 11 Monk tunes, primarily Wayne Escoffery but also his 11 Monk tunes, primarily Way...
In a word association game, the name Paul Desmond would always be followed by that of Dave Brubeck. The former was the alto saxophonist in the latter’s quartet during 1951-67, had been part of the earlier Brubeck Octet and enjoyed occasional reunions with the pianist during the decade up until he passed away in 1977 at the age of 53. Both his first and his final gigs were with Brubeck. Besides adding a great deal of warmth and wit to Brubeck’s music, Desmond gave him his greatest hit, “Take Five”.

After the classic Dave Brubeck Quartet broke up, Desmond was less active but still played occasionally record dates, guested with others or toured with his former boss. He only led one significant group of his own during his final decade, a quartet with three Canadians: guitarist Ed Bickert, bassist Don Thompson and drummer Jerry Fuller. If one does not count the 1974 CTI album Pure Desmond (which had Bickert, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Connie Kay), a bootleg CD of a later festival performance from 1976 and three songs that were filmed in late 1975, the quartet’s entire musical legacy until now was captured on three albums, all from 1975: Like Someone In Love (Telarc), Paul Desmond (Artists House) and Live (A&M Horizon).

Mosaic’s latest limited-edition boxed set has seven CDs by the Desmond Quartet. In addition to the 19 pieces from the aforementioned trio of albums, there are 32 previously unreleased performances. The music was recorded live by Thompson at Toronto’s Bourbon Street during the group’s engagements of 45 years ago, Mar. 25th-29th and Oct. 26th-31st, 1975.

To the casual observer, seven CDs of music by a quartet may seem a bit excessive, but in reality every note played by Desmond was special. He had a beautiful floating tone and sounded unlike anyone else. Desmond was one of the very few alto saxophonists of his generation (along with Lee Konitz and Art Pepper) who did not sound like a close relative of Charlie Parker. Desmond’s thoughtful style was also quite original, with one idea leading logically to the next no matter how long the solo. Somehow every note fit, even when he was using his wit to quote other songs, and he always sounded relaxed, even when the tempo was fast.

In his own groups, whether it was his recordings with Jim Hall or live performances, Desmond always used a guitarist rather than a pianist (a recorded live set with the Modern Jazz Quartet was a rare exception) and he much preferred having a drummer who kept steady time than one who was an overly stimulating accompanist waiting for his solos. Desmond was a melodic guitarist with a clear tone and a style that was complementary to Desmond’s. Thompson gets to solo on nearly every number but he keeps his improvisations concise and never loses the momentum of the performance. Fuller proved to be a quietly supportive drummer; he does not get a single solo but does his job well.

Since this music is taken from 11 different nights, there are some repeats of titles with Mercer Ellington-Ted Persons’ “Things Ain’t What They Used To Be” being heard four times, but the solos of Desmond and Bickert are quite different during each version. The final seven performances by the quartet from Oct. 30th-31st are a bit different because Bickert had to return home when his father passed away. Valve trombonist Rob McConnell, who otherwise never recorded with Desmond, is in his place. He fits in well with the group but Desmond’s solos are briefer than on the other dates and some of the musical magic is missing.

The “new” material on the Mosaic release is on the same level as the three previous released albums, the recording quality is excellent and Desmond sounds consistently inspired by his sidemen. Whether performing Gerry Mulligan’s “Line For Lyons”, Johnny Mandel-Johnny Mercer’s “Emily”, “Wave”, Brooks Bowman’s “East Of The Sun”, Duke Ellington’s “Just Squeeze Me”, Victor Schertzinger-Johnny Mercer’s “Tangerine” or “Take Five”, Desmond is heard at the top of his game throughout this wonderful set. This is one of the top reissues of 2020 and, since it is a limited-edition release, do not hesitate to pick one up very soon.

For more information, visit mosaicrecords.com