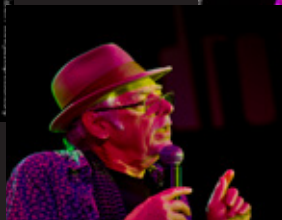


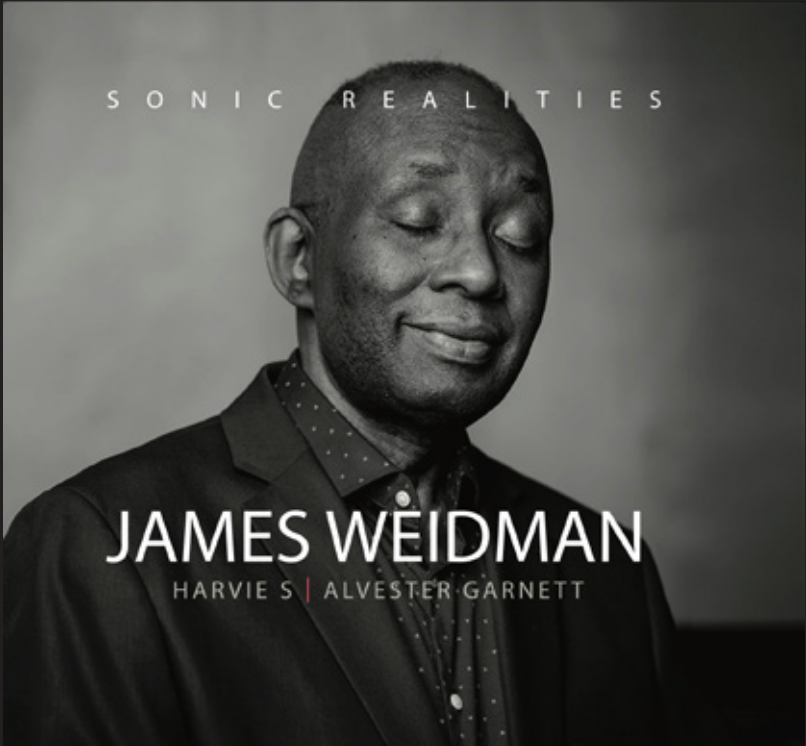
THE INDEPENDENT JOURNAL OF **CREATIVE IMPROVISED MUSIC**

performance



VOLUME 50 **NUMBER 4**

OCT NOV DEC **2024**



S O N I C R E A L I T I E S

JAMES WEIDMAN

HARVIE S | ALVESTER GARNETT

James Weidman's first recording in 5 Years features bassist Harvie S and drummer Alvester Garnett performing original compositions and features works by Charlie Parker, Kurt Weill and Hale Smith.

Consisting of nine tracks, the non-Weidman composed selections include a dark-shadowed rendition of the classical composer Hale Smith's, "Frozen Mist," which Weidman previously recorded with alto saxophonist Talib Kibwe, aka T.K. Blue; a sensitive reading of Kurt Weill's classic "September Song," based on Weidman's arrangement of the composition he produced for vocalist Ruth Naomi Floyd; and the hypnotic, slow backbeat Weidman puts on Charlie Parker's bop number, "Steeplechase."

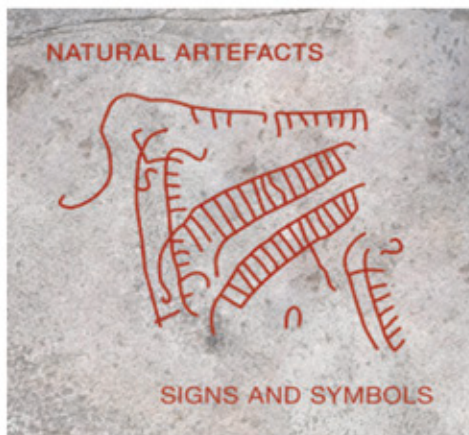
Order the Album

jamesweidman.bandcamp.com/album/sonic-realities

NATURAL ARTEFACTS

Signs and Symbols

Susanna Lindeborg p, elec
Merje Kågu guit
Per Anders Nilsson elec
Thomas Jäderlund saxophones
Anton Jonsson perc



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SUDDEN MEETING

Second Occasion

Susanna Lindeborg kb,elektr
Thomas Fanto elb, elektr
Michael Andersson perc, elektr

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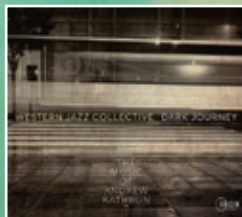
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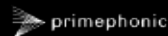
www.bigroundrecords.com/catalog/br8970

www.davidhaneymusic.com

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DUSK AND DAWN

RICH HALLEY 4

Dusk and Dawn is the new recording by Rich Halley, featuring his long standing quartet with trombonist Michael Vlatkovich, bassist Clyde Reed and drummer Carson Halley. Recorded in Portland in November 2023, Dusk and Dawn is the seventh release by the Rich Halley 4, and features a combination of Halley compositions and spontaneous improvisations that showcase the depth and unique interaction of the group.

Rich Halley has released 26 recordings as a leader. Dusk and Dawn follows Halley's critically acclaimed recordings Fire Within and The Shape of Things (with Matthew Shipp), The Outlier, Creating Structure and Crossing the Passes.

*"One of the major tenor saxophonists of our time."
Tom Hull, tomhull.com*

*"Heartland American jazz of the very highest order."
Brian Morton, Point of Departure*

Critic's Pick Top Ten Jazz Albums Of The Year 2023



Anthony Branker & Imagine What Place Can Be For Us? A Suite in Ten Movements on Origin Records

Walter Smith III / tenor saxophone
Philip Dizack / trumpet
Remy Le Boeuf / alto & soprano saxophones
Pete McCann / guitar
Fabian Almazan / piano
Linda May Han Oh / double & electric bass
Donald Edwards / drums
Alison Crockett / vocals & spoken word
Anthony Branker / composer & director

Reviews

"a sweeping opus with sociopolitical and poetic content woven into a musical tapestry with his band Imagine which manages to be at once cerebral, emotive and viscerally exciting." – **DownBeat**

"Musical beauty in the service of thought, or perhaps the reverse" – **Paris-Move**



SCANDINAVIAN IMPRESSIONS

Luboš Soukup

www.lubosoukup.com

Suite for a symphony orchestra and jazz ensemble, conducted by Bastien Stil (also known for working with Avishai Cohen, Wayne Shorter, and Lizz Wright), features the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, Luboš Soukup (saxophone), David Dorůžka (guitar), Vít Kříšťan (piano), Thommy Andersson (bass), Kamil Slezák (drums), and the brass section of the Concept Art Orchestra.

Renowned Czech-Danish saxophonist and composer Luboš Soukup has unveiled his new album, 'Scandinavian Impressions.' This ambitious release builds on the success of his earlier modern jazz albums, notably 'Through the Mirror' and 'Země' (which features guest performances by guitar superstar Lionel Loueke). The album is a deeply personal work that traces a journey and life, following the growth, learning, maturation, dreams, and aspirations of a young man living abroad for almost 15 years.

Excellent soloist and writing skills.

— Angelo Leonardi, All About Jazz

Scandinavian Impressions are filled with a wealth of ideas and effort. The author's excellent playing, his emotive feel, and humble storytelling are probably Soukup's best calling cards as a saxophonist.

— Tomáš S. Polívka, Czech Radio

AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE OR STREAMING

www.lnkfi.re/scandinavian-impressions

www.radioteka.cz/detail/crohudba-949793-lubos-soukup-skandinavske-imprese



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BRILLIANT NEW WORK..

from Milton Marsh an artist you might remember from his classic Monism album for the Strata East label in the 70s; still sounding every bit as brilliant, all these many years later! The set has Milton still working in the larger, more ambitious ideas we love from his other records; a blending of spiritual jazz and additional string players, in a way that

might be the closest approximation to the "black classical music" promised by Rahsaan Roland Kirk and others in the 70s! Yet Marsh is definitely his own visionary here, too carving out a sound that's as powerful as it is individual, with a unique sound that has us sitting up and taking notice all over again. Musicians on the recordings include David Eure on Violin, Stanton Davis on trumpet, Kevin Harris on piano, Carlos Averhoff on tenor, and Keala Kaumehiwa on bass, with Marsh himself handling the Arrangements and Conducting his original compositions. Titles include: "Not Far From Home", "Great Expectations", "Dialogue", "Loving You", "By Design", "I Wonder Why I Care", and "Subtle Anomaly".



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Once Upon A Time...



There was a beautiful ballad of passing time and lost first love from a little-known 1962 Broadway musical. Now, acclaimed retro jazz vocalist Laura Ainsworth reintroduces it to the YouTube generation in a stunning new interpretation accompanied by sensitive animated visuals.

"Once Upon A Time" is the latest release from Laura Ainsworth's multi-award-winning fourth studio album, *You Asked For It*. Featuring great standards requested by fans in fresh, creative arrangements, including her smoldering reinvention of "Goldfinger", whose film noir video enjoyed worldwide airplay. With Brian Piper on piano, Chris McGuire on sax, Rodney Booth on trumpet, Noel Johnston on guitar, and warm, vinyl-like mastering by Grammy®-nominated engineer Jessica Thompson.

"Gifted with a sultry, swoon-inducing croon, Ainsworth can sing any words and command attention."

– AllAboutJazz.com



Once Upon A Time (Strouse/Adams)

By
Laura Ainsworth



@Laura Ainsworth

Watch the video
on YouTube



Discover *You Asked For It* and the entire magical musical catalog of Laura Ainsworth and listen happily ever after...

www.lauraainsworth.com

Greg Abate is a jazz saxophonist, flutist, composer and recording artist who tours Internationally and spends 2 months every year in the UK playing clubs and jazz festivals.

Greg was listed number 2 Alto Saxophonist on the Downbeat Magazine Readers Poll in 2022 and has been in the top 10 for 3 years now.

At the beginning of his career Greg played lead alto saxophone in the RayCharles Orchestra . Greg also had the opportunity to play tenor sax with the revived Artie Shaw Orchestra under leadership of Dick Johnson. Following this experience , Greg ventured out as a soloist or with his quartet to Jazz Festivals, Jazz Societies and Jazz Clubs throughout the U.S. Canada and abroad, including most of Europe, and United Kingdom.

Greg is available for Jazz Workshops/ Master Classes all levels for saxophone ,flute and clarinet, Jazz Improvisation, composition, and arranging and for discussions about his career and how he did it through networking and lots of dues!

Phil Woods quotes:

“ I sleep better knowing there are Alto sax players like Greg”

Selected Discography

Bop City: Live at Birdland(Candid, 1991)[1]

Straight Ahead (Candid, 1993)[1]

Dr Jeckyll & Mr Hyde(Candid, 1995)[1]

It's Christmas Time(Brownstone Recordings, 1995)[1]

Bop Lives! (1201 Music/Blue Chip Jazz, 1996)[1]

Happy Samba (Blue Chip, 1998)[1]

Evolution (1201 Music, 2002)[1]

Horace Is Here (Koko Jazz, 2005)[1]

Monsters in the Night (Koko Jazz, 2006)[1]

Horace Is Here: A Tribute to Horace Silver (Rhombus, 2011)

With Claudio Roditi

The Greg Abate Quintet Featuring Phil Woods (Posi-Tone, 2012)[1]

Motif (Whaling City Sound, 2014)[1]

Kindred Spirits: Greg Abate and Phil Woods Live at Chan's (Whaling City Sound, 2016)[1]

Road to Forever (Whaling City Sound, 2016)[1][9]

Gratitude (Whaling City Sound, 2019)[1]

Magic Dance: The Music of Kenny Barron

Featuring Kenny Barron (Whaling City Sound, 2021)[1]

Reunion with Paul Del Nero Summit Records



YouTube

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<https://www.google.com/gasearch?q=greg%20abate%20stay%20home%20sessions%20&source=sh/x/gs/m2/5>

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- 101 Evan Parker/Barry Guy/Paul Lytton +J.McPhee
- 102 Ernie Krivda Trio
- 103 Bobby Zankel Trio
- 104 Frank Lowe Trio
- 105 Gregg Bendian Project
- 106 Mark Whitecage Trio
- 107 Chris McCann - Billy Pierce Trio
- 108 Steve Swell & Chris Kelsey
- 109 Billy Bang 4tet
- 110 Herb Robertson/Dominic Duval/Jay Rosen
- 111 Vinny Golia & Ken Filiano
- 112 Luther Thomas 4tet
- 113 Sonny Simmons Trio
- 114 Paul Lytton 4tet
- 115 Joe McPhee 4tet
- 116 Steve Swell 4tet
- 117 David White 5tet
- 118 Sonny Simmons 4tet
- 119 Mark Whitecage 4tet
- 120 Joe McPhee & David Prentice
- 121 Kevin Norton Trio
- 122 Joseph Scianni - Dominic Duval - Jay Rosen
- 123 Lou Grassi Saxton
- 124 Odean Pope Trio
- 125 Lee Shaw Trio
- 126 Ivo Perelman Trio
- 127 Mike Bisio & Joe McPhee
- 128 Marc Edwards Trio
- 129 Paul Smoker - Vinny Golia 4tet
- 130 Joseph Scianni
- 131 Bobby Zankel 5
- 132 Joe McPhee 4tet
- 133 Roswell Rudd Trio
- 134 Ivo Perelman Trio & Rory Stuart
- 135 Brandon Evans 4tet
- 136 John Gunther Trio
- 137 Dominic Duval & Jay Rosen
- 138 Frank Lowe Trio
- 139 Chris Kelsey Trio
- 140 Zsuzsan K, Fasteau/Noah Howard/Bobby Few
- 141 Dominic Duval's String Ensemble
- 142 Jon Hazilla & Saxabone
- 143 Khan Jamal
- 144 Bruce Eisenblatt Trio
- 145 Luther Thomas Trio
- 146 Roswell Rudd Trio
- 147 Claude Lawrence Trio
- 148 Glenn Spearman - John Heward Group
- 149 Steve Swell 4tet
- 150 Kahlil El Zabar's Ritual Trio
- 151 David Bindman Trio
- 152 Ahmed Abdullah's Diaspora
- 153 Elliott Levin 4tet
- 154 Tyrone Hill 4tet feat. Marshall Allen
- 155 Joseph Scianni Trio w/Mark Whitecage 4tet
- 156 Lou Grassi's PoBand
- 157 Mark Whitecage's Other 4tet
- 158 Arthur Blythe & David Eyes
- 159 Frode Gjerstad 4tet
- 160 Thomas Borgmann trios plus Peter Brötzmann
- 161 Rob Brown - Lou Grassi 4tet
- 162 Joseph Scianni duets
- 163 John Gunther's Axis Mundi
- 164 Chris Dahlgren/Briggan Krauss/Jay Rosen
- 165 Andrew Cheshire Trio
- 166 Ebran Elisha Ensemble
- 167 Ethnic Heritage Ensemble
- 168 David White 5tet
- 169 Bob Magnuson & Lou Grassi
- 170 Pucci Amanda Jones
- 171 Marshall Allen4tet feat. Mark Whitecage
- 172 Charlie Kohlhase 5tet
- 173 Kowald, Smoker, McPhee, Whitecage, etc.
- 174 Kalaparush Maurice McIntyre Trio
- 175 Yuku Fujiyama's String Ensemble
- 176 John Gunther 5tet
- 177 Hugh Ragin & Marc Sabatella
- 178 Kowald, McPhee, Smoker, Whitecage, etc.
- 179 Michael Bisio & Joe McPhee
- 180 Marshall Allen4tet feat. M, Whitecage
- 181 Glenn Spearman & Dominic Duval
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- 186 Paul Smoker 4tet
- 187 Patrick Brennan with Lisle Elkins
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- 189 John Carls/Eric Hips/S.McGinn/S.Neumann
- 190 Ori Kaplan Plus Seef Mann, Tom Abbs
- 191 Odean Pope & Dave Burrell
- 192 Ahmed Abdullah/Harding/M.Kamaguchi/Weinstein: NAM
- 193 Mark Whitecage's Other Other 4tet
- 194 Bruce Eisenblatt Crosscurrent Trio
- 195 Sam Abdellah's Cabal Fatale
- 196 Dom Minasi Trio
- 197 Blaize Swida Trio
- 198 Joe Fonda 5tet
- 199 Joe McPhee's Bluettes

- 200 Elliott Levin - Tyrone Hill 4tet
- 201 Lou Grassi - Tom Varner - Ron Horton - Tomas Ulrich
- 202 John Bickerton Trio
- 203 Steve Swell Trio
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- 233 Paul Smoker Trio
- 234 John Oswald - David Prentice - Dominic Duval
- 235 Anthony Braxton w/Alex Horwitz
- 236 Anthony Braxton
- 237 Aram Feler 4tet
- 238 Kevin Norton - Bob Calusak - Andy Eulau
- 239 Odean Pope - Byard Lancaster - Ed Crockett - J.R. Mitchell
- 240 Bobby Zankel Trio
- 241 Bruce Eisenblatt 4tet
- 242 William Gagliardi 4tet
- 243 Anthony Braxton 5tet
- 244 Rosi Herflein Ensemble
- 245 Steve Lehman 5tet
- 246 Alex Harding Trio
- 247 Kalaparush Maurice McIntyre Trio
- 248 Ned Rottenberg & Denman Maroney
- 249 Fred Hess 4tet
- 250 Charles Eubanks solo piano
- 251 Burton Greene with Mark Dresser
- 252 T.J. Graham with Rory Stuart
- 253 Jay Rosen Trio
- 254 Tom DeSteno - Bob Magnuson 4tet
- 255 Steve Lehman 5tet
- 256 Mary LaRose - Jeff Lederer - Steve Swell - D.Duval
- 257 Joe McPhee's Bluettes
- 258 Joseph Rosenberg 4tet
- 259 Jean-Luc Guimet & Edward Perraud
- 260 John Heatter - Tristan Hosinger - Jean Derome
- 261 Dominic Duval String & Brass Ets.
- 262 Lou Grassi's PoBand
- 263 Adam Lane 4tet
- 264 Daniel Carter - Steve Swell - Tom Abbs - David Brandt
- 265 John D'Gallagher's Axom
- 266 Matt Lovell 4tet
- 267 Khan Jamal 5tet
- 268 Bob Washington Trio
- 269 David Taylor Trio
- 270 Alex Harding - Dominic Duval - Jay Rosen
- 271 David Wertman-Charlie Kohlhase-Lou Grassi
- 272 Ursel Schlichte-Steve Swell 4tet
- 273 Carl Grubbs' 4tet
- 274 Lucian Ban & Alex Harding
- 275 Frank Lowe 4tet
- 276 Elliott Levin-Marshall Allen-Tyrone Hill 5tet
- 277 Lucian Ban & Alex Harding 5tet
- 278 John Tchicai - Pierre Dorge - Lou Grassi
- 279 Dylan Taylor & Kelly Mesashey
- 280 Kevin Norton 4tet
- 281 Adam Lane/ John Tchicai
- 282 Andrew Lamb Trio
- 283 Joe McPhee-Dominic Duval-Jay Rosen: Trio-X
- 284 Joe Fonda-Barry Altschul-Billy Bang
- 285 Steve Swell's New York BrassWoodTrio
- 286 Arvam Feler 4tet
- 287 Luther Thomas 4tet
- 288 Tom Abbs 4tet
- 289 Paul Dunmal - Paul Rogers - Kevin Norton
- 290 Charles Eubanks
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- 292 Steve Swell 4tet
- 293 Ernie Krivda 5tet
- 294 Odean Pope & Khan Jamal 4tet
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- 299 Devarah Day & Dominic Duval
- 300 Harris Eisenstadt 5tet
- 301 Jimmy Halperin - Dominic Duval - Jay Rosen
- 302 Ernie Krivda 5tet
- 303 Odean Pope 4tet
- 304 John O'Gallagher w/Masa Kamaguchi-Jay Rosen
- 305 Patrick Brennan 4tet
- 306 Kalaparush M, McIntyre & The Light
- 307 David Taylor Trio
- 308 James Feno Trio
- 309 Chris Kelsey 4tet
- 310 Scott Rosenberg's Red
- 311 John O'Gallagher w/Masa Kamaguchi-Jay Rosen
- 312 Marco Eneli - Lisle Elis - Peter Valsamis
- 313 Lou Grassi 4tet
- 314 Mary Anne Dismul - Paul Murphy
- 315 Ghebrail Ullmann - Steve Swell 4tet
- 316 Burton Greene & Roy Campbell 4tet
- 317 Marc Pompe 4tet
- 318 Ken Wessel - Ken Filiano - Lou Grassi
- 319 John Gunther Trio
- 320 Trio-X Joe McPhee - Dominic Duval - Jay Rosen
- 321 Dave Taylor-Steve Swell 5tet
- 322 Khan Jamal 5tet
- 323 Mike Bisio 4tet
- 324 Arvam Feler - Mike Bisio
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- 327 Jay Rosen
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- 329 Chris Kelsey Trio
- 330 Prince Lasha & Odean Pope Trio
- 331 Byard Lancaster 4tet
- 332 William Gagliardi 5tet
- 333 Bobby Few & Arvam Feler
- 334 Ernie Krivda 5tet
- 335 Adam Lane Trio
- 336 Carl Grubbs Quartet
- 337 Lucian Ban-Alex Harding
- 338 David Haney Trio
- 339 Burton Greene Quintet
- 340 Byard Lancaster 4tet
- 341 Sophie Duner 4tet
- 342 William Gagliardi 5tet
- 343 Joe Fonda's Bottoms Out
- 344 Lou Grassi's PoBand
- 345 Burton Greene Trio
- 346 Nat Marucci - Doug Webb Trio
- 347 Dominic Duval's String 4tet
- 348 Jimmy Halperin & Michael Bisio
- 349 Michael Bisio & Tomas Ulrich
- 350 Seth Meichit 4tet
- 351 Stephen Gauci 4tet
- 352 Steve Swell - David Taylor 4tet
- 353 Odean Pope 4tet
- 354 David Haney Trio
- 355 Burton Greene solo piano
- 356 Mat Marucci - Doug Webb Trio
- 357 David Haney & Julian Priestner
- 358 Chris Kelsey 4tet
- 359 Stephen Gauci Trio
- 360 Michael Bisio
- 361 Stephen Gauci 4tet
- 362 Kalaparush McIntyre 4tet
- 363 David Schmitter - Dominic Duval - Newman T.Baker
- 364 Khan Jamal & Dylan Taylor
- 365 Bobby Zankel Trio
- 366 Ernie Krivda Trio
- 367 David Haney & Andrew Cyrille
- 368 Chris Kelsey 4tet
- 369 David Haney-Andrew Cyrille-Dominic Duval
- 370 Bill Gagliardi-KenFiliano-LouGrass: ESAFrio
- 371 David Haney Trio
- 372 Michael Bisio 4tet
- 373 Ernie Krivda
- 374 David Ameri Trio
- 375 Tomas Ulrich's Cargo Cult
- 376 Bill Gagliardi-KenFiliano-LouGrass: ESAFrio
- 377 David Ameri Trio
- 378 Odean Pope 4tet
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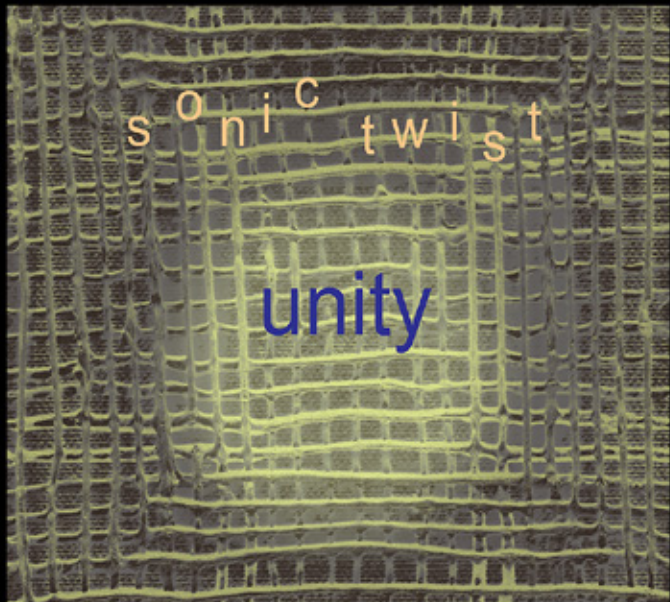
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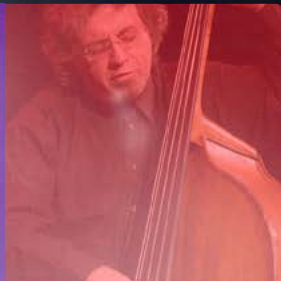
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From the Archives- Rare Elvin Jones Clinic

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This page is a symbolic break, what precedes is advertising, (free of editorial influence), what follows is editorial (free of advertising influence).

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN CADENCE

acc: accordion
as: alto sax
bari s : baritone sax
b: bass
b cl: bass clarinet
bs: bass sax
bsn: bassoon
cel: cello
cl: clarinet
cga: conga
cnt: cornet
d: drums
el: electric
elec: electronics
Eng hn: English horn
euph: euphonium
flgh: flugelhorn
flt: flute
Fr hn: French horn
g: guitar
hca: harmonica
kybd: keyboards
ldr: leader
ob: oboe
org: organ
perc: percussion
p: piano
pic: piccolo
rds: reeds
ss: soprano sax
sop: sopranino sax
synth: synthesizer
ts: tenor sax
tbn: trombone
tpt: trumpet
tba: tuba
v tbn: valve trombone
vib: vibraphone
vla: viola
vln: violin
vcl: vocal
xyl: xylophone



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FRONT COVER

Clockwise from upper left

Ari Brown
Sonny Rollins
William Parker
Joe Lovano
David Haney
Cheryl Pyle

Inside This Issue

CADENCE MAGAZINE EDITORIAL POLICY

Established in January 1976, Cadence Magazine was a monthly publication through its first 381 issues (until September 2007). Beginning with the October 2007 issue, Cadence increased in number of pages, changed to perfect binding, and became a quarterly publication. On January 1, 2012 Cadence Magazine was transferred to Cadence Media L.L.C.

Cadence Magazine continues as an online publication and one print issue per year. Cadence Media, LLC, is proud to continue the policies that have distinguished Cadence as an important independent resource.

From its very first issue, Cadence has had a very open and inclusive editorial policy. This has allowed Cadence to publish extended feature interviews in which musicians, well known or otherwise, speak frankly about their experiences and perspectives on the music world; and to cover and review all genres of improvised music. We are reader supported.

Cadence essentially always has been and remains "the best independent magazine of Jazz, Blues, and Creative Improvised Music that money can't buy."

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SPECIAL THANKS TO ABE GOLDSTIEN FOR PAPTAMUS REDUX
REVIEWS

Cadence Fest-NY Jazz Stories

CADENCE FEST NY JAZZ STORIES IN PHOTOS PHOTOS BY ROBERT SUTHERLAND-COHEN

NEW YORK, NY: April 11, July 19, Sept 13

Cadence Magazine and David Haney presented three events focussing on the Jazz Stories project featured in Cadence Magazine. Spanning three concerts the story tellers were David Haney, Nora McCarthy, Greg Drusdow, and Joe Lovano. The stories about Thelonious Monk, Herbie Nichols, Sun Ra, and others, all took place in New York.

New York Jazz Stories New York Centric Stories are stories first presented by the artists themselves. From 2012 to 2024, Cadence writers and interviewers asked subjects to present stories in their own words.

David Haney starting by recording the stories in his own voice, with an improvised soundtrack. Stage performances followed in Portland Oregon in 2014, with additional performances the next year in Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Seattle, and New York. In 2017 New York Jazz Stories began a regular show at the Public Theater and has presented 14 shows to date. Most of the groups provided improvised music plus background music for the readers.



David Haney New York Jazz Stories

Sept 13, 2024 DROM, NYC Photo credit © R.I. Sutherland-Cohen

Cadence Fest-NY Jazz Stories



Ray Anderson, Kirk Knuffke, Adam Lane, - not shown Billy Mintz
April 11, 2024 NuBlu NYC Photo credit © R.I. Sutherland-Cohen



Dave Sewelson, Michael Gilbert, Dave Hofstra, Shayna Dulburger
April 11, 2024 NuBlu NYC Photo credit © R.I. Sutherland-Cohen

Cadence Fest-NY Jazz Storries



Ken Filliano, Cheryl Pyle, David Haney

April 11, 2024 NuBlu NYC Photo credit © R.I. Sutherland-Cohen



Charlie Apicella, Daniel Carter

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Cadence Fest-NY Jazz Storries



Ras Moshe, David Soldier, Ken Filliano, not shown - William Hooker
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Jorge Sylvester, Reggie Sylvester, Nora McCarthy, Ken Filliano, David Haney
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Cadence Fest-NY Jazz Stories



Mystery Group - Sex Mob - Steven Bernstein; Kenny Wollesen; Briggan Krauss; Tony Scherr

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Claire Daly July 19, 2024 DROM, NYC
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Cadence Fest-NY Jazz Stories



Amazon Audoine, July 19, 2024 DROM, NYC

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Ben Stapp, July 19, 2024 DROM, NYC Photo credit © R.I. Sutherland-Cohen

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Lauren Reilly, July 19, 2024 DROM, NYC Photo credit © R.I. Sutherland-Cohen



Matt Lamdbaise, July 19, 2024 DROM, NYC Photo credit © R.I. Sutherland-Cohen

Cadence Fest-NY Jazz Stories



Evan Crane, July 19, 2024 DROM, NYC Photo credit © R.I. Sutherland-Cohen



Nicole Davis, July 19, 2024 DROM, NYC Photo credit © R.I. Sutherland-Cohen

Cadence Fest-NY Jazz Storries



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David Haney, Claire Daly, Steven Bernstein

July 19, 2024 DROM, NYC Photo credit © R.I. Sutherland-Cohen



Tribute to Art Baron

Matt Lavelle, Steven Bernstein, July 19, 2024 DROM, NYC Photo credit

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Cadence Fest-NY Jazz Storries



Matt Lavelle and Twelve Houses

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Adam Lane Sept 13, 2024 DROM, NYC Photo credit © R.I. Sutherland-Cohen

Cadence Fest-NY Jazz Stories



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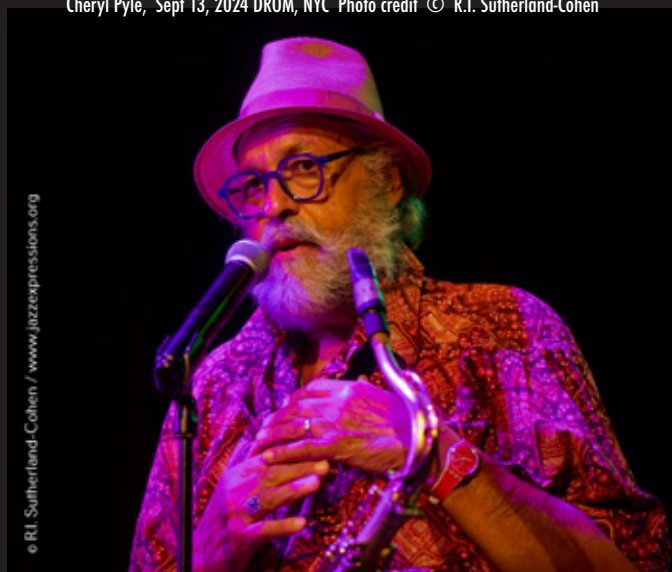


David Haney, Adam Lane, Joe Lovano, Cheryl Pyle Sept 13, 2024 DROM, NYC

Cadence Fest-NY Jazz Stories



Cheryl Pyle, Sept 13, 2024 DROM, NYC Photo credit © R.I. Sutherland-Cohen



Joe Lovano telling his New York story, Sept 13, 2024 DROM, NYC Photo credit © R.I. Sutherland-Cohen

Short Takes - Philadelphia

PHILADELPHIA, PA - Fire Museum Presents unleashed a triple-header of exhilarating performances on 6/13 at The Perch. First up, all the way from Montreal, was Silvervest – the duo of vocalist/poet Kim Zombik and bassist Nicolas Caloia. Their music has aptly been described as having swagger and sweetness. Zombik vocalizes in a pretty tone and can produce enough gravel to cause an emotional response when needed, plus she's got enough Abbey Lincoln and Jeanne Lee in her to be a potent storyteller. There's a certain purity to her singing that was especially apparent when singing a song inspired after recently meeting her biological father for the first time. Caloia effectively filled space and boosted Zombik's work with passion and sensitivity. Master pianist and local artist pianist Dave Burrell held down the middle set, making his third appearance for Fire Museum. Working solo on the venue's stellar piano, Burrell effectively bridged the way-out Avant-Garde with the firm Tradition in a way that was very organic. Commencing with ecstatic pounding, he soon enlivened chestnuts such as "Summertime," "Body and Soul," and "Come Rain or Come Shine," before revealing a lovely composition he had just completed with his wife [poet and writer Monika Larsson] called "Just Me and the Moon." After noting, "I like to mix things up," Burrell went on with "April in Paris," which got into some classic Burrell violent moments, followed by an original tune and finally "Lush Life," completing a breathtaking set. No pianist should ever have to follow Dave Burrell but Paul Giallorenzo was up next with bassist Ingebrigt Håker Flaten and drummer Chad Taylor. Of note, the trio all have spent substantial time in Chicago (Håker Flaten is back in Norway after stays in Chicago and Austin, Texas). Giallorenzo talked of his connection to stalwarts Monk and Duke during his set but I was most struck by a heavy Herbie Nichols vibe to his playing. Giallorenzo's off-kilter, non-showoff playing style fit in perfectly with the very muscular bass plucking of Håker Flaten and Taylor's inventive percussion. It was to experience the trio perform in and out of the Tradition right after Burrell followed a similar path, and to see how very different the two performances were. Each were successful but contrasts existed with Burrell delivering a kill shot while Giallorenzo's abstractions, with help from his locked-in bandmates, suggested endless possibilities for the music to grow...Once again, Chris' Jazz Café served as the concluding site for the Steve Weiss Mallet Festival. Weiss (no relation) established a percussion store in Willow Grove (just outside of Philadelphia) in 1961 that has earned a worldwide reputation. He passed a decade ago but his memory lives on with this yearly festival spearheaded by vibist Tony Miceli. The 8/10 second set was totally fun and light with a rotating group of acclaimed vibists, each calling out a standard tune for the band (Neil Podgurski, p; Shane Aaserud, b; Dan Monaghan, d) to play. Master of ceremonies Miceli showed off his humor ("Tonight is kind of like a vibe buffet") when announcing the musicians. When summoning 13-year-old wunderkind Julian Lee to the stage (Lee didn't know for sure he was playing), Miceli announced, "We share a connection, he's 13 and my emotional age is 13!" Miceli performed first, choosing "How Deep is the Ocean," followed by Chien Chien Lu [who came to Philadelphia's now bankrupt and shuttered University of the Arts to study Classical percussion without knowing anything about Jazz but fell in love with it] did "Bolivia." Morgan Walbridge followed with "Have You Met Miss Jones?," Julian Lee was next with "Donna Lee," Christos Rafalides, who was to move to Barcelona the next week, did "Whisper Not." Behn Gillice played a favorite of his – Frank Foster's "Simone," and finally Sasha Berliner extended the buffet on marimba with "What is This Thing Called Love?" The night

Short Takes - Philadelphia



Gary Hassay - William Parker on ophicleide at the Black Squirrel Club on 9/12
Photo credit © Ken Weiss



WAW Trio (Jeff "Tain" Watts with pianist Carl Winther and bassist Richard Andersson) at the Black Squirrel Club on 9/4 Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Short Takes - Philadelphia



Zoh Amba at Black Squirrel Club on 8/24 Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Isaiah Collier - Orrin Evans - Bobby Zankel at Solar Myth on 8/23
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Short Takes - Philadelphia



Sasha Berliner at Chris' Jazz Café on 8/10

Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Duane Eubanks with Abraham Burton (ts), Jordan Williams (p), Ashanti Santi Debriano (b)
and Byron "Wookie" Landham (d) at Chris' Jazz Café on 8/17

Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Short Takes - Philadelphia



6/13 Paul Giallorenzo - Ingebrigt Håker Flaten - Chad Taylor at The Perch
Photo credit © Ken Weiss



6/13 Kim Zombik at The Perch
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Short Takes - Philadelphia



6/13 Dave Burrell relaxing prior to performance upstairs at The Perch
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Short Takes - Philadelphia

ended with all the players [except Lu who had a train to catch] lining up to the side and then coming up one by one to strike a few more bars...While not thought of as a Jazz or Blues band, Dengue Fever, the L.A. sextet known for their trademark blend of 60's Cambodian Pop and psychedelic Rock, have expanded their musical palette on their latest releases to include Khmer rap, Latin grooves, Afro percussion, and Stax-like horn play, all with a touch of a Jazz and Blues attitude that has managed to keep their thing relevant by sticking to their offbeat idea and introducing new sounds. Dengue Fever originally started out playing Cambodian covers, but now they compose in their own pseudo-Punk style. Their well-attended hit at City Winery Philadelphia on 8/17 was met with a young audience very familiar with their work. Lead singer Chhom Nimol, a well-known performer in Cambodia before moving to the States in 2001, was the centerpiece, dancing to the groove in a gold sequined short dress and high white boots while unveiling her piercing and pleasing Khmer vocals. The music was so infectious that five songs in, a spontaneous, lengthy line dance of fans snaked through the aisles. Before performing their hit "Tiger Phone Card," Nimol needed help from her bandmates to recall what city they were playing in – an understandable issue for musicians on the go. During the encore, they welcomed willing fans to come up on stage for "Glass of Wine," a fitting piece for the venue. Most of the stage climbers danced and took selfies but one fan knew the words and sang in Cambodian...I caught Duane Eubanks' second set at Chris' Jazz Café on 8/17 with Abraham Burton (ts), Jordan Williams (p), Ashanti Santi Debriano (b) and Byron "Wookie" Landham (d). Their cover of Bobby Hutcherson's captivating "Little B's Poem" was followed by the leader's original piece "P," named for his son, done to a heart tugging effect. As Eubanks announced, "We're gonna close out with "Dance With Aleta," a loud cheer went out amongst some of the listeners, to which Eubanks responded – "What's up with that? You're excited we're done?" Hopefully he was joking but nonetheless the piece was another beauty by the hometown hero...Isaiah Collier took another step to stardom with his latest hit in town on 8/23 at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) with a version of his The Chosen Few quartet – this time featuring Orrin Evans (p), Jon Michel (b) and Khary Abdul-Shaheed (d). Commencing with "Body and Soul," Collier, always one to respect his elders, dedicated the tune to guitarist Russel Malone who had just passed. He added, "If you knew Russel Malone you might wonder why he didn't do a career in comedy. "The Almighty" followed, complete with Evans playing inside the piano, dampening the strings for an eerie effect, as Michel bowed away and Collier whistled/blew into his bullhorn device before soon singing, "Freedom has a price but is that freedom worth your life?," which was followed by deep, guttural tenor sax blasts. Alto saxophonist Bobby Zankel was called up from the audience to sit in on Collier's beautiful tune "Compassion." Zankel was the perfect puzzle piece to complete the spiritual mood of the song and fit in with Collier's work in general. Later still, Collier raised some Pharoah Sanders goosebumps when singing "We need peace and love" and then splitting up the house into sections to have the listeners sing. After the performance, a spectator was overheard to say, "Now that's as good as it gets!"...Fire Museum Presents threw themselves a fundraising event on 8/24 at the funky Black Squirrel Club with Spectral Forces (Alex Smith, elec, vcl; Pete Dennis, b; Julius Masri, d) and a rare Zoh Amba solo performance. Amba at age 24 is just at the start of her musical career and is still finding her way. She's very open about her troubled childhood in

Short Takes - Philadelphia

Tennessee, she asked as a youth to go to heaven early, and how having access to a saxophone turned things around. There's an openness to Amba that comes across in person that wins her a rooting audience. She started the set by proclaiming her need to use the bathroom and then relayed how she almost got locked in the john. "I haven't been out of the house for a while so I'm moving slower than usual...I'm nervous tonight, I don't usually get nervous...Sorry about all this talking. I hope I don't disappoint anyone...Does anyone play with finger picks? No? I'm trying to get a lesson." She's been spending time on acoustic guitar, working on releasing a solo guitar album in the near future. Her playing on acoustic guitar and singing style is vastly different from her soul bearing, let-it-all-go tenor saxophone rages. Her guitar work is more in the Folk territory. "My relationship with guitar is very different [from saxophone]," she explained. She also revealed she had written the songs for guitar and voice a few months ago during a time when she was very sad and that she was no longer sad and that she was working to figure out how to put her music on guitar and tenor and piano all together. That's a real dilemma because her guitar music is delicate and revealing, and then once she sits down at the piano to blow her sax and play one handed hymnal piano before moving on to solo sax, where she blows with tempest force and arched back, she peels paint off the walls. After finishing on sax and saying, "That puts me in a place where I just want to vanish. That's why I come back here," as she picked up her guitar to finish with "Look Inside." "It's gonna be crazy when I get the album out. Can you imagine me playing songs every night?" ...The Black Squirrel Club was bustling with activity again on 9/4 with the WAW Trio – a band featuring two top Danish Jazz men and one American drum icon. Drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts with pianist Carl Winther and bassist Richard Andersson were on the first stop of a 3 gig tour of the East Coast in support of a new recording. Andersson had trained at the Manhattan School of Music in 2008 and took a summer session course taught by Watts, establishing a relationship that led to the trio's formation years later. Their two sets of mostly original music was supplied by all three artists with songs that blistered or simmered. Commencing with Watts' "Manhattan," a nice drum showcase tune, and then Winther's "Requiem for JW," a tune written for his late father, had more of a romantic vibe. Andersson's "Fundet" opened with an impressive bass solo before turning into a sprawling propulsive romp followed by a beautiful take of the ballad "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square." The first set concluded with Winther's C minor Blues "Steep Steps," a hyperactive ditty that gave the trio a chance to stretch out before ending with a brawny Watts solo. The second set was almost as strong and featured the novelty of Watts singing during his "Sage" piece, written in tribute to August Wilson, the great playwright. Post-set, Winther, who interestingly mouths inaudible voicings while performing, spoke of playing with the acclaimed drummer. "Jeff plays like a beast all the time and I feel his person, he's always smiling. It makes it easy on me to play, it's very human." ...It began with two clangs on a small Tibetan singing bowl by Gary Hassay and then his calming Tuvan throat singing to start things off with William Parker and drummer Tracy Lisk on 9/12 at the Black Squirrel Club presented by artist Aaron Pond and People's Music Supply. Hassay is looking to become more active musically again after dealing with the loss of his wife a number of years ago and his own significant recent health issues. He was the lead for the group's music which centered on a very interactive and contemplative field. He said afterwards that he had no set plan going into the night and went with how he felt in the

Short Takes - Philadelphia

moment. "I feel it. I'm very concerned with dynamics and I try to move the dynamic up and down. I try to be as powerful as possible and sweet and soft at the same time." He acknowledged his alto sax playing has mellowed with age and that playing with Parker allows him to reach high levels due to having played with him so often over his career. The performance was entrancing with no maximal crescendos sought. Parker partook on a number of instruments - first on fujara [overtone flute], stand up bass, two different wooden flutes, and finally the rarely seen ophicleide [brass instrument cousin to the serpent]. Parker said he uses the ophicleide when he doesn't want to lug his tuba around. He explained that he had a number of tuba gigs coming up and had been practicing tuba every day. Lisk was an equal sound crafting partner in laying down a bed of percussive turbulence, often using mallets, and even bowing her set at times. Matt Lavelle opened the night with a solo effort on flugelhorn and alto clarinet and later joined the trio for the final portion of the night. Lavelle also has had a long history with Parker from his time living in New York and easily fit into the group's healing aesthetic.

Ken Weiss

Vision Fest 29 Building Bridges

NEW YORK, NY - June 18 – June 23, 2024, at Roulette, Brooklyn, NY

By Ken Weiss

Once again, Arts for Art brought together hundreds of artists to showcase “multicultural, Black, improvised creative music and arts” for a truly immersive aural and visual sensory experience. This year’s theme was “Building Bridges” with the intent that the artists were to show the way to build a “bridge to peace.” It only took 29 years but fittingly this year’s honoree for the annual Lifetime Achievement Award was William Parker. As the festival’s co-founder, it was long avoided for fear of seeming self-serving (plus Parker is very humble and always looking to shine the light on others) but the rest of the Arts for Art organization took it upon themselves to plan the honor. Parker has been one of the most influential artists in New York City and beyond for the past fifty years, not only as a top bassist, composer, band director, teacher and poet, but as a scene creator/ supporter and pillar of New York’s creative arts community. Hopefully the NEA is paying attention as NEA Jazz Master is a title deserving of Mr. Parker.

The festival opened with a night dedicated to the work of William Parker as five of his projects were presented. Dancer Patricia Nicholson, who does yeoman’s work every year as the festival’s lead organizer (when is it her turn for a Lifetime Achievement Award?) announced that she has been married to Parker for 49 years and that keeping news of the honor for him a surprise was difficult to keep quiet from him. The stage was decked with artificial flowers strung around music stands and all over the stage which Nicholson explained as, “Flowers represent poets in (Parker’s) earliest writings...Poets represent all artists.” After an opening mantra by Lisa Sokolov on piano and vocals expressing the meaning of music – “Music exists to feed the spirit,” Parker then had his run of ensembles commencing with Roots & Rituals [Parker, doson ngoni, wood flt; Joe Morris, g; Joshua Abrams, gimbire; Mixashawn Rozi, ts; Daniel Carter, reeds, tpt, and percussionists Jackson Krall, Juma Sultan, Michael Wimberly, Hamid Drake, Isaiah Parker]. Parker led the ensemble, often surveying the musicians and nodding in appreciation. The next group [vocalists AnneMarie Sandy (mezzo soprano), Andrea Wolper, Raina Sokolov-Gonzalez; Mara Rosenbloom, p; James Brandon Lewis, ts; Rozi, Drake, I. Parker] covered an extended excerpt from Parker’s opera Trail of Tears titled “Vanished Horizon,” a work inspired by the horrific journey that many Native Americans underwent when they were forced from their homelands by the US government in the 1800’s. After that, a couple of Parker’s older groups were featured including Raining on the Moon [Rob Brown, as; Steve Swell, tbn; Eri Yamamoto, p; Drake], with the mesmerizing vocalist Leena Conquest excelling on “James Baldwin to the Rescue,” singing as well as moving to the stage’s side to dance and extend her lithe body in unique ways. Parker recalled hearing Baldwin talk at a library as a child and how he took to heart Baldwin’s advice to, “Be yourself and live your life.” Parker also spoke of playing with his brother with toy guns as children and how they imagined turning them into trumpets. Huey’s Pocket Watch was the other “historic” band presented this night with 16 members including vocalists Ellen Christi, Kyoko Kitamura, Patricia Nicholson, the very young appearing pianist Hans Young Binter, and special guests Assif Tsahar on tenor sax and trumpeter Taylor Ho Bynum. The program noted that “Huey’s Pocket Watch was created for all those who wanted to be poets and were told they

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needed to get a real job. The H in Huey stands for Hope. Huey's Pocket Watch is a wing of the little." A new group called The Ancients with Isaiah Collier, ts; Dave Burrell, p; William Hooker, d and dancer Miriam Parker was organized around a theme of "sound healing" and their explosive set certainly lived up to that goal. Poet Fred Moten served as emcee for the night and astutely announced, "It's kind of hard to get ready for music that you know is gonna mess you up." This was a magical night full of spiritually drenched music, much of it out of the soul of the eminent William Parker, who's broad smile radiated while walking the stage, taking in the presentation of years of his work jam packed into one unforgettable night.

The following 5 days of the festival were masterfully curated with 4-5 performances nightly of creative music, dance, visual art and poetry with no clunkers in the mix. Day 2 highlights included a James Brandon Lewis/Chad Taylor duet that was high in attitude, Rockish and Bluesy at times, with an episode of African-sounding percussive backing by Taylor and later a Lewis delivered pointillistic segment of "Wade in the Water." There was also Matthew Shipp's New Piano Trio with Michael Bisio on bass and Newman Taylor Baker on drums, with Shipp, a longtime Vision Fest favorite, doing superb new music that concentrated on his more refined side, before the longstanding trio Tarbaby hit with their great ebb and flow efforts.

Day 3 was especially outstanding, beginning with the always scene-stealing, charismatic Jen Shyu, who's projects merge different ethnicities and instruments alongside her captivating vocals. The first movement of Fertile Land, Fertile Body, her new multilingual ritual drama exploring the interlocking of climate crisis and barrenness in earth and body. Her all-female quintet [Shyu, composition, vcl, violin, gayageum, Taiwanese moon lute; Layale Chaker, violin, vcl; Martha Redbone, vcl; Maeve Gilchrist, Celtic harp; Devon Gates, b, vcl] came from different backgrounds, furthering the feeling of humanity and solidarity in the work. Ingrid Laubrock's Lilith found the veteran German saxophonist leading a sextet of younger musicians through compositional pieces she's been working on for years. At one point, magic occurred with pianist Yvonne Rogers twinkling the keys in such a manner that it sounded like fairies were being released. The Darius Jones Quintet offered a more textured and thoughtful set by the often firebrand alto saxophonist, reaching a snaky, Threadgill-esque vibe. The night ended large with 84-year-old legendary guitarist, vocalist James Blood Ulmer and his Black Rock Trio with electric bassist Mark Peterson and drummer G. Calvin Weston delving into Ulmer's singular, straight from the heart Delta Blues/Rock/Jazz offerings delivered with his gritty vocals. Late in the set, Ulmer spied guitarist Vernon Reid (Living Color) in the audience and coaxed him up on stage to take over his guitar for a tune. Reid, who has produced a number of Ulmer's records, seemed stunned to be suddenly on stage but gamely acquiesced as Ulmer sat behind him smiling. Post set, Reid grinned and said, "This is the most embarrassing thing...The fact that I was on stage was madness in the first place! If I knew Marc Ribot was in the house, I'd have grabbed him and brought him on stage!" Ulmer noted this was the first time he had ever done such a thing and espoused his admiration for Reid.

Day 4 musical gems included Trio Plex with Cooper-Moore, one of Free Jazz' most exciting pianists, Ken Filiano on bass and TA Thompson on drums. With a set titled "Together We Rise," they aimed to build community through 'Sounds of Harmonic

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Peace,' which they noted in the program notes to be "crucial to everyone's existence." With a backdrop of displayed photos of important late musicians such as Roy Campbell, Kidd Jordan, Charles Gayle, Connie Crouthers and Mary Lou Williams, Cooper-Moore led the way with a two-handed assault to the keys, sending out spirals of thunderous sounds while his hat remained perched on top of the piano. Filiano and Thompson kept pace until harmonic peace was [evidently] achieved and the proceedings slowed to a calmer pace. The quartet Mendoza Hoff Revels ended the night on a Rockish, nasty note with guitarist Ava Mendoza, bassist Devin Hoff and drummer Ches Smith joined by tenor saxophonist of his generation, James Brandon Lewis, covering tunes by Mendoza and Hoff. It wasn't clear how much was composed because hot improv activities seemed to dominate, disseminating a mighty infusion of adrenaline to the listening public who were then released to try their best to sleep later that night.

Day 5 rolled out 5 incredible sets starting with Melanie Dyer's new 12-piece ensemble Incalculable Likelihood that joined 5 string players and 3 vocalists animating Dyer's ambitious composition, running the gamut from lovely landscapes to a view into the Black church. That was followed by pianist/vocalist Amina Claudine Myers, who prolonged listeners' time spent at the church pews with a solo set delivered in her raw and honest way. Myers, a new NEA Jazz Master, scored high covering two Bessie Smith pieces and ending with Gospel musician Andraé Crouch's "Lord, You've Been Good to Me." Next came a duo with Jason Kao Hwang on violin and viola and Cooper-Moore on a number of his handmade invented instruments meeting up for the third time ever. Cooper-Moore was at his dramatic best playing diddley bow (a one-string instrument) with a drum stick in his mouth, peering laser focused into the face of Hwang as he complimented and counterpointed Hwang's efforts. Alto sax legend Oliver Lake appeared next in duet with William Parker on bass. Lake is relegated to reciting his poetry in public these days due to a 2017 diagnosis of Parkinson's disease. He's still creating great artwork, and images of his pieces were projected behind the artists. The final set was Patricia Nicholson's Holding Bridges Falling Down with Nicholson on dance and vocals, DJ Marcellus on live sound mix, Ellen Christi on vocals, Devin Brahja Waldman on alto sax, Michael TA Thompson on drums and dancer Jason Jordan all fully communicating the need for hope, sacrifice and compassion.

The festival concluded with 5 exceptional sets. Matana Roberts presented sections from Coin Coin Chapter V, the latest chapter in the ongoing telling of her personal story of struggle and triumph through music. Thollem McDonas, arguably the breakout surprise performer of the week with his pulverizing 20 minute opening piano solo, manned an electric keyboard/sampler/synth at the front of the stage near his wife AC Villa who worked on projecting her photography to the rear screen, concluding with a photo of Nicholson from earlier in the day, acknowledging her hard work, to which Nicholson modestly announced, "Well, you shouldn't have done that!" Isaiah Collier & The Chosen Few found Collier, the 26-year-old future megastar out of Chicago, on tenor and soprano sax leading drummer Warren Trae Crudup and old-head bassist Nat Reeves [Jackie McLean, Kenny Garrett, Dakota Staton] through an inspiring set of high energy, conversational music. Collier, a respectful student of Jazz history, covered "Equinox" on soprano and then used tenor on a late set gem of Sonny Rollins'

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rarely performed “Blessing in Disguise.” Next up was Watershed Continuum with Rob Brown, as; Steve Swell, tbn; Alexis Marcelo, p; and Whit Dickey, d. Brown, Swell and Dickey have been partnering for years and can immediately ignite into a Free Jazz frenzy, leaving Marcelo to supplement their activities, which he did by adding his own swirling sounds to the mix. Finally, the festival came to a spectacular conclusion with the arrival of Marshall Allen and the Sun Ra Arkestra for a special celebration of Allen’s 100th birthday [it was officially May 25]. After the flowers used for the opening day celebration of William Parker were hastily brought back out and arranged around the stage, the Afrofuturistic 18-piece ensemble did what they’ve been doing for nearly 70 years. Allen has been sitting down more often these days and playing less alto and more EVI (electronic valve instrument) but he still sounds great and it’s always inspirational even just to have him in the house. The Arkestra scored high with “Angels and Demons at Play,” “Sometimes I’m Happy,” “Stranger in Paradise,” and “Space is the Place,” sending home the spiritually cleansed listeners back to their homes throughout America, Italy, and elsewhere, including new contingents from Argentina and Australia.

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Day 1 - William Parker Roots & Rituals Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Day 1 - William Parker
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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Day 1 - Lena Conquest and Hamid Drake Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Day 5 - William Parker Oliver Lake
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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Day 3- James Blood Ulmer Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Day 4 - Ava Mendoza James Brandon Lewis Dev Hoff Ches Smith Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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Day 5 - Aina Claudine Myers Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Day 5 - Cooper-Moore Jason Kao Hwang Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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Day 6 - Matana Roberts with Matt Lavelle Darius Jones Stuart Bogie Mike Pride
Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Day - 6 Isaiah Collier and Nat Reeves Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Why I Will Always Owe Sonny Rollins



SONNY ROLLINS - soundcheck and/or warmup, Edmonton Jazz City, August 1981. This photograph ran full page in the Tokyo-based monthly *Swing Journal*.

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WHY I WILL ALWAYS OWE SONNY ROLLINS

Patrick Hinely ©2024

Initial Forays into Foreign Lands: reflections, recollections and ruminations 40 and more years later...

Anybody who loves jazz or plays tenor sax owes Sonny Rollins. I love jazz, and while I have never played tenor sax, I too owe Sonny Rollins, for more than his music, though that in itself is a gift that keeps on giving. I will always owe Sonny Rollins – gladly - because, via Canada, Japan, and Poland, a photo I made of him got me my first trip to Europe.

The gig on which I shot that photo got me my first trip outside the USA, to Canada, working for a Japanese magazine. It was an unlikely trajectory, and hardly a direct routing, with several individuals around the globe having a hand in connecting a set of otherwise unrelated dots...

This chain of events begins in Canada, late in the 1970s, when a small ad in John Norris' and Bill Smith's Toronto-based bimonthly CODA, to which I subscribed (having seen their classified ad in the then-predominant US-based jazz periodical) caught my eye, promoting yet another jazz publication, an English-language bimonthly based in Warsaw, Poland: Jazz Forum. Even as a just-subsisting freelancer in Jacksonville, Florida, I could afford a subscription, for in those days, American dollars got you a lot more in the Soviet bloc than they got you in Chicago.

So I subscribed to Jazz Forum, and soon became a contributor: photographs, reviews and even a few interviews. I devoured every issue upon arrival, and struck up a correspondence with its Editor-in-Chief, Pawel Brodowski. It contained so many new names, from all over the world. Its scope was even wider than Coda's, and Coda's was wider than any of the US-based publications of the day. Around the time 1980 became 1981, an issue of Jazz Forum included a piece about the first run of a new festival in Canada: Edmonton Jazz City, including some quotes from its director, Marc Vasey, who was already making plans to expand the scope of that festival for its second run in '81. His team had already gained access to some public funding, both provincial and national, and had recruited a large, loyal legion of local volunteers as well as corporate and commercial support from around the region. All indications were that the joint was jumpin'.

With nothing to lose but the postage, I wrote to Marc Vasey, sending him a few samples of my work, citing several years' experience as a staff photographer for Spoleto Festival USA, offering to shoot Jazz City and give the festival free use of my images, if my expenses were paid. He wrote back, thanking me for my interest, regretting that the festival did not have the funds to take me up on my offer. That was that. Or so I thought...

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A couple of weeks later, the phone rang. It was Marc Vasey, who gave me a phone number in Tokyo, advising me to call Mr. Ohkuma, Editor-in-Chief at Swing Journal (SJ) magazine as soon as we got off our call, and told me of his own just-concluded conversation with Mr. Ohkuma, who had phoned him expressing interest in attending – and reviewing – the 1981 edition of Jazz City, lamenting that his magazine couldn't foot the cost of sending a photographer with him, and asking Vasey if he knew of anyone local whom SJ might be able to hire, to which Vasey said yes, he did know of someone very interested, if not exactly local...

From that point on, everything seemed to fall into place of its own accord. When festival time came, my flight into Edmonton arrived late enough in the evening that only a single Customs & Immigration line was still open, and my flight from Minneapolis had landed about the same time as one from Japan. I'd just been airborne, on and off, for several hours, longer than ever before in all my 29 years, and felt a bit frazzled, to say nothing of hungry and thirsty, none of which made the line move any faster. With each passing moment, new heights of fuzziness were attained.

A man from the Japanese flight asked me, in phonetically perfect English, if I was there to attend the jazz festival. I said yes, wondering if this might be Mr. Ohkuma. It was not, but he was an earnest jazz fan and about as personable as someone could be under the circumstances – he'd just endured a far longer flight than I had. He asked me which artists on the festival roster I had come to hear. I said I hoped to hear them all. He responded that he did too, but most especially to hear Sonny Lawrence. Trying to be diplomatic, I smiled and said 'oh yes', all the while trying to figure out who the fuck Sonny Lawrence was. Once my synapses finally fired, it came to me that despite his perfect phonetics, he had still reversed the "L" and "R" sounds, just like in those old jokes we don't tell any more. Of course he meant Sonny Rollins!

Life was different in Canada. Back in those days, in the USA, one could smoke anywhere it didn't say you couldn't, i.e., everywhere except in No Smoking Zones. In Canada, you could smoke only in the Smoking Zones and nowhere else. Collective well-being was given a higher priority than personal liberty, evincing a civic sense of proportion and fairness which, even then, when I was a smoker, I found commendable. That far north, summers are briefer and are thus savored much more intensely by all living things, and festival week was the height of summer for the local jazz folks. They happily went out of their way to show all of us visitors a good time on a somewhat non-stop basis, which I found endearing if, at points, also exhausting.

Late in the afternoon on the day of Rollins' performance, his soundcheck was a fairly simple matter, since he played with his mic clipped to his horn. It was more an extended process of him taking the opportunity to get comfortable with the stage and the room. He seemed relaxed as he loped around, blowing all the while, doing what he does like no one else, if not the voice of God, the voice of a god, speaking fluently, in his own tongue, his sound flowing freely from the confluence of all the music he'd ever heard, its widespread roots made infinitely

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interchangeable, waxing poetic from just about any Point A to any Point B, making it all sound more than logical, more than natural, more like an inevitable force of nature. (The only other tenor player I've ever heard who could do this so convincingly was Dexter Gordon, but that's another story). I don't know how long he strode around that stage but it was long enough for the rest of us in the room to feel we had witnessed the revelation of universal truths. The concert that evening was pretty good too...

This being before the age of auto-focus, Rollins was a challenge to keep in focus, since he was moving around a lot. This was especially true due to the shallow depth of field of a telephoto lens. It was a relief to figure out that the unoccupied drum set could be, rather than an obstacle, a compositional device, its kinetic diagonals also peripherally yielding some well-placed empty space within which all could float with grace. For this one frame, as he tilted his head to his right, in the moment, it all fell into place rather than into pieces, just like jazz at its best. It was as close as I'd ever come to a Henri Cartier-Bresson decisive moment, that confluence of the camera and the geometric imperative. I'm glad it turned out to be one that didn't get away.

It ran full page in Swing Journal!

A couple of years had passed when I saw notice of a photo competition in Jazz Forum: Jazz Photo International, with the Grand Prix winner to receive an invitation to attend and photograph the 1984 Warsaw Jazz Jamboree. Airmail postage for my big-ass print of Rollins cost more than anything I'd ever mailed in my life, but I figured the odds it might pay off were better than buying lottery tickets or applying for grants...

The shot of Rollins won Grand Prix in Jazz Photo International 1984!

So that is how I got my first trip to Europe: Thank you Sonny Rollins, Marc Vasey, Mr. Ohkuma and Pawel Brodowski.

And what a trip it was. We arrived on the same day that the activist priest Jerzy Popieluszko disappeared, which put the authorities there on edge, though locals in the know acknowledged that the authorities had been on edge for several years, since the advent of the Solidarity movement. Yet there seemed to be some unspoken détente for the jazz festival, though we still felt the omnipresent police and military – who wore indetical uniforms, varying only in color - were watching us more than that they were watching over us...

Life was different in Warsaw. There was a notice in our hotel room, and by every main-floor exit door, warning joggers about the local air pollution, advising against running more than a couple of blocks. Acquiring most anything beyond essentials – and, often, those too – required, in the parlance of the locals, 'making arrangements', which equated to knowing someone and, usually, money changing hands. I found this out when I tried to buy a few rolls of film: it was late enough in the month that the month's quota had already sold out. I was told to come back

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early in the next month. So much for the planned economy.

Our hosts seemed to be inured to all that and minimized its infringement on their – and our - enjoyment of this annual extravaganza, the high point of the jazz year. They were all jazz, 24/7. How they did that so cheerfully within the context of what was in so many ways a rather drab existence remains rather miraculous to me.

The Jamboree was held in the Palace of Culture, a behemoth with architecture blending Stalinist Gothic, Art Deco, and the castle of the Wicked Witch of the West in *The Wizard of Oz*, with a great performance space inside, akin to Radio City Music Hall, if not quite as vast.

We had to stand in line for a lot of things. On one intermission, while standing in the line for the bar, I noticed the ID tag of the fellow behind us: Timo Vahasilta, whose name I knew, as the owner of the Finnish (as distinguished from the British) Leo Records label. I said to him, hoping he spoke English: “So you’re the fellow who produced that wonderful album *Tea for Four*”. He looked pleasantly surprised – and proud – and, after reading my name tag said: “And you are the first person from the States who ordered a copy!” (And a great multinational album it is: Finnish drummer Edward Vesala, expat American saxophonist Charlie Mariano, Dutch pianist Jasper Van’t Hof and Norwegian bassist Arild Andersen, all in fine fettle, recorded in 1980, yet to be available on CD, with LPs now going for upwards of \$50 on the collectors’ market). That I even knew of the album’s existence was because of – wait for it - Jazz Forum!

A few minutes later Timo fell down, passed out cold, but his companions took it in stride, standing him back up and bringing him some coffee. Later, I learned that, once out of country, Finns tend to overindulge: liquor is so heavily taxed at home that when they go anywhere else and it’s so relatively inexpensive, they drink it like water. Timo, may he rest in peace, must have been thirsty.

One evening, my wife and I had a deluxe dinner at our hotel: the tab came to tens of thousands of zlotys. While I was counting out some of the Polish banknotes that were part of my Grand Prix, our waiter noticed some US dollar bills in my wallet and, after looking carefully in all directions, suggested in a quiet voice that two American dollars would take care of it all. “But what about your tip?” I asked. He assured me that was included too. I gave him a five, and made a friend for life.

Later in the festival, Willis Conover, the Walter Cronkite of Radio Free Europe’s jazz programming, a traveler far more experienced in the ways of the world behind the Iron Curtain, told me he always brought along as many cartons of Marlboro cigarettes as Customs would allow, along with a wad of US one-dollar bills, saying that he seldom needed to use any other forms of currency.

There were plenty of big American names on the festival bill, among them Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor, and they sounded very much like themselves, yet it was the European musicians who most interested me, world-class players who seldom

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– if ever – appeared in the USA. It had already long been the case – and remains so today – that it's much more common for American musicians to tour in Europe than for European musicians to tour in the USA. May it not always be so.

And then there were the Polish musicians, world-class players who seldom got to tour in the West, period. They were the biggest revelations for me. One evening, most-favored homeboy Jan 'Ptaszyn' (Little Bird) Wroblewski held forth on tenor sax, playing his ass off, repeatedly setting the stage afire, based in bebop but taking things much further, inside and out, adding his uniquely Polish accent to it all. Gloriously, he surveyed the postwar evolution of jazz in Poland, of which he had been an essential part.

He spoke with authority, and came by that authority honestly: At age 20, Ptaszyn had been in pianist Krzysztof Komeda's band at the first Sopot festival, in 1956, widely acknowledged as Ground Zero for modern jazz in Poland. A couple of years later, along with German trombonist Albert Mangelsdorff, and Swiss pianist George Gruntz, Ptaszyn played in the USA, at Newport, as part of the International Youth Band, one of only 3 of that band's 19 players from the Soviet bloc, the others being Gabor Szabo and Dusko Goykovich, both of whom would soon emigrate to the West, while Ptaszyn stayed in Warsaw, becoming as prominent and versatile a home-town jazz hero there as Tony Coe in London or Emil Mangelsdorff in Frankfurt.

Also on that evening's bill was the mainstream European dream band of the day: the United Jazz + Rock Ensemble (UJ+RE). Founded and led by pianist Wolfgang Dauner, the band comprised, along with Dauner (alphabetically): drummer Jon Hiseman, guitarist Volker Kriegel, trombonist Albert Mangelsdorff, saxophonists Charlie Mariano and Barbara Thompson, trumpeter Ack Van Rooyen, bassist Eberhard Weber and trumpeter Kenny Wheeler. With nearly a decade of periodic collective endeavor behind them, and several albums (on MOOD Records, founded by Dauner), UJ+RE qualified fully as a juggernaut.

Backstage before the UJ+RE concert, assembled in one huge, dimly-lit dressing room, were all these major players in contemporary continental jazz, more than I could possibly have time to photograph before their set began. I was, in a word, agog, but managed to get a couple of shots in the available darkness before stage call. Mostly I reveled in having free access to such a pantheon of distinguished company.

While watching from the wings as UJ+RE cranked things up on stage, I noticed Ptaszyn nearby, doing the same, and looking a little wistful. Only then did it occur to me that but for reasons political – not musical – he too could have been in the ranks of that international gathering of all-stars. He certainly had the creds. In any case, at least he was celebrated in his own country, and Lord, could he play.

During a changeover at one of the concerts, I was called on stage to be recognized and receive my Jazz Photo International Grand Prix award. I was introduced and briefly interviewed by Andrzej Jaroszewski, who served the Jamboree as chief

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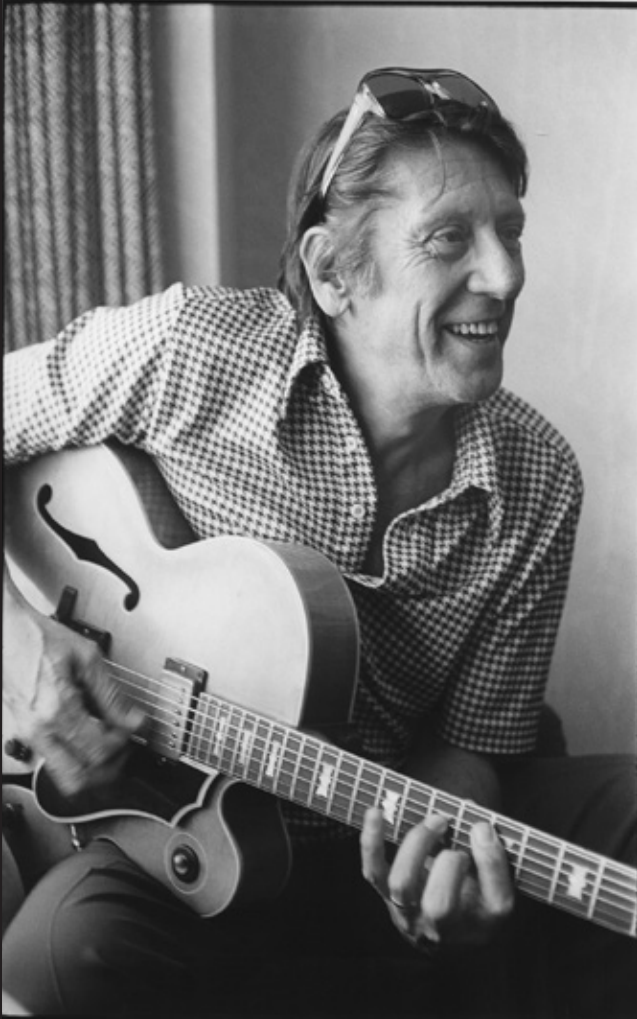
emcee for 35 years. I don't remember any of the questions I was asked or how I answered them, but I do remember that the applause was loudest when Sonny Rollins' name was mentioned. As one more accustomed to being behind the camera than being in the spotlight, I was glad to get back to my seat, but not before taking a long look out into the house, knowing how rare such moments in life tend to be.

Several years later, it was déjà vu when I again saw that same view, though now empty of audience, in National Geographic magazine, which ran a story about the changes in Poland and the rest of Eastern Europe around the time history was ending and/or the USSR was falling apart. With NG's usual level of detail (good old Kodachrome 25), I could read the seat numbers on the front row. The photo had been shot with our seats front-and-center. Only then did I read the caption, which said that those were the seats occupied by First Secretary Wojciech Jaruzelski and his adjutants during plenary sessions of the Polish United Workers' Party. So my host and friend Pawel Brodowski hadn't been kidding when he told me we'd get the best seats in the house...

We left on the same day Popieluszek's body was found, and Indira Gandhi was assassinated, both of which added to already-lengthy wait times and additional security checks at Okecie International, enough to miss our connecting flight in Frankfurt. Lufthansa, thankfully, booked us on the next day's same flight, and put us up at a hotel featuring a sumptuous dinner buffet. After a week of Eastern Bloc cuisine, this smorgasbord cornucopia looked divine. I was tempted to dive into it headfirst, but that would have done violence to several nice cut-glass platters, to say nothing of my own person...

The next year, my photo of Freddie Green and the Count Basie Orchestra playing a college dance date would win first prize (which was, ironically, second place) in Jazz Photo International 1985, and in 1986, I was invited back to Warsaw, to serve as chair of the jury for that year's photo competition, which was an interesting experience, to say the least. Simultaneously, without my active participation, more dots had been connected on my behalf, and from there I went on to JazzFest Berlin – then in what was still West Berlin – for the first of (so far) 26 times, but that's another story...

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TAL FARLOW - in his hotel room, Edmonton Jazz City, August 1981. Farlow was reveling in fellowship with one of his few peers, enjoying an impromptu plectral love feast with Barney Kessel.

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BOBBY BATTLE – performance with Arthur Blythe Quartet, Edmonton Jazz City, August 1981. His cogent propulsion fueled the entire band. When he finished his solo, I felt like someone had beaten the crap out of me, and that it felt good.



CHET BAKER – performance with the Concord All-Stars, Edmonton Jazz City, August 1981. What made him such a great player was that he was also a great listener.

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(front, l-r) saxophonist JOE FARRELL, trumpeter FREDDIE HUBBARD, (back, l-r) festival director MARC VASEY, drummer EDDIE MARSHALL, bassist DAVID FRIESEN, pianist MIKE NOCK – backstage, Edmonton Jazz City, August, 1981. One of the festival's all-star assemblages, a one-off of world-class players who could do it all with wit, grace and style, on standards as well as bringing original tunes to this able ensemble. This was not the first shot, but it was the best. Bassist Friesen – the one making the funny mouth – has tired of posing and is about to lose it.



About one second later. Shots like this are why having a flash which recharges quickly is essential.

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KENNY WHEELER – in his hotel room, Edmonton Jazz City, August 1981. This was our first meeting, and I was not yet familiar with Kenny's droll eccentricities. He began our conversation by saying he hoped I wouldn't ask him to smile. I assured him I would not. He was cordial yet hardly verbose. When I said it must have been exciting to live on London while the Beatles were hitting the big time, he said their main effect had been to dry up a lot of the work opportunities he and a lot of other jazz players had long labored mightily to create. He was the first musician I'd ever met who spoke at all ill of the Beatles, but righteously so. (Years later he owned that there were several Beatles songs he liked, though I never asked which ones).



(unidentified festival staffer), STEVE SWALLOW and MIKE NOCK – after-hours lounge for festival staff and participants, Four Seasons Hotel, Edmonton Jazz City, August 1981. Here are two working musicians, after the gig, far from home, and, as seen here, also far from their instruments, simply being people, hanging out and enjoying the camaraderie, catching up, a decade later, after having worked together a lot when both lived in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Why I Will Always Owe Sonny Rollins



STEVE SWALLOW, JOHN SCOFIELD, ADAM NUSSBAUM – Muttart Conservatory, Edmonton Jazz City, August 1981. This product of a quick stop on the way to the airport ended up gracing the back of the Scofield trio's ENJA album *Out Like a Light*.



JOHN BLAKE and KRZESIMIR DEBSKI – rehearsal, Warsaw Jazz Jamboree, October 1984. This was not these violinists' first meeting, but it was their first collaboration with Debski's band, *String Connection*, pre-eminent among Poland's more progressive units in those days. (Bassist Krzysztof Scieranski is at left, and drummer Krzysztof Przybyłowicz at center rear). Bright sparks flew as they pushed one another into some new places, surprising and delighting each other as well as the rest of us.

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ALBERT MANGELSDORFF and MIKE ZWERIN, backstage, Palace of Culture, Warsaw - Jazz Jamboree, October 1984. Two trombonists talking, yet so much more. In the UJ+RE dressing room, a founding father of the Frankfurt – and German, and European - scene consults with an authoritative American critic and author long based in Paris.

JAN 'PTASZYN' WROBLEWSKI and stagehands listening to UJ+RE performance, Palace of Culture, Warsaw Jazz Jamboree, October 1984. See text.



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JAN 'PTASZYŃ' WROBLEWSKI – performance, Palace of Culture, Warsaw Jazz Jamboree, October 1984. The joy of sax. This Godfather of Polish Jazz, who just passed away at age 88 this past May, was grooving in his prime element, fronting his own band on the



EBERHARD WEBER – UJ•RE performance, Palace of Culture, Warsaw Jazz Jamboree, October, 1984. This was the first time I'd heard Weber in such a large ensemble, but he was easy to hear whilst steering the juggernaut along with drummer Jon Hiseman and pianist Wolfgang Dauner. (More images of Weber will be seen in my forthcoming piece about him, including a review of his memoir).

Why I Will Always Owe Sonny Rollins



WILLIS CONOVER and MIKE ZWERIN – breakfast, Hotel Bristol, Warsaw Jazz Jamboree, October 1984. While there are no Wheaties in sight, this is none the less a Breakfast of Champions. Conover (1920 – 1996) was the voice of jazz on Radio Free Europe and for that, much beloved behind the Iron Curtain.

He always put the music first. As a young man, Zwerin (1930 – 2010) played trombone in Miles Davis' 1948 nonet at the Royal Roost, then recorded an album of Kurt Weill's music with, among others, Eric Dolphy, followed by a stint as jazz critic for the Village Voice, culminating in 20+ years based in Paris, as jazz editor for the International Herald Tribune, which is what he was doing when this photo was made. He was an imaginative but fact-based writer, an incendiary wit, and, in general, a benevolent instigator.



PATRICK HINELY being interviewed by ANDRZEJ JAROZEWSKI, Palace of Culture, Warsaw Jazz Jamboree, October 1984. It was an act of mercy for the audience that I was not made to sing for my supper, though as smooth an emcee as Jarozewski could probably have charmed me into it. This all happened during a changeover between bands. Photograph courtesy of Josef Czarnecki.

Ari Brown - Lion Of God

By Ken Weiss

Multi-reedist and pianist Ari Brown [b. February 1, 1944, Chicago, Illinois] is a revered musician, educator and mentor in the eyes of many artists who have spent time in the Windy City. Never one to shout about his own accomplishments, the humble Brown has always left that up to others and has made his entire career in Chicago. A member of the AACM, Brown is comfortable playing across most genres including Hard Bop, Post-Bop, Avant-Garde, Soul, Symphonic, etc. He's worked as a member of the Art Ensemble of Chicago and Kahil El'Zabar's Ritual Trio, as well as with artists such as McCoy Tyner, Don Patterson, Sonny Stitt, Von Freeman, Bobby Watson, Anthony Braxton, Elvin Jones, Donald Byrd, Archie Shepp, Pharoah Sanders, Orbert Davis, Avreeayl Ra and most recently with Joshua Abrams' Natural Information Society. At the age of 80, Brown is still enjoying performing and has big plans for the future. This interview took place in person during his stop to play in Philadelphia on September 21, 2023, and continued on by way of Zoom through late January 2024.

Cadence: You must be working a lot, every time I call you you're on your way to a gig or about to play.

Ari Brown: I'm playing a couple gigs a week. I'm playing with Josh [Abrams] and Mike Reed. I'm pretty satisfied playing around Chicago but I would like to work more.

Cadence: Your given name is Richard, why and when did you become Ari?

Brown: That came around 1971. I was working with a Hebrew band and one of the Hebrew teachers researched my name and the only thing he could come up with was Richard the Lionhearted so he decided to call me Ariel, which is the Lion of God, and that stuck with me.

Cadence: Do you still play tenor, alto and soprano sax, piano, flute and clarinet?

Brown: Yeah, about eight months ago I started back playing all my instruments again so it's a work in progress. My wife died and which led me to thinking about quitting. It was hard for me to take her dying. I'm mainly playing the tenor now.

Cadence: That's so sad... Why have you continued playing the tenor?

Brown: That's the one I've played the most. I guess you could say that's the one that's closest to my heart.

Cadence: Is there one instrument that allows you to express yourself the best?

Brown: Tenor and piano, I'm back on my piano too.

Cadence: Versatility has been a constant throughout your career. You play a wide range of Jazz motifs – everything from Straight-ahead through Avant-Garde. Is there a Jazz genre that you resonate most with?

Interview: Ari Brown

Brown: Good music, anytime you play good music, that's a plus. It could be Jazz, it could be Bop or Avant-Garde, as long as you're playing with conviction. I feel comfortable playing [in all areas].

Cadence: *Do you think not narrowing your playing to a specific identifiable style has limited your marketability?*

Brown: No, I don't think so.

Cadence: *No one questions your chops and musical skills but you are not as well known outside of Chicago as you deserve to be known. Why have you remained in Chicago and not made the move to New York as many of your AACM (The Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians) brethren did?*

Brown: I went to New York a few times and the thing about finding an apartment was something I didn't want to do. Musicians in New York have a place for maybe six months and then they're moving somewhere else and I didn't want to go through that. I didn't go through that in Chicago so I wasn't going to go through that in New York. Friends like Eddie Harris used to try to get me to stay in New York but I had no ambition to do that. I thought about it but not much.

Cadence: *You've been open in the past regarding having self-doubt about your talent. Would you talk about that and why you felt, or perhaps still feel that way, despite having others around you rave about your work?*

Brown: Yeah, I'm still a work in progress. I'm someone committed to trying to get the harmonies and my playing together but I've come to accept the way I play. I'm not satisfied with my playing yet so I'm still striving for it, I'm striving for something. [Laughs]

Cadence: *Well how does it make you feel to have the other musicians around you talk about you as a legendary player?*

Brown: That makes me feel good but I also know that nobody else can address where you are and I have a lot of things to work on. I'll be 80 years old soon and I'm still trying to do it. [Laughs] I'm still trying to search for the identity, more so than I have before now.

Cadence: *At what point in your career did you feel that you had made it, that you had established yourself as an important player?*

Brown: Really over the past ten years. I've been mentoring a few guys, like Isaiah Collier. I worked for the University of Illinois for about five years and I also worked at Columbia College with Bill Russo and that established good habits.

Cadence: *Staying put in Chicago has had its benefits. The Chicago Tribune named you the Chicagoan of the Year in 2018. That's a pretty big deal.*

Brown: Yeah, that's pretty good.

Cadence: *I know you're very humble but what can you say about that?*

Brown: Nothing really, [Laughs] I guess it's an accumulation of different works I've done through the years.

Interview: Ari Brown



Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Interview: Ari Brown



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Interview: Ari Brown



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Interview: Ari Brown



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Interview: Ari Brown

Cadence: *Chicago is known as a Blues town and you certainly have that in your playing. Talk about the importance of the Blues in your music.*

Brown: It's a staple of the music and different tunes lend themselves to different ways of expressing. Chicago is a real Blues town because musicians came up from New Orleans and came to Chicago and Detroit and Kansas City and they established the Blues sound. In Chicago you'd go to a bunch of clubs where you'd had a lot of Blues musicians and they had good respect for all the other musicians. Yeah, it's been a Blues town for a long time.

Cadence: *At rare times, you strikingly blow through two horns at once. What's the genesis of that for you? Did you see Rahsaan Roland Kirk do that?*

Brown: It was mostly from Rahsaan. It was a funny thing because I never practiced playing two horns, I just started playing them. I was in Singapore and I was trying to find something and I started playing both horns and I said, 'Hm, it seems like it might work, it might turn into something,' and it did. I like playing with two horns. Right now, playing two horns has its physical limitations because you have to have the strength to hold the tenor in one hand and have the soprano elevated so it's kind of hard for me now, but at the time it was easy. It's harder to do it now at my age but I'm working myself into that too.

Cadence: *How do you work double horn playing into your music?*

Brown: I just do it, I don't sit back and think about it. There were other guys around who tried to also play two horns but most of the time that didn't last too long.

Cadence: *I've seen [Chicago-based trumpeter] Corey Wilkes play two horns at one time. Did he get that from you?*

Brown: I don't know but he's a good player.

Cadence: *How do you play two horns and keep it from sounding gimmicky?*

Brown: I think it's something about the way I am. I don't play it for other purposes, I'm trying to get into the meat of the music and the horns can blend real nice when you play them.

Cadence: *Have you tried playing three horns at once?*

Brown: No. [Laughs]

Cadence: *You also vocalize through your horn. How did that come about?*

Brown: Just trying to do something different. Being a musician, you're constantly trying to explore different areas and that was one area I enjoy playing in.

Cadence: *What else do you do that is unusual or more unique?*

Brown: I don't know if I have anything unique but piano is driving me more lately. I found new expression on piano that I hadn't had before. I'm playing more out and at the same time I'm trying to keep the rhythmic and harmonic structure of the tunes. When my wife died, I didn't play piano or anything, but now I got back into an interest in playing all the instruments and piano has been really the guiding light for me with all the harmonic things you can

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do with it. I'm learning how to play with other people. Actually, on piano I'm setting up to be more of a soloist and be out front playing. Piano fascinates me – it's a whole 'nother thing about piano and that's what I'm trying to get to now.

Cadence: *Have you tried playing duo piano with your brother [Kirk]?*

Brown: No, we haven't played piano together but he plays in my band.

Cadence: *Let's talk about your early life. Would you briefly talk about your parents, your siblings and childhood on Chicago's South Side?*

Brown: My father was a clerk at different high schools including Dunbar and the last one he worked at was Malcom X College where he was in charge of the supplies. My mother was a teacher. Actually, I went to junior college and that's when she decided she wanted to be a teacher so she went to do it and she finished before I did so I have to pat her on the back for that. I went to school and I didn't know what I wanted to do. When I was coming up, around age five or six, my mother tried to teach me a song called "If (They Made Me a King)" that Mario Lanza sang. She tried to show it to me but I cried because I didn't want to do it and she didn't seem to bother with me anymore. Later on around age fifteen, after we moved to a house, I got to hear my father play saxophone. He didn't play as a professional but he had some little chops and my mother continued to show me things about the piano. I learned two or three bars of a few tunes but that gave me interest and pulled me into the music. I have two brothers, Kirk is five years younger than I am and my other brother Mark is about ten years under me. Mark plays piano and he sings a little bit too. He's in the studio almost every week doing more of a Rock kind of thing. He's very talented and he's been working on this project for years so I'm waiting for him to finish it. It sounds pretty nice.

Cadence: *Were your parents strict?*

Brown: No, they weren't strict but they had certain rules we had to abide by.

Cadence: *Did they push you towards music as a career?*

Brown: At first, they were kind of opposed to me [being a musician] because of the image about the musicians and the dope and the unhealthy lifestyle but my father, after years of trying to play, he gained respect for me being a musician and he encouraged me to do all I could in the music. My parents inspired me to play music.

Cadence: *Something was going on there because all three of you ended up doing music as a career. Your dad played Jazz albums in the house but you didn't like the sound of them.*

Brown: At first, I didn't although there were a few things I liked. I liked the piano music of Ahmad Jamal and Ramsey Lewis and he had a record of Dexter Gordon, which I broke. I know he didn't like that. [Laughs] He had a lot of Big Band – Duke Ellington and Count Basie. So I would hear it all the time.

Cadence: *Was there an early experience that pointed you in the direction of a career in music?*

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Brown: I think Henry Threadgill, he inspired me to play. I met him in 1959 and a couple years later he was in the Woodrow Wilson Junior College. He was writing music and playing and doing all the things that I wanted to do so that inspired me. And then Roscoe Mitchell, who showed me some things on the saxophone, got me started.

Cadence: So there wasn't any single event that grabbed your attention?

Brown: That didn't happen.

Cadence: Talk about learning to play piano. Did it come easy to you?

Brown: Certain things came easy, yes, the piano was a good undertaking. When I first went to DePaul University [around 1966], after attending Woodrow Wilson Junior College, I signed up for some piano lessons and the teacher, Mrs. Haas, told me to play something for her. I played and she kind of liked my touch and she told me normally she wouldn't have taken a student like me because I had only been playing three years. She said, "I'll take you as a student for six weeks, and if you can keep up I'll keep you as a student." After six weeks, I passed her requirements and she had me playing all Beethoven, Bach and Schumann. I was coming along pretty good and one day we had a pledge recital for the fraternity I was in and everybody was playing Chopin but I played "Round Midnight" [Laughs] and she was so mad. "What are you doing? Are you going to play Classical music or are you going to play Jazz?" I told her Classical music, I pretended. I [was required] to take another instrument or voice so I took the saxophone. I studied with the teacher for about half a semester. He was a pretty good teacher and he thought I had a pretty good tone and he worked with my articulation. I was doing pretty good but I think the school didn't want to accept my background so I had to change schools. I got into VanderCook College of Music and I had to play clarinet there because they thought the saxophone was a bastard instrument. I played the clarinet in the school band but I still played saxophone on my own. I graduated in 1968 from VanderCook and I decided to go out to California with a friend of mine who was driving out there for two weeks. He knew a lady out there who let us stay in an apartment and I ended up staying out there for four weeks. That turned out to be a very inspirational time for me. That time there allowed me to release myself to do whatever I wanted to do. I had just finished school and it was pretty challenging. For the first semester there I was the only Black student, by the next semester, there were five. When I graduated, I was so tired of VanderCook I [used that California trip to recover]. We drove a Volkswagen across the country and every time we stopped, we had to push it to start it again. We did that all the way until we got to Denver and had it fixed there. It was a real nice trip. I saw the stars in the Colorado sky, it was so nice I couldn't believe it. We got stuck in the desert on the way to Las Vegas and some hippies helped us out, they pushed us. Out in California I met some good musicians including Curtis Amy, the saxophone player with the Gerald Wilson band. That trip inspired me and I came back and I was really into the music.

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Cadence: *Did that trip out West show you a lifestyle you wanted or was it that you were so inspired by the music you heard?*

Brown: I got into Jazz there. I had been playing Soul music but I knew I wanted to be a Jazz musician.

Cadence: *So you didn't learn to play piano as a youth?*

Brown: No, I just played then by myself. I had perfected about three bars of maybe three tunes. It took me a little while to get the feel of it. We moved when I was around fifteen or sixteen after my father got enough money to move to a better home and that's when my mother started showing me a little more about the piano, as much as she knew. She had natural talent but I don't think that she got a full dose [of piano knowledge] but she always tried to learn more songs. That's when I started looking at playing the piano differently. It was a challenge to play some of the songs I wanted to play. I learned the first part of "Canadian Sunset."

Cadence: *After high school you went to Woodrow Wilson Junior College (now Kennedy-King College). You didn't go there to study music?*

Brown: When I went there in 1961, I didn't know what I wanted to do. I thought I wanted to be a Spanish teacher because I talked Spanish fast at the time and it sounded like I knew what I was doing [Laughs] but I found out that learning a language took as much time as learning to be a musician. You had to practice every day so I didn't get into it. By the time I went to Wilson, I was kind of playing piano but not that good. I actually went to junior college for three years [Laughs] because I didn't know what I wanted to do and I was getting more into the music. I did take a music course at Wilson. The bandleader there had Eddie Harris, Muhal [Richard Abrams], Kalaparusha [Maurice McIntyre], Jodie Christian, Jack DeJohnette and Henry Threadgill. I was trying to play a little piano then and I used to hang with Roscoe quite a bit. I would go by his house and he'd play the piano. He had an interesting way he played piano, I kind of liked it. I hung around him for a year, around his house and going to sessions and listening to him play in 1964. I went to a lot of his sessions but I didn't play, I just listened to Roscoe and sometimes I'd go out to see some of the people I liked to hear.

Cadence: *You mentioned the young student musicians you encountered at Woodrow Wilson Junior College. What stands out from that time? You weren't there as a musician but you were around these future greats.*

Brown: Muhal wasn't part of the student class, he came in as a guest piano player. I was just in awe of all the musicians that I heard and I wanted to hear more. The year before I went to Wilson, I'd go with two friends of mine to Robert Taylor Homes [housing project] because they had a community center where Roscoe and Joseph Jarman were practicing every Wednesday. That's when I started getting a feeling for playing music but I didn't have experience at the time. The next year that I went to school, I reacquainted myself with Henry Threadgill. It was amazing because I heard a big band arrangement that

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he did for school and I said, 'Well, this cat is pretty bad.' [Laughs]

Cadence: *After Woodrow Wilson, you went to DePaul University for music training.*

Brown: I started filling myself with piano. I was the number one or number two in all the classes I had. My dexterity was coming along pretty good. Mrs. Haas really shaped my piano playing because she was a very strict teacher and she made sure you did everything right. She was a stickler for playing things right. She was a very fine piano player herself. In fact, I met a cat who took piano lessons from her too and he only has one hand and she really helped him out. By the time [I got to DePaul], where I was playing clarinet, I put myself into the music world. The group members of the band Chicago went to DePaul too - Lee Loughnane, Walter Parazaider - all the cats in that band were friends of mine.

Cadence: *You soon began your professional career by playing saxophone in bands playing opposite prominent R&B, Blues and Soul bands including B.B. King, Lou Rawls, the Four Tops, The Emotions, the Chi-Lites and Chuck Berry.*

Brown: The first group I ever played with was Freddy and the Jets. I played with them before I graduated VanderCook and went to California. I was working with that band and right across the way from where I was playing at the band Chicago was playing so I went over to check them out and Walter, who I was most tightly aligned with in that group, he told me they were going to go out to California and that's the thing that really put them over the top. People really liked their music. After Freddy and the Jets, I left to play with a band on the South Side at the Burning Spear led by a trombone player who called himself the fastest trombone player in the world. We were playing that club, which brought in bands from all over the country to play opposite us like B.B. King, Albert King and all the Blues cats and Soul singers. Then I left them and went to play at The High Chaparral, which was a real popular place on the South Side. They had the Four Tops and Lou Rawls and all these other big name bands and celebrities. I was playing there at the time I graduated from VanderCook and I told the bandleader that I wanted to take two weeks off and do some traveling. He said okay so I went to California and ended up staying a whole month. When I came back I went to Roosevelt University in 1969 for my master's but I got tired of school and quit.

Cadence: *When you were playing with the Soul bands around Chicago at the start of your career did you play opposite any of the Jazz artists?*

Brown: I played opposite Jimmy Smith one night. I remember that he was a crazy cat. [Laughs] I think he thought he was at karate, [Laughs] he was kicking up at the lights.

Cadence: *What was your Chuck Berry experience?*

Brown: He was something else. He must have done a two and a half hour show and this cat was doing all this stuff on his guitar and the duckwalk. He was just too much, he had it going as a top performer. He worked hard.

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Cadence: *Did you try to pick up the duckwalk after that?*

Brown: [Laughs] No, but I used to kind of dance when I played sometimes. Once I was over in France with Kahil and I got to moving so much they brought a coat and put it around me like I was James Brown! It was pretty nice, I had a little fun with it.

Cadence: *I think it was 1965 that you switched to saxophone as your primary instrument?*

Brown: I still had my ambitions on piano. Once I got into the piano thing I kept that going. I didn't play out on saxophone but I still played it most of the time by practicing. Then I did a gig one time on saxophone and got paid pretty nicely and I said, 'Wow, this is a pretty easy way to make some money,' and I kept doing that.

Cadence: *Would you talk about Roscoe Mitchell giving you your first saxophone lessons?*

Brown: That was around 1964. We were in school together and I must have expressed to him that I wanted to play saxophone and he said he'd show me. That's where that started. He stressed trying to have a good tone. He tried to show me how to play high notes and have my fingers close to the keys. He gave me a two hour lesson one time, showed me a few things on the horn and that got me started.

Cadence: *Have you played with Roscoe Mitchell?*

Brown: I played with him in the Art Ensemble [of Chicago]. I took Lester's place once when he was sick. What I learned from my time with the AEOC was that time could be infinite and through playing, it takes time to build up. Also, Roscoe told me, "If we're playing together and I stop and you stop, that's not good, that's not counterpoint." He didn't like you playing a phrase mixed in with him, he wanted you to do something completely different but have the same vibe. He liked me on piano. I talked to Roscoe a couple weeks ago. I was so impressed with his paintings that I had to call him up and tell him he was a genius. [Laughs] His colors and ideas really affected me. I wish I could draw, that's one of things I wanted to do when I was young.

Cadence: *At the time you took up saxophone, was there a sound you were after?*

Brown: No, I was trying to play, trying to figure out what the cats were doing – see a chord and how do you play on it? I wanted to learn Jazz and play it as well as I could.

Cadence: *Was there a particular artist that inspired you on the horn?*

Brown: Yeah, Dexter Gordon, Charlie Parker, Trane, Sonny Rollins, those were the four main cats, and then there were others like Charlie Rouse and Sonny Stitt.

Cadence: *You also play flute, did you start on that at the same time as saxophone?*

Brown: No, I started on that around '68 when I was going to Roosevelt College. I took a flute and a clarinet course there one semester. I played clarinet with the

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symphony orchestra and I was making nice progress. The professor heard me playing flute and he said, "Wow, I see you practice more with the flute than you do with the clarinet," which was wrong but interesting. Once I started playing flute I kept going with it. I had pretty good tone on clarinet. I kept playing my horns until about three years ago when, at the time, I guess I was despondent and I quit playing all my instruments except saxophone. Last year I got more inspiration to play all my instruments again so I'm back on my soprano, flute and clarinet. I bought a bass clarinet a couple weeks ago so I'm getting back to where I was before.

Cadence: *You were invited to join the AACM in 1971. What were their meetings like?*

Brown: We had meetings every Saturday at the Abraham Lincoln Center. They talked about the state of music and gigs we could get. They went through harmony lessons and a variety of things. Muhal orchestrated everything. Sometimes the lease ran out at the center, so Muhal had to find other places to meet and rehearse. Muhal told us we had to form our own groups and compose our own music and I didn't know what to do. I didn't know anything about getting the cats together, rehearsing them, or what, but I did it. I forget what tunes we played but that was the first awareness of playing my own music and leading a group. That was real special. The AACM was playing a different kind of music. They weren't playing tunes or chord changes real close, it was really Free so I got a chance to experience playing a different form of music. I had been playing tunes that had changes to them but now I was playing open structures that had a harmonic basis to them but didn't move like regular tunes.

Cadence: *And which style of playing appealed to you more?*

Brown: I like both of them. As I get older, I like the Free things more.

Cadence: *During your career, have you spent more time playing Straight Ahead or Free Jazz?*

Brown: All kinds. I've been doing a lot of different things. I've played with Orbert Davis and the Chicago Philharmonic Orchestra. He wrote a big orchestra piece and I played with his orchestra for five years. I played with the Columbia College Orchestra for three or four years when Bill Russo was the band director but I didn't like that too much because there was too much reading and not enough playing, although he tried to get me to stay with the band by paying me a bit more but it was too much of a college band. He told cats you can't drink between breaks. I don't drink that much but just being around that environment, I don't like that. He was a good band director though and he wrote some really nice brass pieces.

Cadence: *How confident in your skills were you in 1971 when you started going to AACM meetings?*

Brown: Not very much, I was still new to the music.

Cadence: *I'd like to ask you for some memories on other prominent AACM*

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artists. Let's start with Henry Threadgill.

Brown: Being around him is always an inspiration – his writing, his playing. I used to go by his house sometimes and he'd have musicians over there playing. In fact, Jack [DeJohnette] was over there one time. He played piano when I knew him, I only learned about him playing drums later on, and he also played bass. He had a gig over in Lake Meadows where he sang [Laughs] and played piano. That's when I started seeing the versatility in him.

Cadence: Kalaparusha Maurice McIntyre?

Brown: We used to practice together quite a bit. He was a serious musician and he was always trying to play. That's the main thing I saw from him, he was always ready to play.

Cadence: Steve McCall?

Brown: I stayed at his place in New York for about a week and he used to cook for me. He'd make me all the things I liked. Being around him was nice and he had a nice loft. We knew each other from Chicago and he was very encouraging. He was all about the music.

Cadence: Around the same time you joined the AACM, you joined The Awakening, an ambitious sextet that combined Free Jazz, Fusion, Modal Jazz, Soul and Spiritual Jazz. Talk about that group.

Brown: That was a really nice group. Everybody had a different concept about the music and we wrote according to our likes so a lot of different things came out. We played each other's tunes and we were allowed to express ourselves. It was the first band that I'd been in that was organized and had written charts. We used to practice quite a bit together. [Pianist] Ken Chaney, [drummer] Butch Davis and [trombonist] Steve Galloway from that band, we're still in touch now. It also included [trumpeter] Frank Gordon, [bassist] Reggie Willis or [bassist] Rufus Reid at the time. We did an advertisement for Ebony magazine. Freddie Hubbard, he thought he should have done that, so he was kind of pissed off about that. We got a chance to meet him at the Ebony [party]. We were sounding pretty good at the time and we were innovative. We did a lot of concerts around Chicago including Jazz fests. We mainly played in Chicago but we were shooting for [large-scale success] but different things happened and we never got the chance for that.

Cadence: The Awakening aimed to raise consciousness in listeners. Are you very spiritual?

Brown: I think I am. I don't go through any type of routine but I am kind of spiritual.

Cadence: The second track on The Awakening's 1972 debut album Hear, Sense and Feel was your composition "When Will It Ever End." What were you expressing with that composition?

Brown: I was expressing there was so much turmoil in the world and I was hoping that we could come to an idea of how to solve that. It was a piece that was yearning for peace in the world.

Cadence: Maybe it's time for an updated version of that song?

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Brown: [Laughs] Yeah, maybe so.

Cadence: *That band split up after a second release in 1973 after failing to find an audience but today those albums with its spiritual advocacy and groove-based improvisation go for big money online. What do you hear from the young artists who resonate with that music today?*

Brown: I don't hear too much about it.

Cadence: *Those albums are somewhat of a collector's item now.*

Brown: Yeah, I was surprised. I saw the albums for sale in Philadelphia [at Solar Myth club] where I played and they listed at 72 dollars.

Cadence: *Unfortunately, tragedy struck in 1974 when you were involved in a motor vehicle accident. Would you talk about the accident and how it changed things for you?*

Brown: That was a dark part of my life. Five of us went to a John Coltrane memorial in Chicago to play and we left there around 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning and I was driving. I dropped all the cats off and I fell asleep at the wheel, swerved off the Dan Ryan Expressway. It was right at a train track and I hit the post. The police came and took me to the hospital. My teeth were gone and the car was totaled. For about a year, I couldn't play and that really put a change in my program [Forced Laugh]. I couldn't play saxophone, so after a while I started playing piano a little more. I got into that but in the meantime, somebody broke into my house and stole my horn. [Forced Laugh] So that was another thing. I ended up borrowing my father's horn and I started trying to play a couple notes every day, hoping to get my embouchure together. So I started doing that and I went down to see Joe Henderson which, at the time, was kind of brave of me because every time I opened my mouth, you could see my teeth were gone. I had to talk a certain way to kind of shield it from people. Anyway, Joe Henderson said to me, "Trane used to play without his teeth sometimes. He had teeth problems too." So I tried to work with that, playing with my lips. I kept doing that and my sound progressed. After about a year, I was pretty much able to get my embouchure back together. Yeah, that was a tough time, everything changed. Cats used to call me for gigs and I couldn't do them. At the time, I was friends with [saxophonist] George Adams, he was playing with the [Charlie] Mingus' band, and he used to come by my house and he'd show me these pentatonic scales. That's the first time I got into those scales. That was nice, I messed with them off and on, mostly on piano. I had a stroke years later and all I could do was read [beginner Jazz] books. Finally after a year, I got sound off my horn but I couldn't remember songs all the way through. It took me some time to get past that but my memory did improve.

Cadence: *Why didn't you get new teeth?*

Brown: It had to heal up first, my gums were all messed up. I had surgery on them, so I couldn't do it until a certain time. The dentist I used did a pretty good job. He was the dentist that [saxophonist] Eddie Harris recommended to me. All during that time, I started losing more teeth so I had to change my

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dental plates. It was a long process. Sometimes I'd change my dental plate and my mouth piece wouldn't work – the sound I was getting out wouldn't sound the same - and sometimes it would hurt so I kept changing my mouthpiece and the dental plates. It was just a long process but I came through it.

Cadence: *How long did it take to get your chops back on your horn?*

Brown: About a year or so, but actually it took longer than that because I had to get my mind and teeth and all the other things together because I had lost my embouchure and just couldn't do anything. That was misery for me and I was worried all the time. I suffered, it was a long program [to come back].

Cadence: *During your recovery period you concentrated on piano. Did you perform on piano during that time?*

Brown: I played the piano and got better at it but I wasn't going out because most of my teeth were gone.

Cadence: *Around this time in 1974, you put your bachelor's degree in music to good use and started substitute teaching in the Chicago public school system over the next twenty years. Talk about that experience.*

Brown: I had a gig at a school as sort of a security guard. I had my teaching degree but I hadn't found a gig on it. I was doing the security job but I was trying to get more money for it so I spoke to the principal and he was supposed to write to the board but after a few months I saw he wasn't doing that so I quit that job and then a friend of mine went to Jerusalem for a few weeks and he asked me if I could take charge of his school band. So I took over the band and after two weeks he came back and the band had improved and the school kept me on for a while because I guess they liked the way I was doing things. Most of the time when I taught, I had non-musical courses. I had mathematics, chemistry, history, all different classes. I did that for a while and then if the school didn't have anything for me they would recommend me to another school that they knew needed someone. So I did that. I went to a bunch of schools. The kids were pretty cool although sometimes you found some resistance to what you were trying to teach. The substitute teaching was good but I didn't want to do it all the time. I liked teaching a few days a week through those twenty years while at the same time I was into the music.

Cadence: *As the '70s progressed, you got hired to perform with prominent players such as McCoy Tyner, Don Patterson and Sonny Stitt. Talk about landing those gigs and what stands out from time with those artists?*

Brown: Yeah, it was something playing with McCoy who had played with Trane. I kind of felt like I was the protector of the band. I would consult with the sound person if McCoy's sound wasn't coming out. McCoy liked this tune that I wrote and he used to perform it every night. It's called "One For Skip." Skip was a friend of mine who killed himself. He was talking to his wife on the phone and he told her if she got off the phone he was gonna kill himself and he did it. I have to say playing with McCoy I learned a lot of stuff. McCoy never tried to dictate what you did. Whatever you were playing he tried to go with you. With Don Patterson, I just did a few gigs, and the gig I had with Sonny

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Stitt, it was through the friend of mine, John Watson, who got me the gig at the school. We were playing at a place where Sonny Stitt was also playing and on the last set we joined him. That was cool. Sonny Stitt was having some knee problems so I recommended this naturopath to him and he got a lot better at walking. The naturopath thanked me for bringing him by and I got free massages and treatments from him. Sonny Stitt told me he was supposed to meet Jug the day Jug got busted but something happened so he didn't go to Jug so he was able to escape that. We had a nice relationship. I went by his hotel and got a lesson from him. At the time my comprehension and knowledge prevented me from getting more from him. I should mention Jug too, he was in Cleveland playing at a hotel. I got there at the last tune and he said to come back the next night and play my soprano with him but I met this girl, who I messed around with, and by the time I got to the gig, Jug was on his last note so I missed that. [Laughs] I saw him years later in Chicago and he was sitting with some friends and I showed him a tune I wrote called "Richie's Tune." I wanted him to hear it because I thought it would be a nice tune for him to do. Jug looked at it and sang it at the bar and said, "That's pretty amazing." In about six or seven months, I heard my tune on the radio as a big band arrangement but I didn't hear my name so I got a lawyer and got a little money for infringing on my copyright.

Cadence: *Are there other artists that you would like to talk about that you played with in the '70s or '80s?*

Brown: [Drummer] Wilbur Campbell and [pianist] Jodie Christian. I became tight with Wilbur and he brought me to a lot of the gigs and I did a lot of gigs with him. At this time, he was having problems with his shoulders and I used to give him little massages on the gig and that would make him feel better. Wilbur was a really nice cat but he didn't take no stuff, he was a little rough. He played with all the cats that came through Chicago. He and Joe Segal [Jazz Showcase owner] were tight so he and Jodie used to play with all the guys who came to town if they didn't have their own band. When I got through playing with them, that really improved my playing. It was really nice. It was challenging, I always felt uneasy but that was part of the growth. I also used to play with Ira Sullivan. My name is Ari and his name was Ira, they're the same three letters just turned around. He always wanted to do something with me, he was so inventive. [Saxophonist] Eddie Harris was always a good mentor. He used to inform the guys about places to work – he had everything printed up which helped because the union wasn't serving Black musicians well. I also studied with Bunky Green. Bunky at the time was trying to find gigs that included me on piano. We did a couple gigs and then he moved to Florida so that cooled that out.

Cadence: *You feel that your five years playing at a Chicago Marriott was an important time for you.*

Brown: it was important because I got reacquainted with tunes. We used to play [standard] tunes from a playbook and I got to like them. They were things

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I thought I wouldn't like but I did and I had five years to play them. When I couldn't make the gig, sometimes I'd get Pat Patrick to replace me.

Cadence: *You also had the opportunity to play at the Jazz Showcase with Donald Byrd.*

Brown: Donald Byrd really put something on my mind with his concept and I liked listening to him. Some guys you talk to and you find that they're very good talkers about the past and very passionate, and he was one of those guys. He told me that Trane used to bring written solos to the gig to play on the gig. Byrd said he was the one who turned Trane onto the *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns*, which is a real hip book that has everything broken down in it, mathematical programs. He said Trane would play tunes and practice what he was trying to do on his solos. Byrd's ideas on the music kept me up a few nights because I was just amazed at the sound of it. So I started doing some exercises using this particular method and it carried me through that period. The way Byrd played the scales, I had never imagined anything like that before and it had me thinking. I'm still into him now.

Cadence: *You've had some lengthy sideman relationships. You were a member of Elvin Jones' band from 1979 until his death in 2004. How did you connect with him? He was from Detroit, not Chicago.*

Brown: Wilbur Campbell was a friend of Elvin's and Elvin needed a saxophone player for a couple of months. Wilbur told me to go down to the Showcase where Elvin was playing and to audition – play a couple tunes. I was working down the street so I came to Elvin and played a couple tunes. I didn't think too much about it and about two weeks later his wife called me up and said, "How ready are you to play with the band?" I said, 'Yeah, but I've got some things here in Chicago that I have to fulfill.' I was stalling because the call scared me so much. I was trying to process it. I told her I had commitments and she sounded real disappointed so I called up a friend of mine, Rubin Cooper, a saxophone player. I told him the predicament I was in and he told me, "Man, you know playing with Elvin would outdo anything you've got to do in Chicago." After speaking with him, I called her back and told her I wanted to play with the band. The gig started two weeks later. I took a flight to New York and the rehearsal was like 3 to 5 in the afternoon and that was it. That night, Dave Liebman played with us too. We played opposite McCoy's band. We started off the night and I was wondering to myself how would people accept me there and I found out that they liked my playing and that was pretty cool. That was at the Bottom Line in New York, we played there two weeks.

Cadence: *Talk about playing with Elvin Jones.*

Brown: Every day was an experience with him. It was amazing playing with him, working with him with the time. It was just magical almost every night. It was most magical when I was on the same path as he was. Sometimes he'd play a figure and it would sound like a bass player playing and I'd look around and it was just him on drums. He had a tremendous feeling on drums. He liked to

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solo, too. Every night he'd play all those different figures with his own feeling. I don't know all the technical drum terms, like the paradiddles, but he had those mastered. I went through most of the countries in Europe with him. Later on in my career, I looked at the map at all the places I'd played with him and I realized that Europe has many countries but it's really small compared to the United States.

Cadence: *He took you to Japan. How was that experience?*

Brown: They liked us there like they liked us everywhere else. We found some places around town [in Tokyo] such as there's a place called Body & Soul near the hotel we stayed in and we used to go in there after gigs and I'd play piano and we'd just hang out. We went to Japan three or four times and played a whole bunch of cities like Sapporo and Osaka. There were thirteen different cities we did. One time I had to leave early so Elvin's wife made arrangements. The guy who was driving me to the airport took me to this temple in the mountains on the way. He wanted me to see that. Then we went to a strawberry patch to pick some strawberries and then he took me out to dinner and the airport. That was really nice. Elvin's wife, Keiko, really liked me as a person and she did a lot of little things for me.

Cadence: *Did Jones tell you anything about John Coltrane that was surprising?*

Brown: He never mentioned John Coltrane.

Cadence: *You became a member of Kahil El'Zabar's Ritual Trio in 1989. Talk about playing with El'Zabar's group.*

Brown: I liked playing in that band and I got a chance to play piano and my horn on the different compositions. Kahil has his own way of giving his music to you. He'll sing it to you and you're supposed to write it down. We'd spend some time doing that and once you got it down it was cool. He did a lot of songs like that. The band was very cohesive and he had certain rhythms that we had to get down. His compositions were original and came straight from his head. Billy Bang played with us quite a few times. He was a tremendous musician, he'd play stuff that you wouldn't expect from a violin player. He had so much energy. We had a very nice rapport.

Cadence: *Talk about the late Malachi Favors who was the bassist in the Ritual Trio as well as the Art Ensemble of Chicago.*

Brown: It was always a joy playing with Malachi because he'd make the bass sound so much different than you might expect. He was grounded real good and he never had to play a lot of notes, you could feel the vibration of them. I was playing with Junius Paul the other day and he has Malachi's bass. I did a lot of things in Chicago together with Malachi and Famoudou Don Moye.

Cadence: *You got to play with Pharoah Sanders who made two recordings with the Ritual Trio.*

Brown: Oh, playing with Pharoah was like playing with John Coltrane because he had that vibe that John Coltrane had, plus he had the knowledge

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of scales that Trane was into. His sound was so magnificent. He'd bring about 11 mouthpieces on the gig with him and he'd try all of them to see what sound he'd like for that night. He listened to me and then turned me onto a mouthpiece ligature and it made a big difference. Besides his playing, he was a very nice gentleman. He was interesting to talk to about Jazz. I liked listening to him.

Cadence: *Archie Shepp also recorded with the Ritual Trio.*

Brown: Archie, yeah, he's something else. I knew him before that, I was in Paris and he was there. He's an interesting person. He's really intuitive with the saxophone and what he plays. He developed some kind of mouth problem so he kind of plays off the side of his mouth but the sound he gets out of that is amazing. He's a colorful cat, I'm happy to be around him. I like playing along with him, we've had nice interactions on the horns.

Cadence: *Scanning your discography, a recording that sticks out as unusual is Anthony Braxton's 1993 Charlie Parker Project recorded in Germany and Switzerland. You played with steadfast Jazz Avant-Garde artists Braxton, Paul Smoker, Misha Mengelberg, Joe Fonda, Han Bennink and Pheeroan akLaff. Talk about getting the call from Braxton to play in that group and how it was to play in that setting with those musicians.*

Brown: It was a surprise to get that call but I accepted the terms. I got to Germany before everybody else and I didn't go out of my hotel room. They were having a Neo-Nazi rally outside so I waited inside until the next day when the rest of the guys got to the hotel. They had a really nice studio there in Köln, they could do almost anything with the sound. We recorded in different groupings and as far as playing the Charlie Parker melodies, we didn't have to have them at all perfect. We didn't have to follow the chord changes either. You'd start off the beginning, you might follow them on some tunes, like on the ballad I'd follow the regular changes. But that was a real nice program. We did some things there and then traveled around.

Cadence: *That recording has you in with what is an unusual collection of musicians for you. All the other musicians are firmly centered in the Free Jazz scene whereas you are not.*

Brown: Yeah, that wasn't the usual for me but I was ready for it. At the time, I felt really strong but for some reason I didn't want to take over the band. I had some sort of crazy thought in my mind and I kind of held back on some pieces and I wish I had expressed myself more but over all it came off real nice.

Cadence: *Why do you think you held back?*

Brown: I don't know, I haven't figured it out.

Cadence: *Was it intimidating playing with those musicians?*

Brown: No, because they liked my playing. Misha Mengelberg really liked my playing, he'd listen to me at practice. I don't know, I think it's something that musicians go through at times. That wasn't for all the tunes, just one or two tunes. It was strange in a way.

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Cadence: *Let's focus on your work as a leader. Although you've been performing at a high level since the '60s, you didn't record under your own name until the age of 52 in 1996. Why the long wait to lead a recording?*

Brown: [Pauses] I guess the time was right to do it then... I'd been planning and I decided I was going to make a name for myself in Chicago with these albums they paved the way for me to do that. It was about time for me to do it, that was it. I think I'll leave it there.

Cadence: *It seemed like you stopped short of saying you weren't confident in yourself.*

Brown: I knew I was ready but something put a doubt in my mind. I'm glad I did [put those records out] because I released a lot of energy and things I had inside with the music. It allowed me to do all the things I wanted to do. I had to have enough confidence in myself.

Cadence: *In past interviews you've been open in saying you had a lack of confidence. It was almost as if you felt you were fooling people. What's your confidence level today? You're revered on the Chicago scene by others.*

Brown: My confidence level is really good now. A lot of the guys who I helped and had come to listen to me have been mentioning some of the things to me that I told them about musical things and how that helped them. I was surprised because I had forgotten about all the interactions I had with them. It's cool now. I think I've almost said as much as I want to say musically and I'm still progressing towards doing more.

Cadence: *When did you get over the hump of insecurity?*

Brown: Through playing with all the different people I played with. I played with certain guys and I said, 'Okay, I can do this.' I don't know when that time came but it came.

Cadence: *Why did you title your first solo release Ultimate Frontier instead of something along the lines of "Introducing Ari Brown," which would have been appropriate after waiting well over thirty years to put out an album?*

Brown: Ultimate Frontier was the name of a group I had earlier in my lifetime. I came across a book I read called Ultimate Frontier and it opened my mind to a lot of different things and I got into the realm of the ultimate frontier. It was a metaphysical book [by Eklal Kueshana] that was interesting to me. I was playing piano at the time and I wrote this tune called "Ultimate Frontier." It's an open tune with a lot of underlying features about it. The Ultimate Frontier provided me with an outlet for some of my thoughts at the time.

Cadence: *In the liner notes to Ultimate Frontier, you say, "I think I'm really just starting to scratch the surface of what I want to do. I have my own direction and from here on out I want to concentrate on pushing my own voice." What happened since that time? You've only released a total of three studio albums and one live release as a leader.*

Brown: I guess one thing is that I don't have an agent or anyone pushing me. I kind of look at the things that I've been doing recording wise as ten years apart. I don't know why I haven't put out more recordings, yeah, I don't know why.

Interview: Ari Brown



Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Interview: Ari Brown

In regards to demand, there's no one out there demanding my work. I just never did it like that, I waited until I felt the need to do it. As I'm getting older, I haven't been pushed to do that many things. I've kind of slowed down. I do want to do something else soon but I'm not sure when they will be. I've been in a relaxed state but I have a lot of compositions I have ideas for and I'm taking time for that. I want to seriously start putting together a mechanism for the tunes and to start writing them.

Cadence: *Venus, your second solo release from 1998 is named after your girlfriend Venus who had passed the year prior due to cancer.*

Brown: When Venus started getting sick I started spending more time with her. She lived on the North side and I was on the South and I spent most of my time on the North side helping her out – cooking and caring for her. She was a quilt-maker and made quilts that went into a couple of museums and stores. She had a quilt show with about 21 quilts that she had labored on for a long time and she gave an exhibition of them and then she started getting worse. It was a real personable thing that we had. She always had a smile on her face and I appreciated that. She died while I was over in Italy so I never got any closure on that. I wrote a little poem for her and I read it at her funeral.

Cadence: *You play your composition "Venus" on that album understandably with a cathartic, naked sincerity. Talk about that tribute and how it is to play deeply personal music in a public setting.*

Brown: It made me feel good. It loosened some things from my being. I did the record some time after she died. Yeah, it was a nice tribute to her.

Cadence: *"Rahsaan in the Serengeti" closes your Venus release and features you blowing alto and soprano saxes together in tribute to Rahsaan Roland Kirk. What vision did you have of Kirk in the Serengeti?*

Brown: When I thought about playing two horns on the album, I thought about Rahsaan and about Africa being a really robust country and so forth, so I just put that all together. That was one of my experiments, trying to see what was happening with that.

Cadence: *Your last album, Groove Awakening from 2013, includes a Reggae version of John Coltrane's "Lonnie Lament." What led you to perform it in that way?*

Brown: I was just trying to do some things differently. John Coltrane did it one way and I just thought let's try it with this rhythmic motif. I wanted something different on the tune and I think it came out very nice. It's a pretty tune for one thing, a real nice melody, and the chord changes are real simple to a certain extent, so it lended itself to what I was trying to do quite well.

Cadence: *How much of an influence does Coltrane still have on you?*

Brown: He has all the influence on me – ever since the first day I heard until today, I still think he's a genius. I look up to him quite a bit. [Speaking of influence], I met Sonny Rollins about thirty years ago and we became quite friendly with each other. He went to France and sent me a letter asking how I was

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doing. One time he had a friend who was having breathing problems and he asked me to call his friend up and talk with him and get him more interested in living, and I did that. I later saw Sonny at the Ravinia Festival and I met this cat who I had called and helped and Sonny thanked me for that.

Cadence: *You've used the same musicians – Kirk Brown, Yosef Ben Israel and Avreeayl Ra – on all four of your solo albums. Why have you kept the same lineup?*

Brown: I'm content with them, they fit in real nice with my group so I just kept it like that. I know the cats get younger guys and younger guys bring more energy but I like my band. Kirk's my brother so it makes things a lot easier. He's a real talented piano player but he hardly works. He doesn't pursue work or like going into clubs. I'm trying to get him to do more things.

Cadence: *More recently you've been working with Joshua Abrams and his Natural Information Society. Talk about playing in a group with much younger musicians and performing music that has been described as "ecstatic minimalism." The group blends repetitive drones and ethnic pulses boosted with improvisation.*

Brown: I find it very stimulating. Josh has a thing where he has a melody written but you play it like you want to and I like that kind of playing. It stimulates me more than sitting there reading some music and just playing the parts and sometimes soloing. I like his concept and also I'm playing through all his music so it's kind of nice. We've done trio things with Josh and Mike Reed. We've got a rapport going with that too.

Cadence: *As you just touched on, Abrams has said he gives you total freedom to play whatever you feel is right even though his pieces are composed. How have you gone about fitting yourself into that ensemble's music?*

Brown: I just go into the direction they're going into and I just try to do what I feel is complimentary to what they're doing. I just try to fit myself in with these guys, they're quite a group of musicians.

Cadence: *How is it being the old head in that group?*

Brown: [Laughs] It feels good and I don't see any slow down in my playing. My movements are not as good but I've still got the yearning to play and I'm sitting down and playing the piano every day. Yeah, I'm still engaged with music.

Cadence: *During your September 2023 appearance in Philadelphia with Natural Information Society you played with 99-year-old Marshall Allen. Talk about that experience.*

Brown: That was nice, to see Marshall being that old and still playing and having that much zest for playing takes a special person. I really admire him because he's a monumental cat. That was my first time playing with him but I'd run across him before. I was in Switzerland years ago with my group and he played with some people and I was amazed at how old he was then and how he had so much life and spirit to everything he did. He was walking real good.

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He exhibits a young man's spirit in an old man's body.

Cadence: *Do you have any special talents that are surprising?*

Brown: I don't think so. Music was my thing. Did I tell you about the movies I was in? I was in this movie called *The Babe*. It's about Babe Ruth and I've got a scene in there playing clarinet. I got the part because this guy from California needed a clarinet player and it was between me and some other guys who were better clarinet players than I was but he liked my sound so he hired me for the gig. I had another movie part in *The Visitors* with Christina Applegate and I was playing in an underground grotto. That was mostly released over in France.

Cadence: *What are your interests outside of music and art?*

Brown: I used to like to read but I haven't been doing that much lately. I read different things about geography, about social things and about people from different lands. I used to be into books about Black history and theories. I used to be into a whole lot of things but now it seems I don't have a lot of time. I mean I know I have the time because I have the time...[Laughs], I just haven't done it. I pick up a book every once in a while, I've got so many books around here. I've always wanted to draw. I like sports on TV. I like basketball, tennis, and football. I watch that religiously.

Cadence: *The last questions have been given to me by other artists to ask you:*

Douglas R. Ewart (multi-instrument) asked: *"Are there any particular activities that you indulge in to initiate your creative muse?"*

Brown: I don't think I have anything. Sometimes I'll play the guitar. I'm learning how to play the guitar and sometimes [that helps]. I have to have an idea in my mind and then try to carry it out. Sometimes I'll come back from doing something and I'll start thinking about different ideas.

Cadence: *Why are you learning guitar?*

Brown: I always had liked the guitar. It's something I derive a lot of pleasure from. I'm learning different fingerings and different chords. It's kind of nice.

Cadence: *Should John Scofield and Pat Metheny start to worry?*

Brown: Oh, no. [Laughs]

Douglas R. Ewart also asked: *"Which Chicago artist's creativity seems boundless?"*

Brown: I'll say Ed Wilkerson because he's steadily composing and steadily playing. He's one of the cats.

Joshua Abrams (bass, guimbri) asked: *"What are your recollections of working with Muhal Richard Abrams and Lester Bowie?"*

Brown: I was in a group with Lester Bowie called *From the Roots to the Source*. That band had Mama [Martha] Bass singing the spiritual along with her daughter Fontella Bass and David Peaston. That was a nice group until Mama Bass got sick and we had to exclude her from the group. We did one recording and toured all over Europe and also in the United States. Lester was a fun cat, a serious musician. He could get different sounds on the horn. He had a nice house in Brooklyn with three flights of stairs to it. Lester would sometimes

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cook and the basement was where the food was being cooked and when it was ready, he'd ring this bell and you knew the bell meant come on down and eat. We did a lot of things together. One of the things was being involved in a film for Columbia College. I didn't do anything special for it but he had me put down as a consultant for it. Lester was a really good person, he'd try to give you all the knowledge that he had. He was trained in the Schillinger [System of Musical Composition] and the Thesaurus Of Scales. He was just a beautiful person who treated musicians well. I remember some of those meetings we used to have at his home, they were kind of fiery with cats' feelings coming out but he always tried to soothe everything. Lester was everything.

Avreeayl Ra (drums) remembered: "When I first met Ari, I was driving a cab in order to buy my first drum set. I picked him up coming from a gig. He had two or three horns with him and we talked. I told him that I was trying to buy a set of drums and found out that he knew my father, Swing Lee O'Neil. They played together in Jessie Jackson's Bread Basket band. I can imagine how often he must have heard that, someone wanting to learn how to play an instrument. People will share their desire to play, and may even have an instrument, yet having what it takes to follow through is another thing. And now we travel the world together. I often tell this story when we go into schools - that your intention has the ability to attract what's needed for its own fulfilment. I know this to be true!"

Brown: Avreeayl is a very talented drummer and he studied with a friend of mine, Butch Davis, who was a member of the Awakening group in Chicago. Butch told him drums were the loudest thing in the band and that you need to be modestly quiet in the band and taught him all the rudiments. Avreeayl used to come by his house. When I met him he was driving a cab and he told me he wanted to get some drums and I encouraged him. I'm not sure how we met later after he had gotten his drumming together but I invited him to join my band and the rest, as they say, is history. He's been in my band for forty years. He's always been spiritually inclined. He studied the music and he always knew about the cats and likes to talk about music.

Avreeayl Ra said: "Tell your funny story about the guy who wanted you to play oboe on a recording session."

Brown: [Laughs] Oh, yeah, that was Ben Wright [Jr.] about thirty to forty years ago. He was a band director for a lot of big name cats. One day I was going down the street and I happened to see him and he said, "Hey, Ari, do you play oboe?" I said, 'I have an oboe but I don't really play it.' He said, "Because I need an oboe player for a session in a couple of weeks - mostly half notes and whole notes." I again said, 'Well, I have an oboe but I don't really play it,' and he said, "So, man, you could probably do this set." I told him a few more times that I didn't play it but he finally convinced me to bring down my oboe to the session. So I get down to the session and I'm looking at this music and I said, 'Well, I know I can't do this.' [Laughs] Anyway, we did it and I guess it was alright because

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he invited me to another session for him. I went down to that second session and they had members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra there and all the cats and I was trying to play the part but It wasn't coming off too good so he fired me off the session and I felt so ashamed about that session because I knew I couldn't play it. I felt bad about that for almost a whole year. I didn't want the other musicians to see me. I was thinking about walking down the street with a disguise on. One guy mentioned about the oboe to me and I think I got depressed and I made something to drink to try to get rid of those thoughts. Anyway, that taught me a lesson not to play oboe unless I really got myself together on it. I was trying to be brave but I really wasn't ready.

Nicole Mitchell (flute) asked: *"Would you share thoughts on your connection/inspiration in regard to Fred Anderson and the Velvet Lounge?"*

Brown: Fred was another beautiful person. He liked the way I played and he was very encouraging to the musicians. He had a bunch of places before he had the Velvet Lounge. They recorded one of the sessions down there and I think it's one of the best recordings I ever did but it never got out to the public. I tried to put it out one time and sold some copies over in Europe but it didn't go well. One time me and Avreeayl Ra decided we would take a Wednesday and do a series every week for about a year and we'd invite people to come and sit in with us including Nicole. I reacquainted myself with playing the piano there. Fred was nice to have us there.

Nicole Mitchell also asked: *"Having been a pillar of the Chicago scene for decades, what moments stand out to you as some of the most lifechanging music you've been involved in in Chicago?"*

Brown: Everything I've ever done including playing at the Symphony Center with Hannibal [Lokumbe] doing his African Portraits and later with Orbert Davis and the Philharmonic Orchestra. All the years at the Chicago Jazz Festival, they're up to fifty years now and I've played all of them. I've played all the Jazz festivals in Chicago and I think just getting to meet all the musicians and get a chance to talk a little bit and to have them express themselves. Also, I've got a bunch of young guys who I've been teaching through the years like Isaiah Collier and Rajiv Halim and they are real upcoming musicians. Chicago is a very nice town to be a part of and the musicians you come across they are spiritually [based] and the city is prolific in their presentation of the arts. There are clubs for the cats to play in and things are coming along pretty good. As far as Avant-Garde musicians, it's still not open to them now.

Roscoe Mitchell (multi-instrument) said: *"I have very fond memories of Ari Brown. We were college buddies at Wilson Junior College. One memory that sticks out very clearly in my mind was the time we played "Round Midnight" during our time at Wilson College and a gig we had at Kahil El Zabar's place in Chicago where he was playing piano."*

Brown: That was at this club on 75th and College Grove. He played "Round Midnight" that night and Roscoe played so much music on that and I really

Interview: Ari Brown

loved it. Some of the other people didn't love it so much but I was into it. I always had a great affinity to Roscoe's music because he plays so many different styles. He had a style that I wish people could hear now that he used to do back then with this trumpet cat from California – Fred Berry. They had a nice group. Roscoe has always been a mentor and I've always been stimulated by his ideas and just the way he carries himself. Most of the time I was with Roscoe I didn't play that much, I was more like a spiritual follower of his. I played a couple gigs on piano and saxophone with him with the Art Ensemble over in Europe. Roscoe liked my piano playing and he invited me up to the University of Wisconsin and I did a piano solo there. He raved about that concert for a while. I've done some other piano concerts at PianoForte and Constellations and the University of Chicago Logan Center and they came out pretty nice.

Kahil El'Zabar (multi-instrument) asked: "What was it about Jug's (Gene Ammons) sound that made it so special, and did it influence your sound in any way?"

Brown: I don't think it influenced me but it's probably in my head. Jug had such a beautiful sound and I would like to have gotten some of that but his sound didn't influence me much except for how he projected his music.

Hamid Drake (drums) said: "I'm very happy that you are doing an interview with Ari. I don't actually have something to ask but I do have something to say about him. It's interesting that many don't know about Ari, he is one of the hidden giants. He chose to stay in Chicago and not move to New York like some of the other Chicago musicians. He kept the flame burning in Chitown, like Fred Anderson. Von Freeman and a few others did. My first sighting of Ari was at a great venue that used to be in Chicago called Transition East. Great Music and wonderful healthy vegetarian food. I used to play there with The Fred Anderson Creative Ensemble (Fred Anderson on tenor saxophone, George Lewis on trombone, Douglas Ewart on alto, bass clarinet, soprano and bamboo flutes, Felix Blackman on electric bass, Soji Adebayo on piano and myself on drums). It was a great group that sometimes also had dancers and poets. At times we shared the bill with Ari's amazing group called Ari Brown and the Ultimate Frontier. I assumed that the name of the group had something to do with the book entitled The Ultimate Frontier [The Ultimate Frontier - an account of the ancient Brotherhoods and their profound, worldwide influence during the past 6,000 years - published January 1, 1970]. But anyway his group the Ultimate Frontier was one the most amazing groups I had ever seen at the time. It featured Ari on tenor, his brother Kirk on piano, Drahseer Khalid on drums, and I think the bass player was Yosef Ben Israel. His group was amazing and very popular around Chicago. By the way, Ari is also a brilliant pianist! Music at that time on the South Side was blazing and interestingly enough, the improvised music was hot and sizzling. Ultimate Frontier was doing original compositions but very much like McCoy's "Walk Spirit, Talk Spirit" with some Miles and maybe Weather Report, but also pure Chicago

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including The Pharaohs' sound and more. The Pharaohs were a very popular group that came out of Chicago and were a big part of the city's history. Earth, Wind & Fire came out of them. Some years back I started asking Ari to play with my group Indigenous Mind with Josh Abram's on bass, Jason Adasiewicz on vibes and myself on drums at the annual evening winter solstice concerts that Michael Zerang and I have been doing for many years. It was such an honor and gift to play with him. We also traveled to Israel together. One quick story involving Jamie Branch. Years back, when Jamie was back in Chicago for the holidays I contacted her to play with us. When I told her that Ari was gonna be on tenor she totally froze up. She was so nervous when she arrived at Constellation, the venue where Michael and I do our winter solstice concerts. I said, 'Jamie, what's wrong?' She said, "Oh, my God, I'm gonna play with Ari, I'm so nervous." I gave her a big hug and said, 'My dear Jamie, don't worry, Ari is gonna love you and you are gonna love him. We would not have asked you to do it if we didn't love you and have confidence in you. The two of you will be great together.' She relaxed and it was a brilliant concert and I am happy that we recorded it. Oh well, I guess I have said too much. Didn't intend to write all of this but it just flowed out while thinking of the great and beautiful Ari Brown. Ari is one of the greatest tenor saxophonist living who's had the respect of Von Freeman, Chico Freeman, Fred Anderson, David Murray, Pharoah Sanders and so, so many others from the world of saxophone. Like I said, he is kind of a hidden jewel...rare and beautiful. He is also one of the most gentle, kindest, compassionate, loving, sharing and spiritually- evened being around and that comes through in his music."

Cadence: What do you have to say about that?

Brown: That was good.

Cadence: Anything else about that?

Brown: No, I think that was about it.

Cadence: You didn't write that up for him did you?

Brown: [Laughs]

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Reviews from Abe Goldstien

Joel Futterman: *Forever* MAHAKALA 078

If recordings came with instructions, “Go with the flow” is all listeners would need to know to experience *Forever*. The “flow” is Joel Futterman’s spontaneous and emotional approach to solo piano. Three improvisations flow from rhapsodic to rambunctious, light to dark, meandering to methodical and sparse to dense. On “Part 1,” Futterman unfolds a three-note motif, revealing moments of Bill Evans’ introspection, Cecil Taylor’s density and Paul Bley’s use of space. He seamlessly blends those styles into a 30-minute suite that is part meditative and part explosive. Futterman begins the 35-minute “Part Two” with a beautiful ballad of his own making which morphs into a blues before it takes on some of the same sound-shifting characteristics as “Part One.” The final improvisation, “Part Three” is not only the shortest track (less than two minutes), but also the most explosive, with its bass rubato introduction and fleet Taylor-like attacks in the right hand. Thanks to Chad Fowler and his Mahakala label, Futterman, who has been performing since the late 1960s and released his first album in 1979, is finally getting the recognition he deserves with *Forever* as well as his earlier releases on that label. In addition to the instructions to “Go with the flow,” *Forever* would also benefit from following warning — “Warning. Do not attempt to tap your feet, snap your fingers or bop your head while listening to this recording. It will move you in a more cerebral manner.”

BOTTOM LINE: Take a sonic journey with pianist Joel Futterman as he spontaneously creates three solo pieces that run the gamut of emotions, styles and moods on *Forever*. There are rest stops along the way, busy intersections to navigate, meandering country roads and beautiful musical scenery at every turn.

NO CODES: USUAL SUSPECTS SUNSET HILL MUSIC 142401. (RELEASED AUGUST 2024)

The Montreal jazz collective No Codes continues to mine the territory they explored in their 2018 debut release — challenging the expected norms and conventions in jazz. Driven by the dynamic drumming of Louis-Vincent Hamel and the powerful bass lines of Sebastien Pellerin, alto saxophonist Benjamin Deschamps and tenor player Frank Lozano intertwine, interchange and interact as they investigate the sonic possibilities of the ten tunes on their new release *Usual Suspects*. Although tunes vary from the explosive sounds of “*Usual Suspects*” and “*Emit Time*” to the more meditative moods of “*Sokushinbutsu*” and “*Contemplation*,” No Codes approaches each in a similar fashion. Deschamps and Lozano are equal partners, stating the melodies in unison as solos effortlessly shift from one voice to the other. Rather than competing with one another, Deschamps and Lozano prefer to

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be complementary, providing well-crafted counterpoints to each other's solos as well as delicate comping behind Pellerin's impressive solos. They also know each other so well that they complete each other's musical statements on tunes such as "Dog Days" and "Hyperstitutions," making it difficult to tell when one stops and the other starts. It's not until the final track, the boppish "Comuna 13," that the saxophonists take the spotlight with longer individual solos. Throughout it all, Hamel and Pellerin provide the foundation that allows Deschamps and Lozano to go with the flow. Fifty years ago a chordless quartet released the adventuresome *Conference of the Birds*. No Codes does an excellent job of advancing that jazz adventure in 2024 with music that blurs the lines between bop, avant-garde and even punk!

BOTTOM LINE: If you are looking for the best definition of synergy, listen to *Usual Suspects*, the newest recording from the Montreal-based jazz collective No Codes. The four musicians in the group create something greater than they could alone. And what they create is inspired jazz that gracefully shifts from meditative to explosive and often in the same tune!

JOHN ZORN: BALLADES TZADIK 9310

Many of the ballads we cherish from the *Great American Songbook* were written by Jewish composers such as Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, Jerome Kern and others. So, it is no surprise that John Zorn, who introduced us to "Radical Jewish Music," has turned his attention to this song form. And there is no better trio to interpret his ideas than pianist Brian Marsella, bassist Jorge Roeder and drummer Ches Smith. The eleven tunes featured on *Ballade* run the gamut from the rhapsodic "Ballade 1" to the dark and mysterious "Ballade 2." There are joyful ballads such as "Ballade 3," tender ballads such as "Ballade 10." There are even classic ballads such as "Ballade 5," which is reminiscent of Ellington's "Solitude." Given Zorn's appreciation for going "outside," there are ballads such as "Ballade 9" with its angular melody and surprising mood changes and the free flowing nature of "Ballade 4." Regardless of the mood, the under-rated trio of Marsella, Roeder and Smith delivers them all with the passion and perfection of the classic Bill Evans Trio. *Ballade* clearly establishes Zorn as a formidable ballad composer, in the tradition of the great Jewish songwriters that preceded him, as well as giving the Marsella, Roeder and Smith trio their third and finest recording to date. To borrow a title from a Gershwin ballad, Zorn's *Ballade* is simply "S'wonderful!"

BOTTOM LINE: Dispelling the classic definition that ballads are slow and sentimental, John Zorn has stretched the ballad format to the max — a maximum of interesting moods, a maximum of ways in which the outstanding trio of Brian Marsella (piano), Jorge Roeder (bass) and Ches Smith (drums) can interpret his writing and maximum enjoyment for fans of the ballad and one of today's finest piano trios.

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MICHAEL WOLFF: MEMOIR SUNNYSIDE RECORDS

It seems fitting that pianist Michael Wolff concludes *Memoir* with a heartfelt and evocative take on the classic ballad “You’ve Changed.” After all, his life has changed dramatically since growing up in the segregated South where he suffered from Tourette Syndrome, living through the 1960s in Berkeley, California, making a name for himself as a jazz artist and most recently surviving a four-year battle over a rare and deadly form of misdiagnosed cancer. Rather than a celebration of a life reclaimed, *Memoir* is Wolff’s reflection on the experiences that have shaped his life and career. Except for “You’ve Changed,” the other ten selections on *Memoir* are a combination of new Wolff compositions and older tunes that he decided to reinvestigate. Accompanied by bassist Ben Allison and drummer Allan Mednard, the trio infuses the set of melancholic and contemplative ballads with just the right amount of grace, elegance and charm. Allison’s strong bass lines intertwine with Wolff’s ascending lines and percussive chord clusters while Mednard punctuates the stories (the essence of great ballads) to keep things interesting and moving. The interplay between the trio is uncanny as they shift from the slow deep blues groove of “Left Out” to the dreamy waltz “Could Be” to the Latin-infused “Zawinul” to the hymn-like “Leland.” Wolff turns to the vibrato of Fender Rhodes to add texture to the dirge-like feel of “On My Mind” and “Sad Clown.” Now you have two ways to experience the tribulations and successes of pianist’s Michael Wolff’s life and career. You can read all about them in his new autobiography, *On That Note, A Memoir of Jazz, Tics and Survival* (available at Amazon) or you can listen to him meditate on those experiences on *Memoir*, the evocative, beautiful and peaceful recording that welcomes him back into the recording studio after his battle with cancer. Welcome back, Michael Wolff!

BOTTOM LINE: *Memoir* welcomes pianist Michael Wolff back into the recording studio since his recent health scare and it welcomes him back to doing what he enjoys best — finding melodies in melodies. Along with bassist Ben Allison and drummer Alan Mednard, Wolff ruminates on ten originals plus a moving performance of a more than appropriate “You’ve Changed.”

JEROME SABBAGH: HEART ANALOG TONE FACTORY 001

Saxophonist Jerome Sabbagh is a jazz environmentalist. What’s that, you might ask?

For starters, it is someone who does not waste a note. Rather than polluting the air with extraneous flourishes and bravado, Sabbagh’s poetic and delicate tone embraces each selection with a sense of compassion and respect. As a jazz environmentalist, Sabbagh also chooses to recycle and refurbish jazz classics rather than preserving them or adding to the pile of unforgettable material

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that is on the market. Along with bassist Joe Martin and drummer Al Foster, Sabbagh's commitment to jazz environmentalism is on full display with Heart. Listen to the trio's totally unique approach to Duke Ellington's "Prelude to a Kiss." Sabbagh starts the melody with his familiar warm sound as Foster explores all the ways in which cymbals can punctuate the familiar song with perfect timing and creativity. Foster's magical drumming, along with Sabbagh's "no stress" style, continues on Wayne Shorter's "ESP," the standard "Gone with the Wind" and Sabbagh's should-be-a-standard, "Heart." The trio's nice and easy, but never dull and boring, interpretations of Benny Carter's "When Lights are Low" and "Body and Soul" are packed with musical moments that will make you stop, listen and smile. Heart also shows one more aspect of Sabbagh's jazz environmentalism. This is his first release on his new label, Analog Tone Factory, which is committed to pure analog recordings with no edits or overdubs.

BOTTOM LINE: It takes guts for a saxophonist to play songs associated with Coleman Hawkins, Wayne Shorter, Benny Carter and Paul Desmond, but it takes talent and creativity to recraft those songs to make them your own. That's exactly what Jerome Sabbagh does, with capable support from drummer Al Foster and bassist Joe Martin, on Heart.

JAKE NOBLE: LETTING GO OF A DREAM NO LABEL OR RECORDING DATE PROVIDED

Much like Charlie Haden, one of his musical influences, Jake Noble's bass playing is lyrical, strong and inventive. He demonstrates his command of the instrument as well as his composing and band leading skills on Letting Go of a Dream. Noble's other sources of inspiration for this recording are pianist Bill Evans and saxophonist Kenny Garrett. So, it is no surprise that he enlisted pianist Seth Collins and saxophonist Autumn Dominguez for the session. Collins and Noble take a cue from Bill Evans and Eddie Gomez on their duo performance on the jazz waltz "Alice's Point of View." Dominguez channels the tart and fiery sound of Kenny Garrett on the remaining six originals which also feature drummer Tanner Guss. Guitarist Mike Clement adds his bluesy playing to the free sounding "Acceptance of the Journey" and the contemporary sounding "Theme for a New Age." As a unit, the quartet hits their stride on "On the Up and Up," an up tempo stroller with nice solos from all. Those of you from New Orleans may recognize Noble's name. He is a band leader and much in-demand sideman on that city's jazz scene. I would have to assume that the other players on this session are musical friends from that region as well. The band is competent at interpreting Noble's music, but the real star of the show is the full sound and strong solos of Noble.

BOTTOM LINE: The cover of Letting Go of a Dream is a bit ominous, but the music of bassist Jake Noble and his band welcomes you into a world of contemporary jazz. Although the music is inspired by Noble's musical heroes — Bill Evans, Charlie Haden and Kenny Garrett as well as Noble's own journey as a musician — the overall performance lacks the "spark" that sets those musicians apart. Hopefully, the journey will continue for Noble.

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HARRY SKOLER: RED BRICK HILL SUNNYSIDE RECORDS

Clarinetist Harry Skoler has a story to tell, and he tells it with elegance and pathos on

Red Brick Hill. It's a story about reconciling with a traumatic experience from his youth —

the death of a childhood friend. It's a story he shared with the musicians before they recorded the 14 original compositions on Red Brick Hill. Skoler's woody tone, the dark bass lines of Dezron Douglas, the shimmering cascades of Joel Ross' vibraphone and the rhythmic punctuations of drummer Johnathan Blake are ideal for telling such a story. The mood of the recording is set from the opening statement of "Last, Star, Last Night (prologue)," delivered by Skoler in a somber tone reminiscent of the Jewish Mourner's Kaddish. Pianist Christian Sands is added to the ensemble for a fuller version of "Last Star. Last Night," revealing the beauty of this heartfelt ballad. Skoler and Sands return to the tune as touching epilogue for the story. Although "Blue, Mostly" is the name of a tune on this emotional set, its title accurately describes the majority of the tracks — meditative and reflective as Skoler explores and exploits the full range of the clarinet. Skoler's comfort with free improvisation is apparent on "Ascent," a clarinet-bass duo, "Abyss," a clarinet-drum duo and "Harbinger," a clarinet-vibe duo. Harmonica player Gregoire Maret and Skoler blend effortlessly on the more upbeat "Still, Here." Red Brick Hill is a powerful story told with empathy and creativity by Skoler and the various musicians who assembled for this recording. Needless to say, it's also powerful music!

BOTTOM LINE: How does clarinetist Harry Skoler overcome a trauma he experienced as a youth? With heartfelt original music performed by a group of exceptional musicians who understand how best to tell Skoler's story in a moving and heartfelt manner. The music will move you as well.

BRUNO RABERG: EVOLVER ORBIS MUSIC (NO RECORDING DATE)

The best way to describe bassist's Bruno Raberg's Evolver is to use three other words that begin with the letter "E" — episodic, evocative and empowering. Episodic, because the atmospheric nature of the ten Raberg originals seem like loosely connected episodes, balancing somber ensemble playing with uplifting solos. Compositions such as "Sunday," "Elegy" and "Erebus" could easily be combined into a suite, much like his four-part "The Echoes Suite." Evocative, because the music brings strong images to mind. "Mode Natakapriya" conjures up scenes from film noir classics. "Stiltje" brings images of a lone survivor searching for home. With its big symphonic sound, "Peripetela" could easily be the overture for an epic film. Empowering, because Raberg's arrangements provide opportunities for soloists such as guitarist Nate Radley, saxophonist Allan Chase, flutist Fernando Brandao, pianist Anastassiya Petrova, trumpeter

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Peter Kenagy and Raberg himself to set themselves apart from the often dark and lush arrangements. There are also outstanding solos from saxophonist Walter Smith III on three selections and pianist Kris Davis on “The Echoes Suite.” If you are a fan of modern third-stream jazz played by a small ensemble that sounds much larger than it is, you may find *Evolver*, entertaining and engrossing (two more “E” words for you). For me, the listening experience can best be described by two other “E” words — elusive and exhausting.

BOTTOM LINE: Following releases with pianoless quartets, wind ensembles, string ensembles, septets and more, bassist Bruno Raberg returns to a format he pursued on his 2002 recording — the tentet. The results this time around are a bit more daunting with music that is more suspenseful than swinging and more moody than memorable.

ESPIAL: THE ACT OF NOTICING DISCUS-MUSIC 172 (NO RECORDING DATE)

Inspired by nature as much as they are by each other, Espial delivers an impressionist approach to improvisation on their first outing as an ensemble. The trio of Josephine Davies on tenor and soprano saxophones, David Beebee on electric piano and effects and Martin Pyne on vibraphone, balafon and percussion take their cue from a variety of images and moods on *The Act of Noticing* (which is the meaning of word *espial*). Davies’ saxophone swoops and soars, Beebee’s electric piano sparkles and splashes and Pyne’s vibes shimmer and float as Espial takes you on a sonic journey through 11 freely improvised selections. On “The Secret Life of the Forest,” the musicians conjure up the sounds of animals fluttering in the forest. Pyne’s cascading vibraphone notes set the tone for “The Ever Changing Nature of River Water,” while his balafon introduction is perfectly suited for “The Many Colours of Bamboo.”

The trio creates sound pictures as they capture the essence of tunes such as “Morning Sunlight Through a Curtain,” “Fresh Snowfall at Dawn” and “The Moment Summer Turns to Autumn.” *The Act of Noticing* combines the ruminative and delicate sound of some ECM releases with the spontaneity Lee Konitz and Karl Berger delivered on their 1999 *Seasons Change* release. Don’t let Espial’s music lull you into a meditative state. There is a lot to enjoy on this sonic journey if you just practice what the title of the release suggests — *The Act of Noticing*.

BOTTOM LINE: What does morning sunlight through a curtain sound like? You’ll find out on *The Act of Noticing*, the first musical outing from Espial, a trio of Josephine Davies, David Beebee and Martin Pyne. This freely improvised session of eleven tunes envelopes you in an impressionist soundscape inspired by nature, moods and the interaction of trio members.

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LOREN STILLMAN: LIVE @FIREHOUSE 12 SELF-PRODUCED

The Loren Stillman trio is on fire on this live recording from Firehouse 12 in New Haven, Connecticut. The fire saxophonist Stillman and the trio of bassist Drew Gress and drummer Mark Ferber create is not a burning inferno of blistering notes, but a smoldering fire with embers of melodies and rhythms floating into the air. The four tunes from this session have a common element — simple melodies that are dissected, unfolded and explored by this trio that has worked together for several years. Like Sonny Rollins, Stillman builds his solo on “Waterworks” from fragments of his original melody. The Monk-like “Buffalo” has a natural flow to it thanks to the capable and creative interplay of Gress and Ferber. The remaining two tunes — “Double Double” and “Fowlkes” — further demonstrates Stillman’s writing and playing skills as well as the synergy of the trio. As in past recordings, Stillman has found a way to combine his lessons from Dave Liebman, Lee Konitz and Ted Nash into his individual sound. Konitz once said that listening to Stillman was like listening to Konitz on steroids. If that is the case, listening to Live@Firehouse 12 is like listening to Konitz’s 1961 Motion record on steroids! Unfortunately, this fire smolders for less an 35 minutes. Let’s hope they add more kindling for more cool heat in the near future.

BOTTOM LINE: Charles Mingus once said, “Making the simple complicated is commonplace; making the complicated simple, awesomely simple, that’s creativity. That’s exactly what Loren Stillman and this trio achieve on this live date marked by an exceptional level of creative writing playing and musical interaction.

BEN WOLFE: THE UNDERSTATED OUTSIDE IN A2418.1

Ben Wolfe’s The Understated can best be described as cool, calm and collected. Cool, because it is reminiscent (but not a copy) of recordings from Lennie Tristano, Warne Marsh, Lee Konitz and other modernists of the cool era. Calm, because the music Wolfe presents is never forced or pushed. And collected, because Wolfe collected the perfect combination of musicians — tenor saxophonist Nicole Glover, pianists Orrin Evans and Sullivan Fortner, guitarist Russell Malone and drummer Aaron Kimmel to interpret the ten original compositions featured on this recording. Wolfe uses the ideal combination of those musicians to bring his music to life. The quartet of Wolfe, Glover, Evans and Kimmel set the tone for The Understated with the slow groove of “The Poet Speaks,” a tone they further caress and explore on “Ballad in B,” “Waltz” and “Love is Near.” Russell Malone’s guitar is added for the upbeat “Occam’s Razor” as well as accompanying Evans, Wolfe and Kimmel on the sublime ballad “Beautiful You.” The pianoless trio of Glover, Wolfe and Kimmel shine on the lively “Triangle Man.” Pianist Sullivan Fortner delves into the dreamy

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mood of “So Indeed” accompanied by Wolfe and Kimmel and is given a solo spot on “Barely Spoken,” the final tune on the session. With so many sound-alike recordings out these days, The Understated is truly a refreshing release. It’s full of thoughtful improvisations, captivating melodies and exceptional musicianship, all resulting in a relaxing and invigorating listening experience. **BOTTOM LINE:** Ben Wolfe’s The Understated is just that — understated. Rather than bravura and speed, the musicians take a cool, calm and collected approach on ten Wolfe originals delivered in a manner that makes The Understated an overwhelmingly enjoyable listening experience.

LIVIO ALMEIDA: BRASILIA SESSIONS ZOHO 202406

Don’t be fooled by “Sambasus,” the opening track on Brasilia Sessions. Although saxophonist Livio Almeida starts this tune with the chatter and clatter of a live jazz club, the music was recorded in a studio in his hometown of Brasilia, Brazil. If Almeida was trying to capture the energy of a club date, he succeeded. Accompanied by pianist Misael Silvestre, bassist Daniel Castro and drummer Pedro Almeida, the music on Brasilia Sessions is lively, casual and heartfelt. Almeida has recast the familiar sounds of the samba by combining the contemporary use of intricate melody lines and shifting rhythms with his warm and often punchy playing. As a saxophonist, Almeida blends the soul and bite of Stanley Turrentine with the warmth and flow of Stan Getz. As a composer, he builds on his first-hand knowledge of the full range Brazilian musical textures to create new melodies such as the Eastern Brazilian sound of “Partido Cerrado,” the upbeat spirit of “Rocks in My Path,” the modern day groove of “Ditmas Avenue” and the Jobim-esque feel of “Q Train Samba.” His interpretations of other Brazilian composer’s music are equally fresh. An expressive sax solo opens Lo Borges’ “Um Girassol Da Cor Do Seu Cabelo” before Castro and drummer Almeida join in to explore the rich harmonies, rhythms and melodies of this tune. The full quartet embraces Nelson Cavaquinho’s slower ballad style samba “Folhas Secas” with the grace and elegance it deserves. If you’re perception of Brazilian jazz is rooted in the 1960s bossa nove craze, wake up to the contemporary music and playing on Livio Almeida’s lively, but not live, Brasilia Sessions.

BOTTOM LINE: Since arriving in New York a few years back, saxophonist Livio Almeida has been a featured player in Arturo O’Farrill’s bands. Brasilia Sessions clearly establishes him as a formidable composer, arranger and bandleader of contemporary Brazilian jazz.

**Reviews from Abe Goldstien from the website
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Feature Reviews

ART TATUM

JEWELS IN THE TREASURE BOX:

THE 1953 CHICAGO BLUE NOTE JAZZ CLUB RECORDINGS

RESONANCE HCD-2064

DISK 1: NIGHT AND DAY / WHERE OR WHEN / ON THE SUNNY SIDE OF THE STREET / DON'T BLAME ME / SOFT WINDS / THESE FOOLISH THINGS / FLYING HOME / MEMORIES OF YOU / WHAT DOES IT TAKE? / TENDERLY / CRAZY RHYTHM / THE MAN I LOVE / TEA FOR TWO. DISK 2: I COVER THE WATERFRONT / BODY AND SOUL / LAURA / HUMORESQUE / BEGIN THE BEGUINE / THERE WILL NEVER BE ANOTHER YOU / SEPTEMBER SONG / JUST ONE OF THOSE THINGS / WRAP YOUR TROUBLES IN DREAMS / ST. LOUIS BLUES / AFTER YOU'VE GONE / SOMEONE TO WATCH OVER ME. DISK 3: SWEET LORRAINE / INDIANA / TABU / JUDY / LOVER / DARK EYES / STOMPIN' AT THE SAVOY / IF / OUT OF NOWHERE / WOULD YOU LIKE TO TAKE A WALK? / STARDUST / AIR MAIL SPECIAL / I'VE GOT THE WORLD ON A STRING / THE KERRY DANCE. 2:53:51.

Tatum, p; Everett Barksdale, g; Slam Stewart, b. 8/16-28/1953, Chicago, IL.

Awe for Art Tatum's incomparable talent remains, even though he doesn't retain the top-of-mind awareness that today's public extends to other jazz icons. Tatum always left listeners wondering, "How did he do that?" Tatum expanded the possibilities for the jazz piano as he foreshadowed its future. The transcription of even a single Tatum melodic interpretation could be daunting, let alone transcribing his vast repertoire. As Gunther Schuller writes in *Swing Era: The Development of Jazz 1930-1945*, Tatum's "technical perfection... is something beyond verbal description." Jazz legends who followed Tatum analyzed his harmonic innovations and the individuality of his musical expression. Nonetheless, Schuller was ambivalent about Tatum's unsurpassed style. On the one hand, Schuller complained about Tatum's "not speaking as an improviser." He described Tatum's playing as "craft" instead of "art." On the other hand, Schuller concludes, as do many other writers, that "he was... a phenomenon." Tatum's talent was indeed phenomenal. And his musical contributions were indeed art, arising from an unmatched imagination. Some iconic and influential jazz artists agree. For instance, Ahmad Jamal stated, "There was only one Art Tatum. There will never be another." Sonny Rollins said, "I don't know any musician in the jazz world who doesn't just stop cold when you mention Art Tatum. ... He presaged what came with bebopping." Johnny O'Neal, who portrayed Tatum in the movie, *Ray*: "I don't think there's been anyone on any instrument who could match up to Tatum's skills." Don Byas: "He was a genius. I had been with Tatum on the West Coast for two years. I played all the stuff from Tatum." Johnny Griffin: "Bud comes out of Tatum. All them cats can play the piano come out of Tatum. I used to say that Don Byas was the Tatum of the saxophone." Erroll Garner: "Tatum was way out there. He was a genius, ahead of his time." Carmen McRae: "Art Tatum, great as he was and 93,000 years ahead of his time, was always relaxed when he played a ballad, however many arpeggios he made." After hearing Tatum, Rex Stewart said: "I toyed with the idea of giving up my horn." Monty Alexander: "I got to know Oscar Peterson very well. When Oscar heard

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[a Tatum record], he told me, he almost wanted to quit the piano." Terry Gibbs: "Teddy [Wilson] told me that he wouldn't follow Art Tatum. ... Nobody could do what [Tatum] did." Martin Williams wrote that Charlie Parker "once took a kitchen-help job in a club where Tatum was working in order to absorb him live." Fats Waller said: "Ladies and gentlemen, I play the piano, but God is in the house tonight," thereby providing the title for the 1973 Onyx Records release of Tatum's live informal performances from 1940 and 1941. You get the idea. But Tatum's phenomenal playing was outside the mainstream of his contemporaries' recordings. He performed mostly alone, so orchestral, individualistic, and overpowering was his style. Tatum was ever in the spotlight, brilliant and solitary in his level of talent. Tatum developed a repertoire of hundreds of songs for immediate recall. Tatum's originality arose not from compositional skills to write original music, but from his unparalleled interpretations of standards delivered by his rocketing technique, creative reharmonizations, and solid sense of rhythm. Much has been written about Tatum's relatively infrequent recordings. Much should be written about Resonance Records' astounding discovery of Tatum's performances in 1953 at the Blue Note jazz club in Chicago. Yes, Jazz Detective Zev Feldman's growing reputation for finding important reel-to-reel recordings paved the way for the public release of another legendary performance. True to form, the Resonance package's abundance of music and information reflects the value of Tatum's music. It consists of 39 tracks on three sonically enhanced CD's, laudatory interviews by musicians with experiences and knowledge to share, and a well-written essay summarizing biographical, discographical, and musical information about the artist. Feldman's finding this time was made possible by the foresight of Frank Holzfeind, the owner of the Blue Note jazz venue at 56 W. Madison in Chicago's Loop. Holzfeind had booked Tatum's second trio that included guitarist Everett Barksdale and bassist Slam Stewart, and he privately recorded the musicians. The extent of Tatum's recordings over five sets offers comprehensive documentation of that trio's work. Acceding to the occasional popularity of drummer-less piano trios at the time, Tatum compromised his preference for solo performances for the trio's cohesion and its sharing of solos. While that format resulted in a slightly calmer Tatum, with fewer spontaneous surprises and technical feats than his solo recordings provide, nevertheless Tatum's commanding presence projected joy. So, "Tea for Two" retains from earlier recordings his effortless force and speed, signature arpeggios, and entertaining puckish elements, such as his sudden stop in the second chorus. Tatum's velocity, sure sense of rhythm, and technical exactitude still inspire a wondrous appreciation of the lightning-fast links between Tatum's mind—sparking his abundance of ideas, logically connected—and his hands, which just as quickly executed those thoughts. Despite the intensity of his orchestral effect, which covers various parts ordinarily played by separate instruments, Tatum does hold back for brief guitar and bass solos—a reminder of his influence on Oscar Peterson, the talents of the accompanists for both trios impressive, despite the force of the trios' leaders. Tatum's concision remained; the tracks on *Jewels in the Treasure Box* average four minutes, the longest being "Body and Soul" at 6-1/3 minutes. "Sweet

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Lorraine," as always, is a tour de force. Tatum's choruses embellish the melody through block chords, triplets of playful adjacent-note chords, and swirl after swirl of rising arpeggios, as if the melody were but the pin of Tatum's pinwheeling colors and gleams. Tatum recalls at the start of "Sweet Lorraine" the quarter-note left-hand chords associated with Erroll Garner. Tatum allows Barksdale and Stewart to take solos or to improvise during the repeats, but the piano virtuoso can't seem to hold back; he continues to play, unintentionally overshadowing the work of the guitarist and bassist. In addition to his harmonic and technical feats, Tatum challenges the listener to identify the meter of "Lover," when he veers from an approximation of three (though the bar lines aren't well defined as Tatum's rivulets of notes ripple through them) into a rubato section as his mood changes and then into a meter of four with breathtaking rapidity. The comprehensive Resonance package includes many of Tatum's famous interpretations, including "Humoresque" (requested by a member of the audience), which he jazzes after a two-minute introduction. Tatum's inspiration from stride piano players is evident on "St. Louis Blues." But, of course, he makes the song his own with a performance that no one else can imitate. The sheer volume of music contained within *Jewels in the Treasure Box* renders inadequate an effort to describe, usually even within a single chorus, Tatum's style. Much-appreciated transcriptions like Schuller's serve as brief analyses to corroborate his text. Tatum's extraordinary creativity and his ever-refreshing profusion of ideas, swell like balloons until their release through notes on the piano. The overflow of music contained in Tatum's treasure box prevents a comprehensive technical appreciation of Tatum's innovations, as if he leaves clues for riddles. The jewels in Resonance Records's release once again remind us why Terry Gibbs, who has worked with many jazz pianists for more than seventy years, calls Tatum "the greatest piano player who ever lived."

Bill Donaldson

AMY SHEFFER DRONE BONE

I AM SHEE AS0023

HOVERING / BLEDDIDIT / GUESS I'LL PLAY THE VIOLIN / WORDS FROM T.S. / YOU RISE / TODAY / MUSEUM / ZEEBOO / SEAGULL / IMPROV / DRONE BONE / COCOCADINK. 68:37.

Sheffer, vcl; Billy Bang, vln; William Parker, b; Lou Grassi, d. 1/2/2001, 1/21/2001. New York, NY.

Avant-garde vocalist Amy Sheffer released in 2023 a notable album, *Drone Bone*, that was recorded in 2001 with William Parker on bass and Lou Grassi on drums—two musicians with whom she previously had recorded *We'um* (1985) and *Where's Your Home?* (1987) on her I Am Shee label. Significantly, though, Billy Bang also performed on those rare recordings, limited copies of which now are sought online. For Billy Bang completists, the jazz violinist joins the group on *Drone Bone* too. The always-original sound of the free-jazz individualists on *Drone Bone* derives from their mutual enjoyment and respect, and from their understanding of each other's musical impulses that has advanced during decades of collaborations. The instrumentalists introduce "Hovering," the album's first piece, with an abrupt, already-established

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groove. The track has no lead-in as if the recording equipment had been turned on, not at the start of the piece, but a while after that. Grassi's rumbling drum pattern involves tinging accents on the cymbal as Parker's bass lines lope and throb. But Bang sets up the floating mood with a melancholy, understated legato motive that grows in intensity and complexity. Along comes Sheffer at 2:20, when she presents her lyrics before the second section of her occasionally wordless singing, which is comparable to the timbre of Bang's violin on this track. As the quartet fades at the end of "Hovering," Sheffer repeats a high E, around which she wavers her tones. On the next track, "Bleddidit," Sheffer experiments with the possibilities of the rapid-fire tonal repetition of her invented sound represented by the album's title, followed by Grassi's two-beat response on the wood block. Then, Sheffer's voice rises in microtonal "ah ah ah ah's." Bang repeats in various pitches, double stops, and degrees of celerity her "bleddidit" assertion, which becomes the characteristic phrase of the piece to which they return. Eventually, Bang emerges with an emotional improvisation of dynamic variation and precise articulation until Sheffer's final vocal exclamation of "bleddidit" ends the track. Contrary to expectations, "Guess I'll Play the Violin" starts with Sheffer's unaccompanied introductory narrative ("He told me / He lost his love / Somewhere up in Canada. / Oh yeah? Well / It's no sin. / Guess I'll play the violin"). And then, of course, Bang plays the violin. During the first interlude between lyrics, Bang swings, a reminder of his Stuff Smith influence, while Parker plays walking bass lines. During the second interlude, they play in double time. Grassi joins in, and Bang attacks percussively with characteristic vivacity. "Words from T.S.," "You Rise," and "Today" comprise a thematically driven medley inspired by Elliot. Parker's pedal point of D and brief associated vamps anchor all three tracks. On the album's shortest tracks (between 2 and 2-1/2 minutes)—"Museum," "Improv," and "Cococadink"—Sheffer sings solely with Grassi's percussive accents and brief rhythms consisting of the cowbell's clangs and tinks, the wood block's tocks, the tom-tom's haunting rolling resonance, the cymbal's quiet splash, and the snare drum's martial rhythm spontaneously supportive of Sheffer's sung poetic verses. Sheffer toys with the dotted-eighth-and-sixteenth-note cadences of her invented word, "Cococadink", similar to her onomatopoetic fun with "Bleddidit," though her "co-co-ca-dink-a-dah" is reminiscent of, and perhaps a tribute to, Jimmy Durante's "Inka Dinka Doo." Accompaniment for the titular piece backs Sheffer's song, more melodic than the others, with atmospheric, rhythmless textures. Parker's sustained drone blends with Bang's as a reminder of the interactivity present on their other albums. At 2:45, Parker shifts from a soundscape approach to develop a percussive vamp, its solid rhythm swelling the excitement that continues through successive varying moods during the rest of the track. A fearless innovative singer whose discography extends to the 1968 recording of Steve Tintweiss's recording, Markstown, Sheffer confirms on Drone Bone that her combination of poetic cadences and free-jazz extemporaneity continued throughout several decades. Tintweiss continued to produce Sheffer's albums, including Drone Bone.

Bill Donaldson

New Issues

SOMETHING ELSE!, SOUL JAZZ

SMOKE SESSIONS 2403

FILTHY MCNASTY / TOO BLUE / MEAN GREENS / THE CHICKEN / DRIFTIN' / SLOW DRAG / STRASBOURG / ST. DENIS / NAIMA. 50:53. Jeremy Pelt, tpt; Vincent Herring, as; Wayne Escoffery, ts; Paul Bollenback, g; David Kikoski, p; Essiet, b; Otis Brown III, d. 2/26/2024. NYC.

It is this scribe's contention that altoist Vincent Herring is one of the most taken-for-granted artists in all of jazzdom. With many recorded titles under his name and a tally of almost 300 appearances as a valued sideman he has more than paid up his dues. His contributions in a joint setting are of special merit. Take for example the 1999 eponymous Sterling Place All Stars date for the Metropolitan label with Ronnie Matthews, Richie Goods and Carl Allen which sounds as fresh and undated today as when it was first cut. Here, once again, he is surrounded by fellow peers for what is termed "a daylight session" is the Smoke club in the Big Apple. The septet front line consists of Herring, Escoffery & Pelt underpinned by a four piece rhythm unit. The results are naturally expected. With no writings from the participants the tune list sports names like Turrentine, Roy Hargrove, Pee Wee Ellis, Donald Byrd, Hancock, Coltrane, Horace Silver and Eddie Harris which make up some hearty ribs for them to chew on. The fact that this is a live recording spurs all seven on whether its tearing up former JB's Ellis "The Chicken", an early Herbie line "Driftin;" or joyously romping and stomping on "Mean Greens" an Eddie Harris shuffle. Even Tranes immortal "Naima" is given an uptempo overhaul a la Richard "Groove" Holmes. It is great to hear Mr. Pelt back in a blistering straight ahead groove as opposed to his more experimental leanings under his own leadership. Mucho soulful sounds filtered through a Hard Bop sieve to tasty perfection. Get on the good foot!

Larry Hollis

New Issues

RAHSAAN BARBER REVIEW RAHSAAN BARBER & EVERYDAY MAGIC, SIX WORDS,

JAZZ MUSIC CITY self-released.

UNITY PART 1 / THE LONG WAIT FOR JUSTICE / DREAMS OF GOLIATH (PRELUDE) /
DREAMS OF GOLIATH / UNITY PART II / SUN DANCE / REMEMBERING ROY / REACH. 51:56.

Barber, as, ss, ts ; Roland Barber, tbn; Kevin Beardsley, b, el b; Matt Endahl. p; Joshua Hunt, d;
Pharez Whitted, tpt. 12/15/2022. Nashville, TN.

That Nashville cat is back at it again with this Kickstarter funded endeavor. Most of the regular sextet homies are back save for the inclusion of new bassist/drummer plus trumpeter Whitted replacing Nathan Warner from the Mosaic session. All of the eight compositions are from the pen of the leader which form a loose-knit suite of sorts that was captured in a single day in the studio. Which is fairly astonishing since none of the participants (other than Barber of course) had seen or had access to the charts. Eschewing his big baritone this time out, he deftly switches between his three reeds reaching soaring heights most notably with his twin sibling's slide on several numbers. Everyone gets a taste before it's all over and newcomer Whitted shines on the Roy Hargrove tribute especially. My coverage of his last issue ended with an appropriate line "With this ambitious undertaking Rahsaan Barber has exhibited a notable growth in his artistic sensibility that bodes well for the future". Ditto on this one.

Larry Hollis

LOUIS HAYES, ARTFORM REVISITED

SAVANT 2218

TOUR DE FORCE / MILESTONES / MY LITTLE SUEDE SHOES / YOU'RE LOOKING AT ME / RUBY /
CHERYL / RAY'S IDEA / A FLOWER IS A LOVESOME THING / DEWEY SQUARE / G. 50:30. Hayes, d;
Abraham Burton, ts; Steve Nelson, vib; David Hazeltine, p; Dezron Davis, b. 1/25/24. Paramus, NJ.

With the passing of Albert "Tootie" Heath (88) earlier this year the ranks of major veteran drum statesmen has continued to thin the ranks even more. Thankfully we still have Roy McCurdy, Alvin Queen & Roy Haynes plus the inimitable Louis Hayes still kicking some serious tubs. Fortunately there is a considerable crowd of younger skinheads waiting in the wings. Unfortunately a few these ears have heard have a tendency to become excited and rush the beat. One would think they were double-parked. Not to worry with old pros like Louis Hayes who have amassed a wealth of percussive knowledge and experience gigging with everyone from Horace Silver to Cannonball Adderley to just lay back and listen. From the happy vibe of the opening Dizzy ode to the ending KC down home Hayes/Davis collaboration this is nothing more than a great listen. For further illumination I refer you to this sextet's pair of previous Savant titles and the informative liners co-written by Hayes and Maxine Gordon. Gold Medal Listening.

Larry Hollis

New Issues

RICH HAILEY - FIRE WITHIN

PINE EAGLE RECORDS

FIRE WITHIN/ INFERRED/ ANGULAR LOGIC/ THROUGH STILL AIR/ FOLLOWING THE STREAM 65:31

Rich Hailey ts; Mathew Shipp,p; Michael Bisio. Bass; Newman Taylor Baker, d Brooklyn, July 2023
I am not familiar with Hailey though I am familiar with the other members of the quartet. Always liked Shipp. I remember Baker from his recordings with Billy Harper, where I found him a bit stiff but he is much looser and hard swinging here.

The opening track introduces everyone with good solo space. Hailey is good solid player with a light tone. At times he reminds me of someone in the Sonny Rollins school of playing. Shipp is a great two fisted player, who shows a melodic side here. Not a fan of Baker's solo, but it does fit the over all feel of the piece. And Bisio provides great support. His intro to Inferred is great, and the tune turns into a nice ballad with his great accompaniment. The interplay between Schipp, Bisio and baker at the end of this track is quite interesting. Following the Stream begins with a long drum solo. At first I thought Baker was just playing the rhythm but he kept it going with some development. I felt it went on too long before everyone else came in. Basically that rhythmic feel was maintained throughout Hailey's solo. But it goes into straight time in Shipp's solo, with Bisio providing solid accompaniment. The record is also nicely balanced by alternating tempos and moods.

Bernie Koenig

THOM ROTELLA - SIDE HUSTLE

HIGHNOTE 7355

WHO DAT? / LOVE FOR SALE(^) / PICK POCKET(^) / SIDE HUSTLE(*) / GEORGIA ON MY MIND / NOT SO MUCH(^) / MR. MOOTANDA / DON'T MESS WITH MR. T (*+^) / ROY'S GROOVE / ON A MISTY NIGHT / ALONE TOGETHER / THREE VIEWS OF A SECRET-GOODBYE PORKPIE HAT (+ #^). 62:55.

Rotella, g; Bobby Floyd, org; Roy McCurdy, d; Eric Alexander ,ts(*) : Jeremy Pelt, tpt(+):

Gregg Karukas, org(^); Kendall Kaye, d(^): Lenny Castro, perc(^): 2/20 & 39=2/24 & 27/2024.LA/CA
It must be said up front that this writer wasn't conversant with guitarist Thom Rotella but labored under the assumption that he was mostly associated with the Smooth Jazz idiom and was an experienced "any old dawg that will hunt" session player stuck inside some sterile studio. Thankfully he has returned to his youthful roots when he was first exposed to historic organ combos helmed by Jimmy Smith, Bill Doggett & Richard "Groove" Holmes. Also mentioned in Dan Bilawsky respectful liners not be familiar to most Cadence readers but should be. Bobby Jones They need to check out the three , long out-of-print cds he made with upstate Buffalo burner Bobby Militello. We're talking about monster Hammond B-3 work here. But I digress, there is another Bobby heard here that most assuredly bears watching. Unknown to me before this is a major discovery and with no disrespect to anyone else heard on this aluminum platter he certainly steals the show. Not a bit rusty Rotella navigates this mix of standbys and standard fare with the ease that befits a musician of his playing years with the addition of six of his writings among the mix. To spice things up somewhat labelmates Pelt and Alexander contribute to a couple of tracks and the final number is kinda weird , two items made famous by their bassist authors that have nothing to do with the rest of the album. Otherwise this is a nice basic organ trio outing that has me waiting for a debut disc from one Bobby Floyd.

Larry Hollis

New Issues

TONINO MIANO - LUMINARY

BANDCAMP DOWNLOAD

1) LUMINARY/ QUARK TTAPS/ PROBABLY JUST NOW/ BLIP/ I WEAR MY PARTICLES, GENERALLY/ KISS A COMET/ ALL YOU'VE GOT IS AN INCLINED PLANE/ FLEARIDGE/ I WEAR MY PARTICLES, PARTICULARLY/ FOUND IN SPACE 49:34

Tonino Miano, p, synth; Riccardo Grosso, bass; Andrea Melani d Catania Italy, Aug 2022

Bandcamp download from Miano's website

An Italian trio. Haven't a good Italian group min a while. The opening track is very interesting. Some nice and occasionally dissonant piano with some very complex bass lines interacting with the piano. Would have like to hear more drums. But Quark traps takes care of that. The piece opens with synthesizer and percussion, but then moves into a good straight ahead trio piece with all three members of the trio swinging hard, but with a nice tempo change at the end.

Over all this a very interesting record. The compositions do not stand out as they seem brief and quickly become vehicles for improvisation. And this is fine since the improvisations are all interesting. This clearly is Miano's project as he is really the only soloist, and is very adapt at exploring harmonies. And he gets tremendous support from Grosso and Melani. Indeed, Grosso's work really stands out for me. He plays very complex lines that both support and interact with Miano's piano. And Melani stands out on Flearidge.

This is a record that will stand up to many, many listenings

TONINO MIANO - STRINGS CURRENTS

BANDCAMP DOWNLOAD

BEADS HANGING ON A STRING/ UP SHORT AND TIGHT/ PULLING THE WRONG ONES/ OF PEARL AND WISDOM/ WHITE APRON TUGGING/ HEARTSTRING/ KNOT THEORY/ SLIDING PLATES/ JOULE EFFECT/ POWER SURGE/ CHARGE THE WINDMILL/ ELECTRONS AT SEA/ BROKEN CIRCUIT 44:40

Tonino Miano p, synth; Domenico Caliri, elec g Catania Italy, March 28 2024

Duos are probably my favorite ensemble size both to play in and listen to. I love listening to the interaction of the players and as a player I love to be part of the interactive process. So I always come to a duo recording with great anticipation.

This recording features a number of short pieces, each creating its own mood. The two players really work well together. I really like the way they interact especially on Pulling the Wrong ones where they change from lead to support.

The over-all feel of this recording is very mellow. The tempi tend to be on the slow side, which really allows the players to listen to each other and to have time to interact with each other. One can really hear the tugging on White Apron Tugging. Knot Tugging stands out for me. Love the 'tugging' sounds Caliri gets from the guitar. And the synthesizer really 'slides' on Sliding Plates, while Joule Effect exhibits real energy. Over-all this recording exceeded my expectations. I really enjoyed it and will become part of my regular playlist.

Bernie Koenig

New Issues

SUMMER CAMARGO TO WHOM I LOVE

BLUE ENGINE BLEA54.2

JP SHUFFLE / GIRL IN THE JEEP+ / 80 TEARS OF JOY (*) / TENDERNESS WITHIN /(+) /
SPLANKY // EXPLORING THE CITY (+) / GRATEFUL FOR THE GOOD TIMES /
SUNNY SIDE OF THE STREET (+) / DANCE OF THE MERRYMAKER(*).51:07.

Camargo, tpt, flgh; Veronica Leahy, rds; Jeffery Miller, tbn; Esteban Castro, p; Rau
Reyes Bueno, b; Varun Das; d/ Joey DeFrancesco, org(*) / Jamey Haddad, perc(+).
8/16,17&18/2022. NYC,NY.

Question: Is it just me or has there been an influx of talented ladies recently. It is not the usual singers or keyboardist which there are plenty of but horn players on mostly reeds and brass. These include Sarah Hanaran, Alex Tarantino,, Bria Skonberg,etc. Not to mention all female groups such as Alliance or Monika Herzig's Sheroes. In her early twenties Summer Camargo can be easily added to that list with this new issue. Sure she's no Lee Morgan or Freddie Hubbard but who is? Not as fiery as those two but not as mellow as Chet Baker or Art Farmer she sticks mostly to mid-range in her improvs. It's apparent she has studied her jazz history when on the lone standard (Sunny....) with its NOLA feel and the rhythm section laying out the Pops influence is undeniable with its Clora Bryant and Valaida Snow hints. of earlier trumpet styles along with Victoria Leahy's atmospheric licorice stick underpinnings. The only other non-original is the Neal Hefti classic penned for the atomic edition of the Basie juggernaut. replete with ear-catching horn exchanges. Camargo is a democratic leader allowing shared solo space for almost everyone. There's even a drum interlude over horn chords on the opener. The late Joey DeFrancesco guests on the churchy third track and final "Dance ..." with in-studio handclaps from a live crowd of friends and relatives. A fitting finale to a debut brimming with potential. Check it out.

Larry Hollis

New Issues

MIKE STERN - ECHOES AND OTHER SONGS

CHALLENGE RECORDS 7087

CONNECTIONS/ ECHOES/ STUFF HAPPENS/ SPACE BAR/ I HOPE SO/ WHERE'S LEO/ GOSPEL SONG/ CRUMBLES/ CURTIS/ CLIMATE/ COULD BE 77:23

Stern, g; Leni Stern, ngoni (Track 1,5,8); Chris Potter, ts(track1,2,3,6,7,8,10,11) Bob Frances, ss,ts (track 4,9) ; Jim Beard, p ; Christian McBride electric & Acoustic Bass(track 1,2,3,6,7,8,10,11) ; Richard Bona, bass, vcl ;(track 4,5,9); Antonio Sanchez, d(track 1,2,3,6,7,8,10,11) ; Dennis Chambers,d (track 4,5,9) ; Arto Tuncboyacian, perc
2024 NY

Mike Sterns "Echoes and Other Songs" delivers in a big way. Eleven original tracks, an all star cast and seventy seven minutes of non stop musical magic is what Mikes latest brings to the table.

When one looks back on the long and fruitful career of Mike Stern it's impossible not to be impressed. From Blood Sweat and Tears to Miles to his own countless musical projects and world travels he seems to have done it all. And yet a different take on all these accomplishments would be to look at what he's done for his fellow musicians. Over the years Mike has consistently provided a forum for some of the finest Jazz players on the planet. His composing has created a framework for the geniuses of Jazz to explore the limits of what's possible and bring that magic, at all costs, to our ears. The world of Jazz is now a different place because of his relentless pursuit of excellence. So now with Mikes latest we have another fine example of this journey. "Echoes and Other Songs" begins with "Connections", introduced by Leni Stern playing a West African stringed instrument called the Ngoni. This bright and uplifting song is a multilayered romp that highlights Sanchez's drumming and presents some blistering solos by Stern, Potter on Tenor and McBride tearing it up on electric bass. "Echoes" tones things down a bit with its richly lyrical melody. You really have to admire Sterns compositional skills, looking at this cd and his whole body of work in general, he just keeps coming up with very cool melodies that are unique yet clearly sound like him. "Stuff Happens" is a slinky, funky joy ride driven by McBrides ostinato like electric bass and Sanchez's hard hitting drumming. Again the solos are outstanding. "Space Bar" delivers yet a different feel and brings Dennis Chambers, Richard Bona and Franceschini into the mix. Seriously funky and well written. Bona and Chambers together is really something to behold. Some killer solos by Franceschini and Stern kicks it up even higher. Throughout, Jim Beards strong lyrical and supportive role helps fatten things up. "I Hope So" is a joyous pleasure of writing that begins with Leni Sterns uniquely pleasing Ngoni playing. Vocals, Soprano Sax and some fine percussion work by Arto Tuncboyacian enhances this intricate dance of composition even further. "Gospel Song" is a moving ballad with a mournfulness that brings a prayer to mind, soulful with a undertone of optimism.

I've mentioned about half of Sterns writings on this all original project and I'll add that all the rest of the tunes are also first rate and equally as exciting with a variety of rhythmic feels and energy. The amount and quality of the music and the level of musicianship is simply over the top. Mike Sterns dedication to his art, choice of musicians and commitment to press on is nothing less than inspirational. He keeps it coming and "Echoes and Other Songs" is surely one of his finest.

Frank Kohl