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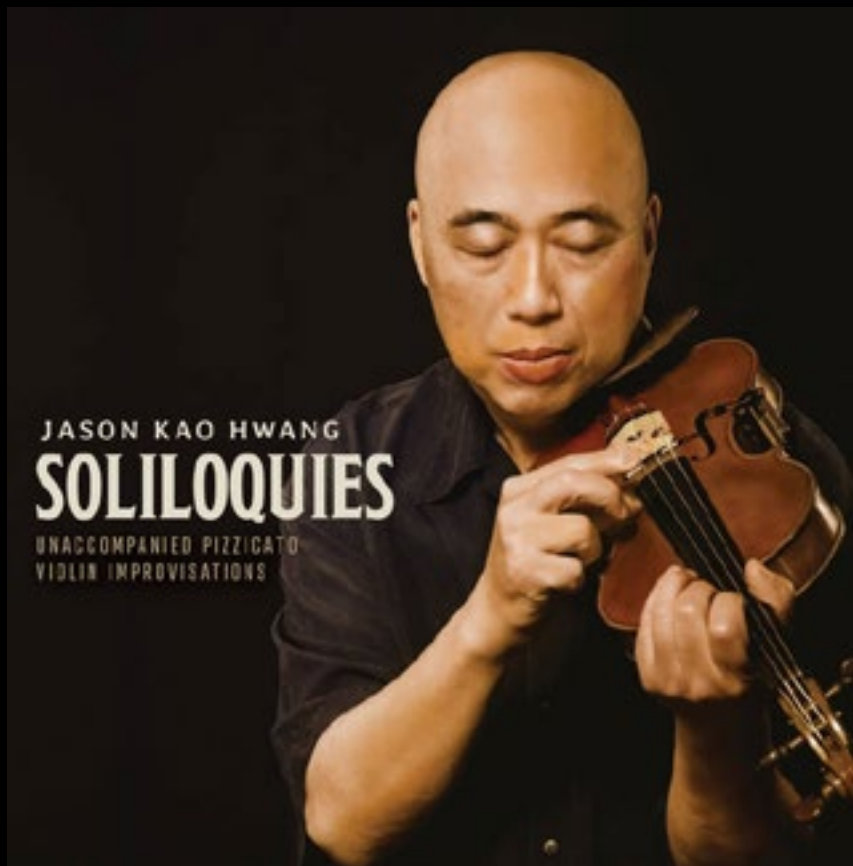
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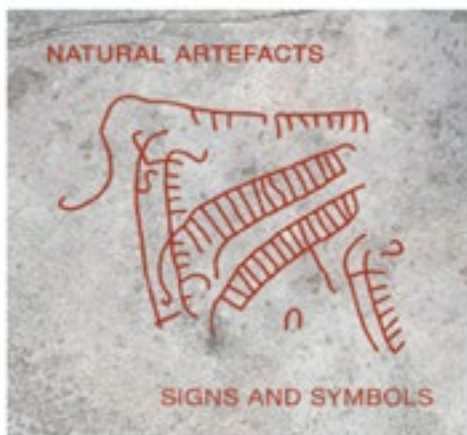
Order the Album

<https://jasonkaohwang.bandcamp.com/album/soliloquies-unaccompanied-pizzicato-violin-improvisations>

NATURAL ARTEFACTS

Signs and Symbols

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



LJCD5263



SUDDEN MEETING

Second Occasion

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

LJCD5262

LJ Records
www.lj-records.se

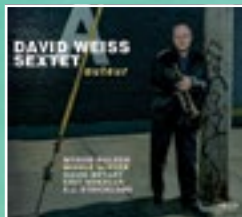
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JUMA SULTAN
BRAD WHITELEY
AUSTIN WALKER



MICHAEL DEASE

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JASON HAINSWORTH
MATT WHITE, NANAMI HARUTA
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ANTHONY BRANKER | ROBBY AMEEN | PETER ERSKINE
JAMES MOODY | DAVID FRIESEN | RUSSELL HAIGHT
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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*



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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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

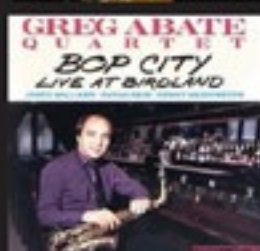


Discover *You Asked For It* and the entire magical musical catalog of Laura Ainsworth and listen happily ever after...

www.laurainsworth.com

Greg Abate

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Phil Woods



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Citizen Jazz (FR)



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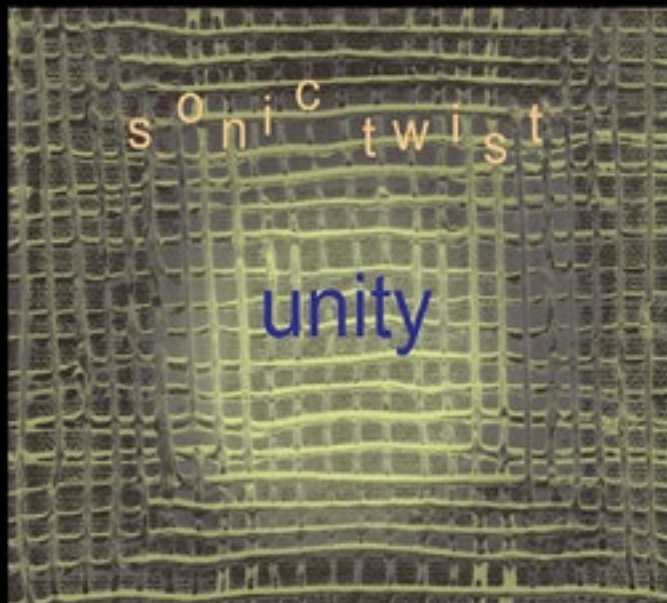
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<https://jimmybenningtoncolourandsound.bandcamp.com/album/>

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Downbeat

"Bell's playing on C and alto flute is gorgeous, filled with light and air on the ballads, briskly inventive on her bop-tinged improvisations."
Los Angeles Times

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1. Isotope
2. A Shade of Jade
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6. Black Narcissus
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8. Punjab
9. Recorda Me

loribell1@cox.net

Lori Bell Quartet

Recorda Me
Remembering Joe Henderson

Josh Nelson · David Robaire · Dan Schnelle

DOWNBEAT ★★★★★

Jazz Journal UK ★★★★★

Los Angeles Times ★★★★★

Jazz Times ★★★★★

Best in Jazz Huffington Post

Best Albums DOWNBEAT

Global Music Awards 2011, 2014, 2016



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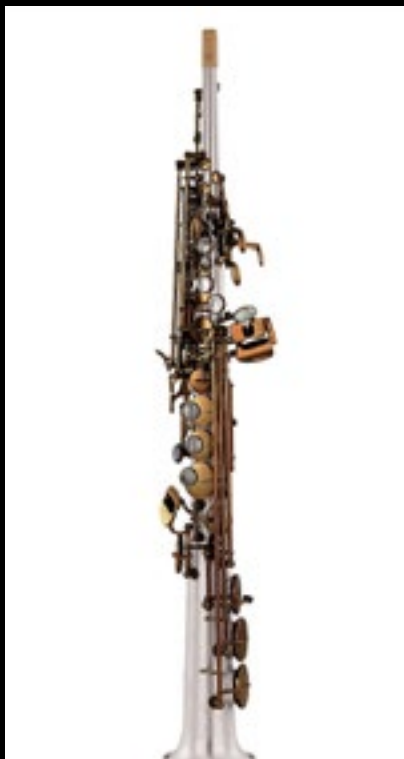
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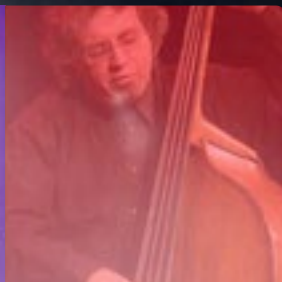
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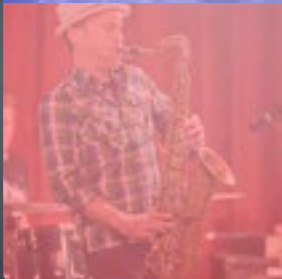
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Top Recordings 2024



NEW RELEASES - ZIM TARRO

- TODAY'S TOMORROW - JUSTIN CHART - (UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP)
DAVE STRYKER TRIO WITH BOB MINTZER - GROOVE STREET - (STRIKEZONE 8826)
EPHEMERIS - EPHEMERIS - MARSKEN RECORDS MR03
JASON KAO HWANG - "SOLILOQUIES SOLILOQUIES, UNACCOMPANIED PIZZICATO VIOLIN IMPROVISATIONS" (TRUE SOUND RECORDINGS TS05)
CHRISTIAN FABIAN TRIO - "HIP TO THE SKIP" (SPICE RACK RECORDS SR-101-68)
DOUG MACDONALD - "THE SEXTET SESSION" (DMAC MUSIC DM25)
CLIFF KORMAN TRIO - "URBAN TRACKS"
MATT PANAYIDES TRIO - "WITH EYES CLOSED" (PACIFIC COAST JAZZ PJ93456)
HYESEON HONG JAZZ ORCHESTRA - "THINGS WILL PASS" (PACIFIC COAST JAZZ PJ94621)
MONIKA HERZIG'S SHEROES - "ALL IN GOOD TIME" (ZOHO ZM 202404)
PONY BOY ALL-STAR BIG BAND - "THIS IS NOW" (PONY BOY RECORDS PB50191-2)
DRONE BONE - AMY SHEFFER - (SELF RELEASE)



NEW RELEASES - JEROME WILSON

- FAY VICTOR/HERBIE NICHOLS SUNG - LIFE IS FUNNY THAT WAY, (TAO FORMS)
CHARLES LLOYD - THE SKY WILL STILL BE THERE TOMORROW, (BLUE NOTE)
DARIUS JONES - LEGEND OF E'BOI (THE HYPERVIGILANT EYE), (AUM FIDELITY)
BILL FRISELL - ORCHESTRAS - (BLUE NOTE)
FRANK CARLBERG LARGE ENSEMBLE, ELEGY FOR THELONIOUS - (SUNNYSIDE)
RON MILES - OLD MAIN CHAPEL - (BLUE NOTE)
PATRICIA BRENNAN SEPTET - BREAKING STRETCH - (PYROCLASTIC)
DAVID MURRAY QUARTET - FRANCESCA - (INTAKT)
BETH GIBBON - LIVES OUTGROWN, (DOMINO)
JASON STEIN, ANCHORS, (TAO FORMS)



NEW RELEASES - ABE GOLDSTEIN

- LEO GENOVESE - ESTRELLLO 2 - (577 RECORDS)
FAY VICTOR LIFE IS FUNNY THAT WAY - (TAO FORMS)
CHRISTIAN MARIEN - HOW LONG IS NOW - (MARMADE RECORDS)
KIRK KNUFFKE - SUPER BLOND - (STEEPLECHASE)
BEN ALLISON - TELL THE BIRDS I SAID HELLO (SONIC CAMERA)
REMEDY - LIVE AT JAZZKAMMER (SELF PRODUCED)
JAMES LEWIS BRANDON - TRANSFIGURATION (INTAKT)
BRIAN MARSELLA/JOHN ZORN - BALLADES (TZADIK)
WADADA LEO SMITH - CENTRAL PARK MOSAICS (RED HOOK)
BRIAN LANDRUS - PLAYS ELLINGTON & STRAYHORN (PALMETTO)



NEW RELEASES - GEORGE HARRIS

- TORD GUSTAVSEN TRIO - SEEING - (ECM)
WAYNE ESCOFFERY - ALONE - (SMOKE SESSIONS)
HYEONSEON BAEK - LONGING - (SELF PRODUCED)
LAUREN HENDERSON - SOMBRAS - (BRONTOSAURUS)
ABDULLAH IBRAHIM - 3 - (GEARBOX RECORDS)
BRIAN BROMBERG - LAFARO - (SELF PRODUCED)

Top Recordings 2024



ZACH RICH - SOLIDARITY - (ORIGIN)
DIEGO FIGUEIRIDO - I LOVE SAMBA (ARBORS)
HEAVENLY CREAM - AN ACOUSTIC TRIBUTE TO CREAM
(QUARTO VALLEY RECORDS)
KEVIN BURT AND BIG MEDICINE - THANK YOU BILL - (SELF
PRODUCED)

TOP HISTORICAL RECORDINGS - GEORGE HARRIS



CHICK COREA/BRIAN BLADE/CHRISTIAN MCBRIDE: TRILOGY
(CONCORD)
SISTER ROSETTA THARPE: THE SINGLES COLLECTION 1939-50
(MVD)
NAT KING COLE: LIVE AT THE BLUE NOTE (ICONIC ARTIST
GROUP)
CHET BAKER AND JACK SHELDON: IN PERFECT HARMONY
(ELEMENTAL)
ART TATUM: JEWELS IN THE TREASURE BOX (RESONANCE)
SONNY ROLLINS: FREEDOM WEAVER (RESONANCE)
STEVE DAVIS: MEETS HANK JONES (SMOKE SESSIONS)
DON BYAS: CLASSIC DON BYAS SESSIONS 1944-46 (MOSAIC)
JOHNNY GRIFFIN QUARTET: LIVE IN VALENCIA (STORYVILLE)

NEW RELEASES: - LARRY HOLLIS



ONE FOR ALL—BIG GEORGE—SMOKE SESSIONS
SHAREL CASSITY/COLEEN CLARK—ALLIANCE--SHIFTING
PARADIGM
AKIKO TSURUGA—BEYOND NOSTALGIA—STEEPLECHASE
LOUIS HAYES—ARTFORM REVISITED—SAVANT
SOMETHING ELSE!—SOUL JAZZ—SMOKE SESSIONS
KENNY BARRON—BEYOND THIS PLACE—ARTWORK
CHARLES MCPHERSON—REVERENCE-SMOKE SESSIONS
JACK WALRATH—LIVE AT SMALLS—CELLAR MUSIC.
SARAH HANAHAN—AMONG GIANTS—BLUE ENGINE
ALEX SIPIAGIN—HORIZONS--BLUE ROOM

REISSUES/HISTORICAL - LARRY HOLLIS



CHARLES MINGUS—MINGUS TAKES MANHATTAN
NEW LAND
SONNY ROLLINS—FREEDOM WEAVER—RESONANCE
MCCOY TYNER/JOE HENDERSON—FORCES OF NATURE—
BLUE NOTE
TUBBY HAYES—NO BLUES—JAZZ IN BRITAIN
FREDDIE HUBBARD 5TET—AT ONKEL POS CARNEGIE HALL—
NDR INFO
SHELLY MANNE & HIS MEN—JAZZ FROM THE PACIFIC
NORTHWEST-REEL TO REAL
SONNY STITT/RED HOLLOWAY—AT CORDEN'S PLACE—JAZZ
REWIND
MEL BROWN—CHICKEN FAT—IMPULSE
B.B. KING—LIVE IN JAPAN--GEFFEN
CANNONBALL ADDERLEY-BURNIN' IN BORDEAUX/POPPIN' IN
PARIS - ELEMENTAL



NEW RELEASES - SCOTT YANOW

RICKY ALEXANDER - JUST FOUND JOY - TURTLE BAY
KENNY BARRON - BEYOND THIS PLACE - PIAS
LORI BELL - RECORDA ME - REMEMBERING JOE HENDERSON -
SELF-RELEASED
BRIAN BROMBERG - LAFARO - SELF-PRODUCED
CLAYTON-HAMILTON JAZZ ORCHESTRA - AND SO IT GOES
- R.M.I. RECORDS
VIYAY IYER - COMPASSION - ECM
DANNY JONOKUCHI BIG BAND - A DECADE - BANDSTAND

Top Recordings 2024



JON DE LUCIA – THE BRUBECK OCTET PROJECT – MUSAEM CLAUDIUM RECORDINGS
GARY URWIN JAZZ ORCHESTRA – FLYING COLORS - SUMMIT VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA –CENTENNIAL: THE MUSIC OF THAD JONES – BCM+D RECORDS

REISSUES, HISTORICAL - SCOTT YANOW

DON BYAS – CLASSIC SESSIONS 1944-1946 – MOSAIC
NAT KING COLE – LIVE AT THE BLUE NOTE CHICAGO – ICONIC
TERRY GIBBS DREAM BAND – VOL. 7: THE LOST TAPES, 1959 – WHALING CITY SOUND
JAMES P. JOHNSON – WORLD BROADCAST RECORDINGS – SOLO ART
ART PEPPER – THE COMPLETE MAIDEN VOYAGE RECORDINGS – OMNIVORE
SONNY ROLLINS – FREEDOM WEAVER - RESONANCE
PHAROAH SANDERS –PHAROAH – LUAKA BOP
JOHNNY SMITH – THE LAST NIGHT AT SHANER’S – PME RECORDS
ART TATUM – JEWELS IN THE TREASURE BOX – RESONANCE
COOTIE WILLIAMS – CONCERT FOR COOTIE 1928-62 – ACROBAT



NEW RELEASES - LUDWIG VANTRIKT

TIZIANO TONONI & EMANUELE PARRINI – OTHER INTERACTIONS ...ON JULY 5TH - (FELMAY RECORDS FY 7078 -2024)
RYAN KEBERLE – BRIGHT MOMENTS (POSI-TONE PR8261 - 2024)
ANTHONY BRANKER & IMAGINE - SONGS MY MOM LIKED (ORIGIN RECORDS 82896 - 2024)
MICHAEL SARIAN - LIVE AT CLIFF BELL'S (SHIFTING PARADIGM RECORDS SP208 -2024)
RAHSAAN BARBER & EVERYDAY MAGIC - SIX WORDS (JAZZ MUSIC CITY - 2024)
BEHN GILLECE - STICK TOGETHER (POSI -TONE PR8256 - 2024)
MARY HALVORSON - CLOUDWARD" (NONESUCH RECORDS - 2024)
JULIEN KNOWLES - AS MANY, AS ONE (SELF PRODUCED 2024)
ANDREW HILL SEXTET PLUS 10 - A BEAUTIFUL DAY, REVISTED (PALMETTO RECORDS - 2024. TWO LPS)
DARIUS JONES - LEGEND OF E'BOI (AUM FIDELITY 120-1 2024)



NEW RELEASES – KEN WEISS

KRIS DAVIS TRIO – RUN THE GAUNTLET – PYROCLASTIC
TYSHAWN SOREY TRIO – THE SUSCEPTIBLE NOW – PI
PATRICIA BRENNAN SEPTET – BREAKING STRETCH – PYROCLASTIC
MATT MITCHELL – ZEALOUS ANGLES – PI
KIRA KIRA – KIRA KIRA LIVE – ALISTER SPENCE MUSIC
CHARLES LLOYD – THE SKY WILL STILL BE THERE TOMMOROW – BLUE NOTE
THE MESSTHETICS AND JAMES BRANDON LEWIS – IMPULSE
VIJAY IYER – COMPASSION – ECM
MATT SHIPP - NEW CONCEPTS IN PIANO TRIO JAZZ – ESP-DISK
ANDREW HILL SEXTET PLUS TEN – A BEAUTIFUL DAY, REVISTED - PALMETTO



2024 TOP HISTORICAL RECORDING – KEN WEISS

SUN RA - LIGHTS ON A SATELLITE : LIVE AT THE LEFT BANK – RESONANCE
PHIL HAYNES' 4 HORNS & WHAT? – THE COMPLETE AMERICAN RECORDINGS – CORNER STORE JAZZ
MAL WALDRON & STEVE LACY – THE MIGHTY WARRIORS – ELEMENTAL
YUSEF LATEF – ATLANTIS LULLABY – THE CONCERT FROM AVIGNON – ELEMENTAL
SUN RA – AT THE SHOWCASE: LIVE IN CHICAGO 76-77 – JAZZ DETECTIVE



Top Ten Concerts 2024

Top Ten Philadelphia Gigs 2024 Ken Weiss



1/6/24 William Parker's In Order To Survive (Parker (b), Cooper-Moore (p), Rob Brown (as), Juan Pablo Carletti (d) and special guest Bobby Zankel (as) at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop). A stunning set of improvised music that shifted seamlessly from raucous Avant-Garde Jazz to tender spiritual forms.



1/28 John Blum (p)/ Michael Foster (sax)/Brandon Lopez (b) at The Perch (Fire Museum Presents) featured three artists who share friendship and a tight knit connection. They've committed their lives to free improvisation in such a genuine way that their music gushes forth from their innards like bucketfuls of blood. Not for the faint of heart.



3/9 Sun Ra Arkestra directed by Marshall Allen at City Winery featured the band firing on all solar cylinders. Allen at 2.5 months shy of 100, was in top form, spending more time on alto than he has over the past few years in town. Saxophonist Knoel Scott was an animated conductor who ran a tight ship.



3/16 Larry Goldings/Peter Bernstein/Bill Stewart at Chris' Jazz Café. Considered to be the top organ trio for the past 30 years, they're music is still fresh and synergistic on covers of standards or each other's tunes. Goldings has gotten his internet acclaim as a humorist, and he was on point as an organist and first-rate funny man this night.



4/7 Mat Maneri's Ash Quartet at The Perch (Fire Museum Presents) with Lucian Ban (p), Brandon Lopez (b), and Randy Peterson (d) was an artful display of angst and fire. Maneri is a fan of melancholy, and he had the band to bring his vision of sorrow and loss to life.



5/11 Bobby Zankel's Wonderful Sound 3 with pianist Cooper-Moore and percussionist Pheeroan akLaff at the Black Squirrel Club (Fire Museum Presents). A first time meetup of the three heavyweights that led

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to great crescendos and decrescendos and unexpected portions of great beauty. Thankfully this was recorded for future release.

5/31 Nicole Mitchell's Black Earth Ensemble at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) with Mitchell (flt, elec), Mankwe Ndosi (vcl), Darius Jones (as), Chris Williams (tpt), Angelica Sanchez (p), Teddy Rankin-Parker (cel), Luke Stewart (b), Avreeayl Ra (d) performing Mitchell's "Xenogenesis Suite," inspired by Afrofuturist author Octavia Butler, channeled the emotional turmoil of Butler's writing into a nine-part suite that shifted moods and genres, often creating walls of glittering sounds.



6/8 PRISM Quartet's world premiere of Generate Music at World Café Live. The work was designed to explore the ties between Black and Jewish Americans featuring musicians who each added an original work to tell nine points of view including David Gilmore (g), David Krakauer (cl), Diane Monroe (vln), Reuben Rogers (b), Susan Watts (tpt, vcl), Tyshawn Sorey (d) and Ursula Rucker (vcl).



8/23 Isaiah Collier and The Chosen Few at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) with Orrin Evans (p), Jon Michel (b) and Khary Abdul-Shaheed (d). Collier continued his skyrocketing ascent towards stardom with a rousing and spiritual presentation.



9/20 Shimmer Wince at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop). Anna Webber (ts, flt), Adam O'Farrill (tpt), Christopher Hoffman (cel), Elias Stemeseder (synth) and Lesley Mok (d) crafted music based on just intonation that constantly evolved and surprised.



11/16 Dezron Douglas Quartet at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) with Emilio Modeste (ts, ss), Joe Dyson Jr. (d) and David Virelles (p) had the audience screaming from the first few minutes until the last, making this the top gig of the year.

Contributors

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KEN WEISS (Interviews, Photos, Short Takes) has been documenting the Philadelphia jazz and experimental music scene with photography since 1992 and has written the *Cadence Short Takes* column since 2003 as an attempt to defeat the conventional adage that, once played, the music is "lost to the air." He has also completed numerous interviews for *Cadence* and *Jazz Inside Magazine*.

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

Herb Robertson
Sara Serpa
Susan Alcorn
Lakecia Benjamin
Brandon Ross

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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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PHILADELPHIA, PA: Idris Ackamoor & The Pyramids played at the Painted Bride Art Center (Ars Nova Workshop) on 9/16 for what was their second of two nights in town. The Chicago-born leader, now based in San Francisco, has led versions of The Pyramids for over 50 years. His band was a very early Afrofuturism band – formed 30 years before the term was coined! Ackamoor earned his credibility as part of the famed coterie of musicians who trained under Cecil Taylor at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio and then went on to study extensively in Africa. The band this night included Dr. Margaux Simmons (who also trained at Antioch and co-founded the band) on flute and vocals, Sandra Poindexter on violin and electric Zeta violin, Bobby Cobb on electric guitar and vocals, Heshima Mark Williams on electric bass, George Hearst on drums and Shakoor Hakeem on congas and percussion. Opening with a walk through the audience, Ackamoor blew a didgeridoo before strapping on an Electric Keytar, to lay down the bass groove, and then on to tenor saxophone for melody and to solo on “We Be All Africans,” a song calling for community, and then “An Angel Fell,” inspired by Ackamoor’s work in a South African women’s prison. “Rhapsody in Belin” was announced by the leader – “This bad boy got a million hits on Spotify!” That Jazz/Rock tune was enlivened with a trading fours midsection between sax, flute and violin. Next came songs from a brand new release composed during the pandemic triggered by feelings of, “Celebration of life, anger and respect for the ancestors.” “Thank You God” was especially effective with Ackamoor hitting a deep Pharoah Sanders’ vein on his tenor sax. Alto saxophonist Bobby Zankel, who, along with Ackamoor, was part of Cecil Taylor’s Black Music Ensemble at Antioch, was called in for a surprise guest hit to cover the new album’s title piece, “Afro Futuristic Dreams.” Ackamoor described the tune as, “A psychedelic San Francisco experience inspired by George Clinton and Parliament-Funkadelic.” Zankel’s blistering solo peeled paint and prompted the leader to a heightened display of physical dexterity at the piano. Ackamoor displayed his incredible wide-ranging dexterity late set but tap dancing – my favorite part came when he stood in place and side kicked with his right leg for a time and then checked his watch – before soon donning a metal washboard that he played with spoons. Ackamoor trained with noted tappers in San Francisco and views tap as, “A great healing force.” He views the use of the washboard as a tribute to New Orleans and utilizes it to build community. Ending the set with “Shaman,” Ackamoor announced, “We’re gonna play one more as long as we’re first in line for the bathroom at the end. Come on, I’ve been up here doing this for fifty years!”...Joshua Abrams’ Natural Information Society settled into Solar Myth (ANW) for a three-night residency 9/21-23. The first night was a one-off performance to remember with Phila-based legend Marshall Allen (EWI, Casio kybd), sitting in for the set, making his first performance ever with Abrams on guimbri, Chicago legend Ari Brown on tenor sax, Lisa Alvarado on harmonium, Jason Stein on bass clarinet and drummer Mikel Patrick Avery. Founded in 2010, the NIS has been described as playing “ecstatic minimalism” – an “expansive form of minimalism based on repeated and overlaid rhythmic patterns, ostinatos and modality.” At the soundcheck, Allen looked at a sheet of music but Abrams told him, “Marshall, anything you play will be good.” Late in the soundcheck, Allen spontaneously started singing a melodic remnant to the band between songs and soon they all picked up on it and played it with joyful delight. The actual performance began with Maestro Allen filtering spacey sounds with

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Idris Ackamoor & The Pyramids at the Painted Bride Art Center on 9/16
Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Joshua Abrams' Natural Information Society with Marshall Allen at Solar Myth on 9/21
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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Joseph Daley's Tuba Trio at Solar Myth on 9/28
Photo credit © Ken Weiss



MSSV at Solar Myth on 10/14
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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Andrew Lamb at Hope's Beacon Baptist Church on 9/22
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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Sara Serpa at the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Atonement on 10/10
Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Trevor Watts/Jamie Harris at the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Atonement on 10/27
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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Harold López-Nussa's group at Chris' Jazz Café on 11/10
Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Stephen Gauci and Adam Lane at The Rotunda on 12/13
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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Susan Alcorn and Dave Ballou at the Perch on 11/11
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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Bobby Zankel and the Wonderful Sound 8 at the Black Squirrel Club on 12/23
Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Brandon Ross at Solar Myth on 12/8
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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Lakecia Benjamin at Bucks County Community College on 11/17
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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reverberation on his EWI followed by Brown's dark and unusual voicings through his horn. They mostly played through the set with Abrams, Alvarado and Avery holding down a drone effect while Brown, Allen and Stein dropped in and out. Abrams announced Allen as, "He is one of the greatest musicians of all time and it kind of shatters my brain to be playing with him right now!" After Abrams thanked everyone for coming, and the night was seemingly coming to a close, Allen picked up his EWI and started playing solo for a few minutes, edging the band to continue playing. The NIS members looked around at each other, smiled, and joined in for a long section that proved to be the best part of the night, as they let Allen lead them into a more aggressive and uncharted space. It was endearing to see Abrams with a wide mouthed, open smile, bending over for a long segment, making eye contact across the stage, sharing the moment with Alvarado, his wife. Post-set, Alvarado spoke of having both Brown and Allen in the band – "It's gonna be a memorable night for the rest of our lives." ...The Producer's Guild celebrated John Coltrane's birthday a day early with tenor saxophonist Andrew Lamb and bassist Nimrod Speaks on 9/22 at Hope's Beacon Baptist Church. The drummer never showed for the gig but they made do as a duo. Lamb had never played with Speaks before but Speaks' pungent pizzicato held up well against Lamb's full, rough-edged tenor. The set of Coltrane-related compositions included "Equinox," "Impressions," "A Love Supreme," "Transition," "After the Rain" and "Nature Boy." Although the drummer was missed, the presentation as a duet stripped some pop and sizzle from the performance and brought home a more intimate and soulful presentation that resonated well with the audience...Low brass veteran Joseph Daley led a band at Solar Myth (ANW) on 9/28 under false pretenses – his Tuba Trio was neither a trio nor did it feature a tuba. Daley played sousaphone, euphonium, piano and a Native American Drone flute, and the "Trio" was comprised of esteemed percussionist Warren Smith, multi-instrumentalist Scott Robinson and bassist Ken Filiano. They were touring in celebration of the 100th birthday of Sam Rivers, in whose own Tuba Trio youngsters Daley and Smith cut their teeth. As the band took to the stage to rousing applause, Robinson comically said, "They like us already!" Daley explained that this was to be Free improvisation – they were going to have an open, unplanned conversation together. Opening with Smith activating a held triangle, the music quickly thickened with a revolving door of changing instruments. The leader began on his massive sousaphone while Smith was free to roam from vibes to drums and back while Robinson sat amongst an arsenal of toys – tenor sax, bass sax, silver 6-hole flute, tarogato, frumpet (a mix between French horn and bass trumpet) and a handheld chime device made of oversized nails that was custom made and given to him by a friend. "Hey, I gotta have some fun!" Robinson told me. The music featured an organic, non-forced, emotive progression that would have made the great Sam Rivers smile. It was nice to see Daley, as well as Smith, in a showcased role as most often they've been relegated to shadowy sideman positions. After the set, Daley announced, "Any questions?," and then answered a few questions and spoke about his long relationship with Rivers. The always fascinating Scott Robinson informed me that he continues to toil on two pieces of work up until 4 AM most non-performing nights in his workshop. His largest project is a symphony for 130 instruments that he's been hammering out for the

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past four and a half years. He has to compose for each instrument and he's only a fifth of the way through it. That sounds amazing but perhaps a wee bit tough to tour...Portuguese-born/Harlem-based vocalist Sara Serpa stopped at the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Atonement (Fire Museum Presents) along with guitarist André Matos and Dov Manski (p, synth) on 10/10 as part of a 7 city tour in support of a new release. Serpa possesses a strikingly beautiful voice that sends chills or warmth based on her desire. The set included a couple songs each in English and Portuguese with the bulk of the pieces being ethereal, wordless vocalizations that combined dramatically with the (mostly) spare electric guitar playing of Matos and sympathetic keyboard work of Manski. Opening with "From a Distance" and catchy melody "Carlos," Serpa sang "Degrowth" in English which was inspired after a walk through the Bronx Botanical Garden. She composed the song as a cautionary tale on consumerism. Serpa's words included – "Buy less, drive less, slow down, listen more, look more," all done in a dreamlike fashion. This was certainly good advice considering our current complicated world. "Primavera," which translates to springtime in Portuguese, was another beautifully delivered piece that obviously struck close to home for Serpa. "Calma" was a highlight with its gorgeous melody and compelling collaboration with guitar and keyboards. Matos effectively mixed in some episodes of unexpected fleet, advanced technique fingering late set, demonstrating another side of his capabilities and led Fire Museum Presents head honcho Steven Tobin to happily (and accurately) pronounce the set as – "Astrud Gilberto meets Prog Rock!"...The raucous MSSV at Solar Myth (ANW) on 10/14 was as thrilling and unnerving as advertised. The trio of guitarist Mike Baggetta on lead vocals, who wowed with crazy guitar chops and his whammy bar enthusiasm, along with drummer Stephen Hodges (Tom Waits, Mavis Staples, David Lynch) and Minutemen bassist Mike Watt [Iggy Pop and the Stooges, FIREHOSE]. The trio's music is unclassifiable – the publicity leading up to the gig listed it as post-genre-improv-Jazz-Rock but perhaps Punk Jazz Rock is appropriate. It was hard to decipher most of what Baggetta was screaming but the tune where he traded vocal portions back and forth with Watt was entrancing due to the joy Watt displayed in delivering his portions – reminiscent of a child getting away with doing mischief. The buff-looking Hodges pushed the band ahead with powerhouse drumming. Guitarist Ava Mendoza opened for MSSV with a solo performance and would have stolen the night from a lesser headliner band. She delivered with killer chops and sang on a number of tunes and then later joined the trio for their first piece, forming a deadly guitar duo with Baggetta...That same night, a mere 14 blocks or so away, the Bay Area's Rent Romus was performing at Pageant Soloveev (Fire Museum Presents) as part of a benefit for Artsakh Relief Aid - the Armenian Relief Society. Fire Museum's Steven Tobin moved to Philadelphia from San Francisco years ago and credits Romus, a staunch community activist, with being the first one to demonstrate to him that music can raise funds for just causes. Romus was on a very short tour out east with his Actual/ Actual band - Gerard Cox (kybd), Josh Strange (vib, tpt) and Troy Kunkler (d) and special guest for a few tunes – Matt Lavelle (b cl). Romus offered a healing vibe, along with some intense playing on alto, tenor, (at one point, blowing through both horns at once) and small instruments. He hadn't played in town for over 17 years and noted that his reputation has not spread to the East Coast – "The last time I played New York, 3

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listeners and a dog came out. I can get 3 listeners to come out at home!"... Ambler Musicivic presented Eric and Will at the Temple Ambler Learning Center Auditorium on 10/18. Dutch trumpeter Eric Vloeimans ["vLew-e-mans"] and American accordionist Will Holshouser made for an unusual but compatible pairing, playing mostly original music. Vloeimans made quite a statement with his mop of fluffy white hair, shiny, bright fuchsia pants and flowery shirt, in addition to his virtuosic horn work that delved into delicate areas rather than turbulence to demonstrate stellar control of his instrument. A number of the pieces covered were his "Innnermission" compositions composed while waiting out the pandemic which he related to as an intermission. Of course, when there's a Dutchman involved, humor will follow, and after four of his new intermission works were played, it was announced that, "Now you can say you've been to a show with four intermissions!" A Prince tune also popped up – "Slow Love" – without the sexy element of Prince, as well as Kermit the Frog's "The Rainbow Connection," which Holshouser explained as, "We both love the Muppet Show." Highlights included Holshouser's "Redbud Winter," a song written for his late mother and inspired by the end of winter in the Southern town he grew up in, and Vloeimans' "Innermission" composition inspired by a Romanian band that played on and on when he was a youth. The duo invited questions from the audience and a listener lamented, "My daughter decided two weeks ago to play accordion. Do you have any advice for a beginner on the instrument?" Holshouser smilingly asked, "Do you have any idea why?," to which the audience member answered with, "I think she's a little bit off"...English sax legend Trevor Watts was on the second stop of a sixteen gig, rare American tour with percussionist Jamie Harris on 10/27 at the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Atonement (Fire Museum Presents) and wowed many in the audience to a standing ovation. Watts first came to prominence in the 1960s by co-founding Spontaneous Music Ensemble and Amalgam which expanded the parameters of Jazz in Europe and beyond. He later delved into pioneering work in World music. Watts lounged on an oversized chair prior to the set and spoke softly but once hitting the stage, it was clear that at age 84 he had lost none of his ferocity on his alto or soprano horns. Sporting a birds nest of white hair that would have put Einstein to shame, Watts began by saying, "Okay, off we go." Tune after tune brimmed with intense and exploratory blowing with frequent circular breathing that was neither atonal nor threatening. His attention to melody, a constant throughout his career, often had a South African feel, and matched well with the powerful conga work by Harris, who expanded the sonics with occasional cymbal flashes. After two songs, Harris announced, "We're going to play a Jazz standard," as Watts looked over the music chart and announced, "The problem I have is that I have absolutely no memory for these things!" A highlight came with the performance of "Ghana Friends" which recalled the memory of passed African collaborators. Watts has had quite a career but remains underrecognized in the States...Chris' Jazz Café doesn't often feature Latin Jazz presentations but that may change after the crowd response and support given to Harold López-Nussa hit on 11/10. The second set was (mainly) a rambunctious hour of the leader's musical world that's an equal blend of Latin and modern Jazz. López-Nussa recently moved from Havana to the non-repressive setting of Toulouse, France where he joined friends. It was a choice made easier by holding dual

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citizenship in Cuba and France (his grandmother was French). His reputation has been growing since winning the 2005 Montreux Jazz Piano Competition and with his recent Blue Note release being produced by Michael League. His standout band included Swiss-born harmonica virtuoso Grégoire Maret, Luques Curtis on bass and Harold's brother, the animated Ruy Adrián López-Nussa on drums. The songs were complex (and dense at times) but handled nicely by the well-schooled group. Maret was a revelation – not only with his playing but also with his effort. His body contortions squeezed out sounds that added unexpected flavor, and when he turned around to play face-to-face with Ruy deep into the set, the band really took off. Beginning with the jaunty “Habana Sin Sábanas” and onto “El Clarin de la Selva,” “Lobo’s Cha,” “Afro en Toulouse,” and “Tierra Mia,” a grand element of joy ran through the music and the band’s demeanor as smiles were often apparent. Curtis, who’s been playing with López-Nussa for a long time, explained post-set that some of his smiles were due to a couple of songs being sprung on him for the first time and having to make up his playing on the spot. It might have also been that his wife and small children were in the audience... The Perch, a two-story building run by Jeff Carpineta that serves as a community center with an eye on recycling and maintaining the Emerald Wildflower Garden (a bird heaven) adjacent to it in East Kensington/Fishtown area, has been an occasional venue site used by Fire Museum Presents. It’s an added bonus that the site supplies gratis food and adult drink along with a (very) homey and welcoming atmosphere. Allegories (Michael McNeill, p; Susan Alcorn, pedal steel guitar; Dave Ballou, tpt; Shelly Purdy, vibs) performed there on 11/11. All but McNeill live in the Baltimore area so that and a likeminded approach to creative music made it natural for the group to form. Alcorn, a singular talent on her instrument, acknowledged prior to the set that, “Sometimes it’s hard for me to play in this group because I want to watch Shelly. Nobody plays like her!” And right she was, Purdy was into mischief all night long – playing with 4 mallets, playing with 2 mallets in one hand and utilizing the other hand to dampen the tone bars, playing prepared vibes, rustling the resonators with long wooden brushes, lifting and dropping the bars, as well as using a file on them. Post-set, she said lightly to the band, “And that’s why nobody lets me borrow their equipment! I have to lug my own stuff around.” The boundary-pushing quartet covered 5 compositions filled with sounds from extended techniques and shifting colors and textures. When Carpineta announced there was plenty of time for more music, the band’s pregnant pause and obvious lack of other prepared material was palpable. Finally, McNeill began with dense piano that was unlike what had come previously. Eventually Ballou responded in a sparring-like fashion. In time, the whole band was playing Free, peeling back layers that composition hid earlier in the set...Lakecia Benjamin was all revved up and a ball of energy at Bucks County Community College on 11/17 for her performance and willed the listeners to meet her feisty level. Hot off a European tour that began in Sao Paulo, Brazil - “Sounds fancy doesn’t it?,” she announced, “We’re gonna party tonight!” Dressed in an outfit that would have made Miles Davis jealous – reflective silver top and gold pants with shiny silver sneakers - she deployed high energy and a positive vibe of acceptance and inclusion. Joined by Zaccai Curtis on piano and keyboards, often with one hand on each, Ivan Taylor on bass and drummer E.J. Strickland, she delved into post-modern Bop and some Funk areas, as well as covering her

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politically themed “Amerikkan Skin,” which featured Benjamin’s recitation of words penned by activist Angela Davis. The night’s highlight came with her tribute to John and Alice Coltrane – “I don’t know if you have a seat belt but it’s time to buckle up!” Her cover of “My Favorite Things” included a fun high-pitched alto showdown with Strickland followed by a kaleidoscopic version of “Amazing Grace” in duet with Curtis that furthered the spiritual atmosphere. The hard working leader also spoke with pride about being up for three current Grammy awards – “I went to bed with zero and woke up with three! ... we’re gonna see what they do,” drawing cheers from newly won over fans in the audience...Hard to believe but veteran saxophonist Stephen Gauci made his Philadelphia debut on 12/3 along with his powerhouse trio - Adam Lane (b) and Kevin Shea (d) at The Rotunda (Fire Museum Presents). He’s been busy building a scene in Brooklyn. His playing of the tenor sax can best be described as frantic with bursts of activity and wild man intensity - it’s almost as if the instrument is playing him. Lane and Shea provided relentless support and matched Gauci’s sound patterns with their own while stroking the fire from new angles. After the set, Lane was overheard to say, “That was really fun, that was really good.” ... Since drummer Chad Taylor moved to Philadelphia a few years back, he’s played in all sorts of projects and settings as a sideman but on 12/8 at Solar Myth (ANW) he took over the leader’s role with a new trio he put together with good friends who had never played together before - pianist Angelica Sanchez and guitarist Brandon Ross. He’s calling it Br-An-Ch, a cool moniker derived from their first names and perhaps a tribute to the late jaimie branch (Taylor was a member of her Fly Or Die group?) Taylor was a wonder, driving the band all night with evolving rhythms and episodes of melodic, driving sections that were picked up by Sanchez, who spent the majority of her time off the piano and on keyboard, a much better match for Ross’ engaging and often warm pedal-mediated guitar effects. Taylor is eyeing a 2024 recording... Satoko Fujii and Natsuki Tamura (or Kappa Maki to sushi fans) arrived the night before from Japan to play University Lutheran (Bowerbird) on 12/9 before heading up to NYC’s The Stone. Although the husband and wife duo play together on a regular basis, they made the performance (as they always do) feel like the first time they were meeting on stage. Commencing with episodic single piano notes and tiny percussive instruments, their music evolved over a landscape of sounds that were surprisingly often spacious and gentle. Tamura can blow non-musical trumpet effects with the best of them but on this night he showed restraint, adding color and sound to Fujii’s magical playing which shifted between intricate portions, muscular, roiling areas, as well as times when she elicited ringing, kora-like notes from her right hand. Fujii also spent time working inside the piano to great effect. Tamura’s crosscurrents of musical turbulence and counterpoint matched Fujii’s work and it was so heartwarming to see them smiling at each other and laughing during a late section where Tamura played whimsically with his small instruments and Fujii mirrored back his sounds. At the end, Fujii announced, “The outside is getting colder but in here it is warm with music and love.” When a listener came up to Fujii to show that he had bought each of the 12 or so CDs she had brought to sell, she happily responded, “Oh, thank you. Now my bag is very light!” Fujii told me, “I was lucky he [Tamura] didn’t sing tonight, usually, he sings in a very strange voice!” ...Bobby Watson’s quartet (Jordan Williams, p;

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Curtis Lundy, b; Victor Jones, d) at the Philadelphia Clef Club of Jazz and Performing Arts on 12/16 was a homecoming for the young pianist who grew up in Philly and did his training at the Clef Club. His parents and grandmother proudly sat at the front table as dad taped his son while grandmother gushed, "I played piano so we had a piano in the house, I just didn't know which one of the kids was going to play it." Radio personality J. Michael Harrison announced the band but mistakenly named the wrong drummer. He said Victor Lewis, another of Watson's frequently used drummers, instead of Victor Jones, prompting Jones to come to the stage and tongue-in-cheekily say, "It's Victor Jones! Don't mess with me!" The funnier part came later in the set when Watson named Victor Lewis to have just soloed before correcting himself - "Now I'm doing it!" Starting off with Jackie McClean's "Condition Blue" and then "Sweet Dreams," Watson let Williams solo to start the next song and the young pianist demonstrated some mean Ragtime skills - mixing in Scott Joplin's "The Entertainer." A set highlight came with the unexpected appearance of vocalist TC The 3rd, the son of acclaimed Philadelphia organist Trudy Pitts and drummer Mr. C., who headed the Clef Club for many years. As Lundy soloed with ringing pizzicato bass to open "The Creator Has A Master Plan," TC artfully echoed Leon Thomas' yodeling portions. Late renditions of "Love Remains" and "In Case You Missed It" by the quartet sent everyone home happy...Alto saxophonist/composer Bobby Zankel has been making it a point to celebrate the winter solstice (and his 12/21 birthday) each year with an appearance by his Bobby Zankel and the Wonderful Sound 8. This year's treat, which featured Sumi Tonooka, p; Bryan Rogers, ts; Fabien Enger, t; Lee Smith, el b; Chad Taylor, d; Shakoor Hakeem, cga; Sekai'afua Zankel, poet, came at Fishtown's Black Squirrel Club, a converted 1890's steam plant that's now a totally hip nonprofit art space and bar with industrial high ceilings, wood benches for seats and loads of cool odds and ends and antique ephemera throughout. Many bands run the risk of being swallowed up by the huge space but that was no problem for Zankel's collection of heavy hitters. The septet unleashed "wonderful sounds" that throbbed with energy, soared with space and often blistered, especially surrounding Zankel's stellar semifrequent solos. Tonooka is always a joy to hear, combining power and subtlety, and the combination of Taylor and Hakeem, who shared an intense connectiveness, along with Lee's fibrous bass lines, built numerous heads of (fittingly) steam that delightfully bristled behind the frontline horn players. At the break, Hakeem stood up from his congas and said, "This rhythm section is crazy!" Sekai'afua Zankel's occasional appearances added to the spiritually infused performance. Spitting truth on many important topics such as changes in destiny, social equality and humanity such as - "How exciting to savor the flavor of a second." The band covered Zankel's classic tune "The Next Time I See You," written after Wayne Shorter's wife died in the tragic plane crash, and a couple pieces connected to one of his mentors - Ornette Coleman. Post-set, Zankel, one of the most humble of people, and the last person to ever promote himself, gushed about his new recording A Change of Destiny - "Listen to it straight through! Jaleel Shaw and Robin Eubanks and everyone plays really outstanding..."

Ken Weiss

Herb Robertson It's Deeper Than What it Looks Like

By Ken Weiss

Clarence "Herb" Robertson (b. February 21, 1951, Plainfield, New Jersey) is best known as a Free Jazz trumpeter with extreme chops but he's also played other horns including flugelhorn, cornet, pocket trumpet and valve trombone. Robertson has worked at extended technique on his horns and mined multitudes of mutes and toys to further his unique sounds. He trained at Berklee and studied for many years with noted Philadelphia brass pedagogue Dr. Donald S. Reinhardt, who helped restore his embouchure after tragedy struck. Robertson has worked with Tim Berne, Ray Anderson, Mark Helias, Anthony Davis, Paul Motian, Bill Frisell, Satoko Fujii, Barry Guy, Joe Lovano, Dewey Redman, Steve Swell, Dave Ballou, Joe Fonda, Phil Haynes and many other influential musicians around the world. This interview took place in his New Jersey home that was jammed with instruments, music charts and mouthpieces on January 7 and March 12, 2023.

Cadence: *Your first name is Clarence. Why do you go by Herb?*

Herb Robertson: When I was in 7th grade in junior high in Piscataway, New Jersey, I was playing the trumpet and Herb Alpert had a hit with the Tijuana Brass on the Top 40. I think it was like one of the only instrumentals that had horns at that time, around 1961. I was just starting to get into Jazz and the kids decided to call me Herb instead of Clarence. Clarence was my father's name. I'm a junior, and they didn't want to call me Clarence anymore so they called me Herb because of Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass. That's what showed up in my yearbook, it stuck all through high school, so I just kept it.

Cadence: *Is Herb your middle name?*

Robertson: No, Clifford is my middle name. It would have been cool to be called Clifford Robertson or Cliff Robertson. Too bad I didn't know Miles, I could have nicknamed myself Miles or Freddie. I was actually listening to Herb Alpert when I was a kid before I got into Jazz.

Cadence: *What's your current performing status? You don't seem to be as busy as you once were.*

Robertson: No, the best productive years of my life were 1984-1997. That's when I was doing a lot of European stuff. Things started slowing down when I moved back to New Jersey after living in Germany. Living in New Jersey, I now had to travel to New York with a car unlike when I was living in Brooklyn. It was a financial decision. It was cheaper to live in New Jersey than in the city so I moved. When I moved back from Germany, my apartment in Brooklyn was basically gone, the rent went way up. I couldn't hold onto the lease, I had no place to live, so I came down here to New Jersey to take care of my mom because she had dementia and my dad passed away years ago before her. She had a spare bedroom so I moved in with her to take care of her until her health got so bad that my sister had to come down here to help me and we both ended

Interview: Herb Robertson



Herb Robertson
Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Herb Robertson
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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up staying down here when mom passed away. I eventually moved to where I am today. I had to stop playing for a while to take care of my mom and that's what happened careerwise with things slowing down.

Cadence: *How much playing are you doing now?*

Robertson: I recently got back from Rochester at the Bop Shop and Erie, Pennsylvania with drummer Phil Haynes and bassist Ken Filiano, and the Edgefest with violinist Jason Kao Hwang's group. I have stuff coming up with Knuckleball with cornetist Stephen Haynes.

Cadence: *You've got lead trumpet chops, you're a strong music reader and you're a topnotch improviser. You've got incredible musical talent yet you've not received anywhere near the fame you deserve, especially in the States. Why do you think that is?*

Robertson: Who knows? I was in the wrong place at the wrong/right time or the wrong/right place at the wrong time. I don't know – self-promotion maybe. That was not my strong point, so probably if I'd pushed myself a little bit more in that aspect it would have been better? And then I had this whole approach where I didn't want to play out too often – I wanted to keep it fresh. In other words, when I would finally have a gig, people would say, "Hey, where've you been? It's gonna be great to hear you again," instead of people hearing me all the time and saying, "Well, we know what that guy plays like. We don't get to go see him anymore." That was my whole approach. That's all I know. The lead trumpet thing? I kind of gave that up years ago. I was known as a lead player when I went to school up at Berklee and I was pursuing that for a while. I had these super high chops, and I was doing that, but then I got into the Jazz thing and it was like a dichotomy fighting – should I play lead or should I play Jazz? Maybe I could do both? I mean the lead thing helped my chops for Jazz but then the Jazz thing was kind of interrupting the lead aspect. Plus playing lead trumpet, it's a lot of calisthenics on the trumpet to keep the chops up, and there's no big bands. I mean how many big bands are there for you to play lead trumpet?

Cadence: *Music critic and musician Chris Kelsey wrote in The Penguin Guide to Jazz that you are "far and away the most original Jazz trumpeter playing in the early 21st century" and that your "voice is utterly original, maybe too original for [your] own good; many less ambitious trumpeters [your] age have made bigger names for themselves." Is that accurate?*

Robertson: It's pretty accurate. A lot of my playing back then was scary, it wasn't traditional. I was really going in a different direction with the trumpet, more of a sound aspect into the instrument. My whole approach was trying to make the trumpet not sound like a trumpet [Laughs] because I was getting tired of that trumpet sound which would kind of interrupt things. I mean, I'm coming into a Free improv, I'd hear all these beautiful sounds happening in it, and then the trumpet would come in and it would be so obvious that it's a trumpet, and it would kind of ruin the improv. So, my whole approach was to try to cloak it, cloak the music with the trumpet. Make it be in there, but maybe

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people don't know that it's there. That's why I started getting into the mutes.

Cadence: *You've made a commitment to playing in the moment and pushing the boundaries of spontaneous expression. You try never to repeat yourself. Why is that so important to you, especially when you're not playing to the same audience each night?*

Robertson: It's like a memory thing, I think, basically. I don't memorize what I'm playing. In other words, I don't try to learn licks for myself and stick to certain phrases that I enjoy playing. I just like that spontaneity. I like to surprise myself when I'm playing. If the audience gets surprised by it, great. Even if it is a different audience and they're hearing me for the first time, if I was duplicating myself, to them it's like hearing it the first time, but for me it would be boring. 'Here I am playing that stuff again – the same thing.' And that's what was happening when I was a Hardbop player when I was a teenager and into my early 20s. I was trying to play Bebop and Hardbop, but to me they were just phrases that I was trying to memorize/learn. If I was trying to duplicate a player like Freddie Hubbard, I felt that wasn't me. I was learning Freddie Hubbard, and I love Freddie Hubbard because he invented what he does. He came from Clifford and all of that but he turned it into his own thing, so my thing was trying to do that too - to get away from Bebop and Hardbop. I grew up in the '60s, there was so much music in the '60s – all the different World musics and Rock and Classical. I loved modern Classical music and I wanted to put all of those elements in my playing and composition too, later on.

Cadence: *Talk about your view on improvisation and the creation of music and how it may differ from other artists.*

Robertson: When I compose? It's the same as like I'm playing the trumpet. If I compose, it slows down everything. The process is slowing down, I'm not as spontaneous. Say if I'm sitting at a piano, and I want to compose something? Everything sounds pretty good. You know, I'll throw my hands down [Laughs] and I'll go, 'Well, that's a nice chord. Maybe I can work with that? What did I just play?' After I threw my hands down, I don't even know what chord it is, but it sounded pretty good. My fingers always seem to land in a nice spot that I like and I take notes and maybe work with that. As far as playing and improvising – I try not to think when I'm improvising, if that makes any sense? Because it's a non-thinking process. I think about improvising before I improvise, and when I start improvising, I try to empty everything out. It's more of like a clearing out of everything and I just wait for the music to happen, and it could be a while before I get started. Say if the band is playing and I have nothing to say yet, I'll sit there for a while until the muse hits me, until it hits me to do something. And if I do something, it's gotta be almost subconscious, from a more dreamy aspect where I'm going for soundscapes. I don't try to formulate anything, I try to let everything happen, and then when it starts going by itself, then I'll add structure to the improvisation. Maybe I'll start adding European structure, like recapitulation, song form, a phrase that

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I might play automatically, something might come out and I'll like it and I'll come back to it later, if I can remember. It'll come out differently but it will be close so it's like a variation on theme. So, there's a whole form approach, it's not as Free as you really think it is. I start out Free but then I give it form as I'm going along while at the same time, my ears are wide-open to what everybody else is playing. People have asked me if I want to do a solo trumpet recording but I'm really not into that. I like to have a group there because I play off of other people's sounds. I like contrasts. If someone's playing something high up there, I like to do something low down here – not to try to duplicate what they're doing. If that does happen, it happens automatically, it's not a conscious thing. Everything has to be without thought – it's almost like a Zen approach. I guess a lot of musicians do that when they improvise. They take the Zen approach, a more Eastern-type, meditative approach to the music. That's what I do.

Cadence: You've mastered extended technique on trumpet and feature all sorts of timbres and textures including screams, growls, clucks, bleats, blown air and rasps. How did you develop that and how does that all qualify as music?

Robertson: [Laughs] Yeah, well, it depends on where you place that as to qualify it as music. You just can't randomly throw that stuff around, you have to put it in there in a musical context. That's what I do. If it's gonna be raspy or clucks, the clucks gotta be in the right spot. They can't just be clucking for cluck's sake. [Laughs] Clucking for cluck's sake! That's a good title for a tune, right? "Cluck for cluck's sake," cluck!, cluck!, cluck!, cluck! And it's a vocal approach, right? I mean it's all vocal's technique. Whatever I can do on the trumpet, I can do with my voice. I think your best trumpet improvisers in Jazz had a great voice. A lot of them sang – Chet Baker, Louis Armstrong. I studied with a great teacher in Philadelphia, Dr. Donald S. Reinhardt, who straightened my chops out. He gave me the exercises to use. I studied with him from 1971 and he gave me these super chops so that I can play lead. In fact, [Laughs] he was a funny man, when I told him I wanted to get into playing Free, after I was doing his stuff, he says, "What are you doing? You don't need trumpet lessons anymore, you need a psychiatrist!" [Laughs] He goes, "Why are you doing that? You're gonna ruin everything we built up," because he wanted to go in the direction of traditional lead trumpet, symphonic trumpet, and all of a sudden I walked in one day – 'I want to play Free' and I started making all these noises on the trumpet and he goes, "What are you doing?" And I think that was it, but I had that backup to make all of those sounds where I could do all of this weird stuff with my embouchure to get those sounds out of the trumpet but then return to the natural sound of the horn when I wanted to. It was a super chop thing which took a lot of practicing which I don't do as much anymore [Laughs] but those were the days.

Cadence: Was there some inspiration for you to work on crafting those unusual sounds?

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Robertson: I was playing lead trumpet at the time I joined Tim Berne's band in New York. I was playing in big bands and dance bands as the lead in New Jersey, where I was still living. I had these super chops for doing lead and then when I played Tim's music, I could play all over the music, physically. So, that gave me the edge to do that with his music. I loved his written music because he gave you an aspect to be free during improvisations. So, that's where all of those sounds came from – having that regular trumpet training that I had from Berklee.

Cadence: *You've often said that you're a traditionalist at heart and that you don't want to leave the tradition behind.*

Robertson: It's hard, I think playing traditionally is difficult. It's kind of like being a Classical musician because being a Traditional Jazz player, playing Traditional Jazz, you have to really play a certain way and have those eighth notes down. I never gave up on that. Like I said, I tried really hard to be a really great Traditional Hardbop player but maybe my heart wasn't into it or I just couldn't hear it. It wasn't my music, it wasn't the street music that I grew up with, because a lot of that was street music when Bird and Dizzy played it. All those tunes were Tin Pan Alley and the American Songbook. That's what was in the streets, so they had to play that music. In the '60s and '70s, that music wasn't around anymore, everything was one chord. Miles Davis changed it into more of a one chordal thing and kind of opened it up. In a sense, it made it a little easier for me because I lived that music, instead of playing all those changes, which I learned at Berklee, the changes thing, but I never really got it down. I'm still trying to remember those changes. [Laughs]

Cadence: *As an Avant-Garde player, do you hear the tradition coming through in your music?*

Robertson: Yes, I hear it in the music. I think it's all connected somehow, it still has that sense of swing. No matter how Avant-Garde it gets, that sense of swing is still there and I think that's important to keep in Avant-Garde music. There's a sense of humor too. Avant-Garde music can get very cold and stiff and square. You see some of that stuff and it's not making it for me – you've gotta have a sense of humor with it. You've got to enjoy it, you've got to have fun. You've gotta have fun playing that music. If you're not gonna have fun playing the music, it just makes it so difficult and harder to listen to. People don't want to hear that music. When I first started getting into it, when it was on record, I said, 'I can dig that.' Listening to Ornette or late Coltrane but when I finally went to a live concert, that's what got me. You've got to hear that music live because then you can feel the emotion coming from the players. On a recording, you can't really get that, but after experiencing it live you can go back and listen to the recordings and say, 'Yeah, now I got it.' The general public doesn't get that today, there's no concerts and it's not played on the radio, except for certain college stations. It's not played on the radio so people don't get used to it. It's like the Chinese language doesn't make any sense to me

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Herb Robertson

Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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but I know it's a legitimate language. A lot of people understand it so it's real. Avant-Garde music, a lot of people don't understand it but it's real so they have to experience it live. Where I live there's no place to hear it. I mean you have to listen to the birds, [Laughs] they're more Avant-Garde than anything [out here].

Cadence: Another thing you're well-known for is your ambitious use of multiple mutes and extended mute technique, as well as the use of megaphones.

Robertson: I always seem to find a new mute and I'll bring them all to the gig. I'll have like 15 of them sometimes, on the floor, and only use 3 or 4, but they all have to be there, you know? [Laughs] I mean, I used to use all of them, when I was younger I could grab them quicker. I could go wham and switch really quick. Markus Stockhausen used to have a belt that he wore like a workers belt to hold hammers and tools. He put his mutes in that. That was a good idea, that way he didn't have to bend down and pick them off the floor. He just had to grab them. I'd like to play maybe 10 seconds with one mute and then take it out and put another mute in for 10 seconds, just so the colors would change. It's not playing a cup mute just to get the cup sound, the cup mute has a specific sound that I wanted at the time. It wasn't a sound to cut the volume down, it was just a way to blend in and disguise myself within the music. I remember early on, some reviewer of one of Tim's records, perhaps Fractured Fairy Tales, wrote, "Yeah, this is Tim's band and Herb Robertson doesn't play much on it," and Tim showed me the review. He said, "Check out this review, it says you don't play that much on the record but you played the whole time and the guy didn't hear you!" That's because I blended in. I told Tim, "That's the point, I was getting lost into it. I was blending into the music." If you take my element out then something would be missing. So, those mutes added into that and gave me the possibility of cloaking my sound within the group situation. I mean, that was my whole approach – just disguising and being part of the music. Not being a soloist out front, I'd rather have a group improv - more of the Dixieland approach where everybody's playing at the same time. Every once in a while you get a solo, but it's not a competitive thing. It's not like a spotlight, like with Bebop which has soloists. Right? The horn players take [extended] solos. You know, even Bird said, "If you can't say it in two choruses, you can't say it at all." Some of those guys go on [forever]. Who did I hear, I don't want to mention names but, yeah, it was one of Elvin Jones' earlier quartet bands, after he left Trane. One of the saxophonists in his band, the guy would play forever! I mean they're playing a Blues – how many choruses can you take on a Blues? It was like 25 choruses and I'm going, 'Oh, my God, wouldn't 20 be enough?' If I'm gonna get a solo, I'd rather have it short, make my statement, and then get back into the band and start playing around with everybody else in the band so everybody's soloing at the same time, all the time. Everyone's featured but it's reduced as far as being a front man. If I'm a leader, I want to be part of the band, I don't want to be Herb Robertson and the band. I don't want the music to sound like that. I want it to just be the band. In fact, my role could be nothing

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compared to them. The musicians in my band, they're more important than I am. They're the ones playing my music and they know what they're doing. I used to write music and then give it to somebody and they'd say, "Well, what do you want me to play here?" And I'd say, 'Well, you play the saxophone, you figure it out.' [Laughs] I mean, I wrote the music but you know how to play the saxophone. If you find a better note, play it. As I said before, when I'm playing a chord on a piano, they all sound good, it's hard to distinguish which one's better. And then if you have the chord and you write it down, then the next day you come back and play that same chord and say, 'No, I didn't want that.' You're in a different mood the next day. Maybe the other chord was better – the lost chord. [Laughs] Everybody's looking for that lost chord. "I want to make the chord that nobody else does!" You'll never find it. You'll search forever for that and that's the joy of being a musician and being an improviser, it's that you're always searching, right? Because if you find IT, you may as well quit, it's over. 'Oh, I found it! Okay, next! Okay, I'll get a new job, it's done, I found it!' No, you didn't find it.

Cadence: You're also an avid collector of mouthpieces.

Robertson: Oh, boy, yeah. Well, it's kind of like an obsession, I would think. [Laughs] I've even thrown some out through the years. It's almost like an addiction, for me. Especially if I don't have gigs and I'm home practicing, I have to have something to do. I'll say, 'Well, that one feels pretty good,' and it will peak my interest to keep practicing. And it will sound really good, and then I'll get a gig, and I'll bring that new mouthpiece to the gig and go, 'Oh, it don't feel good, it don't feel good,' but I'll always have my original one and I always go back to the original, which was made for me, many years ago. It has my name on it. See, I always go back to this mouthpiece. I should just chuck all the other ones, but I keep them and then I'll go through a phase. Like one day, maybe it doesn't feel too good and I'll put my baby down and I'll pick up a bunch of other stuff again. I just went through a thing and I'm back to my original. And those mouthpieces are becoming expensive now, they used to be cheap years ago. A Bach mouthpiece, which is your basic trumpet mouthpiece that's been around forever, you used to be able to get them for 20 dollars. You know what they go for now? Seventy-five dollars, and that's just for your basic stock ones. They have mouthpiece makers all over the place who make their own mouthpieces that are like 250-300 dollars. You buy one of them, you better be satisfied because that 300 dollars is gonna go into the box – that's what I tell myself. [Laughs]

Cadence: Over your career, you've utilized a vast array of instruments including trumpets, cornet, flugelhorn, valve trombone, tuba, Eb alto horn, bugle, penny whistles, English hunting horn, Romanian reed flute, bells, castanets, whistles and rams horn. Why play so many things and what level of training have you had on them?

Robertson: Those little reed flutes make a sound automatically – you just gotta

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blow air into them - and as a brass player, I got the air power so I can play that. I can stick a clarinet in my mouth and make sounds on it. It's easier than doing that on trumpet. I like to have those instruments available for different sounds - those little toys and flutes and bells. You know, sometimes when the chops get tired on the trumpet, you can put it down and pick up a tin whistle [Laughs] and I can make believe I'm Eric Dolphy, in my head at least. Yeah, that's why I have that. I have accumulated all those miscellaneous instruments through the years, and a lot of them are broken but I still play them. I keep them in the trunk of my car in a bag - some of them are melted - but they're cheap - one or 2 dollars. After my recent gig in Erie, Pennsylvania, people came up to me and said, "What was that horn with the 3 bells? That sounded amazing - even better than the trumpet!" I said, 'Yeah, you liked that? It's a bicycle horn!' [Laughs] Ha, it sounds better than the trumpet! And now it's broken over there, it's not on my bike anymore.

Cadence: *You were blowing through it?*

Robertson: Yeah, it's got a reed in it. It's one of those things you squeeze, and if you take the squeeze thing off, you can blow through it. It's got 3 bells so it has 3 sounds. And you can do wah-wah with it. You can stop 2 bells so only 1 plays, and it almost sounds as if you can play a Blues on it. [Laughs] It's a bicycle horn - it cost me 12 dollars on Amazon. She liked it better than the trumpet! [Laughs] 'How to pick up girls in three easy lessons' - get a bicycle horn!

Cadence: *What's the most unusual thing you've incorporated to make sounds?*

Robertson: On Amazon you can buy these little voice modulators for 15-17 dollars. They have a 9 volt battery, which you can't get out. It has little switches on the side and it looks like a mute. You just talk into it and it sounds like a robot or it starts making all these weird sounds. I can put it on top of my mutes. If I use the pocket trumpet, put the Harmon mute in, then I have this voice modulator with a trigger that I hold in front of the mute and play into the microphone, which you need because it's so soft. Sometimes I'll add the megaphone if I don't have a mic. So, you'd have the pocket trumpet, the Harmon Mute, the voice modulator and a megaphone. I had to figure out a way to hold it. That's the weirdest thing I've found. You can get some weird sounds coming out of that one. That makes people look - "What the hell is he doing?" It's more like why is he doing it? [Laughs] I like when I bring all of the mutes, when I have 15 of them on the floor, and then the people go, "Ooo, look at all those mutes. Look at that guy," and then I only play 1 the whole night. [Laughs] They ask and I say, 'Yeah, I know. I'm nuts.'

Cadence: *But you played the right one.*

Robertson: But I had to have the other ones there. If one wasn't there, I'd be really upset - even though it was on the floor the whole night. And I can name them - they all have names.

Cadence: *Let's talk about your childhood growing up in Piscataway, New*

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Jersey. You come from a family with no past history of performers. Your dad was a mason/bricklayer of Scottish descent and your mom was a part time seamstress of Italian descent. What was significant about your earliest years?

Robertson: They gave me the freedom to do what I wanted although they didn't understand what I was doing. When I grew up, I have my brother Keith, who also plays clarinet and saxophones, but he never did it totally professionally, although he's retired and playing professionally now. I have 2 sisters Janice and Denise. My oldest sister Jan, older than me, was, and is again a singer in the chorus. My mother's mother loved to sing Italian arias when we were little kids. She used to sing them while making Italian food and we were 4-5 years old, running around. My father's side, the Scottish side, they were just hard workers, builders. My father's family built the Doris Duke estates in New Jersey. They came over from Scotland at the turn of the 20th century. My great-grandfather was hired by the Dukes to come over and build the estates as a bricklayer and ended up building a lot of the towns around that area – which is Somerville, New Jersey, Hillsborough, Raritan, Flemington. Both my mom and dad came from big families, they each had 8 kids in the family. My dad was the baby in his family. His oldest brother could have been his grandfather, that's how big that family was. My paternal grandmother was in a big article in the paper around 1966. They ran a picture of her sitting in the middle with 6 generations sitting around her. It was a gigantic family. She was deaf and she loved when I used to bring the trumpet over when I first started playing because she could hear the trumpet. I put it right on her ear and blew and she'd get excited. When we landed on the moon in 1969, she saw it on TV and said it was fake. She was from the 1800s, she was almost a 100 years old at that point and couldn't believe that someone's on the moon. [Laughs] She was from the horse and buggy era. My dad wanted me to become a bricklayer to keep the tradition going. My younger brother became a bricklayer. I resisted it – 'I want to become a musician.' "Oh, boy, you want to become a musician?" [Laughs] And then when my brother said he wanted to become a musician too, my dad said, "No, only one musician in this family." My sweet brother, but he did it anyway. It took me a while to convince my dad that it was okay to be a musician. When my first album came out, I showed it to him and said, 'I'm on record,' and I first started going to Europe. It took that long [to win him over]. The first time I went to Europe, 1983, I was 32, and that's when my dad started accepting me – "I guess he's okay. He's going to Europe and he's got a record out. I guess it's working for him." It took him 32 years but...[Laughs]

Cadence: In a 2002 interview you credit your father with introducing you to atonal music.

Robertson: Yeah, that was kind of like a joke. [Laughs] That's because he was tone deaf – he couldn't sing a note! [Laughs] I'll tell ya, because he would try to sing a song. I remember, we would be there, he would try to whistle, he was a good whistler but he couldn't whistle in tune. [Laughs] There'd be a song

Interview: Herb Robertson



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Herb Robertson

Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Interview: Herb Robertson

playing on the radio, which he liked to listen to, often at breakfast, and he'd try to whistle to it and it would be [so off-key] and I was like, 'Oh my, what the heck is this?' [Laughs] I said, 'Oh, that's some atonal stuff!' [Laughs] 'Oh, my dad's way ahead of everybody!' I actually put that in print. [Laughs]

Cadence: *So do you think he set you on your career path?*

Robertson: Yeah, he did because I kind of liked it. [Laughs] I said, 'What the heck? I better start checking out Schoenberg, man. Do some Stravinsky.' And then I started checking out some Classical music. I had my stereo in my bedroom and I would be in there all day long, listening to music or practicing the trumpet. Eventually, I moved to practicing in the basement because it was big and I could get a big sound and they'd be upstairs watching TV. I'd hear them walking around up there and I'd be practicing the trumpet – loud. The whole house heard it because the basement was open. When people would come over to visit, they'd say, "Who's that playing the trumpet? Is that a trumpet?" And my dad goes, "Yeah, yeah. Oh, that? That's my son, he plays trumpet, we blocked him out years ago!" [Laughs] It's kind of like when you live next to a train track and the train goes by and the whole house shakes and you have a guest over and they say, "Oh, the train went by," and homeowners say, "Oh, the train? We got used to that. We don't hear them anymore." Over time, I started getting self-conscious because I realized that they really don't like when I practiced the trumpet – it finally hit me, as a kid. And I started playing in my bedroom closet, with all the clothes hanging so that it would muffle the trumpet. Maybe that was better, I thought. One day I was practicing and I hear a hammering outside the door. [He knocks harrowingly] I'm wondering what the hell that is, I open the door and my father is standing there with soundproofing. He's hammering Styrofoam in my doorway. I said, 'Dad! Dad! Dad!' He said, "What! What! What!" I said, 'You can't put that up. I won't be able to get out!' [Laughs] He thought maybe the Styrofoam might help. He said, "You just keep practicing the trumpet all day long!" That's when I finally went down to the basement and they finally blocked me out. Before that, that's when I was practicing in the bedroom, near where the TV was and they couldn't hear their TV shows.

Cadence: *You're lucky it was Styrofoam and not bricks.*

Robertson: He was ready to bring those in – cinder blocks and bricks, man. That was growing up. I never gave up – I stuck with it. I remember talking with Evan Parker about it and he went through the same thing with his parents. Some people have the folks who say, "Get in there and practice your clarinet. Go and practice." Not my family, they didn't want me to practice so I was rebellious and I practiced. I think that was more of a psychological thing that worked in my favor whereas when your parents are forcing you to practice, so you don't want to practice because you're a kid, you're rebelling.

Cadence: *Your start in organized music was delayed when you failed your 4th grade music test and could not participate in the band until passing the test in*

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5th grade. Talk about what happened and how it affected you.

Robertson: It must have been a bad day. I was 9 years old and the “test” to see if I had musical ability in my elementary school was where the 4th grade teacher, who taught everything, played a note on the piano and then played another note. She asked, “Now, was the second note higher or lower than the first note?” I blew it, so I didn’t make it that year. They gave me one chance. [Laughs] So, 4th grade was a wash as far as music. Then 5th grade came – same test. This time I guessed it right and they said, “you can play! You have musical ability!” [Laughs] I’m going, ‘Great!’ Then they asked what instrument I wanted to play. Alright, since I was a pretty shy boy in elementary school, I was a skinny little kid, I didn’t know. I was told I could play either the trumpet or the clarinet – they didn’t have too many choices. I chose the trumpet because it’s loud and it makes me feel like a MAN. Now I can be loud and blow it at people – so I picked up the trumpet. They had a baritone horn available but thank God I didn’t get that. What are you gonna do with a baritone horn? There’s no gigs for them. Trumpet was a good choice, I think.

Cadence: As you got into your teens, your choice in music and the desire to play the instrument drove you into social isolation because the other kids, and even your parents, wanted to hear Rock, not the Jazz music you were drawn to. You had to listen to the music alone and practice.

Robertson: Yes, I felt I was the only one into playing that type of music. In fact, I was, there was nobody else I could play with - I had to go to New York. There were no players in the area where I was, there were a few, but I had to meet players who were more into what I was into. Originally, I felt that nobody else was doing this. I felt I was a loner, everyone else was into Rock and sports. I remember in high school I used to write my own medical excuses so I could get out of gym class and not have to take gym with the jocks. That way I could go down to the band room. Ha, remember it was the ‘60s, you could get away with anything. [Laughs] I used to not go to classes, I’d go to the band room. The band director knew I was talented so he gave me a key so I could go to his office and hide out. I’d close the door, pull the shade, and nobody could find me way down at the end of the corridor. That’s where the art department was – waaaay down there. “Put them waaaay down there. We don’t want ‘em. That’s where the art people go.” Downstairs was the art room - they were nuts. You think the musicians were nuts, the artists were really nuts. [Laughs] I’d get away with not going to English and science and math, which I hated. I had music, I didn’t need math. Music is enough math, right? One day I did go to English class, and I thought, ‘Yea, I can do this work,’ and I wrote a little essay and handed it in. The teacher [was surprised and] said, “Oh, Clarence, thanks for coming to class today.” [Laughs] The teacher read my essay to the class, and it was a beautiful essay. Then she goes, “Does anybody know who wrote that?” “No.” “Clarence wrote this essay.” “Clarence wrote it? We always thought he was like an idiot!” [Laughs] They thought I was autistic or something, and

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that's before they knew what autism was. I used to fake it, I used to fake it that I had autism [Laughs] and then I'd go to the band room and listen to records all day long. The band director had all the records – he had Frank Zappa, all the Classical stuff. It was the '60s, man. You could smoke pot there if you wanted to.

Cadence: *You were drawn to Big Band music which you heard on the radio. What attracted you to that?*

Robertson: The trumpets got me. My dad used to listen to Big Band music. He liked Jan Garber, Glenn Miller, the Ray Conniff Singers, the real dance bands. I don't think he went as far as Benny Goodman, although Benny Goodman had a dance book, but he was too Jazzy. I always heard that on the little, dinky radio he had in the dining room. I heard these trumpets that peaked my interest in Big Bands. And of course, once I went to Berklee, that's all they had up there was Big Bands. I was in a million of them up in Boston in school.

Cadence: How did you develop your stunning high note chops as a high schooler and how much of an influence was Maynard Ferguson?

Robertson: Maynard, sure. For a lot of us back then, Maynard, Bill Chase, Cat Anderson, any of the leaders, we'd hear that screaming trumpet. But Maynard had it [as the top] because he could play ballads up there, beautiful, like a violin. It was amazing, he had super-chops. I did have some range automatically, I don't know how, in high school, I guess because I practiced so much. I improved after I went to Berklee and discovered the Philadelphia teacher, Doc Reinhardt, from other students who trained with him. I went to him and he corrected some of the mistakes I was doing and it got better and better and better. This was 1969 to 1973, and that's when I switched to the garage to practice the trumpet.

Cadence: *How did you decide that Berklee School of Music in Boston was the place for you?*

Robertson: I auditioned at all of the state schools in New Jersey and got rejected academically. I passed all their music auditions but they wanted academics. I remember sitting at the orientation at Trenton State College and the head of the department said, "We don't want any stupid people in the Music Department." In other words, if you're gonna be here, you can't just play music, you've got to be a scientist or something else. I decided to go to Berklee as a last minute decision after getting all the rejection notes from the state schools. I could late register for Berklee – it was already March of 1969. I applied to be a performance major so I just had to be a performer. I didn't have to worry about academics, I could go to Berklee just to be a musician, an instrumentalist. I didn't have to audition, I did that once I got there, and then I jumped into the junior year because they gave us advanced placement tests at Berklee, and if you qualified, you didn't have to start a freshman level. I immediately jumped to junior level because I already knew stuff about music. Most of my classes were ear training and playing horn and I also got arranging

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courses and harmonic analysis with Gary Burton. I did three years there, I left and never did my senior year. I went on the road to Canada. Most students leave school before graduating.

Cadence: *Why did you leave school early?*

Robertson: Towards the end of my third year at Berklee I broke my leg and I had to go home and I didn't know if I was gonna make it for my next year. I had to recuperate – I had a full cast. I went back to Berklee as a late registrant, I was two weeks late because I was still healing. I still made it but all of my classes were gone. I was in all the top school bands then and I had to meet with Larry Berk, the president of Berklee. I had written a complaint letter to him – 'Where are my classes?' Because I was late, I had none of the classes that I wanted. He said, "No, your classes are gone, you came too late." I said, 'What?' He said, "You can be replaced." I remember those words he told me – "You can be replaced." I went, 'Okay, really, replace me then,' and that's when I left the school. He didn't care that I was one of their top trumpet players, he was just a bureaucrat.

Cadence: *How did you break your leg?*

Robertson: I fell in the street in Boston. There was a car with a rack on the back bumper and I was crossing the street and I hit it and fell on my leg and broke the tibia lengthwise and bled internally. They put a cast on and then I was in pain with this cast. I couldn't believe how much pain I had with this cast. The leg was swelling inside the cast and I knew something was wrong. I went all the way back to New Jersey and my folks brought me to another hospital and they determined I was bleeding. The hospital staff asked, "Didn't they tap your knee?" So, they had to cut the cast off, and as soon as they did, the leg puffed out with blood inside. They put a big needle in to suck out this black blood and they put another cast on and I felt much better.

Cadence: *In 2002, you recalled after ending your training at Berklee and looking ahead to life as a performing artist, you said, "I first started to realize that I finally had a purpose in life and that it could very well sometimes be a lonely life. I knew then that I would probably be living a life on the road."*

Robertson: Right, because all of a sudden I changed my whole life. It was a lonely life because I was always traveling and I wasn't going to have a place I could call my own, a home, because I wasn't going to settle down. If I did come back, I'd have to stay at my folks because I'd be going back out on the road again. I never did have a chance to find a livable thing until I went to New York later on.

Cadence: *What memories can you share about some of your Berklee classmates such as Joe Lovano, George Garzone, Art Barron, Billy Drewes and Bill Pierce?*

Robertson: I remember meeting Art Barron at Berklee. We used to have these jam sessions downstairs after school in the basement ensemble rooms and I remember going to the door and putting my ear to it and hearing him. The ones you mentioned were upperclassmen except Lovano, who was younger than

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me. Art was a year ahead of me and he was playing Avant-garde at that time. He was sounding more like Roswell Rudd and I was really hooked into what he was doing. I thought, 'What are these guys doing? It's really interesting, I want to get involved with that.'

Cadence: *You had some pretty renowned teachers – Charlie Mariano, Herb Pomeroy, John LaPorta and Phil Wilson.*

Robertson: Herb Pomeroy took me under his wing. He was also teaching at MIT, he had a band there and he wanted me to come and play lead there with his band because I wasn't playing lead at Berklee. I was always second trumpet – there was always someone else playing lead. Even in Herb Pomeroy's recording band at Berklee, I was still second trumpet. So I didn't have the Jazz chair or the lead chair, I was always in the middle. [Laughs] They used to call it split-lead. Herb wanted me to play lead. He and Phil Wilson used to talk about me. They were a little concerned about trumpet players up there, strong trumpet players with really high range who could lead the band. Guys could play but they could only play to the high C, they couldn't play above it with some power. But they knew I could do that. They used to complain – "There are no more 'bulls' up here." They called that type of lead players – bulls. They said I was a bull but I didn't have the control yet. I wasn't impeccable, and to play lead trumpet, you've got to be impeccable. You can't miss any notes – when you're playing that high, that loud, and leading the band, you've got to have that attitude of "FOLLOW ME! BANG!" That is the lead trumpet player's responsibility and I didn't have that. I was still a little unconfident about that. I don't think I ever had that real macho "Kick 'em in the ass" kind of thing - an angry thing. I think there was one time, this was later on, I was playing lead in some band in Jersey, and the lead trombone player turned around to me and said, "Man, you sound frickin great today! What is it? What happened to you?" And I said, 'I'm really ANGRY!' He said, "Man, you should be angry more often!" In other words, to play lead trumpet, you've got to be angry, you've got to have that adrenaline and I had the adrenaline for a little while but then I wanted to get into the Jazz thing. I wanted to mellow out and hang out with the Jazzers and that put a damper on my lead playing. Poor Herb Pomeroy and Phil Wilson, they couldn't connect with me that way.

Cadence: *Do any teaching moments stand out from your teachers?*

Robertson: Yeah, Charlie, Charlie was great, he didn't take shit from nobody. He played with Stan Kenton but he was into some other stuff then. He brought in all these Japanese scales, he was married to Japanese pianist Toshiko Akiyoshi. Charlie had this improv class, I don't know how I ended up in his class. I auditioned with Herb Pomeroy when I got to school. He said, "Play a Blues, man." So, I improvised on the Blues form for a couple of choruses, first in a key I chose, then in a key that Herb told me to blow on. I believe he chose the key of E. That would be the blues in F sharp on trumpet. I played and then he said, "Great, great, now play it in the key I want you to play it

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in.” [Laughs] I went, ‘Oh, okay.’ I had never played the Blues in F sharp but I faked my way through it with my keen ears and he said, “Not bad, not bad, man. Yeah, we’ll put you in some good improv classes.” They were small ensemble classes with 6-7 people. Herb and LaPorta had the Big Bands and Charlie had the little bands. For some reason, I got into Charlie’s class with all these upperclassmen because of my advanced placement. Here I was at 18 and I’m gonna be playing with these 21-22 year olds, accomplished cats who had been at Berklee for years. Charlie said, “Alright, bring in the greenhorn. Who is this Herb Robertson? Come on in.” “Play this chart and everyone can take a solo,” and he looked at me and said, “Even you.” We started playing and Charlie’s listening to us all play solos on his original composition and as soon as it was my turn, as soon as I started, he walked out of the room and closed the soundproof door. I’m going, ‘Shit, what’s that?’ Once my solo was done, he came back in. It was weird. He was saying he didn’t want to hear my solo. He was a hard teacher. He said, “No, that’s not good enough.” So, I had to work on that and finally I got on his good side. I took a solo and he stood up, looked at me and applauded. In his private office he had incense burning. It was like being in another world – you were in Japan all of a sudden. [Laughs] He might have been tripping on LSD, who knows what was going on with all those cats back at those times. I remember one time Charlie Mariano was conducting a Big Band and he brought in some Stan Kenton charts because he had the book. He handed it out – it was hard stuff – and we’re playing it. He goes, “Whoa, wait – come on trumpets! Come on! What’s the matter with you guys? You’re playing a goddam trumpet – blow the instrument! Play it!” We were wimping out. Now, Herb Pomeroy could hear everything. He had amazing ears. He could hear your part in the whole mix. He knew exactly what you were doing. John LaPorta, another crazy guy. He played with Mingus, his stuff was modern – it was like Third Stream, almost. He would say, “You gotta’ sing it, you gotta’ sing it. I don’t care if you have a voice or not, you gotta’ sing it,” and then he’d wail it out. That’s when Berklee really had some stuff going on. They had masters and they wanted you to really be a Jazz master.

Cadence: Talk about your time in Canada after leaving Berklee in 1973.

Robertson: I was invited by some Berklee guys who were already playing in this Jazz-Rock band, almost a cover band. It was like a Rock band with horns up in Toronto. I never made any money with that band – we had to pay money with that band. [Laughs] It was crazy, we had more rehearsals than gigs. And then every time we had a tour, it always got cancelled halfway through the tour. We were always stranded somewhere. When it came to pay day, I used to call it “No pay day.” The leader of the band would make us deduct from our pay the rental of the equipment including amps and the PA system. One week he told me, “Here’s your pay. Herb, you owe me 25 dollars.” There was something wrong there but it was nice seeing Canada, hanging out, seeing all the girls.

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Cadence: *What was your mindset when you left for Canada? What were you planning on playing for your career?*

Robertson: I just thought I was going to be on the road with that band forever. Whenever I got in a band, I never thought I'd be quitting the band. I think that's the first band I quit. I don't know how I got back to Toronto from being stranded in Vancouver. I think the trombone player's father was a conductor on a train and he got us on for free. We had no money. I knew a trumpet player in Manitoba and we crashed at his parent's house for a while. It was a mess, those poor people. We made it back to Toronto and I stayed with the second trumpet player at his place in Toronto and somehow I ended up getting 35 dollars so I could take a bus back to New York. I was burnt out – my chops were gone. The band was loud and I had to play high notes all the time on a mic – I couldn't hear myself, that's how loud the band was. So, I was totally depressed. I arrived at Port Authority in New York with nowhere to go and got a taxi cab to take me to Piscataway, New Jersey to my parents house. I knocked on their door. My dad came out and I said, 'Hey dad, it's me. You gotta' pay the cab driver.' I had to stay with my folks and get my chops back together. I went back to the teacher in Philly and it took me a year and a half to recover. I changed my whole conception of playing. I said, 'No more lead, get into Avant-Garde Jazz.' I ended up in the Catskills.

Cadence: *Talk about your time at tourist resorts in the Catskill Mountains.*

Robertson: I was doing some little jam sessions in New Jersey when my chops started coming back together. One of the saxophone players got a gig up in the Catskills and they needed a trumpet player so he asked me. We went up to the Avon Lodge, a bungalow colony there, and I met a drummer named Herb Fisher who turned me on to all this crazy music. He was as old as my dad and he said, "Come on man, let's do some sessions!" He brought his drums out to the river and we played outside. We played in the nightclub at the lodge but we did jam sessions during the day, just playing Free. I started playing the walls, getting into different sounds. He brought his whole record collection up and played me music that I never heard before. I started listening to Albert Ayler and digging it. He said, "You got it, man. This is it! You know how to play this music, you don't have to work at it. You're a natural for playing Free." I just loved it and got into it more and more. We'd be up there summers and some of the Jewish holidays. That lasted until around 1985, around the time that I met Tim [Berne].

Cadence: *It was around that time that you also discovered the Carlos Castaneda books, started meditation, studied Eastern philosophy, quantum physics and explored Modern art.*

Robertson: Yes, the music got me into that, playing Free. I said, 'Where's this stuff coming from? What's going on and why do I like this stuff and how do I find out about it?' Then I started reading [Jiddu] Krishnamurti and quantum physics and meditation because I thought it was a good adjunct to what I was

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doing, and the more I read about it, the more I started really getting deeper into the music. The more I meditated, the more I read about this stuff, I said, 'Okay, what I'm doing is not too bad' because this quantum mechanic stuff is crazy, right? I mean it's nuts, but it's real, so there must be a relationship. I think Herb Fisher turned me on to a lot of that too. I was turned onto Carlos Castaneda in Canada and I still go back to those books. His first three books are amazing. I think it was his books that got me into all of that.

Cadence: *You were also influenced by Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey [1968].*

Robertson: I related to that too – the connection of the star child at the end, the whole rebirth thing and trying to figure out what all that meant at the end. That whole movie's great and the music in it is great. Ligeti's music really captured me and got me into his music. Yeah, I love outer space stuff – it's all quantum related.

Cadence: *At what point did you decide to forgo work in Traditional Jazz music in order to express yourself as a performing avant-garde artist?*

Robertson: It was when I met Fisher and he got me into playing that music that I knew that's what I was going to do. I wanted to find people who were doing this music. That's the time that I felt alone because I couldn't find anyone else that wanted to do it professionally until I went to New York. I got drawn to the people who were into what I was into. There was nobody in the Catskills who liked Avant-Garde and liked playing it. Herb and I invited people all the time to come and play with us but they turned us down and said we were crazy.

Cadence: *Did you have any concerns about financial consequences connected to playing that music?*

Robertson: At that time, I was playing Summerstock, a play house in New Jersey, and I was doing the Catskills. Those three things kept me afloat financially. It got to the point where I just thought I couldn't play Traditional anymore because my heart wasn't in it. In the back of my mind, I kept thinking that I'd like to have a band with just flugelhorn, guitar and bass and just play ballads. I think as I'm getting older, I'm more drawn in that direction because it's harder and harder to play crazy stuff on the trumpet when you're 72. Yikes, you can't be going crazy all the time.

Cadence: *How did listening to the work of Don Cherry and Lester Bowie help you develop your own approach to playing?*

Robertson: Oh, wow. Well, Don Cherry was more of an influence than Lester because I heard him first. In his early stuff, he still had a connection with the Hard Boppers. He had a great sense of swing, he could swing eight notes like crazy, and I admired that in him. With Lester, he was more out there and Bluesy. I liked Hannibal [Peterson] too. I admired his endurance. He could play long, man, he could stretch out, and the way he could build a solo by starting little, simple phrases and keep adding on. All three of them had a system and I figured I'd have to develop my own system of improvisation. I worked on

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remembering recapitulations, making it sound Free but at the same time, there is a connection with the music. It goes in and out, in and out, more so now it's more out [Laughs] and more space too. I like space now in the music. The younger trumpet players these days, I'm not listening to, the ones who were influenced by me. [Laughs]

Cadence: *Talk about making the move to New York City in late 1978. Unlike many other musicians, you only grew up a few miles from the city. What was your plan to establish yourself there? How aware of the New York City Free Jazz scene were you prior to your move?*

Robertson: I started doing jam sessions in New York, and that's where I started meeting musicians. I was in a band in 1978 with Denman Maroney and Shelly Hirsch that was called Iota Jot Yod. I got into that band through Ed Schuller who was playing bass. I just wanted to go into New York and play a gig and they had original music which was cool because that meant I wasn't going to be playing standards. I wanted to do something new. I played the gig and liked it and I started meeting some people – the click of Avant-Garde people including the same group of people that came out to hear this music. It's always the same people so you got to personally know them. I started to play more and I was like the new trumpet player on the scene. There was like no one else playing trumpet in the New Music and I could read, I could read my ass off. I started doing jam sessions and playing Free with a bunch of musicians in Chinatown, of all places, in New York off of Canal Street, and that's where I met Tim [Berne] around 1981. Ed Schuller was there and Mack Goldsberry and we started doing gigs at the Greenwich House. I was also playing in Wayne Horvitz's band - the New York Composers Orchestra. I got tired of driving into New York all the time so I decided to move there and that also would put me closer to the scene so I crashed in the East Village and at Lesli Dalaba's pad while she was in California.

Cadence: *What was your experience early on once you moved to New York?*

Robertson: I was hanging out at Sweet Basil's a lot, just listening to bands. That's where I met Barry Altschul and Ray Anderson. I already knew Mark Helias, who played there often, because I grew up in New Jersey with him. We had a band from 1971 and then he left for Yale. Horst Liepolt was booking the club at the time and he would bring in the New Music which was unusual. It was like the only established Jazz club in New York that put that music on. This was before the Tin Palace and Fat Tuesdays and Lush Life. I never hung out with the well-known Jazz guys but once Art Blakey came to Sweet Basil's to hear us playing once while Tim's band had a week playing there. He didn't know what the hell was going on. He was sitting there like – "What the hell are you guys doing?" But he sat there and listened to us at the soundcheck. Yeah, that was nice to see Art Blakey checking us out.

Cadence: *What standout performances did you witness or what significant experiences do you recall from your first year in New York?*

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Robertson: Verna Gillis' Soundscape place blew me away. The Art Ensemble of Chicago blew me away when I used to see them at the Public Theater. The Art Ensemble still blows me away, I've been checking out some of their stuff on YouTube. They're connected playing Free. Those guys had a mind meld. Roscoe Mitchell could solo and develop – start from scratch with three or four notes and just take that and create a frickin piece out of it but those four notes were always there. Cecil Taylor's band blew me away. David Murray's band with Lester [Bowie]. Certain drummers blew me away like Philip Wilson and Don Moye.

Cadence: *You didn't check out Big Band stuff in New York?*

Robertson: I used to go hear Thad Jones every Monday at the Village Vanguard. I loved that band because it was his music which I still listen to.

Cadence: *You formed an early and immediate connection with Tim Berne. You met him at a Chinatown jazz session and you've described it to be "possibly the most profound musical connection of my life." Talk about that first encounter.*

Robertson: Yeah, that was a special meeting. Ed Schuller wanted me to play in Tim's band for a recording when Tim had his Empire Records label but Olu Dara played the record. Ed told him, "You have to play with Herb Robertson" but Tim had never heard of me and he used Olu. We later met at a jam session in Chinatown. He walked in and took out his horn and we just started playing a Free piece without saying anything to each other and BANG!, it was right away. I remember the look to this day – he was over there and we both went [Eyes wide open] at the same time because we were both connected. It was like this spiritual moment where everything else just disappeared. We weren't playing the same notes but we were hitting the same stuff together spontaneously and then we'd go off in our own directions, take a breath at the same time, and then come back around. I went, 'Wow! That's pretty amazing.' I had that with Mack too but there were only certain sax players that I didn't have to think about phrasing with. Tom Rainey ended up calling Tim and I "Bird and Diz". We haven't played in years but I just spoke with him.

Cadence: *The first concert you did with Tim Berne, along with Mack Goldsberry, Ray Anderson, Ed Schuller and Paul Motian, was released as Berne's The Ancestors recording. How was that experience? Was that your first recorded work?*

Robertson: Right, that was my first recording, I was a little nervous but on stage it sounded great. We had a rehearsal and that's where I started playing with Ray and the first time I met Paul Motian. We did the concert and the first set came out as that recording but the second set never came out. Tim still has the tapes and he swears he's gonna put it out. I told him, 'Well, that was 1982, maybe you should put it out, huh?' [Laughs] I played more on that second set, the set that's not released. I met a lot of people at that performance, they came up to me. That's where I met the Stones [music fans Irving and Stephanie

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Stone]. I could never live this down but Irving Stone said in print, after one of his friends asked, “When is there going to be another Clifford Brown in New York? The modern Clifford Brown?” He said, “Oh, I think we have Herb Robertson.” I went, ‘Oh, come on, you can’t compare me to him.’ I was listening to Clifford Brown today and I’m going, ‘Man, if I could articulate like that, I’d be picking up chicks all over the place!’ [Laughs] But that was cool [to hear].

Cadence: *What are your memories from that first European tour you took with Berne in 1983?*

Robertson: There was a lot of traveling, that’s what I remember – vans, trains. It was 6 weeks- can you imagine? Paul Motian missing the train – I still see it. He was running after the train. We were in Paris and the train is leaving and he’s in the back and he [Motions throwing up his arm] and said, “Aaah, get out of here!” He made it to the gig, though. He was experienced and he knew how to do it by himself. We went to Switzerland and we got there and there’s Paul. [Laughs] He was funny, he was a Jazzer, man. He was upset with the drum set, I remember, at one of the gigs in Switzerland, in the middle of nowhere. We were supposed to go to Cologne next and we had a 3 day layover in Switzerland, way up in the Alps. We were in the middle of frickin snow, laying around [Laughs] and hanging out in Ed’s room and Paul’s going, “Yeah, there’s a dog. Do you hear the dog barking? That’s a dog.” And then there’s silence – you hear nothing – and then the dog would go, “Wup, wup,” and he’d say, “There’s the dog again.” We said, “Okay, Paul,” and Paul said, “I can’t stay here for three days. I’m going to Cologne.” He wanted to get to the city. The night before, when we played the gig, he hated the drum set so he played cymbals the whole night. He didn’t touch the drums, just the cymbals. Tim and I were looking at each other like, “Oh, boy. He’s not playing drums, let’s just play the gig.” And then the last tune that we did that night, he beat the crap out of the drums. All he played were the drums. I think the drum had tape on it, it was one of the drums from the club. He smashed the drums and Tim and I, we had no mics back in those days, I don’t know how we did it. No matter how big the room was, we just played out. We were young, we had lung power. [Laughs] So, Paul went to Cologne by himself after that and met us at the next gig. I liked being in Switzerland. The air was nice and clean, you could see the stars. So, that’s what you have to deal with on the road, especially if you’re the leader. You’ve got to deal with all those personalities, especially if it’s a long tour. Everyone of them are characters. [Laughs]

Cadence: *So this was your first tour, a grueling 6 week tour. What went on during that time?*

Robertson: I lost my wallet near the start of that tour – it was pickpocketed. I was in a post office in Bremen, Germany, took out my wallet, went back outside, realized my wallet was gone and I went right back in but never found the wallet. I was so freaked out, this being my first time in Europe. I was in a

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foreign country and I didn't know what's going on. I went back to the hotel and told Tim. And then there was another moment – I was sitting in the van and I had my passport. I was wearing a vest with zipper pockets and I guess I didn't have it zipped so the passport was sticking out and then I couldn't find it. We were getting out of the van and I couldn't find my passport. I was freaked out – 'Where's my passport? Where's my passport? I have to go to the embassy!' And then I felt a tap at my side and Paul Motian takes my passport out of his pocket. He hands it to me and says, "Let that be a lesson to you. Make sure you zip it up." I learned my lesson. I was a real greenhorn there.

Cadence: *You're lucky that you were asked back on other tours.*

Robertson: Yeah, but Paul never asked me to do a recording with him [Laughs] after that.

Cadence: *How was it to play with Paul Motian?*

Robertson: He was really amazing. He would listen to everybody's solos and make suggestions. He told me, "Yeah, Herb, that's a nice solo you're taking but try doing this." He was complimentary but he was great at constructive criticism. He knew a lot, he played with Bill Evans, for crying out loud, and everyone else. What am I gonna do? Especially when I was playing Tim's ballads, which were beautiful but they had changes. They were very traditional and I was playing on the ballad and taking a solo. I think playing a ballad and taking a great solo is the hardest thing in the world. So, Paul would make these suggestions and they would work. Playing with Paul – he's so free but yet there's that sense of time happening at the same time no matter how free. One of the most amazing drummers ever at the way he evolved from all of that history. You could see the evolution of his playing. You could hear it. He had this timeless time quality. The one was always there, it was deceptive, but it was obvious. It was there for just a fleeting moment. You didn't really have to ever count with him, it was just perfect. The tempo was always there no matter how free he got. That's a gift that few drummers have. Tony Williams had that but he was more of a timekeeper. Paul was more of a soundkeeper. It was different playing with him every night of those 6 weeks, even when he just played cymbals the whole night in Switzerland. It was amazing, I mean, what drummer does that? You got the drum set there, you're playing someone's music yet you're just playing cymbals the whole night, making it work because you don't like the drums. [Laughs] And then at the end, just blow us off the stand. We felt like kids after that. He was a funny man, too. His laugh. You know, I played with him with Charlie Haden's band, later on.

Cadence: *You've had the opportunity to perform with a number of other master musicians who have passed on. Talk about Charlie Haden and your time as a member of the Charlie Haden Music Liberation Orchestra.*

Robertson: By 1987, I was going to Europe a lot and at the time, Charlie was looking for a trumpet player to play in Europe with his band. He found out through my friend Horst Liepolt that I was going to already be in Europe so

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he thought to use me. Dave Douglas was actually supposed to do the tour but Charlie told Dave that I was already going to be in Europe so he was going to use me in order to save the plane ticket. [Laughs] We started rehearsing in New York, it was Carla Bley's South American music that she composed for that band. Charlie was cool, very laid back. We did a really big tour, it was about 5 weeks. It was all on a big bus through Germany and France and then when we went to England, we had to change buses because they drive on the other side of the road. There was a lot of talent in that band. Geri Allen was on piano, I think it was the first time she ever played with Charlie, and he was amazed by her. Of course, Paul Motian was in that band and he may have had a say to get me in that band. It also had Stanton Davis on trumpet, Joe Lovano and Dewey Redman on tenor, Ken McIntyre on alto and Eb contrabass clarinet, Craig Harris on trombone, Bob Stewart on tuba and Mick Goodrich on guitar. Charlie was a stickler for hotel rooms. They had to be perfect. He'd go in first, and if he was unhappy with it, we'd have to find another hotel. Even though it was already booked, if it wasn't a 4-star hotel, we wouldn't be staying there. We'd have to hang in the bus, telling stories and doing crazy stuff until we found another hotel. A lot of those guys were friends and there was some really crazy stuff that went down but I can't really get into that. I don't want to say anything although Charlie's passed. I think his nurse was traveling with him and actually became his wife. She was keeping him cool from some of the crazy stuff. He was in the front of the bus with her and we were in the back of the bus doing our thing, partying or whatever had to be done. [Laughs] It was like a crazy family. Dewey had done a few tours with them. He was so funny, he could have been a standup comedian. He had us laughing, telling stories. He said, "I have a new name for this band – this is Charlie Haden and the Rough Riders Tour." That's because Paul would be a little instigator, trying to get a thing going. And I'd be sitting in the back with Lovano saying, "Yeah, man, there's a bunch of babies on this bus," and I'm going, 'Yeah,' but I didn't know, I was a greenhorn. We were on that bus traveling so much. We'd get hungry and Paul Motian spread the word that I was into health food because it was at that period that I was trying to health up. I knew a lot about nutrition and I'd tell the guys on the bus to make sure they picked up Omega 3 at the rest stops. At one stop I said, 'Hey guys, they have some good sardines here. I'm gonna get a can of sardines,' and all of a sudden, I see everybody buying sardines. We were on the bus, all eating sardines out of the can. The concerts were great. Charlie liked my playing, although he wasn't too vocal about anything. I got on the elevator once with him after a concert, going up to the hotel room. We were the only ones in the elevator and he looked at me and said, "Yeah, man, yeah, man, that flugelhorn, man, you played some nice stuff on the flugelhorn." And that's the only thing I ever heard from him as far as a compliment. Stanton Davis would always be commenting on the band in the trumpet section. He'd say, "Rope-a-dope, rope-a-dope." I could never understand what that meant

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– it’s like a Muhammad Ali thing in boxing. After the long tour, we got back to New York and we were supposed to do the record but I never got called back to do that. Tom Harrell came in to replace me, who was a completely different thing. I didn’t know what was going on - if I was still in the band or not. Nobody told me anything and I knew the recording was supposed to be coming up. I saw that Charlie was playing with the Quartet West at Sweet Basil so I went to talk with Charlie. On the break, I asked him what was going on with the recording and he said, “Yeah, man, you’re on the list.” I was just in the band and now I’m on the list so I figured I was fired. He told me he wanted to change it up, he didn’t want to be so much Avant-Garde. Paul Motian later on told me that Charlie said, “Yeah, I liked Herb’s playing but I didn’t like his ‘barking dogs’.” [Mimics harried dog barking] I would do some vocal things during the improvs. The band would go into some real African sections - Craig Harris had a didgeridoo - and all these sounds would start happening so instead of playing trumpet, because Stanton’s there, I just started chanting and that’s what Charlie referred to as ‘barking dogs’. Some people, like Tim, don’t mind my vocalizations during improvs. I can do anything in his bands, he just trusts my improvisatory skills that I’ll put the ‘barking dogs’ in the right spot.

Cadence: Would you talk about Roswell Rudd?

Robertson: Roswell was a character. He had a beautiful big beard and a nice hat. He looked like an old farmer. I did a double CD with him and the Italian ensemble The Nexus Orchestra 2001 [Seize The Time!], who I’ve been playing with through the years. It was written for Roswell by Tiziano Tononi and Daniele Cavallanti. It was great hanging with him. There’s certain musicians, like Roswell, they’re like your buddy, you’re just hanging out with them. It’s like you’ve known them all along and it’s just so natural. He was like a regular guy. We’d hang out and drink some red wine like he was my best friend. He played great and he had a different way of warming up in Italy before we played and I told Steve Swell about that because Steve and he became great friends. I said, ‘Steve, Roswell has a new way of warming up on the trombone. He takes the slide off and he just plays the leadpipe.’ He’d play the partials on the leadpipe before he put the slide on. I thought that was interesting and I started taking my tuning slide off the trumpet and just blowing through the leadpipe. I thought, ‘Oh, that’s a nice feeling. It changes the resistance and warms you up quicker.’ So, I told Steve about that and he called Roswell and said, “Herb Robertson says you have a new way of warming up. You take the slide off.” Roswell told him, “I was just messing around. That’s not my way, I was just experimenting,” but I guess that’s what you’ve got to do. These great improvisers, you gotta experiment. That was my whole thing, I always liked to experiment. Not that I’m a great musician, it’s just that I like to experiment. [Laughs] One of these days, I’ll reach the upper echelon! [Laughs]

Cadence: Rashied Ali?

Robertson: I played one gig with him. It was great to play with Rashied, he

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was another one who was just a nice guy. He stayed behind the drum set the whole time, even when we were taking a break. He was a great player, I was overwhelmed to play him, the same with Andrew Cyrille on the gigs I did with him.

Cadence: Internationally, you've been a highly in demand player, appearing in numerous ensembles led by European and Asian nationals. I'd like to ask you about your experiences playing in some of those bands and what cultural differences you encountered in the leaders' music, leadership style and how touring with them differed. How has it been to play with English bassist Barry Guy's New Orchestra and his London Jazz Composers Orchestra?

Robertson: I've always done more European work than I've done here in the States. Europe supported me for a lot of years and I made a pretty good living. Barry is so Classically trained he can compose symphonies, and he's done the Jazz improv stuff. He was part of the early Avant-Garde movement in Europe, so he has that, along with the Classical Avant-Garde with Varèse, Penderecki and Ligeti. He has that combination, but it's funny about bass players, they have that romantic side where they write really beautiful, lyrical. Every bass player I play with, no matter how free they can play, they always have this love of romanticism with ballads. They like to play those chords, the roots. They like that movement. They're open minded about that, which I dig because I try to incorporate some of that into my music. Barry influenced me on that. He would rehearse like crazy. He would write this 70-minute piece with all these different sections with romanticism and free stuff, the graphic writing, the regular notation, going through the whole history of music in one big sweep over 70 minutes. I remember we were rehearsing the day of the gig, even though we had been rehearsing for 2 days before the gig, and we would all bitch and moan about that. We didn't want to rehearse the day of the gig, we wanted to save our chops. We would try to convince him not to do that but he would never go for that. He was really into rehearsing but he wasn't into being a perfectionist, if you got close to the thing [that was okay]. A lot of the brass players, by the end of the gig, after rehearsing all day and then doing a gig, we had no chops left. He said, "I don't care." There was one gig my chops were hurting and at the end of the gig he wanted me, on the trumpet, to scream over the band. Now, you've got a full saxophone section including Mats [Gustafsson] and Trevor Watts, Johannes Bauer on trombone and 2 drummers - Raymond Strid and Paul Lytton in the band and everybody's blowing their brains out. And after 70 minutes, he says, "Trumpet solo over the top of the band," and I go, 'What am I going to do, man, jam it down the mic? I don't know what to do,' so one day I just used one of my whistles. It was a tin whistle and it sounded like a piccolo screaming over the band. That's the only time that he came up to me after the gig and said, "Herb, I don't like that. Don't play that flute piccolo over the band at the end, I want the trumpet. I don't care if just air comes out of your trumpet, I want the trumpet. It looks good, let them think

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that they hear the trumpet.” I wrote a piece for that band and we performed it – once. Barry was spreading it out. He would write and several of the guys in the band brought little things in to mix it up a little bit. There wasn’t much traveling with that band – it was mainly festivals and concerts.

Cadence: *Japanese pianist Satoko Fujii Orchestra New York.*

Robertson: She’s the sweetest person and she always gets the same musicians to do it when she comes to New York. We’ve done 8 or 9 records. Her music is real Big Band music but she has her own sense of style and there’s a lot of contrapuntal lines happening within the different sections, not within the horns. The trumpets all play in unison, there’s not much harmony happening. There’s these phrases that are Japanese scale-sounding mixed with Jazz stuff – mostly it’s free. It’s fun playing with her. Sometimes I’d add my own harmony to it. There was this one section, Dave Ballou was playing with me, along with Steven Bernstein and Nats [Natsuki Tamura] we’re playing this thing in unison, and at one point I said to Dave, ‘Okay Dave, I’m gonna put a minor second right next to you. You play the top part and I’ll play a half-a-step below it and get that knife-edge sound.” Just for one second I wanted to hear the trumpets harmonize. He said, “Alright, do you think she’ll notice it?” I did it at the recording, not at the rehearsal and she didn’t care, she let it go and it sounded cool. I listened to the record and said, ‘Yeah, that’s nice.’ She would let you every once in a while, tweak it a little bit. So, it was open in that sense. And she knew the sections, she knew how everybody could improvise, she knew their styles. So you always had your moment in her music, even if it was one solo on the record, it was your spot.

Cadence: *You’ve played with many Italian musicians. Would you talk about your cultural experience with them?*

Robertson: I love playing with the Italian guys, if you’re a little out of tune, they don’t care. It’s Jazz and they are very loose with their stuff which is more American. Fun stuff. In Italy, they always have backyard feasts before shows. The food would come out and they’d say, “Mangiare, mangiare. Forget about the playing, you have to mangiare, mangiare. That’s the most important thing. You have to eat. You eat, then we play the concert. Let them wait.” I’d be there for a big festival right before we’re supposed to play and we’d be in the back with all this food and I’m thinking, ‘We have to play. All these people are waiting for us to play,’ and they’d say, “Ahh, mangiare, mangiare. Let them wait, they can wait. They know, they understand, you’re eating.” The audience would settle down when they realized we were eating – “Of course, we can wait, they’re eating.” [Laughs] I introduced Joe Fonda to a bunch of the Italian musicians and he always calls me and goes, “Herb, man, I thank you so much for hooking me up with those Italian guys. Yeah, I get a lot of gigs,” and I say, ‘Yeah, give me some of them!’ [Laughs] I try to get over there now but there’s never any money in Italy anymore.

Cadence: *Danish guitarist Pierre Dørge’s New Jungle Orchestra.*

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Robertson: That was also great. He would always have a guest come in and I did a few guest spots with that orchestra. We did little tours and some festivals. He was also such a nice person – a sweet guy and his music was just fun to play. We did one record Hold that Tiger and we did about 8 takes of the title song that goes, “Hold that tiger, hold that tiger,” and I had the solo, that was my spot. I have 8 solos on that short little tune that was done 8 times on the recording. Each time I had to do a different type of solo. So, that was the challenge, but it was fun. It was almost like Spike Jones. The musicianship was great and I really liked going to Copenhagen. I used to go back every summer for the Jazz festival – 12 days of bouncing all over the place there. Pierre had his own little scene happening there. There’s always these little cliques of the Avant-Garde but his music would always cross over. You had the really strict Avant-Garde guys and then you’d have the ones who could cross and make it dance bandish. He would always mix the musicians up for a combination of the free players and the straight ahead players.

Cadence: Germany’s Klaus König Orchestra.

Robertson: He’s based in Cologne and we rehearsed with the radio orchestra there because a lot of the musicians in his band are from the radio orchestra. The German musicians and music is a little bit more right-angled, whereas the Italian, the Dutch and the Danish have a little more rounded edges in their music, which I can identify with more - it’s more American. The German [music] is more strict. It’s beautiful stuff but it’s real exact, I’ve always found. With Klaus, there was an exact thing. We were doing the Song of Songs and we had our own little sections but there was some difficult parts to play. I had a thing that I had to give up on and I let the first trumpet player from the Cologne Radio Orchestra do. He was more Classically trained so he could play that part. There was some other stuff that really wasn’t my style. I didn’t mind playing Klaus’s music but it wasn’t my thing. Do you have that recording? I just bought another copy on Amazon. [Laughs] I don’t know why I’m buying my own records on Amazon. I usually just have one copy of my recordings. If I had 10 at the start, I usually gave them away.

Cadence: You’ve also worked with English saxophonist Evan Parker, who, like yourself, has delved deeply into expanding extended techniques on his horn.

How is it to play with someone else who has successfully moved past the perceived limitations of their instrument?

Robertson: I think Evan put more thought into what he wanted to do with the instrument, whereas with me, I take chances, let the instrument dictate what I’m gonna do. I’m not gonna dictate what the instrument does. It’s a different approach to get to the same finish line. Evan had the circular breathing thing going forever. He figured out little things to do and when I try to do the circular thing on the trumpet, I could never do it. I never wanted to take the time to have my body adjust to that. I had other interests. I can do circular breathing if I’m not thinking about it, I can’t just turn it on and off. If I’m playing free and going for sounds on the instrument, if it happens, I go, ‘Oh, I’m circular

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breathing. I'll keep it going.' It just happens – the body responded to it. It's like the music and the instrument dictates what my body's gonna do. That's a surprising thing for me. When I'm improvising free, going for different sounds and extended technique, I like to surprise myself. 'Wow! Whoa! How am I doing that?!' That brings a type of joy to me. I don't like to figure it out. When I practice, it's not to figure out something to play, it's to practice the trumpet – long tones and the mechanics of the instrument just so I'm strong enough physically to handle the instrument. That way I can create music with abandon instead of thinking how to do it. Improvisation for me, has to stay away from my thinking. If I start thinking about what I'm gonna do, then it's not improvising to me and I'm gonna start duplicating myself with doing things that I know. Now with Evan, and believe me when I say this with great respect for Evan because he figured out a whole system for himself. Nobody else was doing that and he changed that into what he is. When he was invited to do a series of duos at the Knitting Factory he picked me for a set and for some reason we were able to do duos together. He said that Trevor Watts and I have the same type of thinking of just going for it instead of having things figured out. I have camaraderie with Evan. You want to foil with each other, you want to do stuff that's different, instead of doing the same thing. Some people like to do the same up and down - if I'm gonna go high, you're gonna go high, if I'm gonna go low, you're gonna go low. No, if he's gonna go high, I'm gonna go low. It's an unconscious thing. If he's playing long tones, I'm gonna play something jittery. And then, every once in a while, if we hit together it comes together automatically, it's not a conscious thing. That's the joy of me and Tim, when we play together, we do completely different things but we're breathing together somehow, and then when we do hit that big [note] we hit it together. 'Whoa, hey yeah, let's stay on that now.'

Cadence: *The great majority of your work has come as a sideman. Do you prefer that? What are your thoughts on leading your own band?*

Robertson: I guess I really do prefer sideman things because I like playing other people's music. It pays more because if you're a leader, you don't get paid. You have to pay the musicians, and the more you pay the musicians, the better they play. If you don't pay them, they're not gonna give you their whole thing. If you're doing a concert and the musicians are paid 10 dollars, you know, but if you're gonna pay them 500 dollars, they're gonna give you more than what they are. So, as a sideman, if I'm gonna be paid well, I'm gonna play better and I don't have to worry about how somebody's gonna be playing my music. I did do a few leader things. I enjoyed it but I didn't like the psychology thing. As a leader you've got to keep everybody happy, especially if you're on tour. You've got to make sure that everybody's on an equal level and everybody's different so you've got to psychologically know how to talk and respond to them, and I'm not into that. I'm psychologically analyzing myself, I don't have time to analyze anyone else. [Laughs] I'm still trying to figure out who I am. There's also the whole business aspect of calling promoters and

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setting up tours. The few times I did it, if I got a no, “No, I don’t want you,” I just give up with the first no and thought, ‘I guess nobody wants to hear me play.’ I like to time it right – I never want to be a regular – “Oh, there he is again. He’s been off the scene for 5 months, let’s go check out what he’s into.”

Cadence: *You did find some significantly early success as a leader. Shortly after releasing your debut album *Transparency*, your band opened the Greenwich Village Jazz Festival in 1986 to critical acclaim. That marked the first time an Avant-Garde Jazz band opened a major American Jazz festival.*

Robertson: Horst Liepolt, from Sweet Basil, got me that gig. I couldn’t get a band together, I had Lindsey [Horner] and [Bill] Frisell and basically a mixture from Tim’s band. I wrote my own music. I remember Vincent Chancey was in the audience and he came up to me afterwards and said everybody was going, “Who the hell is this guy? Herb Robertson? Who’s he?” Thad Jones passed away about a week before that gig in ‘86. He was one of my heroes, I loved his orchestra and his whole approach to abstractly Bebopping. How he could play Bebop, his Bebop phrasing was just abstract. Him and Art Farmer had a whole different way of playing that I really dug. It was different from Lee Morgan. I dedicated the gig at the festival to Thad. I said, ‘Okay everybody, quiet down. We’re gonna have a moment of silence for Thad Jones who just passed.’ And the whole place quieted down, you could hear a pin drop, and then I dedicated the first piece to Thad. That was a good career move. [Laughs] In a sense, I was a good leader when I had to be.

Cadence: *You were invited to the important October Meeting in Amsterdam in 1987 and 1992, an event featuring some of the world’s most important figures in improvised music. What do you recall from playing with Cecil Taylor, Anthony Braxton, Steve Lacy, Paul Bley and Horace Tapscott?*

Robertson: Yeah, the October Meeting, especially the first one, was great. We were there with the Dutch musicians. They used Misha Mengelberg’s music for Big Band ensembles. Anthony Braxton played his music at the Concertgebouw but Horace Tapscott’s was more of a free thing. He lined up all the musicians and pointed to everybody when he wanted them to take a solo, and he cued some backgrounds by doing a conduction thing that was popular through Butch [Morris]. Horace pointed to me and I took my solo while he brought in background during my playing. I got to the point where I figured, ‘Yeah, that’s long enough,’ and I started to peter out and he said, “Keep playing. Don’t stop.” He had me taking like a 10-minute solo and I’m going, ‘Oh, my God,’ and he’s going, “Yeah, yeah.” Paul Bley was sitting in the audience and he said, “Yeah, I like what that guy’s doing.” During the Horace set, Steve [Lacy] was standing next to me, my hero, and while someone else was doing their solo, we were supposed to play background, but Steve said to me, “Play this,” and he played a little lick on the soprano as a background, and he wanted me to play along with him but I couldn’t hear it. He goes, “You got it?” And I said, ‘I got it,’ and he goes, “Yeah, you got it.” I couldn’t hear it but I made up my own

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lick and I got close to it. Michael Moore, the saxophonist from Amsterdam, was conducting a portion while Horace Tapscott was just sitting in the audience, but at one point, Michael Moore just said, "I give up," and he sat down, because the band was out of control. It was just everybody blowing their brains out, going nuts. I played with Braxton there, he had a big band play his music. The main composers [for the October Meeting] were basically Misha, Braxton and Cecil and we had to fill in their orchestras which took place at the Concertgebouw where the symphony orchestra plays. It's a gorgeous hall. Cecil, man, that was an experience too. Another nut, I don't know how I survived that. He did all his rehearsals at the Bimhuis. He'd sit at the piano with a bunch of us waiting. Braxton was there, standing next to me, he says, "Oh, let's see what Cecil is into now." Cecil has us dancing, we had to move our feet, and then while he's sitting at the piano, he says, "Play an E." We do it. "Up to G" We do it. "Down to D." There was no music, this was all by rote. "Okay now play G, up to B, down to..." Some guys are writing stuff down and I'm going like, 'Forget it, I'm not writing anything down.' [Laughs] So we did that, and it sounded pretty good. It actually ended up like Cecil's music. At the second rehearsal, the next day, the guys who wrote it down had practiced their part and had it together but Cecil came in and did a completely different thing and the guys threw their notes away. I said, 'I told you. I told you it would be different, just fake it.' We spent time doing what he wanted and he said, "Yes, it's beautiful, it's beautiful." He had us dancing and spinning around. Then we get to the concert and Cecil has us at the top of the big stairways that lead down on both sides to the stage of the Concertgebouw. So, we're standing way up at the top, 15 or 16 of us, and Cecil goes, "I'll be right back." He walks off. [Laughs] 'Where'd he go?' Finally, he comes back, "Okay, I'm ready to go now. Let's go, let's go!" He directed us in the order he wanted us to go down. He had me go down as one of the last ones and I thought, 'Okay, this is gonna be theater now,' and they had a beautiful gold banister going down the stairway, which I sat on and kinda slid down, [Woosh] at least I made it look like that. Cecil sees that and outdid that. He was the last one and he comes down, making all these gestures, walking down the steps like a robot and the audience starts cheering. He stole the show. And then he sits at the piano and we're ready to go but he goes, "Frank!" We all went, "Frank?" Frank Wright was never at any of the rehearsals. He was living in Rotterdam, he walked out with his tenor, stands in front of the orchestra on the floor, like a soloist, and that was it. He just blew the whole time. Cecil played and we're all going, "Well, I guess we're supposed to play?" [Laughs] Because all of a sudden, it's the Frank Wright Trio. [Laughs] And we're all just making up our own little riffs - 4 trumpets, trombones and 5 saxophones. Cecil was playing and Frank never stopped, he just kept playing solo through the whole thing and we're all going, "I guess we're just backing these guys up." Each day there was a different experience, which is pretty amazing. That was Cecil Taylor, man, that was him. He didn't

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change any of his stuff, he just came in. If you wanted Cecil, you got him. Butch Morris had a conduction piece there too. He was teaching us his signals at the rehearsal and Derek Bailey comes in, takes out his guitar, sits down. There was no written music, Butch was doing conduction signals and Derek stood up and goes, "I'm not doing this, no way." He puts his guitar in the case and walks out. He didn't do that concert but he did Misha's. Wadada Leo Smith was there at Misha's concert with me. Derek was next to us at the concert and he had us cracking up. Leo got into a laughing fit, he couldn't stop. This was during the concert. He got into a laughing fit and couldn't stop. Derek was making him crack up, saying in his beautiful English accent, "See that little square in Misha's music? That little square in the middle of the music?" He goes, "That's me, that's my part." And we're like going, "Okay Derek, that's your part." The concert already started and he's up there talking to us - "That's my part there." [Laughs] It was a trip, man, I have to admit. You didn't have to take any acid, this was happening naturally.

Cadence: *You also played with Paul Bley there.*

Robertson: After the Horace Tapscott concert, Paul Bley invited me to do a duo with him because he was doing duos outside of Amsterdam in some of the smaller towns. He said, "I want Herb Robertson to do a duo with me." Oh, boy, I said okay. We're in the van, being driven to this town to do the gig and he's questioning me. He said, "If Fats Navarro lived, we would have never heard of Miles Davis." I went, 'Oh yeah, right, okay.' He goes, "You heard of Fats Navarro, right?" I said, 'Yeah, I know Fats.' He goes, "Have you ever heard of Donald Byrd." I said, 'Yeah, I heard of Donald Byrd.' "Alright," he said. "You know all of those guys, right?" I said, 'Yeah, yeah, I listened to them when I was a teenager. I know them.' He goes, "Okay." And we get to the place and he goes, [Laughs] what a character this guy was, he goes, "Let them wait, fuck them. We have to get something to eat." We went to a restaurant and we're eating and we're supposed to be doing a duo, trumpet and piano, Paul Bley and me, right? And it's getting late, and me, I'm a stickler for being on time and we're supposed to play at 8 o'clock and it's like 8:30. What's going on man? He says, "You want some dessert?" I said, 'Dessert? We're a half hour late.' He goes, "I'm having some cake. You want cake, right?" I said, 'Okay, if you're having cake,' and then he wanted some coffee afterwards. Finally, we leave for the venue and we walk in the front. This place is full and we get dirty looks from the crowd - "What the hell is going on?" You know the Dutch, they're not taking any shit. This is not the Italians, this is the Dutch. They don't want you to eat, you're supposed to be playing now. We walk in and I'm like, 'Oh, shit, they're pissed off, man.' I wanted to say, 'I wanted to play, it was him. It was that guy. What can I say? He was hungry,' but I didn't. I'm walking to the stage and Paul Bley walks straight upstairs to the dressing room. I was ready to play. My horns were on the stage. We had already been there two hours before the people got in to do the soundcheck. He goes upstairs and I'm going, 'Oh, F. I

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just walked to the stage and messed around and people were saying, “It’s an hour late already,” and I thought maybe I should go out and do a solo. Then he comes walking down the stairs and he tells me, “Why don’t you go up and do a solo first?” I agreed and started, and I see him start walking around the room in the back. This is the best story because I talk to musicians about this and they go, “He did that to you too? [Laughs] You’re not the only one, he does it to everybody. He’s just putting you on.” So, he’s walking around the room while I’m playing and he’s looking at me, checking me out [from all the angles], and then he comes up and goes, “Okay, cool, cool. Now I’m gonna take a solo.”

We’re supposed to do a duo [Laughs] and so far it’s a second solo. I sat down and he takes a solo, and when he finishes, he tells me to take another solo. So I went up and took another solo. [Laughs] By this time, I said screw the coffee, bring me a cognac! I said, ‘Forget it! Bring me some cognac, I gotta change my thinking here.’ He came up, told me to stop, and he starts another solo! That’s when I said, ‘Man, screw this!’ While he’s taking a solo, I just went on stage and started playing and made it a duo. And he went, [Stunned] “Whoa, now we’re doing a duo.” [Laughs] He just wanted me to jump up on stage. He was into this thing where he wasn’t playing a lot, he was just doing New Age stuff. Eventually, he goes, “Okay, man, what ballad do you want to play?” I went, ‘A ballad? Okay, “Yesterdays?”’ And then we’re doing a ballad – “Yesterdays.” A frickin ballad! And he takes a little Bebop solo and I’m like, ‘My God, what am I gonna play with this?’ Finally, it was over with, we got driven back and I don’t think we talked the whole time. I was just sleeping on the way back to Amsterdam. When the review came out the next day I had someone translate it. It said “Paul Bley / Herb Robertson Duo: Catastrophe.” It said, “It was very obvious that Paul Bley and Herb Robertson did not want to play a duo together.” I said, ‘Oh boy, I don’t want to hear the rest of the review. [Laughs] So, Paul was doing that to everyone. He was in the mindset at that time where he was just going to challenge musicians – ask them about the history of Jazz and then turn duos into solos. That was Paul Bley, and believe me, I have those Paul Bley records with Jimmy Giuffre and Steve Swallow, I love his playing. I even told him that, I said, ‘Your playing blew me away.’ I swear when I got home, I felt like throwing his records away, but I didn’t. You can put that in there if you want – R.I.P. Paul.

Cadence: *I interviewed him so I know why you’re saying that. He put me through stuff.*

Robertson: So you know. Some of these guys from that era, man, they’re frickin tough, right. And it’s all a game, it’s all a façade, I think. If you’re not Jimmy Giuffre or Gary Peacock, he’s not gonna talk to ya. It’s weird, right?

Cadence: *One of the bands you later organized was the Herb Robertson New York Downtown Allstars which released 2 albums in the late ‘00s. Talk about having Tim Berne, Sylvie Courvoisier, Mark Dresser and Tom Rainey at your disposal to create music.*

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Robertson: It was great to have them. I was really into writing for them at that point. I remember doing Sylvie's piano part. I wrote it out, she played it at the rehearsal, and then she rewrote everything [to make it read properly]. She had it all taped up. She really took it seriously. It was great to have Mark Dresser on the thing. Of course, Tom could read his ass off, he's just a master. I consider him the orchestrator. And Tim and I, we just had the lines that I'm used to playing with him. I had a nice tour with that band but I was the leader and I was going nuts. It got a little chaotic at times – traveling and making sure everything was working out alright. That was my second tour as a leader.

Cadence: How structured are the compositions you tend to hand out to your band members?

Robertson: They're more like little fragments that I write, especially with that band. On the Real Aberration album, the first disc includes 6 pieces called "Sick(s) Fragments" [Part 1-6]. I put the S in parentheses so that it would have a double meaning. Sicks fragments meant that I had six parts between the improvs and they set up the improvs. They're like springboards for improvisation to help set it off in a different direction in case things get a little monotonized. Not with these improvisors, but sometimes you get caught in a little area of improvisation where you can't get out so that's when I throw in phrases to get us out of that. Then I'll set up duos while the rest of us play in and out of that, and then I'll make sure everybody has a chance with all the combinations of the quintet – all of the solos, duos, trios, quartets and quintets, as far as improvisation. All those areas are available. The fragments set up all those different areas.

Cadence: How much structured music do you like to be given when playing in someone else's band?

Robertson: Not too much. I like to do the lines because I figure the improvisation is the most important part of a composition, unless you're playing Classical music or if it's through composed, then there's no improvisation, or maybe you just want a little dabble here and there. If you're playing Jazz, I think the most important part is improvisation. That's where everybody gets a chance to show off their knowledge of the instrument. If someone else's composition is too complicated, then I'll water down my improvisation a lot because I know I gotta play a written thing that's gonna be intense and I've gotta save some trumpet chops. In that case, I can't go all out on the improvs, I have to edit them, and that goes against my way of thinking. I have more fun when it's more free, and that's why I write smaller fragments. That way it saves everybody's chops to do the real stuff later on. When I write music, I'm not really a dictator. If the musician says, "This kind of sucks what you wrote here," I'll say, 'If it sucks, change it to make it work for your instrument.' I like to have freedom and democracy around the music. I don't like that they have to play it exactly like the way I wrote it.

Cadence: You lived in Germany for 3 years. After marrying a German woman

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in 1991, you ended up joining her in Berlin in 1997. What was your experience there as an American living in Germany?

Robertson: I had to hook up with the locals. I started doing gigs with German musicians, domestic gigs around Germany. What I loved about Berlin was cafés during the day and the weather was beautiful in the summer. Sitting in those street cafés, just watching all the people walk around, all those beautiful, pretty women, man. Oh my God, millions of them. It was so nice just to sit there, have a beer or coffee. Milchkafee [Café au Lait] was my favorite, a nice big cup and sit there with all the musicians. That was part of their culture – sitting in the street at the cafés. New York used to have that but people don't want to do that anymore there. New York's kind of tough these days. I loved being in Berlin, travelling with German musicians. They were beautiful, friendly people. Everyone could speak English, they speak better English than Americans because they learn the proper language in school whereas we speak slang English – American English. I started to learn some German. I could read the menus. Culturally, it was a beautiful experience and they seemed to be more together as far as healthcare and the artists are treated differently there. I had a beautiful apartment when I was living there. It was big, although it was a 5-story walk-up which I could never do today. I was living in the Kreuzberg part of Berlin and because I was a musician, the government gave us those apartments at a cheap price because they support the arts there, even though I was an American. I had my work visa and I had to pay taxes which are higher than here because a lot of the tax money goes to the people. It's a more social democratic system of living there.

Cadence: Did you have any significant Jazz experiences while you were living there?

Robertson: Not really, I played in the local clubs and I looked into becoming a professor in the schools there. Vibraphonist David Friedman was one of the head professors at the Hanns Eisler School of Music and he got me to come in and do an audition. I brought a band in that included some Americans to play my music for the audition, for what was basically a concert. The school had a board that was analyzing the invitation and I had to teach some trumpet player how to play Jazz in front of a room of professors, and then there was a question period where they questioned me. "We notice your music is very modern and Avant-Garde. Why? What about the tradition?" I said, 'I don't know, can't you hear the tradition in my music? It's there.' "No, it's a little bit too Avant-Garde. It's not Bebop. You have to teach Bebop. I said, 'Well, you've already got everybody teaching Bebop, why should I...,' and I remember Friedman looking at me, motioning not to say that - "Don't confront them." I said, 'You've already got Bebop,' and I started pointing out the professors who taught Bebop there. The students were there, they loved me because I came in with a modern thing and my band was kicking ass. We really gave them a concert, it turned out to be a free concert. The audition turned out to be a political thing, they already had somebody picked out but they had to do auditions by law. That was my

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experience trying to teach. [Laughs]

Cadence: *Let's talk about some of your music made as a leader. Why did you name your first release Transparency [1985]?*

Robertson: Because you could see through it. It was transparent, I mean, it's very obvious. [Laughs] Transparency was a conglomerate of all of my styles. There were one or two pieces that I wrote way back in the '70s that I never recorded. I had some Straight Ahead, some Latin, and then some Free things. There was a piece that I dedicated to Gyorgy Ligeti, because his composing was a big influence on me, and also a little ditty that I had written a few years earlier that I finally had a chance to record. I named it that way because you can see where the history starts – some of my early history of music and where it progressed. I had Frisell in there, he takes a wild solo on "Flocculus." His solo is more like an acid trip. I told him that it was named after the floccule of the sun – the sun spots. So, "Flocculus" to me meant hot [Laughs] and fast, so we just tried to play that as hot and fast as we could. Yeah, Transparency was a good takeoff point.

Cadence: *One of your compositions on that first album was "They Don't Know About Me Yet." What did you want people to know about you?*

Robertson: That I was around. I had been around for a while, I was 34 already, which is kind of late for a Jazz musician. Most Jazz musicians are known in their twenties. Clifford Brown was dead at 26, right? Yeah, I was almost 35 and nobody knew about me yet and now they were gonna get to know about me.

Cadence: *As you mentioned, you worked with Bill Frisell on that first album. He's gone on to have a remarkable career. What was it like to work with him at such an early point in both of your careers?*

Robertson: He was just so sweet, what a nice man. He came from cowboy country in Colorado and that Country music was in his playing, but at that point in the mid-'80s, he was doing more Jazz and Avant-Garde. When he became more famous, he kind of toned it down a little bit. Like I said before, if people hear his solo on "Flocculus," they wouldn't even know it was Frisell. It was feedback and he's screaming though it. I had to follow him with a solo after that and I remember going, 'Jesus Christ, what am I gonna do now?' He was so sweet and giving and supportive. When I did The Little Trumpet recording the next year in '86, Stefan Winter [of Winter and Winter] gave me the music and I had to arrange it. Frisell was on that and after the recording, he came up to me and said, "Herb, I would love to take composition lessons from you." I went, 'Really, from me? I want to take composition lessons from you! What are you gonna learn from me? You know more about harmony than I'll ever know.' When I write music, I don't really have a system, and if I do have a system, I throw it out the window next time. It's just temporary. Like when I did my record Certified [1991], that's when my composition was at a high level, that was my ultimate composing level. I was writing a lot then but after that I kind of chilled it out and went more in the Free Jazz direction.

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Cadence: *Your second release “X”-Cerpts: Live at Willisau [1987] has tracks entitled “Karmic Ramifications,” “Vibration,” “Formation,” “Dissipation,” and “Transformation.” Talk about your spirituality at that time and where it is today.*

Robertson: I was getting into a lot of Zen Buddhism, a lot of Eastern philosophy at that time. I was always into it but I was really digging into it. It was helping me a lot as far as surviving, taking a lot of stress out of me. I was doing a lot of meditating at that point. In 1976, I started TM, Transcendental Meditation. I still do it twice a day. There were periods where I stopped but now I’m back in the discipline again because I think maybe it will help with my aches and pains. It seems to help and reduces the stress. TM was always a great simple method to meditate with and there’s no disclaimers about it. It’s always been a real household type meditation. So, that got me more into studying where does this come from. I was trying to get a lot of spiritual experiences around 1980. I could feel a lot of synchronicity started happening, the mind was getting more metaphoric. You know, the left-right brain, meditation helps bring those sides together. That brought my mind together and it started changing my whole approach to playing the trumpet. I would go to these TM seminars and retreats and people would ask me how it was helping me and I would say, ‘Well, my trumpet playing is just getting so much better and different.’ I started realizing that through Eastern spirituality and philosophy, my music was getting more personal. I didn’t care whether I could play Bebop anymore. I didn’t have to – all of a sudden I had my own thing happening. That’s why with “Karmic Ramifications,” I guess I was reading a Zen book and it talked about karmic ramifications and I liked the name and put it down as the name of my piece. That’s what I would do sometimes. I would just flip through the thesaurus or one of these books and I’d see something that I liked and I’d use that as a title. ‘I’m gonna steal it and they’ll never know.’

Cadence: *Shades of Bud Powell followed in 1988 which included your arrangements of Powell’s compositions for a brass ensemble. Why did you make a tribute to Bud Powell?*

Robertson: They wanted me to, that was an assignment from JMT. The Japanese, who were running it at the time, and even Stefan Winter said, “Yeah, why don’t you do the music of Bud Powell,” because they wanted me to do Bud’s “Glass Enclosure” specifically, so that’s what I did, but I wanted to do something unusual – Bud Powell’s music but without a piano. I did a brass quintet and drums. That was my decision. With the pieces that Bud wrote, I changed them, but his lines are still in the music somehow, maybe backwards. [Laughs] At the first rehearsal, we were doing one of his pieces and Robin Eubanks, who was playing trombone on the record, said, “I can’t hear the Bud Powell.” I said, ‘It’s in there.’ Finally, I did an exact Bud Powell moment [on trumpet] and Robin goes, “Oh, there’s Bud Powell!” [Laughs] That band sounded like a mini Big Band. The record got some nice reviews, at least in

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Germany.

Cadence: *Music for Long Attention Spans* came out in 2001. You seemingly cut your audience size down to the few with long attention spans. What's behind the name of that work?

Robertson: To really listen to this you've gotta sit down and listen to the whole record. How many people can really do that, right? So, it's specifically for those types of people. I'm gonna limit my audience. [Laughs] Harvey Pekar did the liner notes to that record, he loved it. He's someone who would listen to it. Why would I title it like that? I just thought it was funny. It was kind of like a joke and I knew that record wasn't going to really go anywhere. That was on Leo [Records] and I was using unknown musicians, local guys. They were great players but who are these people? They were musicians I loved to play with and we recorded it in someone's living room. It was just a jam session but Leo Feigin loved it. In fact, I'll have to call Leo for some copies of that record. I bought one on Amazon, I had to pay 40 bucks for it. The music is nice on that record. Someone put it on once and I didn't know what it was because they put it on somewhere in the middle. I said, 'What's that?' They said, "That's your record, man!" I said, 'Oh, shit, yeah you're right, that's my record.'

Cadence: *Your 2008 duet with fellow trumpeter Jean-Luc Cappozzo is called Passing the Torch. Were you passing or receiving the torch with that project?*

Robertson: Passing it. I was gonna give it to Jean-Luc. I said, 'I'm done, you take over, man,' because he was the new cat. I had first met him in France, he came to one of my gigs and said, "Hey man, you're a big influence on me."

Cadence: *The Macro Quartet is a quartet you formed with trumpeter Dave Ballou, Drew Gress and Tom Rainey. Both you and Ballou perform with mutes, other valve instruments, and unusual things like megaphones and plastic hoses. How do you like playing with someone who can mirror your musical antics?*

Robertson: Dave heard me for the first time in Canada at the Vancouver Jazz Festival years ago, he was playing with the Either/Orchestra from Boston. He heard me extending the trumpet, which he loved, and it made him get into that. I had brought the little mute with the electric to the festival and the next time I saw Dave, he had one. He did that out of respect, he wasn't stealing from me, just like I don't steal from anybody. I mean, I borrow. Joe McPhee even told me, "Yeah, man, I've come to hear you play because I'm gonna steal all your licks!" Dave has a completely different style than me. He has a Classical thing and he has a lot of Kenny Wheeler. He's like Dave Douglas – more Woody Shaw, more angular – whereas I'm a little bit more sound oriented. He borrowed a lot of that stuff from me but I could never borrow anything from Dave. The stuff he does on trumpet? I can't do that, I'd have to practice that for ten years to get like that.

Cadence: *Superdesert is your 2009 released collaboration with Polish jam band 100 nka. Each of the 13 tunes are named after shit including "Elephant*

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Shit," "Snake Shit," "Moose Shit," "Parrot Shit," "Camel Shit" and even "Bull Shit." Do you care to explain?

Robertson: [Laughs] I never listened to that record. I didn't title them, I was just a guest. When that record came out, I didn't know they were gonna title it like that. I remember Joe Fonda got a copy of that record, because he started playing with them, and he said, "Man, I love that record. It's beautiful." I said, 'Yeah, and did you notice all the titles have shit in it?' He goes, "No! What?" I said, 'Yeah, look at it. You can even see [images of] shit on the cover!' I've got a million of those records, I never gave them away! [Laughs] The music is good but I didn't know about the titles, I swear. When I looked at the record I said, 'Is that shit!?' [Laughs] I said, 'Oh boy, I know how to ruin my career.' Boy, those Polish guys, what a sense of humor they've got.

Cadence: You co-founded Ruby Flower Records in 2005 with scientist Ana Isabel Ordonez as an avenue for you to directly release your work as well as that of other Avant-Garde artists. How did that label come to be?

Robertson: Ana Isabel wanted to start a label and she liked the color ruby red and flowers so she named it Ruby Flower. We were associated at the time and we tried to get it off as a fledgling label. We did some records but it got to be a little bit too much for me. Developing a record company? Even Bob Rusch said, "Whew, what are you doing?," because he was distributing records with North Country. After a while, it just didn't work out for me and I just let her have it after 3 or 4 years.

Cadence: What did you learn about the music industry through running the label and was owning a label what you thought it would be?

Robertson: How difficult it is. I had even bought books on how to open up your own record company. You just really have to be so dedicated to be doing that. You have to have office space, know disc makers, know people who do the artwork. Basically, I was A&R, just trying to get the music together with the musicians. She set up the tours. It just became too overwhelming, it was either play music or do that, some of us can't do both.

Cadence: You had an opportunity to accompany the Merce Cunningham Dance Company.

Robertson: That was a one-off deal. The performance was at Merce's studio at the Westbeth Building, a subsidized artist residency and rehearsal space. Merce had a large loft dance space along with his own small secondary private living apartment. I did a duet along with David Behrman on electronics for the performance. I remember meeting Merce. We were introduced – "Here's Merce Cunningham. This is Herb Robertson." I said hello and he went, "Nice to meet you. It's such a beautiful day." That's all he said and he walked away. [Laughs] And that's the last I've heard of him until I saw them dancing at night. At one point, I was improvising on top of this electronics. It was all improvisation for trumpet and they'd come out and dance. Whether the music was on or not, they're dancing. Sometimes the music would stop and they'd keep dancing. That's how that troupe worked – each thing was an element in itself. You either

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dance to the music or you don't, whether the music's on or not. Sometimes it hooks up, sometimes it doesn't. It's independent, especially with this electronic stuff. These were modern dancers and all during the concert they'd be running off the stage and back. I was off stage, you could still see me but the floor was for them. They'd run off, catch their breath, and the second wave would go in while these people are just panting right next to me until they'd have to go run out again and the other ones would come back out of breath. It was very physical, like athletes. It was amazing. It was a mixture of everything – ballet, modern, abstract. At one point, at the end, I went into a Jazzy thing and they got the hint that I was playing a tune. They felt the Jazz and they all immediately went into ballroom dancing, like from the '30s. They heard the Swing and they were smiling and beautiful and that's how it ended.

Cadence: What day jobs have you held during your career?

Robertson: I took day jobs because I didn't want to play club dates anymore. I worked in a factory doing piecework, putting washers on screws for the people putting motors together. That was a tough job because the workers were getting paid according to how many motors they put together and they were on my case. I had to run through the factory and get the screws and the washers and bring them back to give to them so that they could put their motors together, and if I got behind – "Where's that guy!" That was a full time gig but it didn't last too long. I had that for about 2 months. But the main job I had was delivering multiple listings for realtors in Somerset County, New Jersey. It was a driving gig in the '70s and into the '80s, before computers. I had to deliver listings of houses for sale to all of the realtors throughout the county. In the morning, I had to pick up a whole box of listings and drop them off at all the realtors along the route and then I could go straight to the Hunterdon Hills Playhouse to play trumpet in the afternoon. At night I'd go into New York to play with Tim.

Cadence: I'd like to have you share some memories from a life on the road that's not always been that glamorous. You had an especially memorable train ride from Germany to Romania.

Robertson: Right, I left from Berlin and once I got to Eastern Europe, Czechoslovakia, they were checking passports and they didn't believe it was my passport. This was around '89, the [Berlin] Wall was just coming down, so there were still some strict areas. They would walk the train, I mean these were real agents and they were going to take my passport, they didn't think it was real. They took it and they were questioning me on the train. Finally, they called their boss, the Czech passport official, and he said it was a true passport. That was the only picture ID I had and they were threatening to kick me off the train. Man, I was scared to death. I went on through Hungary but when I got into Romania, that's when I really got into it. There was a drunk guy with a conductor's uniform on and he reeked of alcohol, you could smell it. Good God, and he came into me like he was a conductor – "I want to see

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your passport... You got to pay money!" He wanted me to pay a supplement – "You have to pay money to get into Romania." I said, 'Yeah, since when? I'm not paying anything.' He was drunk as a skunk. I'm going, 'What the frick is this?' I don't know where he got the conductor's outfit and he showed me a fake badge. Finally, I kicked him out and then there were gypsies there playing cards. They went, "Hey, come in here. You play cards, you win money," and they had a guy with an American accent. He was part of the scam. They had a big pile of Deutschmarks. "See, he's winning, he's winning, play cards!" I said, 'I'm not playing.' "You can win all this money. You can win." I got out of that and went back to my room and noticed that my cell phone was gone. I said, 'What the frick, my cell phone is gone!' So, I went looking through all the compartments and I saw this guy taking it apart and I said, 'Give me my goddamn phone!' and I grabbed it out of his hand. I switched to a New York accent and started yelling – 'YOU MOTHERFUCKER!' Oh, boy, they got scared, New York! I went back to my room and fell asleep, and in the morning I realized that my gig bag was gone. Thankfully, I didn't have my horn in there, just some mutes. So, they stole my mutes. Boy, what a trip that was, it had to be like 20 hours. There were other trips. One time in Bari, Italy, after one of Tim's gigs, one of the other musicians in the band and I were going to pick up these girls. At least we thought we were. We started hanging out with them and they wanted to go dancing with us so they brought us to a club somewhere outside of Bari, Italy – far away. We got in the car and went with them to some disco place. Oh, man, it never happened. We got there, we just kept drinking, and then all of a sudden, everyone was gone and my ride was gone. So, I ended up walking, at night, back to Bari. I just walked on the highway, following the train tracks and I made it back to the hotel just in time to get up and go get on the train to get to the next city. That was a tough day.

Cadence: *Why were you there by yourself?*

Robertson: My ride and the other musician said they were looking for me and left. Maybe you shouldn't put that in print – don't use names.

Cadence: *Before we started you mentioned other travel incidents such as missing connections and just barely making it to the stage on time?*

Robertson: Oh, that was a long trip, one of the first ones I took. There might have been some train delays, it was a long trip and we had to get to Bremen, Germany. It might have been my tour and we just made it to the gig. We didn't have time to check into the hotel. We had to go straight to the gig in our travel clothes and play without eating and showering. That happens on the road, it's not uncommon when it's a long tour and you have to catch trains and make connections. If you have to run from Track 3 to Track 25, and you've got 3 minutes, and there's people all over the place, and you've got all your equipment and you've got to run like crazy to get to Track 25? We always used to make it but sometimes we'd have to hold the door open for each other which really pissed off the conductor. If there are train delays, you might not

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have time to check into the hotel and you have to go straight to the gig in your travel clothes and play without eating and showering. One time, Gust Tsilis came on my tour when I was using the vibes and he brought his Musser vibes. Do you know how heavy those things are? Oh, my God, on a train tour? We had to open the train windows to get those cases in, it wouldn't fit in the door sometimes. We could have requested vibes at the shows but he insisted on bringing his own.

Cadence: *You've done concerts where the wrong names were advertised as appearing.*

Robertson: Right, it was one of Tim Berne's shows where it was listed that Hank Jones was playing instead of Hank Roberts. So we showed up to the gig and, "Wow, look at all these people here! Wow, we're not used to that." I mean, we would draw people but that place was packed! "Look at that, man, they love us!" And then we get to the front door and see the big sign that lists Tim Berne with Herb Robertson, Mark Dresser, Joey Baron and Hank Jones, piano. We said, "Uh oh, no wonder the place is packed, they came to see Hank Jones. We got on stage with Hank Roberts and no Hank Jones, you should have seen the people walking out just before we started. And then there was a gig I played at the Raab Jazz Festival in Austria with Phil Haynes 4 Horns & What? It was Paul Smoker, Ellery Eskelin, Andy Laster, me and Phil. I was playing tuba, valve trombone and trumpet. That's back in the day when I was playing tuba and valve trombone. I had a borrowed little E-flat tuba, which we had to carry on tour, ha. Phil Haynes made a case for it because it had no case. I remember at the Raab Festival it was booked as Robert Herbertson, tuba.

Cadence: *Any other travel stories that come to mind?*

Robertson: In 1994, I hung out in Amsterdam, which was just beautiful, trying to find things to do, watching the O.J. Simpson trial and visiting the coffee shops. I was playing in the opera there - Noach written by Guus Janssen. I was treated like a king there because I was playing with Classical musicians. The Queen of the Netherlands showed up for one of the gigs. As far as road stories? The main stories were missing trains, because of connections. I left my trumpet behind one time in Avignon, France, going back to Paris. It was early in the morning and we were all so tired. It was 7:30 in the morning and the platform was filled with people waiting for the TGV, which goes about 300 miles per hour. I left my trumpet on the platform there and the train started moving. I realized I was missing it and I looked out the window and I see it sitting there. I was freaked out. I pulled the emergency switch and I tried to keep the door from closing. The conductor comes running over - "What are you doing?!" I'm ready to bust out of the train to get my trumpet, I was gonna stop the train. They wouldn't let me do it, they pulled me back. We go all the way to Paris and I told the conductor, who spoke English, what had happened. In fact, it was a trumpet and a cornet in the case. He called the station from the train and they called back and said, "We've got the trumpet." So now we wait for the next

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train to come from Avignon to Paris, but that conductor said he didn't want the responsibility and left it there. Then the third train's conductor said he'd take it. Meanwhile, we had to sit in Paris for 6-7 hours, waiting for my trumpet. Harvey [Sorgen] and I started walking around, looking to find a music store where I could buy a trumpet because we didn't think the trumpet was coming. We found a music store that was open, can you believe it on a Sunday in Paris? They just had student horns and [bad] mouthpieces so I just had to wait.

Finally, we got a message that it had come in while we were sitting at the café near the station and Joe [Fonda] and I went back to the train and the conductor comes out with the trumpet. Joe gets it and yells, "I got the trumpet!" and I had a music stand in a gig bag attached to the trumpet which fell out and went underneath the train. I said, "Man, now I lost that beautiful music stand that I brought," because some of these clubs don't have stands. So, Joe decides to go underneath the train, because he's a little guy. [Laughs] None of us could fit under there. He goes under the train, and the train was gonna be leaving soon. I said, "I don't know, Joe," but he goes down and pulls it out. So I got the trumpet but what a day that was. If that was Brooklyn, the trumpet would be gone in a second. This happened around 1996. I remember Harvey left his cymbals once and he got them back. This was all with the Fonda-Stevens Group. Once we were in Germany at some out of the way train station and Joe gets on the train but leaves his beautiful bow at the platform. Someone found it and delivered it to the lost and found and they got it to us. I also lost a Sony Pro cassette recorder on a train in France during my first tour with Tim. We wanted to record all of our gigs for documentation so I bought one. We arrived and I didn't have my recorder so we went into the conductor's office at the train station to report it and the man says, "Oh, you lost it, huh? Really? That's too bad. Well, good luck next time." And all of a sudden, little by little, he opens the drawer and he takes it out. "I was just kidding, here," he says in French. I said, 'Who brought it?' He says, "The person sweeping the floor of the train found it and brought it to us." That's humanity. Do you think someone in New York, sweeping the floor, who found a Sony recorder would bring it to the lost and found? I would hope so but the Europeans are so honest. The humanity over there is so amazing. They have a history of centuries of becoming human. They went through a lot of bombings and wars through the whole continent. They're such nice people. Americans are nice too, most of the ones that I know.

Cadence: *What's been the most unusual setting or location that you've ever played in?*

Robertson: Oh, yeah, again with the Fonda-Stevens Group, we were in East Germany. You had to get visas to get to East Germany then because it was still communist but this was after the wall was down so you could go there but a lot of the places were still not built up. So we had some dungeons we had to play in. Mark Whitecage was in the band so it had to be one of the first tours. [Laughs] We had to play in this dungeon and there was just so much dust

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on the floor, you couldn't breathe. You could see a mist of debris and dust in the air, and we had to play in that place, breathing while trying to play the trumpet. I was taking breaths, inhaling dust cement, or whatever. It must have been bombed out and never cleaned, maybe it was a bomb shelter. That was a tough gig and the drum set was crap, it was like a toy set that Harvey had to play but we played the gig somehow.

Cadence: *Who were you most surprised to have called you for work?*

Robertson: Ornette Coleman. I never gigged with him but we were supposed to hook up for one of my albums. I sent him music and he called me on the phone. I was living in Brooklyn, renting a room before I had my own place, and Ornette called and said, "Hi Herb, this is Ornette Coleman. How are you? I've been listening to some of your music," it turns out that Stefan Winter had contacted him about playing on my record. And he said, "You're coming from the Don Cherry." I wanted to make sure he was cool with me sending him music and I got his address and sent him "Eastawesta," a piece that I wrote on Certified. I figured that was a nice piece, it had a little Ornette-ish thing. I sent it to him and then I didn't hear anything until I contacted Stefan who told me that Ornette wants to do the whole record, he's not just gonna play on one piece and it was just too much money for Stefan. Ornette was expensive, he was very exclusive. So I blew that, I had to find something else. I think Ornette towards the end would only do 2 or 3 concerts a year and he'd ask for like a million dollars and he'd get it. [Laughs]

Cadence: *Your grandmother reportedly had Native American roots. Have you explored that side of your heritage musically?*

Robertson: We always thought that growing up but the rest of the family denied that. They said it's just a rumor that she was from the Lenni Lenape tribe, they said she was French. I said, 'Really, you don't want to be associated with that?' I would think of it as a proud thing because I love their music. I never played that music but I did listen to the tribal Folk recordings found on Nonesuch Records hoping that it would influence my playing.

Cadence: *When was the last time you played in a traditional Big Band setting and do you miss that?*

Robertson: I used to love it when I was playing lead trumpet. I guess the last time I did Big Band or dance band was around 1992-3. I'm fine with not playing it, I don't miss it. If I would do it now, I would play third or fourth trumpet. I never want to take solos in it anymore, I'd rather play just a part. I got some calls to do it but I turned them down. The only thing good about playing in a Big Band is it's like practicing on a gig, you can see where your chops are at, but for me, it was a different set of chops. When I had the strong, really high chops, that was good in the beginning when I first started getting into Free improvisation because it gave me that stamina but then I got away from it. Not too many Big Bands around anymore.

Cadence: *What are your interests outside of music? Guilty pleasures?*

Robertson: Reading and I love to cook. I don't follow cookbooks, I just add my

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own ingredients. To me, it's like musical improvisation. I like to watch movies – science fiction and horror. I don't like the regular type of movies, I like stuff that's more psychological or dark because that makes you think more and you can come to your own conclusions. I used to love to go to restaurants but that's too expensive now. I don't own a TV, I've never owned a TV. I watch movies on a laptop. I have no interest in having a TV, I think it's trying to tell me what to do. I don't like commercials and advertisements.

Cadence: The last questions have been given to me by other artists to ask you. You've already dealt partially with the first question but perhaps you can expound on it further:

Jim Yanda (guitar) said: "You are one of the most knowledgeable people I know (about music and all else!) and have a full life of musical experience and accumulated wisdom. Among the many artists and groups you've worked with, which person or situation did you learn the most from, or get the most useful knowledge from, and can you tell us what you learned?"

Robertson: Wow. That would be Herb Fisher, the musician I worked with up in the Catskills who opened my mind up to Free playing. He never really succeeded himself but he had this knowledge that he used to distill to certain people. He'd say, "Check this out. Check this out. You better check this out."

Jim Yanda also asked: "Some of the music you've done has been referred to as 'ritual music,' and fellow musicians have called you a shaman. Can you tell us more about that music and your state of mind when performing it? Also, how are you able to drop into that ritual state of mind so effortlessly?"

Robertson: I set it up beforehand, before the music starts. If it's a Free thing, I give myself a psychological construct to follow in the music. I say, 'Okay, I'm gonna be doing form' or 'I'm gonna just go for sounds today and just see what happens.' I set that up but then I'm always on this meditative state of mind. To me, playing Free is like being in meditation. Like I said before, I've been through Transcendental Meditation and Eastern philosophy and I try to view music like that. I kind of let myself go and not judge anything, not try to change anything, and try to get beyond the ego to a state of non-ego, a state of nonexistence where, hopefully, the body disappears and I'm not thinking physically anymore. That to me is the illusory part, that's the illusion. Physicality is the illusion. I'm gonna get to the mind, the Universal Mind, so I try to set that up ahead of time, and then I've always found that when we start playing music, there's always going to be someone who's gonna start it. I don't like starting improvisations, I like waiting until a certain type of sound captures me to do something in response. I'm more of a response person. I respond to the environment and once I join in, I just let it go, and to me, that's effortless because I'm not thinking. I'm not thinking. I don't care where my fingers go. I just let them go wherever they're gonna go. They already have their own patterns setup. That's my style. When I listen to myself on a record, and I try not to listen to myself too much, but if I hear me playing, I may say, 'I'm doing that again?' So I do have a style, even though I'm not thinking where the

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fingers are going, somehow I must have set it up through years [of playing]. It's about trust, I trust what I'm gonna do. I don't have to correct anything.

Phil Haynes (drums) asked: *“What experience first drew you towards expanding your instrumental range to include toys as found instruments?”*

Robertson: First of all, the cost. I used to go to Toys R Us, when they were in business. I'd walk through the store and hit pots and little things when no one was around and if I liked the sound of it, I'd buy it because it was cheap. And I'd buy children's toys – little bells and apples that have bells in them that could float in the bathtub. Those little apples had Filipino bells in them. I remember there was a whole stack of apples, I still have them around, and I would take two and stereophonically set them up to my ear to find the ones which were most atonal, most 12 tone. I wanted the ones which would create the most tension. Plus, playing the trumpet, I remember the first time I had to do solo trumpet I said, 'Man, this is too hard. I'm getting tired of playing the trumpet, I want to add something else to the thing.' Plus, I could [gather] my chops by taking a break. That's the secret ingredient - picking up a shaker or a New Year's Eve party balloon, which I used to do. I've accumulated a lot of stuff, although a lot of stuff melted in my trunk because I leave them in the car or they would break. I would still play the broken ones until they were non-playable and then I would have to get some new stuff.

Steven Bernstein (trumpet) said: *“Herb, in the early '80s you were one of the first “next generation” trumpeters- trumpeters with lots of technique - but with a musical philosophy more attuned with “Free/Open music” as opposed to “Traditional/Bebop.” What led you down this path and who were your main influences?”*

Robertson: Wow, I haven't heard from him in a long time. Well, I always had technique. That was technique from playing in Big Bands and going to Berklee and training my ears, and I always had the chops from playing lead trumpet. I always had screaming chops. I had a range of 3 and a half octaves on trumpet and I utilized that. What trumpet players broke me out? When I heard Kenny Wheeler, because he had chops and could play a lot of free stuff. He could play his own thing. Of course, Don Cherry and Lester Bowie, who gave me more of a sound. Don Cherry was coming from more of a Hard Bop originally, I mean those early Ornette records, he really sounds almost like a Hard Bopper. The sense of swing was there from him and his whole approach. There was also Thad Jones and Art Farmer from the tradition who were breaking through the tradition. And I have to say I love Don Ellis, the stuff that he was doing. He was experimenting on his early records before he got the Big Band going. He did a record with Paul Bley, a standards record, and he did the standards differently. He had a different thing. The records he did with Jaki Byard. I was interested in Don Ellis' wanting to stretch it further even though he was coming from more of a Dixieland thing, I thought. The way he would swing was more Dixieland. When I was early in my teens, it was Freddie Hubbard I was trying to emulate. When I heard Clifford Brown on record I went, 'Well, there's no way I'm gonna

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be playing like that – that’s perfect.’ [Laughs]

Dave Ballou (trumpet) asked: *“Herb, you have been influenced by Eastern philosophy and thought. What drew you to this and how has it influenced you as an artist? Who influenced you in this realm?”*

Robertson: I would add to what I’ve said earlier the American philosopher Ken Wilber, who was also coming from a spiritual Eastern philosophy. I also studied the people from the Esalen Institute. That stuff was becoming popular in the ‘70s – the more Eastern things were joining in with the Western. I liked to combine in, I didn’t like to separate. It was about how could I add that to the Western approach? I was raised Catholic but I kind of broke from that to get into the Eastern thing because I didn’t like the guilt trip that was laid with that. I went to the Eastern thing and then I found out from the Eastern approach when I went back to studying Christian religions, you could get that approach [with Christianity] also if you changed it from the physical to the mind. If you read the Bible and see it as having everything to do with the mind and nothing to do with the body, then you have the same approach that the Easterners were talking about. I made that correlation – it worked for me. It’s hard to put it into words because sometimes there are no words to describe that experience. As soon as you put it into words you start reducing it.

Steve Swell (trombone) said: *“I’m so glad you’re doing something on Herb. I’ve had so many wonderful experiences with Herb, musical and social. There’s a lot to choose from to ask about. I was with him one time in Tim Berne’s band in Austria and he started a solo improvisation alone without the band and I think he was blowing water or air through his horn and the audience seemed a little turned off, even offended in some way, expressing themselves with sounds of displeasure you could audibly hear, and yet somehow he managed to develop it into this wonderful improv that brought the house down. I’m asking how you managed it, trusted yourself, and what your mindset was in taking a risk that in other hands might have had a disastrous result?”*

Robertson: Whenever I talk with Steve he always reminds me about that experience. I remember it exactly. I poured water in the horn and then I played and it started gurgling, spitting and echoing with sound coming out but at first, the water came flying out of the bell and hit Tim’s music and the notes started dripping down. It wasn’t set up for water and I went, ‘Uh-oh! I have to redo that part!’, and Tim’s like, “Oh no, Jesus! What’s going on now, man?” [Laughs] And the audience is going, “Ugh! What is that, spit coming out?” And I think people in the front row may have gotten sprayed because it was a little club. Like I said before, when I start improvising, I like to close my eyes and get to the sound – please don’t look at me, just close your eyes and listen to what it is. It’s deeper than what it looks like. [Laughs] Sometimes you have to contort yourself physically to get to those moments, you have to do something strange to get a new approach coming out. Once I commit I don’t give it up. I’m not gonna go, ‘Oh, shit! Sorry Tim, sorry audience!’ No, I’m

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gonna stick with it, man, I'm gonna win 'em over, man. You know, sometimes the ego does come back into play. You say, 'Oh boy, I can't blow this one.' But I don't want people to laugh at me, some were laughing, some were disgusted, but like what Steve said – all of a sudden the place got quiet because it turned into this beautiful improvisation. So, I hit a wall but it wasn't gonna beat me, I'm gonna go through it, and once you get through it then you're there, then it's easy. Sometimes you hit it and bang! You can either give up or you can just work your way through it. Not knock it down, just keep moving it. Climb that mountain, get to the mountain top. That's my goal all the time if I'm improvising.

Steve Swell also said: "Also, Herb is a superb trumpet player as well as an amazing improviser. That gets lost on a lot of musicians who think they know what Herb does. He could easily play lead trumpet in Big Band or Broadway shows or have become an excellent Classical player. I'd like to ask about the importance of being proficient on your instrument and how it informs your improvising?"

Robertson: Well, I think he overstated a lot of things [Laughs] that I am. I mean, I'm not a really heavy Classical musician. I had a choice to go into a Classical direction or Jazz and I picked Jazz. When I was in a Classical situation, I just didn't like the attitudes that were happening. It wasn't fun and I have to have fun. And memorization is not my thing, that's why I always have music [charts]. I never have it memorized. I think memory is a bad thing for improvisation because then you don't create anything new. You [have to] forget what you did before so that way when you start again, it's completely new. So, I take advantage of my memory, [Laughs] or non-memory, as I say. Steve said that about Big Band but I can't easily do that anymore. That was back in my 20s and 30s because I was doing it all the time. As far as proficiency, when I studied with Doc Reinhardt his whole thing was you have to overcome the instrument physically so you have complete abandon when you play music. If you have any kind of detriment or blockage physically in the trumpet it's gonna keep you from expressing your music. You want to overcome the instrument so much that whatever you think is then gonna come out. I had that because I practiced his routines all day long. He said, "When you get to the gig, forget about that and just play music."

Satoko Fujii (piano) and Natsuki Tamura (trumpet) said: "Natsuki and I have been talking about some questions for Herb. It is hard because he is totally different from other musicians. He is very unique and special. Our question is do you have any daily trumpet practice routine? If so, please talk a bit about it. We are very curious how your special and unique playing is made by your practice."

Robertson: The only thing I practice is the mechanics of the instrument. I concentrate on long tones and my jaw structure, my teeth structure, my malocclusion. Not everybody opens their jaws straight up and down. People's jaws can go side-to-side – that's called a malocclusion. That affects your

Interview: Herb Robertson

trumpet playing when you spread through the intervals. The interval of a fourth or more, the fourth or the fifth, because the partials of the instrument are based on the harmonic series, especially on a trumpet because you only have 3 valves. Three valves doesn't mean that you just play 3 notes. People think that but the 3 valves play all the notes, all the chromatics, but it goes through the partials. In other words, there's 7 positions, just like a trombone. So that means you've got 7 bugles. You've got an open bugle and then a half step lower, that's another bugle, and those bugles play the harmonic scales. They line up the harmonic intervals. When you get up into the upper register you don't even need the valves, you can play everything just with the lip. The ancient trumpet players used to do that – they had no valves so they used small horns and they could play scales. French horn can do that because it has all that coil. So, that's my approach. My teacher, Doc Reinhardt, was great at analyzing your embouchure. In fact, when you went to your first orientation with him, may he rest in peace, he died in 1989, he would just talk to you, you wouldn't touch your instrument. You wouldn't know that he was analyzing you. He would look at your jaw and your lips and your teeth while you were talking and then he would tell you to play and he would figure out how you had to play the instrument to get over the impediment. I apply all that he taught me to my freedom [on the instrument]. I remember one time when Satoko was introducing the band after a concert, she introduced so and so and all these other great musicians and then she goes, "And this guy's REALLY crazy -Herb Robertson on trumpet!" [Laughs] I took that in a positive way.

Joe McPhee (multi-instrumentalist) said: *"I know you had to quit playing music for a time when the strain of performing nightly in a loud Jazz-Rock band caused you to lose your trumpet chops. Due to a periodontal infection I have not been able to play my trumpet for three years and trumpet was my first instrument. I'd like to know what it was like for you to stop playing and how did you get your chops back?"*

Robertson: Yeah, I went back to Doc Reinhardt and I had to do all these special routines that he gave me that sounded terrible. That was their purpose. All these non-sounding notes I had to do just to get a little buzz happening again. I have periodontal disease too. In fact, I just had 2 molars pulled and it's affecting my life now too. What happens with periodontal disease is that teeth lose their compression, they start to shift because the molar is not there anymore so the tooth in front of that one starts to relax, especially when we get older. I have to go every 3 months to the hygienist to get a cleaning to slow it down. You can't cure periodontal disease once you have it. When I was in my 20s, I had all 4 of my wisdom teeth cut out and boy did that mess up my playing. I had to go back to Doc Reinhardt then also. I know about what Joe's been going through. I've spoken with him. As far as how it felt to have to stop playing when I lost my chops? It felt horrible. I was depressed. I thought I had to quit music and that's when I started doing the factory jobs. I thought it was over and I was a mess to be around. I had to go back and live with my parents in a bedroom

Interview: Herb Robertson

there and I guess I was driving them crazy because I was so fricking depressed. That's when I started getting into meditation, that was around 1976. I knew I had to start doing something so that's when I started TM and it took the stress away from me. I got more calm and more psychologically active again, and then I went back to Doc. I said, 'Okay, let me get it back together,' and he gave me the correction routines that were specifically made for people who lost their chops. It was a 2-year process of getting it back together but I never became that lead trumpet player again after that. I had to change my whole approach and the meditation got me into checking out Free improvisation, checking out a whole different approach to trumpet. It made me more of a melodic player and more of a sound oriented player. Now when I practice, I can play those high notes when I play through his routines but I never use them anymore on the gig unless automatically they go there because it's a whole different thing now. I know that Joe is doing some spiritual things and it's great that he's starting to play the trumpet again.

Dave Douglas (trumpet) asked: "Herb, what was it that first inspired you to get into mutes and all manner of sound manipulation? Sitting next to you in Walter Thompson's big band all those years ago was a huge inspiration for me."

Robertson: Ahh, the mutes. I brought them in because they were a different way of changing the sound on the instrument. I didn't approach the mute as a color or a softening aspect, I approached it as a different instrument. Each mute gave me a different way of playing, it opened up the musical palette of how to improvise. I could go in a different direction. An example is the cup mute. When I use the cup mute I play more traditionally because it brings back the memory of that cup muted trumpet found in Bebop and Hardbop. Now when I use the Harmon mute, it's more soft and it makes me play quicker because I can put more air in the horn without blowing my brains out. I can blow stronger so I can move my fingers faster, whereas with an open horn, when I get stronger I kind of back off – I hold back. With the Harmon mute, it keeps me upfront so I can dig in deeper but it's not gonna be really loud so I can really expand the sound of it. Plus, it makes me think of different trumpet players that played like that. The plunger mute is the same thing. It brings back that talking action of the instrument and that whole "Jungle" sound of Duke Ellington so I can bring that up and make me stretch the sound aspects and make the thing really wacky. And then I just started expanding and trying all these different mutes.

Cadence: The next question you've already talked about. You've talked about your trumpet influences but perhaps there's someone you haven't mentioned yet, someone obscure?

Dave Douglas also asked: "Are there any trumpet players who are important for you that we might be surprised to learn about?"

Robertson: It would be Classical trumpet players such as Gerard Schwarz. He's a famous trumpet player who became more of an orchestra conductor out in Seattle but his whole approach to playing modern trumpet [influenced me].

Interview: Herb Robertson

Dave Douglas also asked: “As a composer, can you identify a moment when you really felt you were writing music in your own new and unique voice?”

Robertson: When I did *Certified* because I was adding taped sounds and electronics. I thought my composing had a certain style and I had a certain technique of how to write that was helping me because, say if I was composing, I’d get blocked and I’d have to find a way to get out of that blockage. I had found a technique that I invented, which I’m not gonna give away, [Laughs] which helped me when I got stuck, which happens. I remember when I was doing the Bud Powell record, at one point I said, ‘I can’t do this.’ I had a deadline and all of a sudden I got blocked and I said, ‘What am I gonna do?’ So, all I did was I stopped, put the pencil down, because I always use a pencil and not a computer, that’s how I learned at Berklee. I got away from it all. That’s the best thing to do – get away from it – go for a walk, it will come back. For me, it was just laying on the floor. I remember I just laid on the floor in dead man’s pose from yoga. It was a hard wooden floor and I just laid there for maybe 25 minutes and then I got up and felt fresh again and I threw some notes down. You know, the thing that scares me the most about composing is when you have the blank score and you see all those staves looking at you. There’s nothing there, just lines, and I go, ‘How do I get this thing ...’ I just stare at that blank score and finally say, ‘Fuck it!’ and then just put pencil to the page [Laughs] and just draw a note. That’s all it takes, just throwing a note on there, and wherever it goes, blindfolded, just put it there and let it go from there. I think it was Gary Burton who said, “Composing is slowed down improvisation.” Sometimes I’d do 2 measures and I’d look at the clock and it had been 3 hours.

Tim Berne (alto sax) asked: “How much of a role do you think magic plays in making music with others?”

Robertson: Magic? Wow, I don’t know, magic? Well, it’s magic if you have the musicians that you like to play with. When you find musicians that you can hang with, that can be your friends, and they’re also great players and improvisers on their instruments - if they’re your friends and you can hang with them off the bandstand, that’s magic because when you get on the bandstand the music just happens. The first time I played with Mark Helias was in a place called Fat City in New Jersey around the time I left Berklee. We formed a quartet in 1971. We got together, nobody knew anybody, I don’t know where we found each other but Mark was living at Fat City, which was like a little commune, in a big house way in the middle of nowhere in Franklin Township, New Jersey. It was a hippie commune, basically, and he had a piano and a drum set there and we went there to play some Jazz. The four of us started playing some tunes from the *Real Book*, it was alright, nothing special. We were young and a little nervous. I was 20. We took a break, went into the kitchen and started talking. We asked about each other and laughed and joked and had some food and beer, and everybody relaxed. We went back to play and suddenly it was on another level immediately. We said, “Holy shit.” We all

Interview: Herb Robertson

looked at each other like, “Wow, how’d this happen?” Same guys but it was like a whole different band. We reached a new level because we were comfortable with each other. That’s the magic. The magic is being with everybody and not having any discrepancies. We’re gonna have our moments. You know, friends have their moments, right? It’s tough but you get through it, that’s the most important thing – it’s playing with people that you want to be with. That’s the magic.

Tim Berne also asked: “Does the audience play a role in the music?”

Robertson: It’s different for me, sometimes I’m comfortable just doing a jam session in the living room with musicians or nobody. You can play some amazing stuff just because you’re [relaxed]. You can take your clothes off, you can’t do that in front of an audience. Well, I know one musician who did, that’s another story. [Laughs] Oh, I don’t want to mention names but we were doing a gig on a Bobby Previte tour in front of an audience in Dresden, Germany in an old bomb shelter that was made into a club, and we bet the keyboard player to go out there naked. “I bet you won’t go out there naked for the second set.” We put money down and said, “He’s not gonna do it.” We went out for the second set, he stayed backstage. We’re on the stage and all of a sudden the big doors open up and he’s standing there completely fucking naked. And he just walked out and 10 minutes later, everyone in New York knew this was happening. The word just spread. [Laughs] He played the whole set naked. We couldn’t believe it, man. And the German people in the audience were like, “Alright, that’s cool.” So, the audience gives a different thing [Laughs] to the thing. Like I said, I like playing in living rooms and experimenting there and the audience plays a big role because you get this shifting going around – this communication, this circle – that puts it in perspective and makes you play differently. It’s a whole different experience, just like if you record live or record in the studio, the music is gonna come out different. When you’re live, anything goes. That’s the thing about live, you can’t stop even if you get lost and hit a train wreck you gotta get out of it. Sometimes that’s where the music gets real creative, when you’re stuck. ‘Oh, boy, how are we gonna get out of this?’ That’s when creativity has to come in and all of a sudden you have to figure out a way to get out of it. You listen to the tapes and that moment you got stuck? That was the best moment of the piece because you weren’t comfortable all of a sudden. You’re playing something different, you’re stuck. You’re not doing your familiar stuff and you find your way out of it. The creative process is problem solving. Set up problems and solve them. That’s how I experience the difference with the audience. The audience is very important but it’s a different thing. You should experience all three. You should do the living room, you should do the recording studio, and you should do the live with an audience, all with the same musicians.

New Issues

GEORGE NAZOS

WAVES

STREET OF STARS RECORDS

CITY BLUES/ WELCOME HOME/ DESERT WIND/ JAFFA/ SUMMER DREAMS/ SECRET WORLD/ AT LIAM'S/ WAVES 42:59

Nazos, g; Trifon Dimitrov, bass; Joe Abba, d; Tamuz Nissim, vcl 2022 NY,NY

Finding new pathways that can redefine what's possible for one of the world's most popular instruments is no easy task. George Nazos, a guitarist deserving of greater recognition is one who diligently travels that path. George's latest CD "Waves" is one fine example of what it takes to forge ahead and find new avenues of guitar expression.

"Waves" is a trio recording with guitar, acoustic bass, drums, with one track featuring the sublime vocal work of Tamuz Nissim. George Nazos who plays both steel and nylon string guitar has chosen to play all nylon string on this recording that presents eight of his original compositions. Two of these tracks are performed as solo guitar pieces.

We get started with "City Blues", a slow, mysterious fourteen bar blues that uses space and lots of dark harmony to create its moody bluesyness. Nazos uses his vast vocabulary of unusual and undiscovered guitar voicings to achieve this shadowy atmosphere. "Welcome Home" is a bright and uplifting 3/4 gem that's wonderfully constructed. Some exceptional bass work is presented by Trifon Dimitrov, followed by a vast array of chordal and single note action by Nazos. "Desert Wind" begins with a masterful solo guitar intro before the group joins in and the bass plays parts of the melody with the guitar. This ballad speaks volumes and brings forth many different images as it's written and executed with great passion. "Jaffa" is another wonderfully constructed piece that moves through a samba-like feel to straight up swing with strong solos by Nazos, Dimitrov and Abba. "Summer Dreams" has vocalist Tamuz Nissam join the bass with an exquisite reading of the melody. The guitar then solos with great expression and depth. Tamuz then restates the melody and this time adds lyrics. Her voice rings perfect as it takes us to another time and place. Simply magical! "At Liam's" has solo guitar open with showers of harp-like notes dancing across the fingerboard. An uplifting folk-like ballad is born as it frolic's joyfully, bringing forth images of happy times. "Secret World" demonstrates George's gift and extreme proficiency as a solo guitarist. Not only is he able to perform this piece with astounding expression but he also has the ability to reach across the fingerboard with his thumb and play additional notes not normally reachable. The title track "Waves" finishes out the set on a bright note as a joyous celebration of more solo guitar excellence.

Compositionally and performance-wise "Waves" is a celestial journey into imagination and guitar magic.

Frank Kohl

New Issues

OZ NOY - TRIPLE PLAY

ZIG ZAG/ GROOVIN' GRANT/ BEMSHA SWING/ BOOM BOO BOOM/ BILLIE'S BOUNCE/
SNAPDRAGON/ CHOCOLATE SOUFFLÉ/ LOONI TOONI/ TWICE IN A WHILE/ TWISTED BLUES
72:06 Noy, g; Dennis Chambers, d; Jimmy Haslip, bass Dec. 2022 live Stage Music Arts
performance space Maryland, USA

Oz Noy delivers a powerhouse, high octane performance on his latest CD "Triple Play". With the support of drummer Dennis Chambers and bassist Jimmy Haslip the trio soars, leaving the listener with a deep sense of satisfaction.

"Triple Play" is a combination of two live performances recorded at Maryland's Stage Music Arts performance space. Fresh of a European tour we find the trio in top form and well acquainted with each others artist mannerisms and eccentricities. This pristine recording presents eight Oz Noy originals from previous CD's along with Monk's "Bemsha Swing" and Parker's "Billies Bounce".

We open with Noy's "Zig Zag", a funk driven treasure that has Chambers laying down the pulse with muscular precision. Oz Noy solos, carefully at first, delivering a colorful array of possible paths forward, then brings it all together in a barrage of masterful technique. He then tones it all down with some contemplative eloquence before restating the melody. "Groovin' Grant" begins with an expression of rockish unison and then slides into a slick octave melody statement before it lands on some hard driving swing and then takes off with a blistering Oz Noy solo. Monk's "Bemsha Swing" takes a different path. A colorful array of chordal fluency has Noy stating the melody in psychedelic-like fashion before it finds its way to tempo. A dark and mysterious atmosphere is present throughout as we travel in an out of a dreamlike jam session. "Boom Boo Boom" has a captivating oddity to it as it delivers a collage of musical ideas that merge together with some humorous genius. We then launch into a lineup of contemporary and exhilarating solos with Dennis Chambers taking center stage on this one. A very unusual version of Charlie Parker's "Billies Bounce" done at a ballad like tempo takes us on an unexpected journey. After the melody statement Jimmy Haslip takes off with a soulful solo demonstrating his prowess with the six string bass. Oz follows with a scorching Hendrix inspired solo that evolves into some present day harmonic concepts. "Snapdragon" starts out with a pleasing solo guitar intro that then blossoms into a rockish 6/8 romp that again displays Noy's ability to merge the spirit of Hendrix with the jazz and fusion of today. The result of all this being a historical view of the connection between what came before and it's path to now. "Twice In A While" deserves special attention as it exhibits Noy's knowledge and command of unique harmony and solo guitar performance. "Chocolate Soufflé", "Looni Tooni" and "Twisted Blues" round out the set with spirited originality.

Throughout "Triple Play" the trio hits a live recording home run with solid performances by all. Oz Noy demonstrates his unique compositional skills and talent to present his work. The vast and colorful landscape his music creates is a testament to his awareness of what came before and how we arrived to where we are today.

Frank Kohl

New Issues

MIKE DIRUBBO, INNER LIGHT, TRUTH REVOLUTION COLLECTIVE 076.

JK IN NYC / STROLLIN' AND TROLLIN' / THE MUSE / BETHUNE STREET / LOVE THE SAME / INNER LIGHT / BRAND NEW / STRAIGHT STREET / THE MOMENT BEFORE SUNRISE / CAMPANIA / DEARLY BELOVED. 65:18.

Dirubbo, as; Brian Charette, org; Andrew Renfroe, g; Jongkuk Kim, d. 6/15/23.

One would think after several decades of playing performance and two handfuls of recordings under his name gifted altoist Mike Dirubbo would escape the Rising Star box he's been consigned to some maybe this one will do it. Sure, none of his work has been on major labels and issues on smaller indie labels like Smalls, Positone, Sharp Nine or imports Steeplechase and Criss Cross tend to slip under the radar but come on, people, give the guy a break. This latest outing teams him once again with the keys of Brian Charette for their fourth album appearance together along with relative unknowns Jongkuk Kim and guitar ace Andrew Renfroe on eleven cuts mostly from the pen of the leader save for Trane's "Straight Street" and the concluding evergreen "Dearly Beloved" from Jerome Kern.

Mike's tone is McLean-flavored but not quite as tart and there are subtle hints of his study with Dr. Jackie while Charette summons up the console carousing of one, Mr. Smith. Renfroe is a new name to me but he rings a bell with his tone set deeply in the tradition. If one is completely new to the sound of DiRubbo may I recommend the wonderfulduet album Four Hands, One Heart with the much-missed Larry Willis on Ksanti as an appetizer. On second thought, any of his titles will do just as well.

Larry Hollis

AHMAD JAMAL EMERALD CITY NIGHTS

JAZZ DETECTIVE 006

DISC ONE: GLORIA (A)/ FANTASTIC VEHICLE(A) / MISTY(A) / MR. LUCKY(B) / AUTUMN LEAVES (B). 45:11. (A)9/29/1966. (B) 8/24/1967. SEATTLE, WA. DISC TWO: CORCOVADO(C) / WHERE IS LOVE(C) / DANCE TO THE LADY(C)/ NAKED CITY THEME/(D)/ EMILY(D)/ ALFIE(D). 48:35. (C)8/31/1967 (D) 4/26/1968. SEATTLE, WA. Jamal, p; Jamil Nasser, b; Frank Gant, d.

The late Ahmad Jamal was that rarity among the species, a true maverick plying his trade in a maverick idiom. Subtitled Live At The Penthouse 1966-1968 this is the final entry in the trilogy following two disk sets 1963-1964 and 1965-1966. Where those sets held different bass and drums combinations this third volume has only one in Nasser and Gant. The aforementioned bassist shows up in some of these trios but it is only on the last three titles that the Nasser/Gant configuration caught a week in September of 66 is present. Growing up with the iconic duo of Israel Crosby and Vernel Fournier probably makes me prejudice but this twosome is a very close second. But that's all apples and oranges. At this point in time the threesome had transformed from the early Chamber Jazz touch into a stronger, more percussive unit. Plus there is a more pronounced chance-taking vibe like when Jamal reaches inside his instrument to strum the strings to produce a harp-like effect a device used by other pianists from Les McCann to Chick Corea. There's a radical redo of fellow Pittsburgh homie's composition and the rhythm section lays out on the lovely Johnny Mandel classic "Emily". Once glance at the tune list says it all. Television theme songs mixed with current pop numbers are given a true jazzy touch. A fitting conclusion to a fine series from a certified music giant. A gift from the piano gods

Larry Hollis

New Issues

WES MONTGOMERY/WYNTON KELLY TRIO MAXIMUM SWING: UNISSUED 1965

HALF NOTE RECORDINGS, RESONANCE 2067.

DISC ONE : LAURA(a)/ CARIBA(a)/ BLUES(a)/ IMPRESSION(b) / MI COSA(b)/ NO BLUES(b)/ BIRK'S WORKS(c)/ FOUR ON SIX(c)/ THE THEME(c). 50:08. DISC TWO: ALL THE THINGS YOU ARE(d)/ I REMEMBER YOU(d)/ NO BLUES(d)/ CHEROKEE(e)/ THE SONG IS YOU(e)/ FOUR ON SIX(e)/ STAR EYES(e)/ OH, YOU CRAZY MOON(e). 74:16. Montgomery, g; Kelly, p; Paul Chambers ,(a), Ron Carter(b), Larry Ridley, (c), Herman Wright, (d), Larry Ridley, (e), b. (a)9/24/1965, (b)11/5/1965, (c) 11/12/1965, (d) 11/19/1965, (e) Late 1965. All selections New York City, NY.

There is one given when it comes to identifying musicians and that is their sound. Whether it is Monk's piano or Desmond's alto the giants are always recognizable through their sound. Wes Montgomery's distinct guitar sonics fit this definition, the touch of flesh on strings let you shake your head in affirmative recognition. One has to wonder how large a drop occurred in guitar pick sales there was after he came on the scene. Taken from radio broadcasts hosted by Alan Grant these seventeen tracks the pairing of Wes with Kelly and Cobb find only the first three titles with original bassist Paul Chambers inexplicably absent from the remaining fourteen numbers. Aply subbing for him are Ron Carter, Larry Ridley and Herman Wright who is a new name to me. All acquit themselves admirably but this writer would have preferred more Mr. PC. The three items with Ron Carter are actually just two since "Mi Cosa" (My Thing) is a sweet solo guitar rendition. From mid-November comes a rare take of Dizzy's "Birk's Works" taken fairly laid back, a contrafact of the dusty diamond "Summertime" filled with recognizable quotes before a short segment of "The Theme" all with bassman Ridley ends the initial disk. The second disk is even longer filled with a triad of two standards and another version of "No Blues" as a break song. Cobb gets a three chorus ride on "All The Things..." which was unusual in a more sedate studio setting. A former stalwart of the Gillespie combo Larry Ridley returns to the final five selections some of which went unrecorded in Montgomery's CTI days. "Cherokee" is an unmitigated burner wrapping up with some dazzling eights exchanges. Ridley is not forgotten as he get mucho solo space on a lengthy "The Song Is You" while yet another take of the signature "Four On Six" and the standard "Star Eyes" before a brushed "Oh, You Crazy Moon". Mention must be made of the brilliant pianistics of Wynton Kelly whose solo work is equally enhanced by his comping. He never got the critical accolades bestowed on some of his peers but this listener has never heard him play a false note. As for Mister Montgomery his prestidigitation is peerless. No question the man left his thumbprint on beaucoup six-stringers. Larry Hollis

P.S. An earlier import release under the Jazz On Jazz logo with a similar title was heavily flawed containing only eleven tracks with numerous mistakes is apparently out-of-print. Don't be fooled, the Resonance is the one to have. L.H.

New Issues

JOHNNY GRIFFIN, LIVE AT RONNIE SCOTT'S: 8TH JANUARY 1964, GEARBOX R5GB1010.2.

THE GIRL NEXT DOOR / (BACK HOME AGAIN IN) INDIANA / BLUES IN TWOS . THE THEME. Total Time: 53:55. Griffin, ts; Stan Tracey, p; Malcolm Cecil, b; Jackie Dougan, d. 1/8/1964. London, UK.

John Arnold Griffin III may have stood only a little over five feet and one-half inches but he most certainly was a tall tenor. Most hardcore jazz junkie know his nickname of the Little Giant but only a few know of another tenor terrorist Edward Brian Hayes that bore that same nickname but was commonly called Tubby. It is unknown if these two ever locked horns but Hayes visited the states at least twice while Griffin gigged in London several times before relocating to France in 1963 where he died in 2008. These four tracks were laid down a year after the Windy City native moved to the Continent and finds him with a British pickup section in saxophonists Ronnie Scott's bistro for an exciting set. Feeding the changes from his keyboard Stan Tracey was virtually the house pianist for many years coupled with fellow Londoner Cecil on the upright and Scot Dougan kicking tubs. Things kick off with a pop tune from the fifties with two Griffin solo spots to savor, followed by the contrafact of "Donna Lee" written even earlier which is taken at a sizzling pace replete with bull fiddle solo and a drum kit solo before some adroit four exchanges. Next it's time for some B flat blues which Griff knows all too well from his teenage years with T-Bone Walker and R&B session work for Atlantic records. One can almost picture him walking the bar from back in those days. The set closer "The Theme" is another barn-burner that is way too-brief. Throughout this example of tenor mastery the elder Little Giant displays his dexterity and articulation in a breathtaking fashion.

Larry Hollis



New Issues

(1) JEFF COSGROVE, JEFF LEDERER, MARK LYSHER WELCOME HOME

BANDCAMP DOWNLOAD

STANLEY'S PACKAGE/ NO BOOZE BLUES/ DEEP RIVER/ DEWEY'S TUNE/ FARMER ALFALFA/
SOFTLY IN A MORNING SUNRISE/ KRYSTAL'S CAVERN/ GOING HOME/ PEE WEE'S BLUES 73:38

Jeff Cosgrove, d; Jeff Lederer, ts, clt; Mark Lysher bass October 23 2023

(2) JEFF COSGROVE, NOAH PREMINGER, KIM CASS CONFUSING MOTION FOR PROGRESS

DIGITAL DOWNLOAD

AT/ OFF-HANDED INVITATION/ JUMBLES/ FINGERS/ EVERYDAY LANGUAGE/ AC/ GHOST/ SLIPS
51:53

Jeff Cosgrove, d; Noah Preminger as, ts; Kim Cass, bass Oct 20 2023

(3) IVO PERELEMAN, MATTHEW SHIPP, JEFF COSGROVE LIVE IN CARRBORO

LIVE IN CARRBORO/ LIVE IN CARRBORO (EXCERPT) 65:25

Ivo Perelman ts; Matthew Shipp p; Jeff Cosgrove

(1) The CD opens with some good raucous tenor with great accompanying drums. The energy is maintained throughout the track with solos by all. As a drummer I enjoyed Cosgrove's solo as it really fit the piece. This is followed by a nice mellow blues. Lederer's tenor here is nice and warm with some good vibrato. And Lysher is right there with him. As the solo develops, Lederer gets a bit boisterous, but it fits. Great accompaniment from Lysher and Cosgrove, with a nice solo by Lysher. Dewey's Tune is a standout for me. A nice medium tempo bluesy piece with some lyrical tenor playing, great bass support and a nice solo by Cosgrove. And, I think appropriately, Farmer Alfalfa features Lederer's clarinet. Just sounded right to me. A clarinet in the field. The tune has a nice Latin feel to it with great work by Lysher and Cosgrove. Interesting to see the inclusion of an oldie in Softly in a Morning Sunrise especially as it was a tune I played in the jazz band in university back in the early 60s. (2) As this recording opens I want to make immediate comparisons to the previous trio led by Cosgrove. Preminger has a lighter tone and is a bit more lyrical than Lederer and Cass has a heavier sound than Lysher. And the tunes here are more lyrical as well. As the recording goes on I find I am really enjoying Preminger's playing, whether on alto or tenor. Cass provides great support and a great solo on Fingers, and Cosgrove plays appropriately for the tune. I point this out because so many drummers in solos just rely on technique and showmanship instead of musicality. The standout track on recording for me is AC. I don't know if it stands for Alternating Current or Air Conditioning, but it really cooks. The melody is lyrical and everyone shines. The recording ends with two mellow pieces.

My final comment is that it left me wanting more. Truly enjoyable.

(3) I haven't heard Perelman and Shipp for a long time. This is a very different make up from the previous two recordings, partly because of the length of the pieces and the different instrumentation. So I was very interested in how Cosgrove would

New Issues

function here. I must admit I am not a great fan of Perelman. I find his high squeaking a bit tiresome. But he also is capable of some very lyrical playing. He seems to go from a lyrical line which he then builds and builds to his high note squealing and then back again. By the ten-minute mark on the first track he has done this three times.

His lyrical playing is actually very nice. In these passages he exhibits a nice warm tone, which gets lost when he builds to his high notes. At about the twelve-minute mark Shipp solos. His solo playing builds very nicely on his accompanying work which was excellent. Very two handed and complex when it had to be, complimenting Perelman's playing very nicely. At times Cosgrove can be heard but at other times he is not audible. When he is audible he also complements both Perelman's and Shipp's playing very nicely. There is a nice drum break around the twenty-minute mark. It is very restrained but very musical and offers a nice reprieve from the tension created by Perelman. Very nice use of mallets on toms and cymbals. At times it sounds like he has a tympani or a pedal tom, since he gets a good glissando effect. I must admit by the end of the recording I was exhausted. A recording for Perelman fans. Bernie Koenig

DAVE STRYKER TRIO WITH BOB MINTZER, GROOVE STREET, STRIKE ZONE 8826

GROOVE STREET / OVERLAP / SUMMIT / INFANT EYES / SOULSTICE / COLD DUCK TIME / CODE BLUE / THE MORE I SEE YOU / STRAIGHT AHEAD.

Stryker, g; Mintzer, ts; Jared Gold, org; McClenty Hunter, d. 7/2/2023. Paramus, NJ.

For several years now Dave Stryker has been a constant in my listening room. Whether on the import Steeplechase label or under his own StrikeZone issues he is right up there with other favorites like Graham Dechter and Peter Bernstein. To my mind (and ears) these guys are all sons of Kenny Burrell and Grant Green. One thing that always amazes me is how he constantly comes up with interesting formats without resorting to any noticeable slickness. This time out he has augmented his usual trio of Gold and Hunter with the tenor of Bob Mintzer. The subject of an unpublished interview for Cadence some years back Mintzer is most closely identified with the Big Band idiom but he is perfectly at home in an organ setting. The evidence is a 2010 Japanese release (Canyon Cove) with Larry Goldings locking in with Peter Erskine. He's no slouch in the writing department as shown by his two contributions with his tenor feature "Overlap" and closing cooker "Straight Ahead". The leader mixes up the program with three of his originals, Gold's "Soulstice" and the Harry Warren standard "The More I See You". But the tune that struck the biggest chord (no pun intended) with yours truly was the bandstand favorite "Cold Duck Time" from the almost forgotten great Eddie Harris. An infectious boogaloo that could make a dead man dance. Well, you get the picture. If you can't get behind this aptly named trip down Groove Street it's your own asphalt.

Larry Hollis

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: soprano 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

Mark Dresser
 Laurie Anderson
 Shara Lunon
 Charlie Apicella
 Lafayette Gilchrist
 Che Chien

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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Laurie Anderson with Sex Mob: Let X=X Tour

Laurie Anderson performed on 3/29/24 to a packed house at Portland's Keller Auditorium as part of her Let X=X Tour.

Her back up group was Steve Bernstein and Sex Mob which is an amazing show in itself; providing a powerful rock group, chamber orchestra/art ensemble setting for Laurie to work with.

Sex Mob consists of Steven Bernstein, Briggan Krauss, Tony Scherr, Kenny Wollesen, and Doug Weiselman. That's the same lineup for over 24 years. The band was exceptional and really focused on Laurie's vision. The third aspect of the concert was a background film featuring Laurie's artwork - films including some beautiful images of snowflakes floating upwards through the forest then floating back down.

The music, the words were all working. There were a few pieces with pre-recorded music. The resulting effects were seamless blending live and pre recorded music. At one point Laurie talked about the idea that life is experiencing another mass extinction. There was a lot of compassion in what she had to say, coupled with an honesty of where we're at as a species.

Laurie Anderson is the real deal: an intelligent performer helping us to see reality. She is a uniquely creative artist/musician /composer capable of inspiring through her originality. Laurie presented some of her older tunes that she's famous for and some new material including an audio piece that featured Lou Reed. A concert of a lifetime.

For the ovation, Laurie had the audience stand up, spread out and follow her in a few minutes of Tai Chi. It was a great ending to a great show.

Jim Tarro

Short Takes - Portland OR

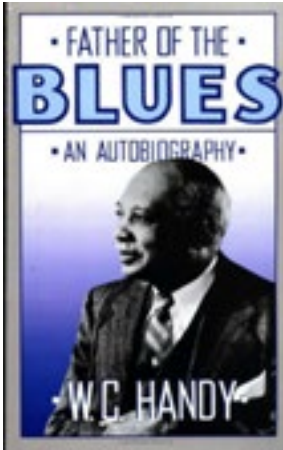


3/29 Laurie Anderson with Sreven Bernstein and Sex Mob Photo credit © Zim Tarro



3/29 Ovation - Tai Chi with Laurie Photo credit © Zim Tarro

**BOB RUSCH,
WRITER,
PRODUCER, BORN
IN BROOKLYN, NY
IN 1948, TALKS
ABOUT HIS FIRST
INTERVIEW WITH
W.C. HANDY.
TRANSCRIBED
FROM A VIDEO,
RECORDED IN
REDWOOD, NEW
YORK, ON JULY
28, 2011.**



The first person I ever interviewed was W.C. Handy. I was probably about 12 years old and I trucked this very heavy dictaphone type thing that my friend's father had, who was a shrink, and I guess recorded his shrink sessions on it. We trucked it up to Tuckahoe NY, which is where W.C. Handy lived. I didn't know too much about W.C. Handy but I was already a serious jazz fan and I knew that he had written St. Louis Blues, and played cornet or bugle or something. Anyway we got to his house and he came down these stairs in one of those elevator chairs, that...well it goes up and down stairs for you, you sit on it and it goes up. That was the first time I had seen one of those, this had to be the 1950's. I was wide-eyed, you know, these are heroes, musicians, W.C. Handy, he was an old guy and he was blind. We pushed the microphone up in front of his face because we didn't want to miss any words, it was very important. And he started telling us about his life and he started crying. I thought, "this is remarkable, this must be important," and everything else. We did the interview and years later it was transcribed and ran in a little underground magazine called Mumbblings, which nobody had ever heard of, and nobody still has ever heard of, probably. And one day I came across part of the transcription of that, and I read it, and it was so basic, so simple, you know, one of those occasions, and I've had many of them, where I wish I could've done it again. I remember, though, going back and listening to these transcription discs, they were these green discs. You could hardly understand it at all because we'd put the mic so close to him, we didn't want to miss anything. We didn't realize we might be overloading it. The one thing I remember Handy said to me, because we asked him all the basic, cliched questions like "how did you write those tunes" and "how did you come up with those things." He said, "you know, the tunes: I lived in Memphis, it was an urban area, people had these backyards where they'd hang laundry and stuff like that." And I, having lived in New York City, knew exactly what that was, because lots of tenements had backyards where you played. Anyway, he said, "women would come out in the morning, they'd hang their laundry, and they'd talk back and forth, they'd say things like 'oh, didn't that moon look lonely last night,' and I just transcribed that and put it into tunes. It was really conversations that I kind of heard and I'd put it into music." That's my main and favorite W.C. Handy story.

1. The Jazz Stories Project -

Please share a memory about a significant turning point in your life.

When I was 20 I played in the Eastman Rochester Philharmonic while I was in school. Many top-tier conductors visited as guests. One of those conductors was Leopold Stokowski, from the Houston Symphony. He pulled me aside one day and said. “Young man, you play wonderful bass,” he said. “But I’m in Houston, and I know that the board of directors is not ready for a colored man to be in its orchestra.”

I didn’t know what to do. Here I had invested half my life to prepare myself for a career in classical music, but one of the world’s top conductors tells me his orchestra wouldn’t hire a ‘colored’ person. I was stunned—here I am a handsome African-American man who switched to bass because when I was a cellist, I couldn’t get a job that a white cellist could. That no matter how good I play, I can’t make it because I’m black? The only word I could think of was disillusioned. Are 10 of my 20 years shot? Is what happened to me in high school still the case? Well, I thanked Mr. Stokowski for his honesty, then walked away. I tried to live with that and not strangle myself. Despite any success I’ve had since then, the memory of it still stings.

Ron Carter

2. Where We Are Stories - June 2023

A short reflection on what life is like now, at this post pandemic point in history and a word of wisdom about what we can do to help unify our society.

The divisions in our society – everywhere in the world – are so overwhelming I am beside myself. I can’t fix what’s happening globally, but I’d like to think if I can continue to be a better person I might positively affect what’s around me. The more people that do that, it gives me hope.

Ron Carter

A New York Minute

A NEW YORK MINUTE BY FRANK KOHL

Nothing like a trip to NY's Greenwich Village to get an earful of some of the best or soon to be best Jazz players of the day. Staying at NY's Washington Square Hotel with all its cultural memories of the 60's adds another dimension of coolness. Access to several Jazz venues is within walking distance. Even the street musicians in the park are delivering some high quality music. I'm feeling nostalgic just being in this area as I spent much of my youth here. Remembering nights at The Village Vanguard listening to The Thad Jones, Mel Lewis big band or Bill Evans at Fat Tuesdays with Eddie Gomez or Marc Johnson on bass. Not to forget Bradleys, The Zinc Bar, Zinos with Gene Bertocini and Michael Moore, Sweet Basils, The Blue Note or a short subway ride to Birdland, The Iridium or Dizzy's Club Coca Cola. The list is long!

So for those of you who don't know me, I'm a guitarist and one of the reasons I'm here in NYC is to perform at Mezzrow's, the sister club of Smalls that opened in 1994. Both clubs are owned by Spike Wilner, an outstanding Pianist and big time supporter of Jazz in NY. During the pandemic Spike diligently kept his clubs open as much as possible and was able to provide work for NY musicians. This also helped develop a rich livestream platform for audiences all over the world to enjoy and helped prevent the club's financial catastrophe.

I'm looking forward to listening to as much music as possible while I'm here, starting with The Zinc Bars Guitar night. The Zinc Bar is a very special place with lots of history and a comfortable layout that allows for a very intimate listening experience. Formerly known as The Cinderella Club it once hosted legendary musicians like Thelonious Monk and Billy Holiday. On the bill tonight are two guitarists- Steve Cardenas and Brazilian guitarist Ricardo Silveira accompanied by bassist Eduardo Bello and drummer Rogerio Boccato. I'm not too familiar with either one of these guitarists except I once saw Steve Cardenas at Seattle's Jazz Alley with vocalist Karrin Allyson and was quite impressed. Much of the music tonight is Ricardo's original work. He uses lots of colorful harmony with the rhythms of Brazil and Bossa Nova then adds his own contemporary originality to the mix. These two guitarists are a perfect match as they listen carefully to each other, blending their lines together so creatively with sonic waves of expression. Ricardo's originals are quite captivating and his style demonstrates someone who has been influenced by many different guitarists before finding his own voice. His tunes "Jeri", "Beira Do Mar" and "Tango Carioca" are especially well written with lots of drama. His solos are graceful and spaced out nicely to present an ease and awareness of his surroundings. Steve Cardenas plays masterfully throughout, with complete command of his instrument, weaving an exceptional blend of pull offs, straight picking and chordal work. For standards they do amazing versions of Antonio Carlos Jobim's "How Insensitive" and Irving Berlin's "How Deep Is The Ocean". As a listener it's all up front and personal thanks to The Zinc Bars ambience.

Next up is my gig at Mezzrow's. I'll be performing with my brother and pianist Tom Kohl and bassist Steve LaSpina. Steve and I have played a lot together including 3 of my 7 CDs. Steve has played with the best of the best including 25 years with guitarist Jim Hall. When guitarist Pat Martino resumed performing after his brain aneurysm Steve was one of his bassist. Tom is an amazingly

A New York Minute

accomplished pianist with 5 CDs to his credit and we have worked closely together since we were very young. So my Mezzrow's gig is with two musicians I feel very much at ease with. Playing at Mezzrow's or Smalls has always been a pleasure, the audience is quiet and respectful and includes many listeners from all over the world. We do two sets and it all feels and sounds even better than I expected. Many young inquisitive musicians are listening and I can say that in this environment one can rise to a meaningful level of proficiency.

The following night is one I will not soon forget. We walk to the Village Vanguard, arguably the greatest Jazz venue of all time. When I was a young aspiring musician I would come here often to see legends like Bill Evans and the many fine musicians that would be in his trio. If ever there were a club that might be haunted by the spirits of Jazz history, this would be the place. Not very comfortable, packed shoulder to shoulder, no food, only the most dedicated of jazz listeners are present. The event tonight is Kurt Rosenwinkel's "Chopin Project". I often hear talk, mostly from older musicians that jazz isn't what it use to be. I personally find that not to be true and Kurt's monumental "Chopin Project" is living proof of that. He is one of the many jazz musicians, young and old breaking through with new approaches to the music we love. For many it's not always perfect but it's the quest that's ever present and most important. You might even say it's the spirit of jazz. So The Vanguard is packed in anticipation of what's to come. I know very little about Chopin and would never imagine that it could be such an apt vehicle for modern jazz. Well let me say my mind was blown by what I witnessed. A large amount of this project is written out and arranged by pianist Jean-Paul Brodbeck and requires exceptional reading chops. But the reading and writing is only part of the story. Large sections are left open for improvisation and Kurt, pianist Jean-Paul, bassist- Lukas Traxel and drummer- Jorge Rossy do an exceptional job of navigating the form and bringing a bounty of rhythmic and harmonic energy to the mix. Everyone's solos and their contribution to the whole is simply outstanding.

The final night we head uptown to listen to guitarist George Nazos and vocalist Tamuz Nissim at a restaurant in midtown. I've written about George and Tamuz before, they are two exceptional musicians with a worldly approach that defies the barriers of culture and soars into a more universal oneness. They bring the voice of Greece and Israel to NY using the language of Jazz as their translator.

Growing up close to NYC and then transplanting myself to the west coast I've always been aware of how some people perceive New Yorker as rude. So this trip, having time to contemplate and observe if there's any truth to this rumor, I found it to be false. I discovered the people I met in the clubs and on the street to be friendly, helpful and engaging. On one occasion while having trouble operating the subway turnstile a complete stranger used their metro pass to let myself and two others enter the subway. Could it be that all the city has been through with 911, the pandemic and now the politically charged influx of immigrants has softened the hearts of New Yorkers. Maybe so, either way the vast cultural diversity of New York's inhabitants has laid the foundation for innovative thinking. I found the city a gold mine of creative energy and a place where Jazz with all its eccentricities and logical obstacles can thrive. So as Jazz goes through its many different stages, as it should, NY provides the competitive and nurturing atmosphere it requires.

Interview with Chien Chien Lu - Vibraphonist by Ludwig Vantrikt

*Cadence: There is such a dramatic difference between your first two recordings ("The Path" from 2020 self-produced and from earlier this year "Richie Goods and Chien Chien Lu - Connected Volume #1 on P-Vine Records * 2023) and the most recent recording "Built in System" on Giant Steps GSA010*

Chien Chien Lu: I believe the producer played a significant role in the distinct sounds of the first two records. My debut album, "THE PATH," was produced by Richie Goods, as was my collaborative record with him, "CONNECTED." On the other hand, "Built-in System" was produced by Jimmy Katz, and the recording process differed as well. "Built-in System" involved a live recording compared to the other two, which were done in a studio with each musician in a separate room, isolated from each other. In terms of composition and the messages in the tunes, there is a big difference for me. I recorded "The Path" in 2020, starting the preparation in 2019 when I was 29 years old. It was the fifth year of my journey into jazz & improvisation, and I had no idea about what was going on, both in life and in music. It was a chaotic period, moving from Taiwan to America, adapting to a new language, a new musical language, and trying to survive in New York City by playing jazz—figuring out life. Richie Goods approached me around that time and encouraged me to record my first album, offering to produce it as well. I remember bringing my compositions to him for the first time. I couldn't believe it when he told me those tunes were good. I always thought I was lagging behind everyone else and had serious doubts about my compositions. Certain comments or incidents had occurred that made me lose confidence in myself. Richie gave me some suggestions on my tunes, but he didn't change much. The next thing I did was book Bunker Studio for two days, and we called some musicians to record. I started working on "Built-in System" in the summer of 2022. I remember it was right after I moved into my current one-bedroom (no roommates yay) apartment in The Bronx. When Jimmy called me for the first time, the call went to voicemail, and I couldn't fully understand it. However, I heard him mention Jeremy Pelt. So, I reached out to Pelt and asked him about it. He told me it was cool, and I should go for it. That's when I realized I needed to start writing tunes again!! Now, at 33 years old and having experienced the COVID pandemic, I've had much more thoughts on life and music and have been shaping them slowly. I realized that some of the ways I used to think weren't working well for me anymore, so I started paying attention to the differences in thinking between my culture and others. I began researching my family and ancestors, as well as the philosophies of the East and West. This is where the name "Built-in System" comes from—the things that shaped or inspired me from my own culture. I call them my built-in

Interview: Chien Chien Lu



Chien Chien Lu

Interview: Chien Chien Lu

system. The writing approach is classically influenced. Before coming to the States, I had 20 years of classical training, so those sounds are ingrained in my ears.

Cadence: As you alluded to in your previous answer establishing your ethnic identity is a central theme in your artistry. But what in your youth led you to pursue studying percussion?

Chien Chien Lu: I began learning classical piano at the age of 6 and joined a music education program in the third grade. By the time I was 10 years old, I had to select a different instrument to focus on as my primary one. Initially, I was considering the cello. However, when I went to choose it, someone who scored higher than me had already taken that spot. My piano teacher always thought I had a good sense of rhythm, so she highly recommended that I choose percussion as my instrument. That's why it became the final decision.

Cadence: You mentioned your extensive classical studies; but ultimately your musical path led you to my city. What was Philadelphia like both musically and socially. Moreover how did your interest in jazz develop?

Chien Chien Lu: I arrived in Philadelphia in 2015 straight from Taiwan. I couldn't really speak English well at the time. The reason I came to Philly was because of vibraphonist Tony Miceli; I wanted to study with him. So, my life in Philly was mainly spent in the practice room and at home. I would stay in the practice room for 8-10 hours a day, trying to figure out chords, scales, and all the jazz knowledge that I didn't have. I was anxious every day, so not all of the 8-10 hours were efficiently spent on practice, but I felt like I needed to be in the room figuring out what was going on.

In the second year, Tony arranged a monthly residency for me at Chris' Jazz Cafe. I was incredibly nervous and didn't think I could kill it. I had to cancel my trip to visit my boyfriend during spring break. He was upset, but all I could see was ensuring that the show and music was good. I began the monthly residency at Chris', performing from 10 pm to 2 am and earning \$8 per person. Despite the modest pay, I was incredibly satisfied; I had a stage where I could apply the things I had been working on.

I played a show with the local Philly band "Vertical Current." I was surprised by the way they treated me—they treated me like a professional musician even though I was still a student at the University of the Arts. J. Michael Harrison from WRTI was my radio class teacher, and he has always been so supportive, even to this day. He treated me like a professional musician as well. Perhaps, because I carry an Asian female body, I've had many experiences where people expect me to behave in a certain way. However, by encountering these great people, I saw different possibilities in myself.

When I was in Taiwan, I toured with a well-known percussion group, and it was an amazing experience. We had hundreds of shows every year, performing on big stages and at festivals. However, I couldn't feel the freedom in the music. We were required to use the same techniques (Sticking) on stage, wear identical outfits, and maintain the same smile and movements. After each performance,

Interview: Chien Chien Lu

we had to socialize with the team and sometimes with the organizers who had purchased a large number of tickets. The socializing often involved consuming a significant amount of alcohol, which became overwhelming. I understood that it was part of the business, but I needed to find a balance from music. Unfortunately, I couldn't achieve that balance. I felt like all my energy was going somewhere other than into music, so I decided to leave what I was doing. Jazz, to me, is a rescue. It's an incredibly liberating art form that allows for self-exploration and finding a unique direction because of its inherent freedom. As you embark on this journey, you start to question: What's going on? What's good for me? What do I want to do? What can I offer? What is my style of music? As an Asian female with a classical background, speaking different languages and growing up in a different culture, I find myself pondering what I can do and where I can stand. How can I make myself comfortable, and where is my circle? Extend to realize that I'm essentially just a container holding a mix of culture, the wisdom of mentors, my parents' personalities, life experiences, life events, the wisdom of ancestors, and more... This realization sparked my interest in jazz.

During a tour with trumpeter Jeremy Pelt in Europe, my eagerness led me to explore the apartments of Mozart, Beethoven (where he wrote Symphony No. 7), and Johann Strauss. This exploration helped me understand their personalities and the influences behind their distinctive musical styles. This experience marked a turning point for me. Unlike my past, where I viewed classical music as a series of exams and tests (my music education experience in Taiwan), now it transformed into lots of personal stories.

I also visited Chengdu, China, exploring places with a history spanning over 2000 years, many of which I had read about in history textbooks during my childhood. Witnessing the historical context firsthand deepened my understanding of how people navigated life under Totalitarianism thousand of years ago. I learned about the resilience of ancient Chinese artists and poets, examining how they shaped their mindsets to not only survive but thrive in challenging circumstances.

Now, I am so interested in jazz, and I would say it has become an integral part of my life, or rather, life with jazz.

Cadence: Do you have or have you thought of a dual career playing both Jazz & Classical. What brings more emotional satisfaction?

Chien Chien Lu: I have been contemplating pursuing a dual career, playing both Jazz and Classical music. I believe that both genres will never cease to inspire me. While I find more emotional satisfaction in listening to symphonic orchestration, I derive fulfillment from playing improvisational music. Ultimately, it depends on the artists I'm listening to rather than being dictated by the genre. I am focused on the personal and nuanced connection I have with the music.

Cadence: During this current era in jazz there are very few working bands, but

Interview: Chien Chien Lu

you performed with Jeremy Pelt in his band. Please give us some insights what that experience was like?

Chien Chien Lu: I attended Banff workshop led by Vijay Iyer in 2017. Jeremy Pelt was the faculty, and I was a student. He heard me playing at a lunch concert. After I got off the stage, he asked for my email and inquired if I lived in New York. A year later, we recorded his album 'Jeremy Pelt The Artist,' and soon after, I started touring with him in Europe. It was a challenging experience, and I was very lucky because 2017 was only my second year playing jazz. I had the opportunity to work with musicians who had excellent taste and skill. Including Allan Mednard, Victor Gould and Vincente Archer. Moreover, I learned so much about how to lead a band and what a professional musician needs to have.

Touring is very tiring; our schedule is always back-to-back, and there are lots of early flights. I needed to be very disciplined and sensitive about time to ensure that I am always on time or early. There is not much room for me to make mistakes as a sideman, so I usually memorize all the music before going on tour. Sometimes Pelt would call tunes that I don't know, but he would lean over to me and tell me the name of the song. Then he would just tell me to learn it NOW. If we played a ballad, he would tell me to check out the lyrics. It was a precious experience.

Cadence: Did you record with Jeremy Pelt?

Chien Chien Lu: I was on these 3 records

"Jeremy Pelt The Artist"

"GRIOT: THIS IS IMPORTANT!"

"Sound Check"

Cadence: Let's return to your formal jazz education and the subject of ethnic identity. When you were in Philly in school did you learn about the social dynamic that jazz came from in terms of it's origins in black culture?

Chien Chien Lu: Not really. When I was studying Jazz in Philadelphia, my school focused primarily on the technical aspects—learning standards, navigating chords, and mastering the time feel. During those years, there was minimal representation of black students, with just one bass player in school. It wasn't until a couple of years after graduating that I truly delved into the cultural nuances.

In 2019, when I started to tour with Jeremy Pelt, I started to experience the real cultural essence of Jazz. The pivotal moment, however, came with the onset of the pandemic. It was during this time that I began to actively observe and reflect on various aspects. I joined book clubs to delve into American contemporary history, expanding my understanding. Moreover, forming a band with Richie Goods provided a platform for in-depth discussions about culture, race, and human nature.

Cadence: We are doing this interview during a time that you have three recordings out; have you been able to tour behind your disc?

Interview: Chien Chien Lu

Chien Chien Lu: Yes, I had the opportunity to present all three of them after their releases. Unfortunately, I didn't get the chance to tour with my first record, "The Path," which was released in September 2020—right after the pandemic hit in March 2020. I only managed to have a couple of shows in Jersey and New York.

On a brighter note, my second release "Connected", a collaborative project with Richie Goods, marked a turning point. We were touring intensively across Asia, Europe, and America in 2023, making it a truly remarkable year.

My third record "Built in System", so far I've only hosted two CD release shows. However, the challenge of booking shows persists without additional support.

The good news is that Richie's and my band, "Connected," recently signed with a booking agent, Maria Matias, and we've welcomed a new manager, Brian McKenna, to the team. This new development has injected fresh energy into our ongoing efforts with "Connected," and we're excited about the opportunities on the horizon.

Cadence: Give us a glimpse into the way you compose; do you use the latest computer software or just a keyboard?

Chien Chien Lu: When I'm composing, I like to keep it old school. Give me a real piano, a pencil, and some manuscript paper any day. Typing notes into a computer or using a keyboard just doesn't do it for me. I need that hands-on, traditional feel to really get into the creative flow.

Cadence: One of my last questions dealt with if you were able to tour behind your recording output; by that same token are you seeing a profit on the disc you sell?

Chien Chien Lu: Absolutely! My first album, "The Path," is almost sold out. I had 1000 copies in the states and 500 in Taiwan. It flew off the shelves, especially after scoring seven nominations from the Golden Melody Award and Golden Indie Melody Awards.

Now, onto the second one, "Connected." Thanks to all the touring, CDs are still a hit at live shows. We're selling about 10-15 CDs per club gig, sometimes even more. And at festivals, it's selling better, one time sold almost 50 CDs after just one show. So, yeah, those CDs are working for me!

The third one, "Built-in System," I'm keeping it lowkey. I'm not putting it online for sale. Anyone who really wants to get into my music can contact me directly to buy it.

Mark Dresser Interview

This Was Supposed to Happen

Interview and photos by Ken Weiss

Mark Stuart Dresser (b. September 26, 1952, Los Angeles, California) is a double bass virtuoso, composer, inventor and interdisciplinary collaborator with an unending passion to explore and expand the musical possibilities of his instrument. He's led a unique career, training with renowned bass maestros Bert Turetzky and Franco Petracchi, and performed with Stanley Crouch's Black Music Infinity [including Bobby Bradford, Arthur Blythe, James Newton, David Murray] in the early '70s, the San Diego Symphony, and with Anthony Braxton's fabled quartet along with Marilyn Crispell and Gerry Hemingway [1985 – 1994]. Dresser has gone on to perform and record as a leader and a collaborator with numerous bands. In 2004, He joined the faculty of the University of California, San Diego where he remains as an acclaimed educator and publisher of GUTS, a book that unselfishly shares his musical discoveries found from a career spent seeking innovation. Dresser has released a number of solo bass recordings which allow him to showcase his improvisational artistry and his innovative adaptations. With the help of luthier Kent McLagan, Dresser has come up with custom-designed 4-and 5-string basses with fingerboard-embedded pickups and a set of metal tines affixed to a secondary bridge that can be plucked or bowed. He's also been heavily involved in promoting and performing telematic music presentations which involves live performances between artists in different geographic locations using high speed internet. There's a lot more. This interview took place in Brooklyn on June 15, 2023, and was completed by Zoom on July 29, 2023.

Cadence: *What are your family roots? Where does Dresser come from?*

Mark Dresser: I'm of Eastern European Ashkenazic roots.

Cadence: *Your website bio uses the word obsessed in describing your longtime commitment to expanding the sonic and musical possibilities of the bass through the use of unconventional amplifications and extended techniques. Would you talk about your music, its purpose, and why expanding the bass' sound arena has been so important to you?*

Dresser: It's the sound of the bass, and I just love playing it. I heard all these things that it could do but some of which were only audible when I was practicing by myself. I thought they were really areas of richness and, although I didn't know it at the time, amplifying those sounds so that I could use them then became a long-term project. I've spent decades working on that. My two early musical influences were hearing what [Jimi] Hendrix could do vis-à-vis with feedback, which is basically playing the upper partials, and I heard the relationship to playing by the bridge, where you're getting the higher partials, and I heard that they were essentially parallel. So, expressionistically, it spoke to me. And then also [Charles] Mingus, too. He would play so-called extended techniques in service of an expressionistic music. Both those artists gave me

Interview: Mark Dresser

what I refer to as the “green light” to pursue. And then when I was 16, I met Bert Turetzky, the great contrabass soloist, and he had a very, very colorful sound, unlike anyone I had ever heard, and I ended up studying with him.

Cadence: *Tines of Change (Pyroclastic)*, your solo bass recording was recently released and features custom-designed four-and five-string basses with fingerboard-embedded pickups and a set of metal tines affixed to a secondary bridge that can be plucked or bowed. Where did the idea for the tines come from?

Dresser: As a student, I had heard these wonderful stroked rods that were standing percussion instruments made by composer Robert Erickson, who taught at UC San Diego where I was a student. They had a very beautiful kind of disembodied timbre that just rang and were very beautiful sounding and unlike anything I had heard. I thought that was something that would be nice to add to the bass and that it would give me something that was a cross between an African mbira, a waterphone, and these stroked rods. So, I posed the idea to my friend and collaborator, Kent McLagan. I said, ‘I’d really like to do this’ and as always he would say, “Oh, that’s interesting, let me give it a try.” And these collaborations, especially with him, have been so invaluable. He spent an inordinate amount of time that was way beyond anything I could ever afford to pay him to, basically, expand my palette of music, and it’s gratifying when the music gets these good reviews so that his efforts, and hopefully the music itself, validates his investment.

Cadence: *How is it having the tines available to augment your music?*

Dresser: It’s another dimension of sound. It’s not something I use all the time because the tines have all this great stuff but they also somewhat mute the natural sound of the bass because it attaches to the bridge. There’s also extra resonance because you have this extra vibrating attachment to the instrument. As a universal instrument, that’s a detriment because it makes the instrument less clear in a way, but for doing the stuff that it does, it opens up new, rich domains. I use it in specific pieces and when I record. I use it on solo [bass] concerts and I’ll take them off at some point so that people can hear the difference and allow the instrument to be more resonant and clear, and I can play it differently. I also use different bows to give me different possibilities and spectrums. I look at all of this as having different paint brushes that I can access and do different kinds of sound painting.

Cadence: *You performed at the Vision Festival last night in Brooklyn and didn’t use the tines. Was that because you were performing with a large group?*

Dresser: Yeah, because it doesn’t add to that music. The music wasn’t conceived for that. The music was written and conceived before I even had the tines so, for me to add that, it didn’t make sense.

Cadence: *What other novel enhancements have you come up with?*

Dresser: This wonderful guitarist, Tom North, had a set of magnetic pickups that he had attached to the headstock of his guitar and then he panned it stereo for a very orchestral, sonic dispersion of the sound. It was very, very beautiful.

Interview: Mark Dresser



Mark Dresser
Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Mark Dresser
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Interview: Mark Dresser



Mark Dresser
Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Mark Dresser
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Interview: Mark Dresser

I met him when he was a graduate student and I was an undergraduate. I'd been playing like that but recording with microphones and I said, 'That's incredible, I wish I could do that,' and he said, "Well, steal the idea." I'm not a maker so I found someone to build me something. They basically took bass guitar pickups and mounted them so I could hang them onto the scroll of the neck and suspend them over the nut of the bass so it didn't block any notes I could play. I did about three variations on that idea. Guitarist Fred Frith used a similar kind of neck suspended pick-up and kindly connected me with Bill Bartolini, the great pickup maker, and Bill sent me some pickups after about a year. He just gifted them to me, he liked the idea of what I was trying to do, so that was very affirming. When someone invests in me, I feel a responsibility to do it. I used Bartolini's pick-ups for nearly twenty years installed onto a custom copper housing that was held by a capo, built for me by a wonderful sculptor named Don Jacobson. After 20 years of regular use it started to become unstable from taking it on and off basses.. Around that time, I was playing a concert in Boulder and I borrowed a bass from Kent McLagan, who's also a fine bassist and he was starting to teach himself lutherie by copying a bass that he liked of his own. He's also a trained engineer and has an amazing ear. He started making these basses and I asked him if he would be interested in making me a set of pickups built into the fingerboard. He said, "Oh, that's an interesting idea, let me see what I can do." So, for nine months, using a spare fingerboard, he started making hand wound pickups embedded into the back of the fingerboard. He would temporarily attach the fingerboard onto the neck and experiment with how it sounded. We decided to place two different sets of 4 individual pickups – one set at the nut and one further up the neck initially at the minor 6th from the open string. Kent would send me cassettes of the pickups of him playing and we went back and forth tweaking the tone. Finally he got to a place where we thought we were ready to try it, I had David Gage in New York remove my fingerboard and I mailed it to Kent, and Kent just nailed it. The very first version was perfect. That was in 2001, and then I subsequently asked him to install them on all of my basses.

Cadence: Have you trademarked or marketed these innovations?

Dresser: No, we thought about that and I was told [by others] that we should patent it. I discussed it with Ned Steinberger, of the Steinberger basses, and he explained to me – "What do you want? All a patent is is a license to sue. That's all it is really and this is clearly not a commercially viable thing. What do you really want out of this?" And I said, 'I just want to be able to get concerts and continue to perform.' I didn't make this thing. Kent has made these pickups for three or four other bass players and I don't care. It's like, 'Okay, here's a tool. If you like it, if it serves you and your music, great.' It's just like in the Age of Information, it's not the information that changes the world, it's the choices you make with information you have. So, I'm very unpossessive about the tools, and besides I didn't make the tools, I only had the idea for them.

Cadence: *Are other bassists using the tines?*

Dresser: Not yet, and since 2015, we've tried eleven different iterations of the tines – different tunings, different metals, different numbers of tines, different mounting systems. In that sense, it's one continuing science project and I consider myself a lucky guy to work with someone who's willing to do that work because there's no profit in it at all. Zero. It's about something to increase sound potentials, and fortunately for me, he likes the result of it. He likes the new record a lot and keeps hearing new things in it. Kent put in the time [to build it] and I put in the time learning how to play it and trying to find musical context for it all.

Cadence: *How did your new Tines of Change recording come into existence?*

Dresser: I worked with engineer Alexandria Smith and I basically improvised. I did a day's worth of improvisations. We had about forty minutes of music which we edited down because, as often happens, not every moment is golden. I put it into Logic and made a dummy mockup edit, making it more concise and basically composed with those materials, like making musique concrète. And then I gave it to her and she did a really finesse edit of it. The first session was done in 2019 and I sent it around to a couple labels who, to my surprise, immediately responded positively. One label offered to release it quickly while Pyroclastic Records, Kris Davis' label, couldn't release it until 2023 but they could offer a publicist, and that was worth more to me than money because then it would get reviewed and get some attention. That would be more valuable to me, especially in the age where the CD itself is almost valueless because most people don't even have CD players. So I chose that. And then the five-string [bass] was completed for me last August 2022. I knew I wanted to add some more music so I had a few months to develop that and we did a second recording session.

Cadence: *The track "Gregoratyne" is especially interesting as you bow the tines, suggesting the chanting of Gregorian monks.*

Dresser: That's what the title suggests because the tines were tuned in an array from low to high and that sort of lends itself to kind of melismatic, kind of melodic ornaments. The titles came after the fact. I'd start improvising and think, 'Oh, this title will go with this.'

Cadence: *The liner notes for Tines of Change quote you to say, "I think of the bass as an orchestra." Would you expand on that?*

Dresser: I hear all these different voices in the instrument - harmonics, bitones, subharmonics, and then, of course, there's the inherent fundamental sound of the bass. And if you start parsing them out, they're different voices – radically different registers, radically different timbres. So, that's what I mean, and the idea is how to orchestrate them to make a personally compelling music.

Cadence: *This is your sixth solo bass recording. What attracts you to keep recording in that format and is it financially feasible to keep producing solo bass projects?*

Dresser: This is not about money, playing solo is kind of my laboratory. That's where really specific ideas I've brought to the ensemble music, especially about sound, get developed and worked out. Especially with groups like my trio with Denman Maroney and Matthias Ziegler, both those guys have similar sonic vocabularies. I also did some of that in my first quintet with Theo Bleckmann, Dave Douglas and Phil Haynes, where I really wrote specifically for certain sonic vocabularies.

Cadence: What should the listener draw from this new music?

Dresser: Whatever they feel. I always hope that the music speaks for itself. I hope people enjoy it, there's certainly no pandering. Some people are really touched by it. I played it for my mom and she said, "It's really interesting. I'll listen to it again." [Laughs]

Cadence: Another passion of yours since 2007 is telematic music which involves musicians in different geographical locations performing live together via high-speed internet. Why has this been so important to you?

Dresser: In 2004, I left New York, so I left my community of collaborators, and when I got to UC San Diego, I learned that they were very much supporting the cutting edge of interfacing art science and technology. I met my former teacher and friend Pauline Oliveros over dinner in 2006 at the Guelph Jazz Festival and she told me about the telematic music and broke down what the fundamentals were. Literally over dinner, I wrote down notes and then I put together a group of three professors from UCSD – one in visual art and two from theatre and dance. We had a residency and created a research group centered on telematics at a center for computer music research at UCSD formerly called CRCA. We invited a bunch of graduate students to take this course and then we did our first experiments. Then [trombonist] Michael Dessen, who I had known for years before that class, got a job at UC Irvine and we started collaborating together telematically, beginning with a concert in 2008. So, it was a way to collaborate and do projects with those musicians that I had musical affinities with irrespective of whether they were local or not. Pauline's assistant at the time was Sarah Weaver, a composer with a background in sound painting who was often responsible for teaching Pauline's class when Pauline was out of town. We started collaborating and it continued on with many projects. Sarah lives in New York so we started doing projects in classes between NYU and Stony Brook, where she was a student. We did projects from five different locations, as far away as Korea, Banff, Belfast, Homburg and San Diego. Just wildly different places, and the potential for failure was really high but we never failed, we always got it going on. So, it became very interesting, not because of the technology, it was really more interesting because of the human level of [what can happen] if people put their minds [together] to make something happen, and if they were willing to do the work, you could collaborate and make something happen just based on effort and good will and problem solving. That became very, very meaningful. When we started, high

speed ethernet, not Wi-Fi, was only available to research universities. However by the time of the pandemic, access to high speed ethernet connection was more available because the network infrastructure had evolved. There was a motivation for developers to create new software that was more versatile, that individuals could mix, record and could work on Wi-Fi as well. The need for music schools, students and professional musicians, to be able play together was real. After the shutdown was lifted we missed out on the potential of that medium had to offer as everyone was anxious to return to life before the pandemic. It can be a beautiful thing to perform with people at distance if we use these telematic platforms . Considering the amount of travel that we do to play for so few people, the carbon footprint of traditional touring is just ridiculous. Don't get me wrong, I love playing for a live audience, but there's no doubt that when I talk to someone on the telephone or by Zoom that we are communicating. What I can't do is go out afterwards and have a meal with the other person, the social dimension after the concert is missing, but in terms of the pure musical information, sometimes I think we can get better sound because it's more like recording in a recording studio. It's another skill set to play telematically but you're still putting your feelings through your instrument to do what's necessary to make music.

Cadence: You were born and raised in L.A. Your dad was in the family's plumbing business and your mom was an amateur musician who played folk guitar, so you grew up in a musical home. Was there a very early experience that led you to a career in music?

Dresser: She was also a folklorist. She went back to school and got a degree in anthropology and then a master's in folklore and taught ESL. One of my mom's best friends, Jan Steward, was a wonderful visual artist, a student of Corita Kent, who was also involved with the Indian music world.. It was a real cultural environment. We would have these hootenannies at our house and Jan's house every Friday for years. And so I got a chance to meet a lot of musicians. I heard a lot of Indian music that happened at Jan's home as she was deeply connected to the Indian music scene in LA. This was the period when Ravi Shankar was collaborating with the Beatles.

Cadence: Piano lessons started at age 5 for you with your eccentric next-door neighbor. What were her eccentricities and did you like studying piano?

Dresser: Her name was Hansi Alt and she was from Austria. She had an eccentric habit of walking down the middle of our street. Yeah, I don't know why. She was a wonderful teacher. I loved her and she was literally next door until she moved away.

Cadence: How did you end up on bass?

Dresser: After Hansi Alt left I had a terrible piano teacher and my interests started to change. At age 10, they offered free instrumental lessons at Ivanhoe Elementary School in LA. and a friend of my mom, who played guitar with her, said, "Well, he's a big kid, he might be good on the bass," and it was a good

choice, it stuck.

Cadence: *You've had a good deal of serendipity throughout your career. After attending a Paul Horn concert at age 12, you developed a relationship with Horn's bass player, Bill Plummer, who ended up trading guitar lessons from your mom for bass lessons for you.*

Dresser: Once again through my mother's friend Jan Steward, who was friends with Paul Horn, I met Bill after hearing a concert of theirs at the Pilgrimage Bowl Theatre. We started doing this exchange, my mom gave him guitar lessons and he'd give me bass lessons. He was a wonderful bass player and inspiring musician.. He just passed away last year. He had a fantastic sound and beat. He was also an amateur sitar player.

Cadence: *Red Mitchell also helped you when you were a teen.*

Dresser: Yes!!! Between ages 14-15 in Los Angeles, I had been playing in a Rock band with drummer John Friesen and also in a different band with Rick Mitchell, the stepson of Red Mitchell. Red was kind and generous, as well as being a brilliant musician. Red gave us young bass players free group lessons at Grants Music in LA including Roberto Miranda and J.J. Wiggins, the gifted son of Gerald Wiggins. Red only played piano, never bass for us. Also important was that Red introduced me to Craig Hundley who was both a child actor and a child prodigy piano player. He had showbiz parents that pushed their kids into acting opportunities as well as lessons with the top level musicians around LA. John Friesen and I rehearsed with Craig for several months. I remember that Craig's mom told us that her astrologist said Craig was going to have all kinds of professional opportunities open up. Within a month, John and I were fired and he formed a band with Jay Jay Wiggins and a drummer and they soon appeared on TV on the Johnny Carson show. As an adult, he changed his name to Craig Huxley. Craig's parents had paid for three lessons for his younger brother to study with the fine Classical bass teacher, Nat Gangursky. As his brother didn't want to continue playing bass they gifted me his two prepaid lessons with Nat. I spent my last two years of high school studying with Nat. Nat was from Chicago and went through the Chicago Symphony Orchestra scene and moved to LA to be part of the studio scene and was the teacher of both the principal and co-principal of the LA Philharmonic. Nat had also studied with Herman Reinshagen, who was the former principal of the New York Philharmonic, so I was [very impressed and a bit anxious] to study with him. Reinshagen was also the teacher of Mingus and Al McKibbin. You know, I just got tapped into a lineage of bass playing. Also, Bill Plummer had studied with Reinshagen. So, it was a lineage to the Simandl School – German bow playing through this Czech-Germanic approach to playing the bass which was how I was studied. It's still a dominant school in classical bass but definitely not at the level it was when I was a student.

Cadence: *At age 16, you took a master class with famed bassist Ray Brown at UCLA that you've described as "lifechanging." How so?*

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Dresser: I got a glimpse of the work ethic of Ray Brown. He put the fear of God in you – like if you don't practice eight hours a day and haven't made it by the time you were twenty, forget about it. He was so serious about what he did and inspiring. The authority of his sound, his virtuosity, absolute musicality and the seriousness of his person, and how he expressed himself was just – “No bullshit. Leave the bullshit at the door. No excuses. Deal.” So, that was very inspiring.

Cadence: *How did you come to start playing freely improvised music as a teenager?*

Dresser: I always had an affinity towards improvising. It started as me goofing off from practicing my “lessons” and I started playing what sounded interesting to me. I saved up some money and bought an inexpensive multitrack reel to reel recorder and started doing experiments after hearing some John Cage and Henri Pousseur electronic music. I was fascinated with it. I had a friend named Michael Harrington who was a flute player and guitarist. With Michael on guitar we would play classics including Billie Holiday repertoire and “I Cover the Waterfront” and play the folk music/coffeehouse scene. He also had a radio show on KPFK, which is the Pacifica station of Los Angeles. His show was from midnight to 3 and we would start improvising at one in the morning. We'd free improvise on the radio. I was also playing in Rock bands that were on the expansive side. That's where I found my voice. I just had an affinity towards improvising and playing the instrument itself, much more than being a functional bassist. I worked hard to get good at that, but the expansiveness, I just sort of had a feel for it, a love for it.

Cadence: *You've named bassist Bertram Turetzky to be the most influential person in your musical life.*

Dresser: Yes! In 1970, there was an L.A. bass club that was the precursor to the International Society of Bassists, founded by Gary Karr. At the time, my former teacher Bill Plummer was the president. I had been studying with Nat Gangursky and I had heard about Turetzky. I remember asking Nat, ‘Well, what about this Bert Turetzky?’ and he kind of warned me/dissuaded me from checking him out. He said he was weird. I ended up seeing Bert at a solo show that was really compelling. I was blown away, I had never heard anyone play with such a rich robust sound, overflowing musicality, and confidence. He was doing these solo performance pieces where he talked and played. He spoke to me [through his music] and I met him after the concert and he asked where I was going to college and I said, ‘I'm going to IU [Indiana University]’ After speaking for a few minutes, he said, “You're not gonna last there. When you're ready, give me a call.” He gave me his card and literally, three weeks after arriving at IU, where I studied with a great teacher named Murray Grodner, I gave Bert a call and he sent me an application and I transferred there the next year. IU was really training people to be orchestral bass players in the Classical world or you could study Jazz with the noted jazz educator, David Baker,

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which I did, but Bert's approach was there's no such thing as New music, it's all music. You have to know how to sing, you have to know how to dance. It was fine to play in an orchestra but one needed to be able to play Chamber music. He had me playing the traditional solo bass repertoire as well as 20th Century repertoire. He had had more pieces written for him than any person in history at that point. I auditioned for him and I apparently had a great intensity to the way I played because he said, "Oh, I can see that you're a lifer," and no one had ever affirmed my potential [before]. And I didn't know what it meant, and still to this day, I was never impressed with what I could do but I believed in my potential. And I could go with that, I could bank on it. I was rarely happy with today's level but I believed that I could get better, and that's propelled me, even to this day. He's the one who introduced me to Stanley Crouch, who he brought down [to the school], and he had all these records [I listened to].

Cadence: What did Turetzky mean when he stressed, "Basically, as a bass player, there are two major things you need to learn how to do. You need to know when the music dances and when the music sings."

Dresser: Yeah, that's an oversimplification. He would identify the singing qualities of the music as well as rhythmic qualities. He studied with a great musician, lutenist and former bassist, named Joseph Iodoni, who studied with Paul Hindemith, as well as the great oboist and musicologist, Josef Marx. Bert emphasized that one needed to understand early music and their performance practices to fully understand and approach contemporary music. Paul Hindemith wrote that book *Elementary Training for Musicians* and Bert had me going through that – sight singing, ear training, and rhythmic training.. So, my lessons were not just bass playing, but musicianship. Bert's background was in musicology, as well as being a singular performer. He trained me in musicianship. His thing was, "You're not an instrumentalist, you're an artist." Again, those were really empowering words to me. To even have the idea of being an artist when you're just learning to play, a time when you're very unsure of yourself, but I was given a vision of what it could be. So, to that, I'm forever grateful. And also, the way he taught the bass was very, very non-dogmatic. He had a very holistic approach that was oriented towards musicianship, blending international schools of bass playing and chamber music including, "early music," Jazz and 20th Century Chamber music, rather than a single school of bass playing, more often than not, oriented towards orchestral playing. You would filter everything through your ear and understanding of the music as opposed to having an empirical, technical approach, which was very different from anyone I had ever studied with before.

Cadence: In 1972, you accompanied Turetzky to the Claremont College Chamber Music Festival in Pomona where he had a summer residency and you met drummer Stanley Crouch who invited you into his group, Black Music Infinity, the early West Coast Free Jazz unit.

Dresser: After the festival, I was not even 20-years-old, I stayed in Pomona at Stanley's house and the first time we played, we played trio with Bobby Bradford. Now, I didn't know what I was doing, I was studying and playing out of the Real Book and playing tunes but here, with Stanley, I was playing New music. We were trying to figure out what the New music was. I was playing Bobby Bradford, who had played with Ornette [Coleman] and I didn't really know Ornette's music. Stanley, not unlike Bert, was important in conceiving of the tradition as a continuum. One of Stanley's teaching methods was to play an excerpt of Louis Armstrong's and say, "Now listen to this," and he'd play something that was motivically related to Charlie Parker. Then he would play me something that was motivically related to Ornette, and so the idea that you could enter the music from where you were by educating yourself in the whole history of the music was liberating. It was sort of like you could enter the music from wherever you were and you didn't have to learn linearly, which meant that I didn't have to master Bebop to play so-called Avant-Garde. I could just keep listening and keep improving my musicianship, playing abilities, and fill in the holes as I invested in my strengths, which was improvising. So, that was completely liberating, not to mention the sometimes challenging social and cultural dimensions of being in an all-Black band -the Black Music Infinity, during a particular period of identity and consciousness. I know Stanley appreciated what I would do and he would say nice things. Bobby would never say a word, he'd just continue to play. [Laughs] I did a project with him years later, a trio with Glenn Ferris, and he said, "Dresser, I remember when you couldn't play dead!" [Laughs] I thought that was so funny. Yeah, those were really heady times. I felt like I was at the edge of something really exciting – musically and culturally. Musically I was at the edge of all my capabilities, and I was so grateful for it. Meanwhile, there was no money in it. Maybe we'd do two or three concerts a year! Yet I'd drive to Pomona from San Diego nearly weekly to rehearse. Up to that point, it was the most exciting musical period of my musical life.

Cadence: How was it to play in Stanley Crouch's Black Music Infinity, a group that at times included future stars – David Murray, Arthur Blythe, James Newton and Bobby Bradford?

Dresser: As I said, I first played with Stanley and Bobby, at Stanley's home and then soon Arthur Blythe joined the group. We rehearsed weekly. People would drive one hour out of L.A. to Pomona and it was two hours for me from San Diego. Then soon, James Newton, who was a year younger than me, joined, and then about a year later, David Murray joined on the recommendation of Ray Anderson. David came to study at Pomona College and I remember the first time he played with us, David was an immensely talented and confident young tenor player.

Cadence: Was it awkward being the only white member of Black Music Infinity during the height of the Black Power Movement?

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Dresser: It was many things, yes, awkward is just one of them. I was culturally out of my comfort zone but it was exciting. I was embraced as a musician. I loved the community and everyone treated me with respect. Bobby may have never said anything about my playing but he was always helpful and generous with musical information. He was an important mentor. He never participated in any of the rhetoric of racial politics that were part of the time. I was blessed and fortunate to be part of the Black Music Infinity, and through that I met Horace Tapscott, Butch Morris, Wilber Morris and the great John Carter. It was just an amazing experience that was empowering, exciting and dynamic. And it wasn't like I came in with expertise, I was just game, working hard and showing up.

Cadence: You dropped out of UCSD after a year and a half because the music you were making with Black Music Infinity was so exciting and you lived in a flower truck for 3 months on the property of German artist Claus von Wendel, living a very alternative lifestyle. What were you thinking and what was going on there on his property and in the flower truck?

Dresser: That's true, we're talking about the early '70s. Claus also was an artist and builder of cool stuff, he made stained glass windows and all kinds of macro level environments. He encouraged all of us to create our lives. He had created this space and said, "You can come here and play 24 hours a day. Just come, show up with your instrument and play." He was facilitating all kinds of stuff and we would do that. We would show up and it was also a time we were experimenting with marijuana and psychedelics. It was all part of this milieu. I didn't really want to be a student, I just wanted to play. So, I dropped out and I was there. It was just really six months or less that I was doing this.

Cadence: After realizing you needed to earn a living, you moved back home with your parents, brushed up on your Classical bass skills, and impressively landed a job with the San Diego Symphony. How did that come about?

Dresser: I don't remember how I heard about the audition but I learned about it and said, 'Okay, I've had enough of this experiment, I'm gonna go back home to my folks if they'll take me,' which fortunately they did, 'and I'll work and get this going.' And it worked out, I was very fortunate. Yeah, things have worked out for me in ways that I couldn't have planned. I left San Diego and moved back to my parent's house and started taking lessons again with Nat Gangursky. I practiced my ass off for three months and was able to pass the audition and got a contracted job with the San Diego Symphony. I remember at the time that it was a dramatic decision. 'Am I gonna sell out and play with symphony or am I gonna dedicate my life to 'the music?,'" which was playing with the Black Music Infinity? I remember Bradford wisely saying, "Listen Dresser, as long as you keep a bass in your hand, and you're able to make a living doing that, that's what you should be doing." And that was a really wise decision because I wasn't working in a record store or doing a day gig, I was able to make a living playing the bass. The orchestra [gig] went on for a couple

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years and then they went on strike. By that time, I was getting fed up with the politics of the orchestra. I learned a lot and had a great time working with my peer musicians, especially bassist Peter Rofé, but I wasn't really cut out to do that kind of music, as great as it was, I loved the variation of improvising.

Cadence: *After the symphony went on strike, you went to New York with your then girlfriend for what was to be a short visit that ended up becoming a two-year stay on the East Coast.*

Dresser: It was a three week vacation with no intention of staying but things were happening there. David [Murray] was out of town and said I could stay at this loft. His roommate was Ray Anderson. I arrived at 6th Street and Avenue B, no doorbell, and finally someone came, it was Ray. I didn't know what he looked like, but I saw this guy, about my age, with marks around his chops. I said, 'Are you Ray?' He said, "Yeah, come on in," and we played and it was like instant fire. I mean, I broke a string, I was playing so hard. What we were doing was so exciting and affirming, it felt like I had found musically what I was supposed to be doing. And then David, Stanley and I started playing concerts together and things just started happening. With David's trio with Stanley Crouch we started getting great press. It was sort of, 'Why am I going to return to San Diego to play?' I didn't want to do the symphony and I really didn't want to go to school. I was exactly where I wanted to be.

Cadence: *You had a rough introduction to New York City life that first day.*

Dresser: Right, on day one, someone threw a brick through the back window of my VW van and stole a Mexican blanket, recorder and my African hat.

Cadence: *What did you do when you saw your African hat on someone walking down the street two days later?*

Dresser: I did nothing. I laughed it off and had my first "welcome to New York story." My girlfriend at the time had friends in New Haven (Connecticut) and we ended up parking the van there. In New Haven I met Anthony Davis, Mark Helias, Robert Dick, Pheeroan akLaff, all these people who would become lifelong friends. Again, I was just at the right place, at the right time, and it wasn't like I was going to school at Yale. We ended up moving because I wasn't ready to live in New York, it was just too intense. I was able to work in New Haven doing casuals. Mark Helias hooked me up with a couple contractors in town and I was able to work immediately because I had musicianship and I could play. I started working with some of the people who were part of the community of Bert Turetzky, because he was from Connecticut. Things just worked out for me, and that lasted for two years until the relationship [with the girlfriend went bad]. It was time to leave after two years so I had to do all kinds of crazy gigs to afford being able to leave and go back to California. I didn't know how things were gonna go but I knew I desperately wanted to be a musician. I had no other skills, I just wanted to play and I didn't know how to do it. I got back to San Diego and I was living in a gazebo, sleeping in a sleeping bag, outside the home of the girlfriend's brother, doing gigs. I finally

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had enough and got into the CETA program [a federal jobs program] and was able to earn enough money to get unemployment and help arrange a music festival. At that point, Bert said, "You know, if you went back to school and finished your degree, it could serve you. You could maybe teach at one point. I really recommend you do it." And for me, there were two choices – either do that and buy time to get better, or move back to New York, understanding that at the end, while I was living in New York, in order to do the music [I wanted to play] it meant having to play shows in the Catskills to pay for my rent. So, if I'm in the Catskills doing shows to live in New York, and not playing the music, it seemed better to me at the time to go invest in my education and see how that worked out. I could always move back to New York, I proved it once, and that turned out to be a wise move and I'm forever grateful to Bert for encouraging me to do that.

Cadence: *As you mentioned, you returned to New York City from New Haven to play with people including David Murray, who was gaining a lot of publicity, yet you still couldn't afford living there. You've said in the past that you didn't have the skill set at age 24 to support yourself in New York?*

Dresser: I was playing the loft scene, I could do shows but I wasn't at the level to play New York level Post-Bop gigs. The loft scene had no real work and I needed more musicianship. I needed more training to be able to be competitive and also my relationship was dying so I went back to California. I went back to school and got that degree. I took Bert's sage advice and went to the woodshed and worked my ass off. I did my first solo recording and improved my musicianship skills and sat around and then went on the Fulbright and was able to get more information, and then when I finally went back to New York in '86, I was a much more evolved player. I was able to immediately plug into things that were happening. You have to be ready at the right time. If it's not the right time, it can't work. At least that's been my experience. It was people like Ray, Tim and Zorn, people who had stayed in New York the whole time, I was able to profit from their perseverance and hard work. I came in and I was the guy who was able to do things. Not everyone had serious arco chops at the time. I could do that and read complicated music so I was busy immediately.

Cadence: *As you said, eventually, things turned around and you found plenty of work through the CETA program and the musician's union, met your future wife, and Ray Anderson hired you in 1980 for your first European tour.*

Dresser: I met Carol Del Signore in 1979 and I was still trying to figure out how to do my career. The first family affair I brought her to, I was playing my sister's wedding. I had been practicing thumb position like crazy, trying to get it together. I was over practicing. I remember playing at the wedding, throwing my thumb onto the string, hammering, and all of a sudden, I got an electric shock up my arm and damaged a nerve. And for six months, I couldn't bend my thumb. That's about the time I got a call from Ray asking if I could do a tour of Europe. It was his first tour as a leader and my first European tour. I

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told him, 'Yeah, I'll be there,' but for months I couldn't play. I was seeing every quack doctor and finally met someone [who helped me] and it was literally like a week before the tour that I finally healed, thanks to a bunch of things. So, a week before I left for the tour, I could bend my thumb for the first time. It was like my career was never to happen or it was going to begin because I could play. Fortunately, it worked out and that was really exciting. I have all these crazy stories from that first tour, as every musician has. The first paying gig on the tour was the Moers Festival. They had bought a seat for me and the bass on Capital Airlines, a fleabag, cheap flight, and [when I showed up] they wouldn't take the bass because of the small size of their seats. By chance, I had sat next to a German woman on the subway from Manhattan to JFK [Airport] who was also flying to Frankfurt, Germany, leaving at the same hour on Sabena [Airlines]. When I couldn't get on the plane, the promoter for the Moers Festival was ready to replace me but I said, 'No, man, you're gonna pay for this flight.' I researched it and I found out Sabena could accommodate me so I got on their flight with the bass. The promoter agreed to reimburse me so I fronted the cost. I've had challenges along the way but everything worked out. That's been a theme for me. There's no guarantees in this business. It's an act of will, faith and luck, and it's been my good fortune that things have worked out. The hard work, I'll take credit for that, but the good fortune, that's something else. I've met people who have been kind and empowering – people such as my wife, of course, to other musicians, and since 2000, luthier Kent McLagan has invested his time in making instruments for me. There's no financial profit in realizing these sonic ideas. This is about curiosity, the ability to manifest tools for someone else's creativity, this is about the intangibles of life. That's just amazing.

Cadence: Upon your return to UCSD at age 27 to finish your studies, you found an important mentor in trombonist Jimmy Cheatham. How did Cheatham help you?

Dresser: He was a person who could see, he could look into someone. One day he could tell that I was feeling upset and down and he basically said, "Man, don't invest any energy in self-pity, just work and make it happen." It was instilling belief in oneself. I wanted to play piano again and compose and he gave me some basic fundamental stuff and told me to just do it. He was one of those people who believed in my potential and he would tell me, "You're gonna do some stuff." That's so invaluable for a young musician, it's worth more than anything specific that someone could teach you. It's about work ethic and attitude – "You can do it, man, but you've got to do it." He had an incredible spirit with an infectious laugh and suffered no fools. He was really important to me. Jimmy had played with Ellington and Ellington was a hero. Going back to my time with Stanley, who adored Ellington, we would listen to Ellington from a modern perspective. How he wrote for individuals, the power of individual voice, and to meet someone who had played with Ellington,

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even if it was as a sub, was just touching part of that legacy which I wanted to be part of. Jimmy also set up jam sessions. His wife, Jeannie Cheatham, was a piano and Blues player, and they were people who would call you up and pull your coat if you were doing something that seemed right but was musically wrong. They were generous enough to call you up and say, "Hey, man, that's not really happening, you should do this."

Cadence: A Fulbright Scholarship allowed you to study with famed Classical bassist Franco Petracchi in Italy in 1983. Talk about that experience.

Dresser: Petracchi was amazing. Turetzky had talked to me about Petracchi. Italy was one of the countries that you had to have a year of studying the language before you could apply for the Fulbright, whereas for France, you had to have studied two years and passed a proficiency test to be able to apply. So France was out of the question but Italy was within reach. I sent him an audition tape and I was accepted into the Fulbright and he accepted me as a student. He was great, he could see that I was not really trying to be a Classical virtuoso, that I had my own music. I had already done my first solo cassette. He dug me and he was kind and generous. He was very much a technical teacher, but out of the Italian School, which was intensely musical, coming out of an operatic tradition. He was very empowering and a great bassist.

Cadence: Your interest lay in Avant-Garde Jazz, why did you decide to train with Petracchi?

Dresser: I had a friend who said, "You're already the best guy in town, why are you sticking around San Diego? You should really go to Europe," and that really pissed me off. So I applied because deep down I knew he was right. I ended up getting the Fulbright and it was a ticket out. And then I asked Carol to marry me and I realized whether I got the Fulbright or not, we were to get married, because when I met her, my life started to work. I can't explain it more than that. And then I got the Fulbright and we moved. She's of Italian origin and she had relatives there so we stayed an extra year past the Fulbright. I kept studying with Petracchi and I met lifelong friends there including the great pianist/accordion player Antonello Salis, alto saxophonist Sandro Satta, the wonderful pianist Riccardo Fassi and saxophonist Maurizio Giammarco. I also became friends with American dancer Roberta Garrison and her son Matthew Garrison, the great electric bass player. I gave him bass lessons when he was a teenager, before he moved to the US to live with Jack DeJohnette. Yeah, those were great times. We loved Italy but it became clear [that I had to come home]. At first, as an American in Italy, there was a lot of interest – "Look who's in town, let's see what he can do." But after spending more time there, it was like, "Well, why are they staying here if they're so good?" I couldn't get to the next step in Italy because I really couldn't speak Italian well and wasn't able to maneuver all the nuanced cultural issues, as much as I loved living there.

Cadence: It was a fateful call in 1985 from your former New York City neighbor, drummer Gerry Hemingway, that got you out of Italy. He

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recommended you to Anthony Braxton, who needed a bass player to complete a European tour.

Dresser: Again, I was fortunate enough, with the good serendipity that runs through my life, to get the call from Gerry, who said, "Listen, man, Braxton just fired his bass player. We need a bass player, can you join us in Ljubljana in a couple days?" I said sure but there wasn't money for me to bring my bass. Him inviting me was the sign it was time to return to America. Braxton invited me to join the quartet after the tour and I clearly had to be in the US. I had an unfinished master's degree, so I went back to San Diego and finished the last nine months of my masters and then we moved to New York. That's when things started to pop. I started working with Ray again, I met Tim Berne and started playing with him regularly. I met Zorn and started participating in the scene there.

Cadence: You had played with Braxton once before at a 1978 festival so he was aware of you. What were your thoughts when you got that call?

Dresser: The one concert I had done with Braxton was with Sonny Simmons, Barbara Donald and Eddie Marshall, the great drummer. Man, at the end, Braxton said, "I'd love to play with you if you're on the East Coast." I thanked him but I was still in school.

Cadence: As you said, you joined Braxton's quartet a couple days later in what was then Yugoslavia with little time to prepare. His band arrived 15 minutes before the first gig so there was no rehearsal, you didn't have your own bass and to top it off, Braxton pulled out the hardest charts in his book including "Composition 121," a fifty-page, fully notated piece, all on separate pages.

Dresser: Right, zero time to prepare and I was sure at the end of the gig I had been fired. [Laughs] I remember yelling to Hemingway during the gig – 'What page are we on?!' literally, a page would last ten seconds. There were fifty pages but they were scored and handwritten. [Laughs] It was just crazy. Every ten to fifteen seconds it was another page, and I'm sight reading. I wasn't bad but I was sure I was fired, but the gig continued. Waiting for the band to arrive that first time? I was there, it was gonna happen. People are delayed, there's nothing to think, just wait. Okay, no rehearsal time? I gotta make this work. You do the best you can, as always. There's no rehearsal for life, you jump in and do the best you can.

Cadence: You were part of Anthony Braxton's historic quartet from 1985-1994 along with Marilyn Crispell and Gerry Hemingway. Talk about playing Braxton's "trans-idiomatic" music and what changed as time went on.

Dresser: I played with Braxton for nine years and it was incredible. There was just kind of a magic chemistry. Hemingway and I had done a lot of playing together and we had been talking about what we loved to do. We were woodshedding so we could try out a lot of things that we had been interested in within the context of Braxton's group and Braxton was very empowering

too. He said, "You take care of the music," and gave me a book of over 300 pieces of music. He was very empowering—at the end of every concert he would thank us for "our" music. Playing the music was fascinating. It was a beautiful combination of the maximal amount of responsibility and freedom to make creative choices, whether improvising or making choices about the music once the primary level of the set list was decided. His ideal was the music was to be 50% the scores, and 50% improvised. What changed in the quartet from the day I began to when we left was that the music became less about soloing, the power of the soloist, to become a collective music. And that just evolved. I remember doing a concert in Munich on that first tour and I was given a bass that had no endpin. I literally had my Swiss Army knife out and I had to whittle an endpin out of a broom handle. I stuck it in the bass and played. At that same performance, we were playing the charts and he thought that we were playing it too safe so he came over to us, and this was the only time he ever said anything critical, and he said, "Listen, uhm, Mark, Gerry and Marilyn, I want you to go out there and KILL!" With Braxton, it was always trial by fire, he believed in that. You'd never pander to what the easiest, expedient thing was. It was whatever the most ambitious idea was, that's what was gonna win. First of all, the music was often orchestrated in tandem. Often, Marilyn and Anthony were playing one chart that was in rhythmic unison, and then Gerry and I were in another part that was independent, and then after so many beats, we would go into rhythmic synchrony. That's with these pulse tracks. I suggested a strategy that involved metric modulation, to play a parametric 4/4, which was something that Gerry and I had been experimenting with based on our love of Mingus' music. I think this one strategy was something that I brought to the mix, with the cooperation and collaboration of Gerry. This became a strategy that I continued to explore in my own music. At one recording session, we had one of those pieces that I just described, and I was counting beats to make sure parts aligned and I realized that there was one part of the music where there were three extra beats in the horn and piano score than what the bass and drums had. I said, 'Hey, Anthony, the beats don't align. What do you want us to do?' And he just looked at me and said, "Make it work!" I said, 'Okay.' [Laughs] That is the only rule in improvisation - just make it work. With that band, I felt that what we had figured out, meaning, especially me, was how to recover from mistakes. How to make mistakes work. It wasn't about being perfect, it was how to land on your feet. It was how to flow, essentially.

Cadence: He didn't give you a lot of direction or feedback?

Dresser: It was always positive feedback. As I said he was an empowering bandleader – "You're the best people that I could ever hope for my music. We're doing important things." That kind of feedback. He was the kind of guy that when we went to play Victoriaville, and he forgot his own music, instead of photocopying Marilyn's part, which was identical to his own, he was so

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angry with himself that he copied the music by hand. I don't know what that was, but it was just sort of like his commitment to being excellent, to being completely committed. He was not going to be massaged by simply copying something. He had to put that maximum effort into it. It was very impressive, and his commitment to us as people was unshakable. During the days of the quartet, it felt very much like a family. Braxton is a very, very beautiful person. I can't express my feelings about him, he has a very special power and a vibration that is very positive. There's nothing egalitarian about the music, it's his music and you're working for him. You do that job and within that, you can do no wrong as long as you give it everything, and he gives you that permission to always go for it, to give it everything. So, again, he's giving you the permission to be the best version of yourself, whether you are every night or not. Of course, you're not, you fail, but failing in the Braxton school is not giving your all. It's not, not trying. Trying's fine but give blood. That stuck – trying always to work your hardest, giving your best. That's what stuck for me, not anything specifically musical, it's just that commitment, I hope. That's what it was to me. Braxton continues to be totally committed and completely never to be dissuaded from anything he loved, even if it was unpopular. I mean, what musician is going to, in the height of Black Power, say he loves Paul Desmond and Warne Marsh? That was musically blasphemous, and he got crucified in the press, but he didn't give a shit. That's what he believed and no one was going to dissuade him from that. And having an all-white band in that period? He just thought we were the best thing for his music. And me to be in that position, just like to be in the Black Music Infinity, how could I feel anything but completely grateful and completely fortunate to be embraced by that, and because of that, people in the critical press, for the first time, took me seriously. Dave Holland played with Braxton, a lot of great players played with Braxton, and it gave me credibility that helped my career.

Cadence: *Would you share some memories or travel stories of Braxton?*

Dresser: Much of it is documented in the Graham Lock book [Forces in Motion]. This is just a personal story. I had left something at a hotel and we were with our luggage somewhere. I was standing with the bass and Braxton said, "I'll go get it." He saw that I was with the bass and he literally got up and ran to try to find this thing for me. It just showed that he fuckin cared. If you were in with him, he was in with you. That showed a level of care and love. Meaning, it's not by what you say, it's what you do, and he showed that it wasn't just talk. I was 27 and he was 38. You know, he had no business doing that, running to get my stuff. That's just the kind of person he was.

Cadence: *What would we be surprised to hear about Braxton?*

Dresser: For people that don't know him and think that he's this very serious guy, which he is, he's a guy of TREMENDOUS humor and ebullient spirit. He can be hilarious and joyous, he can just light up the thing.

Cadence: *When I interviewed Braxton a number of years ago, what surprised*

me was his love of McDonalds. He told me that when he arrives in a new city, he will study the location of each McDonalds.

Dresser: Yeah, yeah, [Laughs] his culinary bandwidth is very narrow. Yeah, we used to joke that he should get a grant from the Ray Kroc Foundation.

Cadence: Why did the quartet end?

Dresser: It was sad and disappointing. When he disbanded the quartet, he didn't call us up and say it's over. We heard secondhand that it was over, we never heard a word. I was like, 'Okay, whatever,' but it was hard. It was really hard for us because we had grown to love that thing and knew it was magic. It was time for him to move to the next stage in his music and he always did what was best for his music. When he hired us, he felt it was best for his music, and when he changed directions, he felt it was best. You've got to respect it, whether or not he's sugarcoating it or not, and he certainly didn't. But we remain dear friends, although we rarely see him, and he continues to do great things and to evolve his music.

Cadence: Were there problems inside the quartet?

Dresser: Not really, there weren't any problems that I was aware of, he just wanted to do something else. He changed the direction of his music - he went to Ghost Trance music and was teaching at Wesleyan and he could work out his ideas with his students.. I remember him talking about it, that he wanted us to come up and participate in it, but it never happened. He started to work with his students and they were accessible to him and he could work with that music. Why would he do what was easy to do? And he did, and it was the completely right thing for him to do. It didn't mean that it didn't sting, but I got it. And I was gonna be fine because I was living in New York, I was playing with good people. Again, it was an affirmation to continue doing my thing and everything worked out for all of us.

Cadence: The quartet did play one more time at New York City's Le Poisson Rouge in June 2010 to celebrate Braxton's 65th birthday. How was it to play as a unit again and how was it decided what to play?

Dresser: We were asked to play trio and that Braxton might join us for a tune. It wasn't that we were playing quartet. We all still had his music and Gerry, Marilyn and I chose some tunes to play as a trio. Braxton got up there, and I guess he didn't have his music, and he said, "Let's play 'Impressions.'" So we played "Impressions," the Coltrane tune. We played the set and after it, people responded really powerfully to it. [John] Zorn, the next day, asked us to record as a trio, playing that music. Steve Coleman also came up and was effusive, and that's that.

Cadence: The trio just completed a four gig tour which was the first time you had played together in years. How was it to play in that setting again?

Dresser: This was our first time playing together after making the recording for Zorn [2011] and we played one other time at the Knitting Factory. This was the first time in 12 years that we had played together. I just had a residency at

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The Stone [late June 2023] and the final night featured the trio. At one point, before Gerry moved away to Lucerne, I had done more gigs with him than any other drummer, but that was a long time ago. And literally, I hadn't played with Marilyn, I don't believe, since we recorded that record for Zorn. You know what's really uncanny is that there's just an inherent chemistry with these personalities that's just there and, speaking for myself, I play differently with them than I do with anyone else, and I would think that's probably true for them as well. It's just a particular kind of chemistry that we've had from the beginning a certain kind of empathy. I really don't understand it, it always tends to be greater than the sum of its parts, and the response that we always get from the audience always shocks me. I'm always aware of every deficit, [Laughs] everything that I was trying to do, but there's something that happens that is beyond analysis. It's just a synergy. I don't have the vocabulary for it. There's a real familial feeling between us that still exists, even with everyone's idiosyncrasies. You know, the way we've gotten weirder as we've gotten older. [Laughs] I've got their backs and I have a special feeling for them as people and as musicians, both are intertwined. It was a joy to play with them again, and I realized how much I missed that particular configuration. And I had something to compare it with because I'd just done that residency at The Stone, playing with four different groups, all of whom I've had long histories with. In each group I find myself playing somewhat differently. Of course, that would be expected, in a sense, but the chemistry with Gerry and Marilyn is really particular because of both the specificities of Braxton's music as well as the amount of freedom it gives us, and that's something Braxton's music has always had – maximum responsibility and maximum freedom. It's sort of an equal measure. Of course, I was thinking about Braxton and wished he had been there, but that's another story.

Cadence: There was a tragic event that happened during your recent trio tour in Hartford.

Dresser: Oh, God, I'll talk about it briefly. Our soundman for the gig at Real Art Ways, after the set, he expired in the parking lot as he was loading the heavy gear into his vehicle. We were called out and told that he was on the ground and did anyone know CPR. I jumped in and tried my best until the paramedics arrived. They had oxygen and used a defibrillator but to no avail. He hadn't been out there long when I got to him but I was told he was probably gone by then. It's thought that he had a heart attack. It was quite tragic, I'll never forget it, of course. It was so dramatic, and with us being on the road, we just had to get up early the next morning and continue driving down to Philly, do two concerts, and drive back up. There was no time to fully process it. It's very sad, I'm glad I had a chance to try but it was to no avail. That will remain a question mark. Believe me, I've sent all the links to CPR to both of them. I had never done CPR myself but I had seen it on YouTube and I just went, 'Okay, here we go.'

Cadence: *Are you saying you never trained in CPR?*

Dresser: No, I wasn't trained but I had seen it. It's not that complicated. I'm a big, strong guy, I can do chest compressions at a fast tempo. I even did mouth-to-mouth, which I learned after the fact, they don't even do that anymore. That sort of gave me the post-COVID willies, to be frank. In the heat of the moment, I reacted, I did my best.

Cadence: *Well, you certainly earned your wings.*

Dresser: Yeah, for what? [Laughs]

Cadence: *A great effort. It would seem natural for the trio to continue on as a working unit. Why has that not happened?*

Dresser: We've all been doing different things. I live on the West Coast, Gerry lives in Lucerne and Marilyn in Woodstock. Braxton is the glue in our musical history together. Though it made sense for one or two concerts, it frankly would feel a bit strange to be performing his early music regularly, without him, especially when he isn't interested in performing it himself. Since the pandemic I've been investing in my solo bass investigations in relation to recording and working on a book. In 2019 I got a grant to compose this septet music which I performed at the Vision Festival. I feel grateful that at age seventy and a half, I'm still excited about performing and developing new music. Frankly, I've never been more excited about playing the bass as I am now.. Having a teaching job has given me the financial foundation to be able to continue. I'll retire in the near future and I'll be able to continue playing. It's like what is success? To be able to continue to develop my music and hopefully share it with an audience. it's just being able to play and develop and spend your time doing what's most meaningful.

Cadence: *After Braxton hired you, you relocated back to New York City in 1986 to live for the next 18 years. Would you talk about some of the groups you worked with during that time?*

Dresser: Early on, Tim [Berne] hired me to work [in his Chaos Totale group] and I worked with both Tambastics and Arcado String Trio which were collaborative works. Tambastics with Robert Dick and Gerry Hemingway, it started out as a trio, and then I met Denman Maroney, who is a very important person in my music, because once I met Denman, I realized he played the piano like I was playing bass - playing the overtones and bitones - so I started making him central to all of my musical relationships. I brought him into the Tambastics and into my trio and into my quintet. He became the person that I built all my groups with. Arcado, that came out of Hank Roberts. We both played with Tim and I wanted to do something without drums, because once you added drums, so much of what I could do got acoustically obliterated, even though I love playing with drums. So, we formed Arcado String Trio with Mark Feldman. Eventually, Hank moved out of town to Ithaca to stay home for family reasons and Ernst Reijseger joined us. We had a good little run there for a few years.

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Cadence: *What was your experience recording John Zorn's classic 1988 **Spy vs Spy: The Music of Ornette Coleman**, a work that combined Free Jazz with hardcore Punk?*

Dresser: John Zorn always has really clear ideas of what he wants and that was different from anything that I had done. I just did my best to be able to deal, which required playing super loud and super-fast. There were two drummers, two saxophonists and me. Just to be able to sonically penetrate was really something. I remember that infamous Philly gig at the Painted Bride where the curator, before we went on, apologized to the audience that this was going to be very, very loud concert, and Zorn came out and said, "Fuck you, man, what were you expecting? Kenny G?" [Laughs] And then we played this set. I had never played anything so loud in my life. I think [drummers] Michael Vatcher and Ted Epstein, from Blonde Idiot God, were on that gig and the drums were amplified. I used two stacks of speaker boxes. It was over the top but it was great fun. Once again, I didn't know what I was doing. I was just doing the best that I could do and I've been friends with Zorn ever since.

Cadence: *What other happenings stand out from your time in New York including horror stories?*

Dresser: Horror stories I don't want to revisit, what's important is the relationships formed, the things that lasted, lasted. Myra [Melford] and I had done things and we met up again at a recording session by Andrew Drury and we clicked in a way that we hadn't before but then 9/11 happened. Something that came out of 9/11 was that Myra and I played a memorial concert for Gillian Levine, a beloved concert promoter in Cambridge and the founding director of the Boston Creative Music Alliance. That Boston concert came ten days after 9/11, a time when people were still skittish about flying, and there had even been rumors that there was going to be an attack on Boston. There was a lot of nonsense. I remember speaking to my wife and mother – 'Should I go?' "Yeah, go," so I flew up there with Myra. Marty Ehrlich and Leroy Jenkins were also on the flight and William Parker drove up there. Those folks that did that, we kind of bonded on a special level based on overcoming fear to do something right. And I don't know if it was really right or not, but we became really close. That was 2001, in 2004, both Myra and I got teaching jobs in the UC system and we started to want to play together because of our relationship and because the hard thing about leaving New York was my natural ecosystem of collaborators was removed and the people living in San Diego were not those folks at all. And that's what brought me to the telematic thing. Also, before I left New York, I became really close friends with Roswell Rudd and we started doing things together – duo concerts. And he really kind of helped prepare me to think about teaching.

Cadence: *Why did you decide to exit New York?*

Dresser: After 9/11, I said, 'Well, fuck it. If I never play a note again, it doesn't matter. My daughter is the future.' So I started looking at how to get out of there. A friend gave me a contact about a job in Auckland but my wife

said, “No, no, if you can’t be near the people you love, what’s life worth living?” And I’m thinking, ‘Well, being alive is worth something,’ but I said, ‘I’m sticking with you.’ And then I spoke with an old friend who taught at Hampshire College, she offered me a concert there. I played the concert and then she said in passing that Yusef Lateef was retiring from teaching there and they were looking for someone. I said I was interested but she said it was hardly worth my time, but someone had advised me that if I was interested in getting teaching work, to leave town. I needed experience because on paper, having recorded a 100 records didn’t look significantly different than someone who had a Ph.D., which I didn’t have, I had a masters. So, I took the job not knowing what it was gonna do [for me] but to get teaching experience. And then on the advice of Jane Ira Bloom, I submitted a course description to the New School and I was able to start teaching there simultaneously. A year later, I auditioned for a teaching position for a composer/performer at Princeton. I was a finalist and then they gave me a fellowship. Then UCSD called me up and asked if I would be interested in interviewing and we went.

Cadence: *How did it feel taking over the position held by Bertram Turetzky, your mentor, who had retired two years previously.*

Dresser: Yeah, I had the same office number, it felt surreal. Things fell in place in a way that I couldn’t explain. I even had the same phone number as him, and the last 4 digits of his phone were the same 4 numbers of my home phone. The last person I recorded and performed with in New York, was the first person I performed with in San Diego. The first gig I did outside of California was playing with Pauline [Oliveros], playing a piece of hers for Bert. There were all these serendipitous kinds of coincidences that made me feel like this was supposed to happen in some kind of inexplicable way. I grew up in LA, I was able to be around my family during the last three years of my father’s life. If I had lived in New York, I couldn’t have been as present. That was a good thing and I was able to afford paying for my daughter’s education. It just facilitated a new chapter in my life and facilitated me to grow in unanticipated ways – like telematic music making. I learned a whole new dimension about performing, composing, about teaching, it just intellectually fired me up. San Diego was very nourishing. Basically, in that environment, your biggest enemy is not anyone trying to hold you back, but inertia, your ability to just not push through. The big lesson is just work your ass off and nothing but your best will get the job done. That proved to be true, if you work hard enough, and you’ve got the goods, and the time can facilitate it, extraordinary things can happen. Nothing is guaranteed but if something has the potential to happen, only maximal effort will facilitate it, anything less won’t get it done. That’s been my experience.

Cadence: *Talk about serving as a full professor at UCSD since 2004. How prepared were you for that role?*

Dresser: I had been teaching private bass lessons for close to two decades

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and I had been teaching adjunct at both Hampshire College, teaching Yusef Lateef's class, and I also taught a course I designed at the New School called Sound and Time. I also had a fellowship to teach a semester at Princeton on improvisational driven composition. Then I got the invitation to interview for the UCSD job, and got it, but I had never taught on that level before. So, I wasn't totally unprepared, I had had some classroom preparation for a couple years, but the demands of a full time gig in an ongoing bass studio where you meet with folks weekly, I had not done. After starting at UCSD, I soon started a bass ensemble where I invited members of the graduate community to compose for the ensemble and I also required my bass players to either compose or arrange something for the ensemble. Typically, the way traditional music schools are structured is that the disciplines before composition and performance and computer music and scholarship, they're usually pretty segregated, but I knew when I was that age, I wanted to compose but it was frowned upon institutionally and I wanted to open that up and give permission and encourage people to dig into it. I had a lot of instrumental information that I wanted to share, especially with the composers. In 2010 I did this CD/DVD called GUTS where I sort of broke down all the extended techniques that I'd been working with for my career. I formalized that information so I could share that with everyone and they were free to use whatever seemed of value to them. I've enjoyed that, and we even did it during the pandemic, which was really wild because we weren't allowed to meet in person. Because of my telematic experience since 2007, I'd had experience learning how to play remotely, so I created a research group with the bass players. Each one of them were in their practice rooms with their laptops, audio interfaces and microphones, and we would connect within the building, and then we would meet with our composers using a special software. We learned and performed 14 different pieces during the pandemic. It was really remarkable. The necessity to perform gave us the impetus to really get it done. It was an imperfect way to learn but it was perfectly doable and successful. On a musical and personal level, that was really affirming.

Cadence: *Do you use any unusual or unique teaching methods?*

Dresser: I share the stuff I've researched as well as encourage them to mine what interests them.. With the graduate students, they typically have a point of view on what they want to accomplish and I try to support them trying to be who they want to be and what they want to do. I'm not trying to make people play like I do, on any level, other than that they can play the instrument. The undergraduates are usually on a more basic technical level, so I'm sharing my background, and some of that's quite traditional, but it's often holistic, like how I was taught by Bert, to bring in a lot of different methods, not just one.

Cadence: *You've played with a number of cooperative groups that I'd like to ask about. How about Trio M with Myra Melford and Matt Wilson?*

Dresser: Trio M has been playing together since 2006. Myra and I had been playing together and we started to think who to add on drums. We thought

of Matt and once we started playing with Matt, there was such a synergy that, because we all have slightly different backgrounds, I've always felt the result was greater than the sum of its parts. Matt is such a musical guy. It's always easy to play with them and it's always fun. It's open playing but everyone brings in compositions.

Cadence: *Talk about Jones Jones which includes Larry Oches and Vladimir Tarasov.*

Dresser: That's a different situation, it's completely open and, again, that's a chemistry that works. We've done a fair number of tours since 2006. That's been a joyful thing.

Cadence: *Why form a trio with Tarasov who lives in Lithuania?*

Dresser: It's because of human chemistry and at the time, he was coming regularly to Sacramento, he had a girlfriend there. The fact that he was going to be on the West Coast, and is a phenomenal musician, was an opportunity to do something together. Larry would set up something in the Bay Area and I'd try to make something happen in San Diego or LA. Larry, more often than not, does the lion share of the organizing our tours.

Cadence: *Why the name Jones Jones?*

Dresser: Oh, it was kind of a joke. I don't remember the exact conversation but there's a parlance when you don't remember someone's name, people refer to them as Jones. "Hey Jones, what's happening?" And Jones is also a euphemism for an addiction. So it was Jones Jones, and of course, English not being Vladimir's native language, it took a while for him to get it. He was calling it Johnson and Johnson. [Laughs] We just had a lot of fun with the title because it was really a joke and humor's as good a motivator as anything. We would make titles with Jones intrinsic in every title.

Cadence: *Jones Jones has toured Russia a few times. What's been your experience there?*

Dresser: Vladimir, though he's been living in Lithuania for over 30 years, he was born in Arkhangelsk, Russia. He had been part of the Ganelin Trio which during the Soviet era, they were the premier improvising trio. I had met him in 1983 or '84, when they played in Rome and I was living there on my Fulbright. We ended up on the same bill. I was brought in by Mario Schiano, who is sort of the father of Free Jazz in Rome. I ended up sitting in with the Ganelin Trio and we had really good chemistry and liked each other. I also joined them for a radio broadcast in Rome. Over the years, Vladimir and I stayed in touch. He's a great musician and a great person.

Cadence: *How about Mauger with Rudresh Mahanthappa and Gerry Hemingway?*

Dresser: That had its time too, I can't remember the last time we played. At a certain point, Rudresh started getting really busy with his own projects and Gerry moved to Switzerland. That [group] clearly stopped. It's interesting what continues and what stops, but everything has a cycle of existing. With that trio,

each one of us would bring in our own tunes. Gerry and I would share a lot of things together based on our long history together. Gerry's quite a composer, as well as being a virtuoso, unique drummer. And Rudresh is like another generation. He was interested in playing so we did it. We were able to do a tour and make a record. There was a point where there was interest in that project and we checked it out. After I moved to California, it became harder to do stuff together

Cadence: *Why the name Mauger?*

Dresser: I don't even remember. There was a story behind it, I think it was Gerry's idea. There's often humor intertwined with these collective bands and how they define themselves.

Cadence: *You also have played in C/D/E with Andrew Cyrille and Marty Ehrlich.*

Dresser: Marty and I are clearly a generation younger than Andrew but he was interested in giving it a go and we did a few tours. He had done a couple hits with me when I had residencies at The Stone. It was beautiful, what a great honor to play with Maestro Cyrille. He's a great man and a great drummer with a very special feeling in the music and a way of orchestrating the drums that is really singular. It was fun, I loved it.

Cadence: *What attracts you to cooperative groups?*

Dresser: To be a band leader, especially if you're bicoastal, you're going against the grain. [A cooperative group] is a way you can do something and everyone has some input. I can't think of many musicians who don't do some kind of cooperative activity. In an era when there's very little business in our business, it's quite an investment in time, rehearsal, money and effort to do something as a leader. If everything is improvised. That's one thing, but if I'm trying to realize compositions, which is something that I've spent a lot of time doing, I want to rehearse it.

Cadence: *One of the bands you have led is the Mark Dresser Trio.*

Dresser: Yes, my trio with Matthias Ziegler and Denman Maroney. I had met Matthias in the early '90s while playing in Switzerland with Ray Anderson. He invited us over to his house for pasta and he had this giant flute hanging on a wire and I could just tell he was sonically obsessed. Eventually, he commissioned me to compose a piece for him, his flutes and string quartet, and I added myself into the project. It was a piece that Tzadik recorded called Banquet. Matthias had heard Denman and actually he's the one who suggested we do something with Denman. Denman was in New York and we did our first gig at the original Knitting Factory. Denman is someone who I had instant sonic chemistry with. The way he plays the piano, especially inside the piano, has so many parallels to how I play the bass. It just made complete sense to join forces with him and during my last decade in New York, most every band that I was a part of, cooperative or not, I made sure Denman was at the center of that because he was such a good springboard for the kinds of things I wanted to hear. I invited him to be part of the Tambastics, and when I put together my

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first quintet with Dave Douglas, Theo Bleckmann and Phil Haynes, Denman was there. Matthias lived in Zurich and then my interests had changed a little bit so Denman and I started rehearsing in duo to see where it was going and then we did a duo concert at Victoriaville that was recorded. We eventually co-led a trio and did a record together called Time Changes with Michael Sarin, a wonderful drummer, and singer Alexandra Montano. Those connections with Denman and Michael continue to this day.

Cadence: Let's talk about some of your recorded work as a leader. As you mentioned earlier, the exploration of solo bass has been very important to you and that culminated with your 2010 DVD/CD/booklet triptych, GUTS: Bass Explorations, Investigations, and Explanations where you document your techniques. Talk about that special work.

Dresser: I've always been doing this solo exploratory work and I'm of a generation of musicians who were working on so-called extended techniques. That process for me was sort of articulated by a friend and wonderful composer and saxophonist Earl Howard who was very adamant that you need to document your vocabulary. He was using electronic music and had to find a vocabulary that wasn't just about notes and rhythms, but about wave structure and thinking about textures in terms of layering and interaction and literal vocabulary. I started thinking about how to compose, thinking about the Tambastics, that had very little to do with traditional notation but had more about defining texture and order and general durations rather than every pitch being written out and the specificities of equally subdivided pitch and rhythm. In 2000, I had been working with Zorn and he invited me to contribute an article on my techniques, A Personal Pedagogy for the first edition of [his book series] Arcana. I probably would not have done that had he not asked me. It was about three years before coming to San Diego and it set me up for learning how to speak and articulate what it was I thought I was doing. Because it's one thing to do something that you work up intuitively, it's another thing to start to try to actually analyze what it is. That usually requires another level of figuring out what it is, not just those areas that I find myself stumbling upon. So, that was very useful. In 2009, we had done this project Deep Tones for Peace, a telematic performance between Jerusalem and New York, and the instigator of the project, bassist Jean Claude Jones who runs the Kadima Collective label from Jerusalem, he asked me if I would do a DVD for his label about my stuff and that became the crux of what I was doing for about a year. I took that article I had written for Zorn and articles I had been invited to write for Strad Magazine on specific areas of extended techniques. So, one thing led to another and then I came up with GUTS in 2010. My pandemic project has been to update that project which is a book I've been working on as well as the Tines of Change CD I just released. I'm trying to share this information.

Cadence: You've released 2 recordings of music composed for silent films – The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, which augments the 1920 German horror film and your Eye'll Be Seeing You, which includes music for the 1929 French film Un Chien

Andalou. What attracts you to silent film scoring?

Dresser: To be frank, when I was getting to the point where I wanted to tour, I was working with an agent who said, "Listen, you're playing six times a year in Europe as a sideman, unless you do a project, I can't get a promoter interested." He had actually tried to get the collective Arcado String Trio to do the silent film project for *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* but we weren't interested in it. He presented it to me as a potential bandleading project. Realizing that this may be my only potential to tour as a bandleader, I looked at it again on video, which exaggerated the speed faster than the film itself. I realized the film's sound had this kind of stilted look to it and I thought I could do something with it and started improvising with the film and then transcribing. I gave it to Denman to do the same and we shared stuff. I wrote some themes and invited Dave Douglas to perform on it. The thing was, I got into silent film for very pragmatic reasons. It was not artistically motivated, but to my surprise, to do something that was narratively driven was surprisingly powerful and engaging. I found I liked it and it took me musically to a different space. That was fruitful for a few years.

Cadence: *You've made a number of albums based around food – Banquet (1997), Marinade (2000) and Nourishments (2013). There's obviously a close sensory connection to food for you. Talk about your artistic connection to food.*

Dresser: [Laughs] Well, each one of those has different meanings. *Banquet* was a piece I had written for Matthias Ziegler and the genesis of our hanging out was that he first invited the Ray Anderson Quartet after a gig to his place and he made pasta for us, so this idea of breaking bread became part of our friendship. You know, breaking bread is one of life's simple but profound pleasures. He asked me to write a piece for him for contrabass flute, bass flute, alto, soprano and piccolo, so it was like each movement was a course. The last movement, which was on piccolo, was a tune that I called the "Digestivo," and then I wrote another one called "Aperitivo." So it just became sort of a vamp. It's more playful than anything although there is a connection with metric modulating forms. There's a wonderful chef who's a big music fan in the Bay Area named Paul Canales. He's a very generous, brilliant, and inventive guy, I had done a performance in the Bay area and we ended up in his restaurant Oliveto and he hosted us to a wonderful meal. When I got back home, I made a tone row and I emailed it to him and I said, "This is the Canales Row." So, we started playing with that and we ended up doing something of a food idea jam session. He would make a dish, take a picture, and send it to us. Trio M ended up doing a performance that went with a meal that was a fundraiser for Myra's program at UC Berkeley. And we continued to have these pictures of food sent to us and each one of us composed pieces. It was basically friendship caught on fire based on enthusiasm for music and food. It was a playful cross disciplinary creative think tank.

Cadence: *Are you a gourmand?*

Dresser: I enjoy food, my wife's a wonderful cook. I'm a great audience but I

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don't really care about it. What I care about is the company I'm with, it's the human thing. If food's made with love, that's it. I tend to enjoy things that are more rustica than high-end cuisine.

Cadence: *Duo trombone/bass recordings are uncommon in Jazz yet you've released work with both Ray Anderson and Roswell Rudd, as well as often featured trombone in your music – often with Michael Dessen. What attracts you to trombone, an instrument that is often overlooked?*

Dresser: The parallels are pretty common – they have a slide and we have this gradient pitch that's common to both instruments. My fascination with trombone really came out of the first time I played with Ray Anderson we had such instant chemistry. And then once I became friends with Roswell, he was such a deep dude and a wonderful musician and generous soul. We had an opportunity to do something and we did it. And then Michael [Dessen] has been my most frequent collaborator in California. He's a virtuoso trombonist and a wonderful person with the highest musicianship and ethics. We rehearsed yesterday telematically. We've been talking about doing a duo record for a couple years but what is a record now in the 21st century? None of my students even have a CD player or CD drives. I don't know, the business of our business continues to be dwindling and I can't say for better. However the need for musicians to continue to document their work, to continue to create, will never change, however the medium and how it's shared in the world will change.

Cadence: *The title for your 2016 recording Sedimental You is a play on words taken from the standard "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You." Your intent was to play "with the idea of 'layering' musical qualities." Would you explain that further?*

Dresser: I don't know, I'd just be making something up for you. It was a play on words. It was a wonderful band, anyone of those people could do a solo concert. I just tried to use people's strengths within the framework of my music and I tried to let them be them. I don't feel like going further with the layering metaphor but I think the music's clearly polyphonic.

Cadence: *Sedimental You features a cover image taken from the National Geographic archives. It's a photo of a man lying on his back in the dirt, supporting a boulder with his hands and legs. How did that come to be your cover work?*

Dresser: I love the cover. The artistic director at Clean Feed Records came up with that one after we had rejected [Laughs] a couple earlier titles. I thought that was really playful and it seemed to work mysteriously well with the title. The boulder's on top of him and I thought it was a beautifully provocative image.

Cadence: *You obviously value striking album artwork. Your covers are consistently creative and thoughtful as opposed to many other artists who spend years working on a release only to issue it with cover work that distracts from the quality of the project.*

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Dresser: Thank you, I often work with wonderful artists who are friends.

Cadence: *You touched on the fact earlier that you put a lot of thought into choosing musicians for your pieces. You compose for specific artists in mind.*

Dresser: That is the Ellington model and that always made sense to me. My peers have been unique players – whether it be Gerry Hemingway or Robert Dick or Matthias Ziegler. Yeah, I tend to gravitate towards musicians who have their own voice. I want to feature people like Joshua White or Denman Maroney, those folks whose sound I really have in my ear. I want to set up a situation that facilitates my players to be themselves..

Cadence: *Ain't Nothing But A Cyber Coup (2019) features your politically charged compositions, poking fun at what many perceived to be toxic leadership during the Trump administration. Talk about your role as a musician who isn't shy to offer political commentary.*

Dresser: Outside of our titles, what have we got? For me, Mingus was a lightning rod for band leader activism and being a social commentator. He was a model for me. We're playing very abstract music and here's an opportunity to do something and say something. Again, what is the impact of what we do? God only knows, but if you have an idea and it's fun and it stimulates a musical idea, great. All's fair, and we're living in a politically and environmentally horrific time. It's not just about the notes – there's more to react to and I want to be a thoughtful citizen. And, of course, as musicians we all do it in our different ways. Some people don't want to deal with it directly and I respect that, other people approach it in a very different way. Someone who I respect very greatly is William Parker, who has a very different way of dealing with it but it is very direct as well. I think that is one of the things that one can do as a musician, if one chooses.

Cadence: *What's a typical practice session like for you?*

Dresser: There isn't a certain pattern. Since the pandemic, I've been working on a bass book so I'm trying to generate material for the book and understand what it is that I'm trying to articulate. Often I'm just preparing music that I'm getting ready to play or I'm having to practice the music that my students are playing so I can share an insight, hopefully, on learning to play it, get a sound, get in synchrony and pitch and rhythm. I do like it when things are being compositionally driven from a creative point of view but sometimes it's not. Like during the pandemic, I was just trying to keep my abilities together because there was no performing, and out of that vacuum I decided to update GUTS. Let me do this definitive new document over ten years later. What have I learned? What can I bring new to the table?

Cadence: *You're recognized as a bass virtuoso, is there anything that you feel needs strengthening in your ability as a bass player?*

Dresser: Yeah, everything, it never stops, yeah, EVERYTHING. Yeah, there's not a dimension that I don't want to get better at. I want to hear more, I want to feel more, I want to be able to translate those things. I want to play the instrument better, hear better, and be a more conscious human.

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Cadence: *What's the history behind your favorite bass and how many do you own?*

Dresser: The main bass that I made my career on, I found in 1979. I had played a gig in La Jolla and a stranger said to me, "There's a guitar store in Tijuana that has basses in it." I said, 'Oh, really?' A couple months later, I found myself in Tijuana and I saw this guitar store open at 11:30 at night and I ran towards it and I found this bass that was on the ground that looked very much like an instrument called a Panormo that my former roommate Peter Rofé had. It was covered with dust and had blue mariachi nylon strings on it, the bridge was off centered, and inside it had, besides having a label that it was a Hawkes Professor 1901, a dead cockroach inside. [Laughs] They were asking \$250. So I went back there with my friend Peter, who was playing principle bass in the San Diego Symphony, I had already resigned from the orchestra, and I offered them \$200 for it and I left with the instrument, without a case. I did work on it but that became my most important bass up to a certain point. And then around 2001, I was doing a double bass duo tour with Mark Helias and after flying to Brussels to start the tour, there was a delay in getting my Hawkes bass off the plane, when I got to my hotel I heard all this rattling inside the case. They had broken the instrument, they penetrated the Kevlar flight case. Helias found a bass for me that I ended up buying and I flew home with two basses. The new one had a fake label, it was a Hungarian bass, and I did a lot of recording and touring with that one. And then Kent McLagan made me my first bass in 2015 and then another bass, a 5-string, last August. I have enough instruments. They're all fun, they all give me different things and I use them.

Cadence: *What are your future artistic plans and goals?*

Dresser: I want to finish this book. I'm wondering what will be my scene once I stop teaching at UCSD and I return to being a fulltime performer/composer, which is part of the reason I'm trying to set myself up to have my abilities be as sharp as they can be. My goal is to continue to evolve – to keep growing, keep collaborating, looking for new stuff. I want to keep it going.

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

Dresser: I've been studying Tai Chi for over 40 years. Other than that, I'm filled with goals within my career. I don't like sports, I don't have a sports' gene at all. Zero. [Laughs] I have zero sports' gene, I don't get it, sports to me is like ritualized warfare. I watch films on TV and I like humor. Comedy has sort of helped get me through the Trump era.

Cadence: *The following questions have been given to me to ask you from other artists:*

Marilyn Crispell (piano) asked: *"How have your years with the Braxton Quartet influenced the trajectory of your career and what thoughts do you have on the Quartet years?"*

Dresser: To play with a bona fide master like Braxton gave me credibility in my profession, certainly with the critics. I was perceived differently after playing with that quartet so that changed everything for me. Working with

Braxton, again, was the greatest, musically, for the reasons I've spoken about earlier. The synergy and chemistry with that group was really, really unique and mysterious to me. It always worked, it wasn't about being correct, it was being adaptive, of making mistakes work. At its best, it was like playing in the perfect world where there was no such thing as a mistake, as long as you could hear yourself and feel what was going on you could do no wrong. It was a perfect world of communal musical activity and I've experienced that rarely in any other situation. Anthony Braxton is a great bandleader too. When someone after every concert thanks you for your music, that's very empowering. I can't explain it, it was just a wonderful experience.

Marilyn Crispell also asked: "Talk about your Tai Chi practice and if and how it's influenced you musically and personally?"

Dresser: It's helped me energetically, physically, it's changed the way I play. It's been a very beautiful complimentary discipline, like music, has levels upon levels of depth..

Cadence: How did you get exposed to Tai Chi?

Dresser: It's funny, there was a bass repairman in New York named Paul Biase and he'd been talking about it to me and there was a workshop at NYU with a Tai Chi teacher named Al Huang, who was an author, skilled and good humored though it did seem a bit New Agey. I bought another book on the topic around 1975 in NY, that grabbed me. It mentioned that one of the driving principles was the idea of being able to hold your root and when a force came at you, to yield it, to deflect it, and not be blown over, not to fight it, but to yield, and that seemed to me to be a metaphor to how to be a musician because there's no way to fight the forces out here. There is no business in our business, but if you can hold onto your convictions and stay rooted in what it is that's important, that just seemed to be a perfect metaphor to be a musician. Philosophically, I related to it. It just rang to me as something true and I was fortunate to have a really good teacher in California – Abraham Liu. He was very unfussy, completely unpretentious and highly skilled. I resonated with it physically, intellectually and energetically, it really helped me. I've been studying with another wonderful teacher for the last 18 years, Jesse Tsao, who has very similar qualities. He breaks things down in really pragmatic, practical ways, but talks on a very detailed level. Often, people who have abilities are not always forthright about showing what they know – they're "secret sauce," and then you have people who are very generous and really want to make things clear, and he's one of those people. That's inspiring as a teacher. I want to share what I know, there are no secrets, and so I relate to that on a bunch of levels.

Ray Anderson (trombone) asked: "What did we learn from Hassan Hakim, the little known alto sax player that we met and played some gigs with way back in '75?"

Dresser: [Laughs loudly] That's like an inside joke. David Murray, who I knew from the Black Music Infinity, let me stay at his New York apartment that he shared with Ray while he was gone. When I first got there, Hassan was hanging

out there. He was a homeless alto saxophone player. He was crashing with various people. He was part philosopher and very funny. He actually gave me my very first gig and he had all these hilarious maxims that we still pass around between the musicians that knew him. One Hassan maxim was like, "New York ain't nothin' but a meatball without no spaghetti." He also said, "When they walk fast, I walk slow. If they walk slow, I walk fast. Keep your mind on the music and carry yourself like a man and no one will mess with you." He was a self-taught alto player with a very lyrical style about him and a sound that you could identify immediately. I'd lost touch with him and I remember being in San Francisco walking with my wife near the Golden Gate Bridge and I heard this alto sound and said, 'That's gotta be Hassan,' and sure enough it was. He was on the street playing. I don't know what happened to him but he was hilarious. He was a bit mad, a nonstop talker. He would not stop talking – "How ya doing garbage?" [Laughs] We had a gig at a Cuban restaurant during lunchtime and he walks off the bandstand while we're playing duo. He's playing his horn and walks into the bathroom [Laughs] and keeps playing. He was wild but a good soul.

Joëlle Léandre (bass) asked: "How and why did you meet [Giacinto] Scelsi in Italy? Did you learn something? Did you find different sounds, different techniques? For sure it was different from the USA."

Dresser: Wow, she's one of the greats. I was in Italy on the Fulbright and my friend Roberto Laneri, who is a composer/performer and played for a minute with Mingus, he lived in Rome and knew Scelsi. He suggested I go see Scelsi so I went with him but he said, "You need to bring with you a beautiful woman." I had a friend who was a very gifted composer named Tomae Okatsu so I invited her to join and we went to visit him as I knew she would appreciate meeting Maestro Scelsi. I brought him a cassette of my first solo recording called Bass Excursions and there was one composition called "Subtonium," which was the one piece that he seemed to like. He said, "This reminds me of Ligeti" and I was very flattered. What I remember most about him was that he was an aristocrat, a count and he had an amazing apartment overlooking the Roman Forum and he said, "Look at that. It's very hard to compose music that will stand up to [and he pointed to the Forum] antiquity." I knew exactly what he meant – "what have I got to say that's gonna be able to stand up?" My first year in Italy, I was living by the Vatican and there were countless artisans doing their finest work dedicated to the glory of God. I thought, 'What do I have to offer?' It was very intimidating and challenging and wonderful. At a concert, Scelsi introduced me to [bassist] Stefano Scodanibbio and told him, "He plays my music." I wasn't trying to play his music, I just wanted to meet him. He was nice, he was cordial. I didn't play his music until a few years later when I performed "Dharana" for cello and bass with Frances-Marie Uitti at a festival of Scelsi's music that she curated at the Guggenheim and other New York City venues. Scelsi wrote a lot for Uitti, who is a brilliant and innovative cellist, he also wrote the beautiful Mantram for Joëlle, who he loved. He had a clear

Interview: Mark Dresser

aesthetic but as a musician, he didn't have a typical composer's background. He would improvise in a microtonal keyboard and hired someone to transcribe and orchestrate his pieces. Though he wasn't highly regarded in his own country, his music has been celebrated all over the globe because he had a very clear aesthetic, and sound. It was a pleasure to meet him.

Cadence: *You trained with both Bertram Turetzky and Franco Petracchi, two of the greatest living bass players. Putting them aside, who would you name as the greatest living bass player?*

Dresser: I hate that kind of question. In our field, of people who cross improvised music and Jazz, to me, Barry Guy is a grand master. There's plenty of great bass players and he stands out in a field of his own. I wish we heard more from him. There are many superb musicians that I love.

Cadence: *I was hoping you were going to say Gary Karr because I have questions from him for you.*

Dresser: Wow, Gary Karr has a question for me, that's really flattering. I love Gary Karr, he changed the expectation of what the bass could do when I was coming up. I'm born in 1952, he was born in 1941. Growing up as a kid, he was the one that everyone said you had to hear. He's also from LA, which is also my hometown, and he was the gold standard contrabass soloist. Wow, I'm just shocked that you got to Gary, that's just amazing. He's been such an advocate for the instrument and diversity of all kinds. The International Society of Bassists was his brainchild. He's a wonderful player and person.

Gary Karr (Classical bassist) asked: *"Thanks to Francois Rabbath and Bert Turetzky, the standard for solo Classical bass playing has risen enormously in the past few decades; would you also say that the standard for Jazz bass playing, too, has risen or did that happen long before with Scott LaFaro, Ray Brown, Charlie Mingus, Paul Chambers, etc.? If so, who in your opinion was the most influential in raising the standards?"*

Dresser: All those people you mentioned changed the game. Francois Rabbath was seriously a major pedagogue, probably the most influential teacher of the last 50 years. He introduced a new technique. And then you have people who've had a huge impact on all bass players, pan idiomatically, people like Edgar Meyer, who's an extraordinary musician who plays really uniquely. Stefano Scodanibbio was really influential in changing the vocabulary of the bass and writing music that lots of people played. I still think about William Parker, Joëlle Leandre, Barre Phillips, and once again Barry Guy whose abilities with the bow have open the field.

Gary Karr also asked: *"Have you applied Bert Turetzky's avant-garde techniques to Jazz playing?"*

Dresser: Bert never really taught technique per se, more he taught musicality, musicianship, and demonstrated an attitude towards performance.

Though I saw his techniques many times, that by in large he developed improvisationally, he dissuaded his students to copy him, but rather find our own stuff. It really makes sense, as we all have an artistic identity that is

Interview: Mark Dresser

intrinsic, that is as unique and personal as one's DNA. Bert encouraged me to be myself.

Gary Karr also asked: "What do you think of the use of the bow in Jazz?"

Dresser: The best is yet to come. The richness of the bow to me is in its polyphonic potential, its sonic multiplicity and harmonic potential. There are fine improvisers in Jazz who use the bow more traditionally to play in a more melodic fashion like John Clayton, Christian McBride, Larry Grenadier and others. Arco playing in Jazz traditionally has a dynamic challenge that to my mind is impacted by amplification, the relative high volumes of playing in an electro-acoustic environment often with drums. The irony of amplification is that though it allows the pitch of the bass player to be heard by amplifying the sound of the attack, the vibration of a piezo pick-up isn't flattering for the bow, nor is the volume profile for arco and pizzicato the same. Ironically, piezo electret pickups tend to compress the dynamics of the bass, not broaden them. Many fine players play solely with microphones or combinations of pickups and microphones. I was so taken by hearing and watching Barry Guy who uses a volume pedal masterfully, allowing him to mitigate the volume differences with his hyper articulate playing. I immediately added a volume pedal to my gear for that reason. For me, arco playing is the most expressive aspect of the instrument and with a volume pedal I can play with the shape of the envelope of sound. For decades, I've been amplifying regions of the string that are normally too soft to project acoustically. Kent McLagan developed for me pickups embedded into the fingerboard just below the nut and at the octave facilitating multiple levels of pitch on one string. Irrespective of my own interests, the level of arco playing in Jazz and improvised music will continue to evolve.

Bobby Bradford (trumpet) asked: "Going to New York City, not as a tourist but as a challenger, is a big move for most. If you could do it all over would you make different choices?"

Dresser: That's a really good question. As I mentioned before, the first time I moved to New York I was just taking a vacation and didn't come home for two years and I got my ass whupped! [Laughs] I wasn't prepared to participate at that professional level but I didn't think I was ready, I just ended up there, gave it a go, and it worked until it didn't but I felt compelled to come back. When I returned to NYC nine years later in '86, I knew why I was coming and had another level of preparation after having made a solo recording, worked with Franco Petracchi for two years, a more in depth new music background having worked with Braxton and my experiences at UC San Diego. I felt ready to come back and I wouldn't change that decision at all. But most importantly, I have a great life partner in my wife, Carol, and together we were able to make it work. I wouldn't change any of that. I feel really blessed and fortunate that things worked out.

Bertram Turetzky (bass) didn't have a question but he gave a memory: "When I came to California in '67 there was a bass club in L.A. and two people would

Interview: Mark Dresser

share an afternoon. I was asked to play and Mark was there. I talked about some of the pieces [and played] and it was the 'old Turetzky show'. A lot of people liked it but the [talent booker] wasn't sure that people were going to like it so Ray Brown was [brought in as] the second act. They had set it up that way in case I didn't go well and Ray would need to save the show, or if I did very well, Ray would balance it. I met Ray and we remained friends ever since until his death. I also met Mark Dresser, this young bass player. He said he'd like to study with me and I said, "That's cool." So he came down and played for me in this little office I had at that time. Mark played some things. He played with a lot of fire, even simple things he played with a lot of fire, and I was taken with the way he played. I told him, "You're a lifer," and he understood what that meant. He was a gifted guy and I was so impressed, and he came [to the school] and I had the pleasure of teaching him for some time and we've remained friends for all these years. He usually calls at least once a week. I'm very proud of him. He feels that some of his stuff sounds like me. Quite a few people say that, but I don't hear my work in him. I still like his fire and when I go to hear him, that's what I expect, and it hasn't changed all these years. He's got his own thing and there's no one who plays like him. He's a friend and a member of my family."

Dresser: That's beautiful and I feel that way towards Bert. My memory is a little different, we met at the LA bass club in either 1970 or '69. He played a concert and I was blown away by his concert, I had never heard anyone play with so much color and dynamism and confidence. I was really taken with it, especially the sound. His sound was so rich and rich arco/pizzicato, every aspect was just vivid. He asked me where I was going to school and then sized me up and said, "You're not gonna last there, when you're ready give me a call" and he was right. I think what I got from Bert was kind of an attitude towards playing. I hear more attitude – it's just you enter the 'zone' and he's got that. I think that people who study with Bert share something but I can't put my finger on what it is besides having a broad background. Yes to all those things he said. I talk to him every week, he's family, there's no doubt about it. When I lived in New York there was a letter coming back and forth. I love the dude, he was my most important teacher without a doubt.

Cadence: Any final comments? You may be fed up with all this questioning at this point.

Dresser: First of all, thank you. I'm flattered to be indulged with all this interest in my work and I'm really flattered by these questions from people I have such high regard for. These relationships, these friendships that continue, they're the next best thing to the music itself. The camaraderie that persists, it's such a beautiful thing and the common bond is dedication to sound and music making. That's a great thing.

Book Look

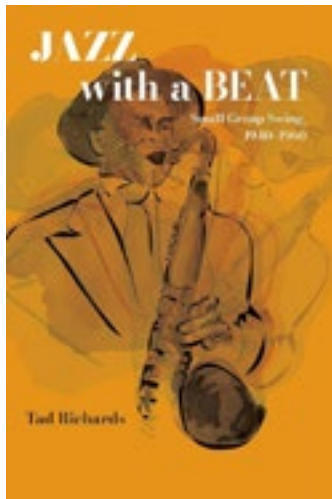
JAZZ WITH A BEAT,
SMALL GROUP SWING 1940-1960.
TAD RICHARDS,
EXCELSIOR EDITIONS 2024.
PAPERBACK 175 PAGES.

It only happens a few times (if any) in one's lifetime but it isn't impossible to come across a book that hits you where you live. That can happen with novels like *A Catcher In The Rye*, *Sometimes A Great Notion*, *On The Road*, *The Bear Comes Home*, etc. and a few others but seldom if ever concerning a reference/history book. Being a child of the Atomic Age reading this work was like stepping into a time machine to be transported back to adolescence and first discovering the joys of music especially early rhythm and blues and jazz. In eight main chapters (Jacquet & Jordan/ *The War Years*/*Los Angeles Central Avenue*/ *A New Sound*/ *Popular Explosion*/*Open The Door*/*Down In New Orleans*/*Rock & Roll*/*Jazz With A Beat*) the author outlines an often ignored form that I always called Jump Jazz. After a rather lengthy introduction the first chapter focus is on two key figures of the forties both of which played the saxophone. The third waxing of "Flying Home" with the fiery tenoring of Louisiana-born Illinois Jacquet ushered in the era and was even mentioned in the Kerouac novel above. He went on to become a sensation in Norman Granz's *Jazz At The Philharmonic* and a long and fruitful career. Yet Jacquet's popularity was eclipsed by the singing altoist Louis Jordan whose perfectionist tendencies were manifested later in James Brown and Ray Charles. After big band stints with Chick Webb then Cab Calloway he cherry-picked from both ranks and formed his own combo the Tympany Five and slowly amassed a huge audience among the black population. The one thing this reader learned from this chapter was his affair with Ella while both were in the Chick Webb organization. I had the good fortune to meet him in Lake Tahoe in the sixties while we were gigging in Harvey's casino. Richard's comparisons between the two artist is quite illuminating at times. Chapter Two dwells more on the overall influence of LA's Central Avenue which like the Big Apples clubs was the breeding ground for this distinctive type of music during WWII. It introduces two major string players, Charlie Christian & T-Bone Walker and a pair of vocalists Roy Milton and Charles Brown. Moving to the Third chapter, there's a neat label shot of "The Honeydrinker" by Joe Liggins on the Exclusive label. Like Walker Liggins was originally from the southwest and his rise coincided with the eruption on many small, independent labels that promoted singers like Wynonie Harris, Texas trumpeter Oran "Hot Lips" Page and others. Entitled the *Postwar Explosion*, Chapter Four chronicles the aftermath of the global conflict when "Drifting Blues" scored for Charles Brown, Nellie Lutcher cut for Capitol and Ruth Brown appeared on the Atlantic roster while instrumentalist such as Tiny Grimes. Red Prysock & Brown's spouse Willis "GatorTail" Jackson made some minor noise. Things really get rolling in Chapter 5 with even more instrumental numbers from Jack McVea, Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson, Bullmoose Jackson, Hal Singer, Big Jay McNeely and Tulsa-born

Book Look

Earl Bostic who was a sax mentor to John Coltrane early on. The chapter ends with Sil Austin and organist Bill Doggett whose huge hit "Honky Tonk" featuring Clifford Scott and Billy Butler blew up the charts. We take a side trip to the Big Easy on Chapter Six with kind words for Cosimo Matassa and Dave Bartholomew heading up a slew of talent in Paul Gayten, Alvin "Red" Tyler, Earl Palmer, Herb Hardesty, Lee Allen and, of course, Fats Domino. Chapter Seven deals with the advent of Rock and Roll with both Doggett and Sil Austin cited again this time with the latter's recording of "Slow Walk" a sort of answer to the aforementioned Doggett blockbuster. An offshoot of Ellington's "Happy-Go-Lucky Local" sax ace Jimmy Forrest hit the jackpot with "Night Train" which was no-where near derivative as Paul Williams's "The Hucklebuck" was of Bird's "Now's The Time" or Chubby Checker's note-for-note cover of the original version of "The Twist" by Hank Ballard & The Midnighters. Other notables include Ray Charles in his early work under the Atlantic logo, the now-forgotten Doc Bagby and likewise Noble "Thin Man" Watts, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and the immortal King Curtis. Both of these last two artists are carried over into the final chapter which along with the initial work of organist Jimmy Smith hints at the coming of the Soul Jazz birth. Aside from a few occasional omissions and slight coverage of the importance of the shuffle rhythm this is a book that will take some readers (such as myself) back to fond memories of their teenage years. It will also show newcomers what they missed. Highly recommended.

Larry Hollis



New Issues

EIGHT HANDS ONE MIND

DOM MINASI

UNSEEN RAIN 9899

TITLE ONE/ SUCKER'S PARADISE/ OOH TASTE SO GOOD/ MISGUIDED HEART/ EIGHT HANDS/
DANCING ROSETTA 32:33

Dom Minasi, g; Hans Tammen, g; Harvey Valdes, g; Briggan Krauss, g - 2021

I was not sure what to expect here. A guitar quartet where the composer talks about each piece being a movement of one large work. He also talks about finding the right people who could read and improvise. One mind is composer and leader Minasi, and, of course, the eight hands are the hands of the quartet.

The opening piece is a nice complex piece moving back and forth between obviously composed sections and improvisation. There is some very nice interplay between all the guitars and some really nice groove sections. But I decided to take Minasi's advice and listen to the whole record as one long piece.

In doing so I let each piece flow into the next and waited for highlights. The best way to describe the record is to think of the whole record as one long piece that has various sections. The composed sections are interesting and often intricate and the improvisations fit well with the compositions. Over all there is great interplay between all four players. "Taste Good" has some really great sections with all four players working hard.

The title tune has some very interesting composed moments. But there are times when it is not clear what is composed and what is improvised. Which is a great compliment to both the composer and all the performers. And the dancing of Dancing Rosetta is not Rosetta but the guitarists fingers.

A must for guitarists.

Bernie Koenig



New Issues

MANUEL ENGEL META MARIE LOUISE PHONOMETRICIAN METRONIC RECORDS

CEMETERY LAWN/ JOSEPHINE/ DEATH SUCKER/THE ANARCHIST/ CYBERPUNK FICTION/
LOGICAL DELIRIUM/ THE AWAKENING/ SEVEN/ GLOOM/ PUSH/ GRATITUDE/ GAMBIT 62:00
AND 23:46

Manuel Engel, Fender Rhodes, synths; Kevin Chesham, d with guests Max Usata and Sirup
Gagavil, and Dominik Baumgartner - France

I am working with downloads from a double LP set and a 10" Lp. I only have the front covers so I have limited information about the records. But it is the music that is important, so here we go. The group is described as a fusion of Snoop Dogg and John Cage. And Engel's playing is influenced by Eric Satie and Cage. The opening sounds like a guitar, but I suppose it can be a synthesizer, along with drums, and a voice starts. The piece is very moody. The melodic lines are blues influenced and the drums offer a combination of keeping time and nice interplay. Josephine sounds more like a synthesizer though guitar like sounds are also present. The mid section has an interesting interplay between drums and synth. As this piece progresses one hears the guitar and synth together, so I am assuming that the guest Max Usata is the guitarist. And Death Sucker is all instrumental featuring the guitar and drums, with piano comping. The Anarchist aptly describes the guitar playing which is all over the place in terms of technique and sound, but it works. Good drum accompaniment and what sounds like piano accompaniment. The rest if what I assume is record one is a continuation of this style. The guitarist has great technique and loves uses various effects and Chesham on drums provides excellent support. Phonometrician is a 10" LP and has shorter tracks and appears to be the basic duo. Gloom works well by using a repetitive two-note pattern with solo passages. And the last two tunes are quite melodic and create very nice moods. Engel's keyboard playing is very interesting. To my ears it exhibits both classical and jazz influences. So the above description of his influences is accurate. And Chesham is a very sensitive accompanist. Two very interesting projects. Engel is certainly a very creative composer and performer while Chesham provides excellent accompaniment. My preferences lean toward Phonometrician but both records are very interesting.

Bernie Koenig

New Issues

ROSS BANDT MEDUSA DREAMING

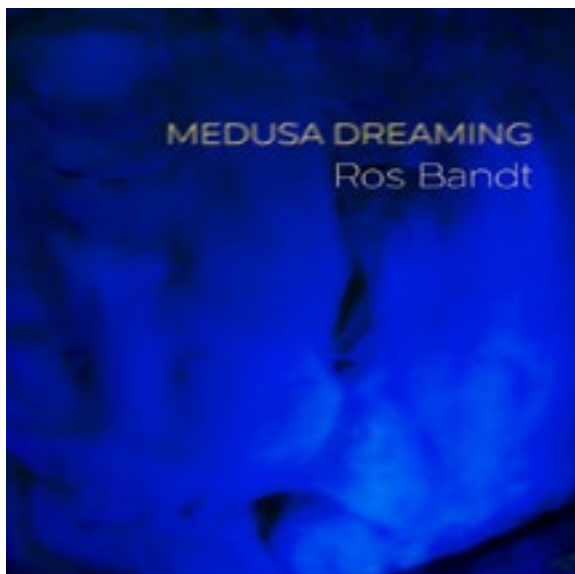
NEUMA

THE TEARS OF YEREBATAN PALACE/ FROZEN LOCKS, ATHENA'S CURSE/ FISH DREAMING/
ODE TO THE EMPEROR JUSTINIANUS/ WATER THROUGH GLASS/ CORINTHIAN SONG/ WATER
DREAMING/ MEDUSA DREAMING/ FROM BELGRAT FOREST/ 52 STEPS TO THE FUTURE OF
WATER 56:36

Natalia Mann, harp; Rps Bandt, tarhu, flt, whistles; Erdem Helvacioğlu, elec gviol, live processing;
Izzet Kizil, perc.

The notes describe the music here as the perfect ambient music to listen to at a cistern. But as I listen this is more than just ambient music for the background, but demands serious listening as well. The use of voice on Frozen Locks is interesting. But throughout the interplay between the harp or flute and electronics is always interesting. I must admit the combination of flute and harp is one I love. I wish there was more of that here. But the harp creates these wonderful waves, which can create the feel of water flowing. The sounds of the electric guitar viol are also interesting, especially in contrast with the harp. Bandt gets some lovey, almost haunting sounds from the flute, and they get beautifully contrasted by electronic sounds and subtle percussion, especially on Corinthian Song. The electronics on Belgrat Forest demand serious listening and the final track emulates water again both with electronics and harp, along with voice. A very interesting record

Bernie Koenig



New Issues

JAZZ CLUB GAJO TRIO SAX SUMMIT

KOLODVORSKA 2,1550

THE ETERNAL TRIANGLE / FUNKY BLUES / MAMACITA / SOUL EYES & I REMEMBER CLIFFORD /
BLUES UP AND DOWN. 36:00.

Sasa Nestorovic, Lenart Krecic, ts; Jani Moder, g; Ales Avbelj, b; Drago Gajo, d. Ljubljana,
Slovenia. 12/2023.

Welcome mystery players and sign in please. Well, it's not quite that bad but there's far from a wealth of information on this slim volume. Devoid of liner notes there is a line stating "Recorded at Radio Slovenija, Studio 26" but that's about it. Billing itself as a Jazz Paradise and located in the Capital city the Jazz Club Gajo has apparently been around since 1994 with a degree of success. Named after the bistro's owner and drummer on this date, Drago Gajo is a veteran musician with a solid time feel. One would suspect he's the nominal leader of the trio backing both the horns. The skimpy playing time holds a half dozen numbers. The only one not penned by a reed player is Mal Waldron's "Soul Eyes" taken as a ballad and paired with the classic "I Remember Clifford" from living legend Benny Golson. The other tunes "Blues Up And Down" & "The Eternal Triangle" associated with Sonny Stitt & Joe Henderson's catchy "Mamacita" and Bird's blues line are sandwiched in-between. Instead of the customary keyboard is Moder's guitar which is used mostly in a chordal capacity. Both tenor men are well-versed players that lock horn sympathetically. Although no sax solo work is identified they are pictured on the booklet cover; Krecic seems to be the younger of the two while the bald Nestorovic has an extensive resume on line. He is a Croatian originally with Krecic and Moder both being native Slovenians. All recordings by these players are imports so I cannot recommend any specifically. This is just a fun album, no frills or fancy touches but for a short listen this one fits the bill.

Larry Hollis

New Issues

JIM SNIDERO

FOR ALL WE KNOW

SAVANT 2215

FOR ALL WE KNOW / NAIMA / LOVE FOR SALE / BLACKBERRY WINTER / PARKER'S MOOD / WILLOW WEEP FOR ME / MY FUNNY VALENTINE / YOU GO TO MY HEAD. 53:29.

Snidero, as; Peter Washington, b; Joe Farnsworth, d. 10/24/2023. Saylorsburg, PA.

Before anyone starts complaining about “another standards trio date” one needs to give this disc a spin. It is quite possibly the alto star's first trio outing but it is definitely not his first standards-laden release. Way back in 1997 there was a quartet cd recorded at RVG.s studio for the Double Time label and most of his vast slew of Savant titles have contained well-recognized compositions. Even his much-lauded Live At The Deer Head Inn of 2021 held some evergreens. His last two Savant releases sported the inimitable talents of upright bassist Peter Washington and drumming prowess of Joe Farnsworth. These men are not only strong when it comes to soloing but are acute listeners who Snidero felt would be perfect for such a setting. And he was right, both acquit themselves admirably. The leader's silken alto tone glides atop their rhythmic bed like an eagle swooping in the sky. This is a fairly laid-back affair with a few swingers dropped in to keep all awake. There are too many highlights to mentioned but a couple of this listener's faves are the unique treatment of Coltrane's best ballad, the Charlie Parker classic and the alto/bass duet work on “Blackberry Winter” written in 1976. The space afforded by this stripped-down unit makes this recital another winner in the discography of one, Jim Snidero.

Larry Hollis



New Issues

BLACK ART JAZZ COLLECTIVE TRUTH TO POWER

HIGHNOTE 7353

BLACK HEART / THE FABRICATOR / TRUTH TO POWER / IT'S ALRIGHT / COMING OF AGE / DSUS / CODE SWITCHING / SOLILOQUY / LOOKIN' FOR LEROY / BLUES ON STRATFORD ROAD. 62:41.

Collective personnel: Wayue Escoffery, ts; Jeremy Pelt, Josh Evans, Wallace Roney Jr., tpt; James Burton III, tbn; Xavier Davis, Victor Gould, p; Vincente Archer, Rashaan Carter, b; Johnathan Blake, Mark Whitfield Jr., d. 5/9&10/2023. Paramus, NJ.

The first question that comes to mind when looking at the cover of this release is "Didn't They Used To Be A Quintet?". With nine musicians pictured on the front photograph and six in the rhythm section listed on the back one has to wonder what's going on as Marvin Gaye used to say. Never fear, all is explained Willard Jenkins' inside booklet annotation. When it comes down to band formations my personal favorite has always been the quintet grouping but there has always been a place in my heart for sextets From the Jazztet to One For All come to mind with the blending of trumpet, tenor sax and trombone producing a soothing sonority. Maybe that's why Blue Train is still my favorite Coltrane album. For their third issue under the Highnote logo they run pretty much true to form which is fine by me. The operative word here is BLAKEY especially the excellent sextet he had with Freddie Hubbard, Wayne Shorter and Curtis Fuller. All ten selections spring from the pens of band members Davusm each. While the majority are steamers there are a couple of spots where they catch their breaths on two Pelt numbers "It's Alright" & "Soliloquy" a nice dedication to the late Sidney Portier. Throughout their ten year existence there have been fluctuating personnel changes and that is true here but the flow remains steady. If contemporary hard bop is your forte look no further.

Larry Hollis



Remembering - Robert D. Rusch-

I first called Cadence Magazine after buying, listening to, and reading the interview of Beaver Harris' Cadence Record, *Live in Nyon*. It was in a little apartment in Houston, TX. I remember immediately not only loving the music, but the cover, interview, layout, logo, the whole thing. This was the mid 1990's and the record was from the late 70's. At the end of the interview, a part 2 was mentioned with their contact info: a phone number. As the phone rang I thought, 'Of course this thing is long gone' and I waited for an automated message telling me the number was no longer in service. Instead, Robert D. Rusch himself answered the phone in a brusque, energetic manner. He was intrigued by my call and asked me my age, status as a musician, my interest in the rather obscure Beaver Harris, etc. The 2nd part of the interview he said he would gladly send and he ended our talk with, 'Well, keep playing and, who know's, maybe you'll send me one of your records for consideration.' A few days later came the rest of the interview and a short note from Bob in a letter with the Cadence logo on it.

Today, when I think about it, it's rather remarkable. I did eventually begin sending Mr. Rusch, 'Bob', recordings I made I thought were of value and for ten years he rejected them one after the other, but always offered insight into why as well as encouragement to keep trying... 'You never know' he would intone.

One day years later, after I had moved to Chicago, I got a voice message one day from Bob and he said one word, 'Bingo'. Cadence released the first of several recordings I was to make for them. I was overwhelmed and thanked Bob profusely, telling him he had made my dream come true. He said simply, 'Well that may be, but maybe its time for some new dreams'

Who answers the phone at their own label? Who takes the time out to guide and encourage the artist on his often lonely path? Who takes a chance on unknown talent? Who PAYS money to the artist to make a record? What labels are still out there that allow everyone an opportunity to become a part of something greater than themselves? I know of none. These things seem just about gone from the world. When Bob told you he would do something you knew it would be done. He himself was timely, and as I write 20 to 30+ emails to booking agents trying to get a gig, I marvel at someone like Bob Rusch. Who called or wrote you right back.

The friendship, mentorship, and comraderie we shared is something totally unique, rare, and special in my life. His beloved partner and satellite, Susan Rusch welcomed me into the fold as warmly as Bob did, in fact all of their children and extended family treated all the musicians with warmth and respect. Oh yeah, where's an artist going to find respect now? At those fine meals at their home, you were treated as a royal guest, every need attended to. Few times in my career has this happened, when it does, you notice it immediately.

The man did so much for this music. Those who would disparage and complain know in their hearts that there are few angels on this earth that care enough to make such an investment as Bob Rusch made. Economically, it was probably financial suicide. But Posterity? For posterity and the history of this music it is a priceless body of work... capturing an array of talent, some know, some unknown through the decades. And we have Robert D. Rusch, Bob, to thank for it.

Rest in Peace and Music dear man. Heartfelt condolences to the Rusch Family and Staff.

*Jimmy Bennington
Cadence Jazz Records, C.I.M.P., and C.I.M.P.ol recording artist.*

Remembering - Robert D. Rusch-

Bob Rusch loved jazz. He loved, and collected, the best music from every era since recordings began, but he didn't stop there. He was also a historian, documentarian, journalist, publisher, producer and distributor of America's original art form and devoted most of his life's work to seeing that the newest and most cutting edge music was documented and that the creators got to tell their personal stories at length through the many interviews he conducted personally and the countless others he published. Future students, scholars, historians, and fans will benefit from his work for generations to come. Many thanks Bob. A job well done. Rest in Peace.

Lou Grassi

Yes, my friend Bob Rusch was like one of us musicians, not a businessman first. It felt more like a musician... that kind of vibe. And he took that stance with all of us players and recorded us on records and cd's. He also published Cadence Magazine which was very important... every month to receive that copy, it was full of great information that you couldn't find elsewhere. Bob Rusch was a real brother, we will miss him, yet he will always be close to us. One of the real people in our lives.

Ron Enyard, Legendary Drummer, Bandleader, Cadence Jazz Records Artist

Bob Rusch will be missed. He was so very passionate about improvised music, regardless of whether it was over standards or intuitive abstract playing without a form. I first spoke with Bob in the early 1990s when he distributed the albums of Zinnia Records that was I on. Since then I collaborated with Bob on many albums: Ted Brown 4tet; two trio recordings with Jimmy Halperin and Bill Chaitin; pianist Jon Easton Trio; a Kazzie Jaxen Quartet; even a solo double bass album (where he insisted that I write extensive notes - as much space as I needed.) We also co-produced a five-CD set of Sal Mosca solo piano concerts from the Netherlands; and again he insisted that I take as much space as I needed for photos and liner notes. Where else can you find that? I imagine the old time A&R guys were much like Bob. He questioned tracks or entire albums. He was quality control. He had no illusions about the ability to make money with this art form. Yet he continued to release hundred of recordings and gave the musicians control of their recordings. It always felt like a partnership to me. He was a good friend, and rumor has it a wonderful painter. We had an on-going joke that he could paint but he couldn't figure out how to send me pics of his work. I've been told he was very good. He was supportive of my daughter's art, and he loved to talk and hear stories about the musicians who make this music. We would talk (either by phone or email) about Prez, Bird, Tristano, Powell, Lee Konitz, Warne Marsh, Billie Holiday, Jimmy Halperin, Mosca, Oscar Pettiford, Sonny Dallas, so many more. We had fun. He was intense yet level headed. Jazz music and jazz musicians have lost a great advocate for their cause. His booming voice required you to listen to him. He provided a strong foundation so that Cadence magazine, his two labels, and North Country Distributors will survive in the hands of those who are also passionate like him regarding this music (David, Slim, Mark and Susan). Thanks Bob for all the years you gave to this music. Much appreciated.

Don Messina

Eulogy and Remembrance for Robert D. "Bob" Rusch

My name is Ed Schuller and I'm an acoustic bassist and composer. I first met Robert D. Rusch in August of 2005, recording two CDs with pianist Burton Greene (a trio with my brother George on drums) and a quintet (adding Paul Smoker on trumpet, and a saxophonist named Russ Nolan). Over the course of the next 10 years I recorded six more CDs for CIMP (Creative Improvised Music Productions) involving such players as Perry Robinson (cl), Jimmy Bennington (dr), Daniel Carter (reeds), Federico Ughi (dr), Demian Richardson (tp), Jerome Crowell (tp), and Fred Jackson (as). If I was to use two words to describe Bob Rusch, it would be "uniquely enigmatic". Most of his productions involve the artists traveling to Rossie, NY, which is located about 350 miles north of NYC (near Canada). The Rusch family live in what can only be described as a compound with living quarters, offices, storage sheds, a barn, a kind of bio lab, and the "Spirit Room" where the recordings usually take place. Room and board are provided along with excellent healthy meals provided by Bob's wonderful wife, Susan Rusch. It reminded me of being at some kind of retreat or camp.

The thing about Mr. Rusch was always his somewhat imposing presence. He could be quite prickly and snarky in a somewhat comical kind of way. It was a bit of a test to see if you could hang, but I can imagine that some folks found it a bit offputting. There were also rules and regulations you would be strongly suggested to follow, i.e. no alcohol, drugs or smoking. Most artists were paid a standard flat fee of \$500 each. However, if after a session he deemed the music or the performance not up to his standards or not interesting enough, he could refuse to pay you, which fortunately never happened in anything I was involved with. However, I was told that such awkward occurrences, though rare, had transpired.

In addition to "CIMP", Bob also founded "Cadence Jazz" and "Cadence Magazine". He'd also written numerous music articles, record reviews and a book called "Jazz Talk". His dedication to promoting avant-garde creative improvised music is without precedent. He was also quite the purist when it came to recording music, especially for the CIMP label. All CIMP productions were recorded live to a very high-end two-track digital system manned usually by his son Marc D. Rusch. To quote from CIMP's statement of purpose "there is no compression, homogenation, EQ-ing, post-recording splicing, mixing or electronic fiddling with the performance."

In closing, my personal and working relationship with him was for the most part a good one despite our indulgence in some occasionally raucous verbal banter. I know deep inside he respected me as I did him. Robert D. "Bob" Rusch passed on January 14th, 2024. Rest in Peace, Music, Love, and Grace.

P.S. Unfortunately, in recent years I became aware that certain troubling allegations of sexual impropriety had been brought against Bob Rusch concerning his time as a schoolteacher in Brooklyn back in the 60s. I don't feel the need to comment on any of that but I would hope that we musicians remember him as a stalwart champion and promoter of a mostly overlooked but vibrant creative musical genre.

Ed Schuller

January 23rd, 2024

Remembering - Robert D. Rusch-

I first came to New York in 1982. You heard a lot about Cadence Jazz Records and of course, I studied the names of the musicians that were being released. After recording together with Reggie Workman and Chuck Ferial, I presented the recording to Bob. At first he said "No". Then I called him back and said. "Why not"? And then he said "Yes". The result was "Shapes Sounds Theories" catalogue #1020

I love the fact that Bob had such an acute sensibility about upcoming artists that were doing unique music. I think there was a number of artists during that time that took great advantage of being on the Cadence Jazz Records label and had wonderful careers started because of it. Also, David Haney reminded me, when I spoke to him recently, how available Bob was to pick up the phone and talk to you at any point in time. Even though you may not have liked his opinion or he may not have even really liked yours he was always available for a conversation.

As the year's past by I noticed, the focus for Bob was more on certain artists that he liked working with in different collaborations that they put together. This took place at the time when CD's were coming out.

I never released any more recordings with Bob, although he did say to me that the style of my work was not necessarily the type of music he was into, but he did respect the quality of the music and that was a pleasure for me.

Bob's catalog is a wonderful selection of the events taking place in the years that these musicians were highly active and many are still very active today. Great kudos to Bob Rusch. Thank you, may you rest in peace.

Over the years I have been featured in the Cadence Magazine in different interviews and reviews. This magazine which was Bob's Baby, has been another fabulous contribution to the history.

Steve Cohn



Remembering Les McCann

Les McCann – September 23, 1935 – December 30, 2023

McCann now rides the groove eternal, re-united with his bandmate Harris, who died in 1996, and their special guest at Montreux in 1969 on “Compared to What”, trumpeter Benny Bailey, who passed in 2005. That performance, besides being available on Swiss Movement, can also be found on YouTube. It’s still smokin’ after five and a half decades, enough to keep my foot tapping as I write this. *Andy Henkin wrote a comprehensive obituary of McCann for the New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/01/arts/music/les-mccann-dead.html>*

Jazz at Spoleto soundchecks for the Cistern site were scheduled for as early in the morning on the day of the gig as the artists would agree to, since both the temperature and humidity routinely hit 90 by late morning, and afternoons were even less hospitable.

While I can’t recall what time this soundcheck began, I do recall how everyone in the house, at that point comprising crew, festival staff, media folks (myself included), and also a few truly faithful fans, instantly locked in on the groove when McCann and Harris broke into a snippet of “Compared to What,” the Eugene McDaniels tune from their mesmerizing set at Montreux in 1969 which opens their live recording of that gig, Swiss Movement, a bestseller in both of their catalogues. We didn’t know it at the time, but they would take their reunion tour – and, of course, that tune - back to Montreux that same year as well.

The three ladies seen on the left had been among those who enjoyed the all-too-brief excursion into the tune, and patiently waited until the soundcheck was concluded, hoping for a momentary audience with someone they might never have met before, but considered, through his art, a good friend, and McCann graciously signed and signed and signed, including the cover of that copy of Swiss Movement we can see atop the piano. If he wasn’t happy to be among the faithful, he sure fooled me.



Les McCann signing autographs after soundcheck with Eddie Harris, Spoleto Festival USA, Cistern of the College of Charleston, George Street at St. Philip, Charleston SC, May 24, 1988. Photograph ©1988, Patrick Hinely, Work/Play®

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

RAY DRUMMOND
 NILS PAUL DANIELSSON
 GABRIELA MARTINA
 PAUL GIALLORENZO
 CARLA BLEY

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

Marshall Allen @ 100 Years

Marshall Allen 100th Birthday Celebration at Solar Myth Philadelphia, PA, March 25, 2024

By Ken Weiss

Maestro Marshall Allen, the universally beloved saxophonist/director of the iconic Sun Ra Arkestra, which he has led since 1995 and been a member of since 1958, made his 100th trip around the sun on March 25 and was celebrated by family and friends at a private 5-hour event at Solar Myth. Organized by Allen's son Ronnie Boyd, bass legend Reggie Workman headed a band that included trombone veteran Dick Griffin (a past member of the Arkestra), Wisconsin-based soprano saxophonist Hanah Jon Taylor, who has sat in with the Arkestra in the past, Philadelphia drummer Craig McIver, as well as Workman's students- vocalist Chi Westfelt, tenor saxophonist Sean Hong Wei, keyboardist Hana Igarashi, and percussionist/bassist Zachary Kirsimae. Prior to playing, Workman warmly lauded Allen – "What can I say to add to this joy for Marshall? I turn on public radio and public TV now and I hear them talking about what Sun Ra was talking about back in the '40s, and just getting wise to that knowledge that he has given us for years...that DNA brought the music to where it is today. Sun Ra was a wise brother. When I was younger, I used to go after the gigs and sit at his heels and listen to the wisdom." Workman also delivered a number of messages from fellow artists including Sonny Rollins who was recovering from some health issues. Rollins implored Allen to - "Gimme some of what you got!" Workman added, "This music is very important, this music is gonna save the world." The long musical set included Coltrane's "Dear Lord" and a take on "It's Only a Paper Moon," as done by Art Blakey. As always, Griffin tore it up on trombone but the real revelation was the fiery work by Taylor, an AACM member.

Between sets of music there was a cake cutting ceremony featuring a beautiful custom made cake with an edible photo of Allen and an inscription glorifying his time as a Buffalo Soldier in WWII. Workman said a few more words including, "We all want to be like you when we grow up!" and, "I'm very glad to bring Mr. Marshall to his next cycle," before turning the mic over to Allen who brought a round of loud cheers with, "I want to thank this band for giving such a nice performance today and I'll be here tomorrow!"

The second set of music included Arkestra regulars vocalist Tara Middleton (surprisingly without her trademark bright blue lipstick which she will be selling soon), her hubby DM Hotep on guitar, saxophonist Knoel Scott on the first tune, as well as keyboardist Brian Marsella, drummers Chad Taylor and Mikel Patrick Avery and saxophonist Elliott Levin joyfully performing Sun Ra compositions – "Tapestry From an Asteroid," "Living in the Space Age" and "Somebody Else's Idea," along with Allen's "Watch the Sunshine" after a champagne toast.

Allen took the night off from performing, he had played a lot of saxophone the night before in town at Union Transfer but stood to sing to everyone's delight as the event drew to an end. As his son Ronnie tried to shut the party down, Allen kept singing, never wanting the music to stop [he spoke after the event's end about how the music fires him up]. Allen ended the night, as he always does at Arkestra performances, with a spoken word "Hit That Jive Jack" segment with Middleton, who recalled first performing with the Arkestra at Allen's 89th birthday celebration. It was a lovely event and how great to give Marshall Allen, who is such a beautiful person, some love back.

Marshall Allen @ 100 Years



Marshall's Birthday Celebration
Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Marshall Allen Dick Griffin Reggie Workman
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Marshall Allen @ 100 Years



Marshall Allen Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Cake cutting Marshall's son - Ronnie Boyd - is in white suit
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Ray Drummond Interview

Luck Is What It Was

Interview and photos by Ken Weiss

Ray “Bulldog” Charles Drummond [b. November 23, 1946, Brookline, Massachusetts] has long been one of the most in-demand bass players in Jazz. His deep, smooth bass playing and perfect intonation has graced more than 300 recordings including those of Benny Golson, Art Farmer, Kenny Burrell, Stan Getz, Toots Thielemans, Ray Bryant, Houston Person, David Murray, Arnett Cobb, George Coleman, Ted Curson, Teddy Edwards, Curtis Fuller, Freddie Hubbard, John Hicks, Etta Jones, Lee Konitz, Frank Morgan, Pharoah Sanders, Woody Shaw, Horace Tapscott and Horace Silver. Drummond, who is also a gifted composer and educator, has retired from playing. This interview, his first in five years, took place at his home in Teaneck, New Jersey on October 15, 2021. He talks about many aspects of his career and how he’s always felt that he “lucked” into having success as a working bassist.

Cadence: *It took you a number of months to agree to do an interview. Why the hesitancy? Have you not enjoyed doing interviews during your career?*

Ray Drummond: *Oh, I’ve loved them. I don’t see them as publicity, I see them as informative. When you called me at first, I didn’t want to do it at all because we’ve had too much sickness around here and I’m not doing the best in the health department. I lost my wife over three years ago. Everybody knew us as a couple and she was just an incredible person. She was an integral part of everything we did. It’s not only that she is missed as a person but she was just a lovely, lovely spirit. She was inspiring for me. Yea ... [His daughter Maya is by his side and comforts him]*

Cadence: *Have you officially retired from playing?*

RD: *Yes, it took me a couple of years to decide if I really wanted to do it. I’m sure a lot of people that I’ve known for years will think I’ll be back because I love playing and enjoy the music, which is all true, but I’m just not in the best of health right now. There’s lots of things going on.*

Cadence: *What’s your relationship with the bass now?*

RD: *Nothing, I haven’t been doing anything on instruments. I stopped playing three years ago and I haven’t picked it up, but to tell you the truth, I have been curious to sit down and play it. Holding it earlier today for you to take photos was the first time I’ve touched the bass in a couple of years. You know, I was never supposed to be a musician. I was a military kid, an army brat, because my dad was in the army. I went to Claremont College, and by time I graduated, I was playing the bass, playing some jazz because I really liked jazz from the time I was a kid. I got my degree in political sociology but I was always playing some gigs on the side. I wasn’t thinking in terms of being a jazz musician, I just really loved the music.*

Interview: Ray Drummond

Cadence: *How have you filled the huge creative outlet that performing presented you during your life now that you've stepped away from playing?*

RD: I don't know, I haven't thought of it, [Laughs] because again, I wasn't cut out to be a jazz musician. It was just something that I really loved. I loved the spirit of it and communicating with it. I loved just being part of the jazz scene. I really enjoyed musicians and absorbing the music. The performance part, I really dug. Some people tell me I should want to be appreciated and be given honors but that's the worst thing anybody could think about with me because I just so much enjoyed being a musician. I was a French horn player, a baritone horn player, and I only got into bass after playing trumpet. To make a long story short, Susan and I met while I was living in San Francisco playing music and we wound up going to Monterey and stayed there for five years. I played some gigs there but I wasn't really a musician. One day I came home and I asked my wife, 'Listen, Susan, I'd like for us to go live in New York. What do you think?' I mean we're both Bostonians, although we met on the West Coast. She decided to go with her crazy husband although she wasn't fond of the harsh weather on the East Coast. We decided to give it five years and if we didn't make it, back to California we'd go. So, we did it and the mainstream jazz community snatched me. We showed up in New York in early October and I started working.

Cadence: *Your peers know you as "Bulldog." How did you get that nickname?*

RD: That was from when I was a kid. My dad was assigned to Fort Bend in Georgia and they had a peewee football team. I played fullback, that's how I got my chipped tooth. That's from me being stomped on because I was one of the best athletes on the field. They gave me the ball and I put my face [into the pile] and BAM! Eventually, because I was making a lot of touchdowns, they needed to find a way to stop me. The name came from the Georgia Bulldogs. There was also a popular series of crime solver movies featuring Bulldog Drummond.

Cadence: *You have a rare '60s diligent mindset and approach to musicianship. A few years ago, after playing a noisy club in Philadelphia, you didn't express frustration, you told me that you viewed that as a challenge, and that it was the responsibility of the musician to play to a level that grabbed the audience's attention. Talk about that mentality.*

RD: You hope you can do that. You can't actually tell the people to shut up and listen to this music but you also have some complicity in having all of us be part of this. Hopefully, that's why we are all there. I hope that people can appreciate some parts of what we're doing and it's up to you to get to a certain level of artistry so that you can at least push your art out there. People are not stupid and they really do enjoy the music when you are saying something. With any art, the artist works so hard to develop their voice and get it out there, and it's really a drag when you see somebody in the audience being very [disruptive]. It may just be that the musician needs to figure out how they can get their voice together, and that's one thing that's really having a hard time

Interview: Ray Drummond



Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Interview: Ray Drummond



Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Interview: Ray Drummond

now, I think, in jazz music. There's a lot of guys who can play, they have all kinds of ways of playing their instruments. Some of them have a really good knowledge about the history of the music and things that are most important to the music. I love music but over the past twenty years, the music doesn't have that "thing" that was so [magical]. If you go back and take Ornette Coleman, for instance, when he first came out in the mid-'50s, oh man, there were fights that would happen. Guys would be yelling and screaming, "What are you doing? You're not playing any kind of jazz music. You don't know what you're doing!" Of course, that was not what was happening. I know that when I first started listening to Ornette Coleman in the late-'50s – early-'60s, I didn't get it. I'd say, 'What is wrong with this guy?' But when you really listen to him, it was really beautiful stuff. There were some fantastic [avant-garde] musicians on the West Coast. I made an album with Horace Tapscott and he was kind of the king and top educator on the scene. He was so spirited and so very inclusive, but when I first heard him, I was like, 'What? What's going on?' But there's [a pitfall] that somebody trying to be an artist can suffer. You can very easily, I wouldn't say get off track, but because you're somewhere else, you can lose [elements]. I was a Miles Davis guy, just about everybody was a Miles Davis guy because of all that music that Miles played. It was so correct, it had history. There were lessons there that you got just by listening to his band. There was everything there that you were looking for in terms of the basic knowledge. There are a lot of really good musicians today but I just can't get that excited about too many of them. It's not like it was in the '40s and '50s and '60s and '70s where you could just bop into a club and it's really nice because everybody believes in the same tradition. They might not have believed in the same part of that tradition but the thing is to find your voice that you're supposed to be doing out here and the only one who can do that is you.

Cadence: *Did you ever play with Miles Davis?*

RD: No, I talked to him a couple times. Once was in '68 in the back of Shelly's Manne Hole. His band had finished and it was Tony Williams, Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter and L.A. bassist Marshall Hawkins. I wanted to talk to Marshall for a minute so I went up to Miles and said, 'I really like your bass player,' because I had never heard of Marshall Hawkins before. [Laughs] It was so funny, I said, 'Mr. Davis I would really like to talk to your bass player.' He said, [mimicking Miles Davis' growly voice] "Well, there he is over there. Why don't you go talk to him?" I thought, 'Oh geez.'

Cadence: *In a few of the phone calls leading up to this interview, you ended by saying, "Straight ahead, strive for tone." Is that a motto of yours?*

RD: That's an old saying that I remember from growing up in the '50s. You'd say it sometimes when you were through playing or rehearsing for the night. Instead of saying, "See you on the downside of luck," they'd say that. I don't know who came up with that but that's something that I stole.

Cadence: *There are other "old school" attitudes that you practice. It's very*

Interview: Ray Drummond

important to you that one tells their own story when playing but you're not a fan of extraneous flourishes.

RD: I'm not for that personally but there are some people who are just built that way. They are very flashy. There are people who can play the devil out of their instrument, and they're really good, but when you listen to them, they don't have the depth. Now, if you hear someone like Art Tatum play, his approach is unbelievable. He's so able to get around his instrument so easily that it's amazing. I would never want to be a player like that – it's just too much. I don't know how to say it except that it's so correct the way he's playing. Art Tatum wasn't born, he was created. He was so correct in terms of playing the instrument and being able to take tunes and craft them. Same thing with Coltrane and Monk. Oh my God, Monk. There're still some people today who say Monk couldn't play, they think he was fumbling around on the keys. What? Everything Monk played is deliberate. He heard that that way and played what he heard. It's unbelievable. I always liked Monk but I didn't realize, not until I was older, that Monk was playing everything deliberately. It was part of his art. Those notes were specific and if you listen to them there weren't any busted notes. Any note he played was very deliberate. He was perfect, he's telling you the history of this music in his own voice.

Cadence: The NEA has been naming Jazz Masters since 1982 and now there are a total of 171 Masters, out of which only ten are bassists [Ray Brown, Ron Carter, Percy Heath, Milt Hinton, Charlie Haden, John Levy (who made it in as a manager), Richard Davis, Dave Holland, Reggie Workman, Stanley Clarke]. Do you have a response to the fact that bass players are by far the least represented Jazz Masters?

RD: I think most of us [bass players] don't get around. You've got to hang out for those kinds of things. It's political. I think it's great that they give the awards. The bass is a strange instrument. You have to remember that the bass fiddle was not there in the beginnings of jazz – it was sousaphones and tubas at the start.

Cadence: Why have you spent the majority of your career as a sideman rather than as a leader?

RD: There was a point where I was trying to push into bandleading and I kind of didn't like it. You need to get an agent and do all the things you need to do if you want to be a bandleader and suddenly I realized I really didn't want to do that. I mean I did want to on one hand but not for the ego of it. I just wanted to see how far I could get in terms of pleasing myself and the kind of compositions I could get out. I'm kind of a strange bird anyway because I didn't get into this for the musical values originally.

Cadence: Which bass players have inspired you the most?

RD: The most? Ray Brown, of course, Scott LaFaro, Charlie Haden, Ron Carter, Paul Chambers, and to some extent, Percy Heath. Oh my God, there's so many good guys. One guy who I really liked a lot but I would never want to play

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quite like that is Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen. Now he, I did know. We would hang out from time to time. I remember the first time I heard him – it was on a Rahsaan Roland Kirk record recorded in Denmark. I said, ‘Damn, who is that?’ He was the exact same age as me. His teacher taught him to play pizzicato with three fingers instead of two or one to strike. I play with two and Peter Washington, for instance, uses just one.

Cadence: *Why wouldn't you like to play like Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen?*

RD: He has a different kind of playing. It's a wonderful sound, just different than I would play. He is a very melodic and magnificent player, it's just not the kind of playing I would do.

Cadence: *Would you talk about your own playing and what you're most proud about being able to do? What makes you unique?*

RD: I don't know if I'm that unique but one thing that I'm trying to do, I'll tell you right straight out, I'm trying to play melodies like a horn player does. I don't want to be playing just notes, I'm trying to play melodies. I'm trying to communicate this music in such a way that even if you don't like jazz, you hear it and say, “Hmm, what's that?” I'm not interested in people saying, “Oh, that's great, fantastic! You open in Omaha next week!” It's not that at all for me. For me, let me hear some music that has not only been thought about, but you know that that person is in love with the music and is trying to play it. If you notice, most bass players when they play their solos they're not into melodies. The reason that I decided to stay in jazz music was that I wanted to see if I could play more like a Paul Chambers or a Percy Heath and someone more revolutionary like Scott LaFaro. I'm proud of just the fact that I was able to be a living part of this phenomenon, which is really what it is, because it really is incredible. The whole idea of the jazz thing is amazing.

Cadence: *You've become quite an accomplished composer without having extensive scholastic training. How did you become so adept at composition that you've been hired to teach it in universities?*

RD: Yeah, [Laughs] I'm blown away with that one, that those two institutions decided to let him be a professor. It was like – ‘What?’ To tell you the truth, I didn't even think about it. I just saw it as an opportunity. They asked me to be part of their faculty – can you imagine that? They had people like Kenny Barron and Carl Allen already, I mean all these guys, and they wanted me too.

Cadence: *How did you become such a talented composer?*

RD: I don't know. I would hear things and decide to write something. I'd hear the bass notes and I'd make a tune out of them. I was just narrowly involved. Remember now, I'm just a poli sci student that loved this music and actually got pulled into it.

Cadence: *Growing up as the son of an army colonel, you attended 14 schools around the world in a 12-year span. Talk about that experience.*

RD: We lived in Germany twice, France for a short period, and in the States – Massachusetts, California, Oklahoma, Wisconsin, Georgia, Kansas and a bunch

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of other states. There were six kids and we just went from one place to another. My father would come home that day and say that the movers were coming in ten days so we'd have to have everything packed and get out of there. I never lived in Alaska but I went there for some oil business back in the '70s.

Cadence: *You were in the oil business?*

RD: Yeah, well that was brief. My father had a company and we bid on the Alaska Alyeska oil pipeline. I went up there with my father to bid on this contract and we didn't get any part of that. Yeah, Fairbanks was 58 degrees below zero. Wow, it was January.

Cadence: *Your father played sax and clarinet and served as a Tuskegee Airman bomber pilot.*

RD: Yes he was, that's how my parents met. They met in Tuskegee during World War II. He was in the very end of the war but he didn't have to fight. They were getting ready to ship out to Japan.

Cadence: *You started on trumpet at age 8. Why at age 14 did your junior high school teacher in California encourage you to take up bass?*

RD: Because he knew that I was interested in it. I had played the bass a little bit before at gigs when people were short for bass players so I'd do it. I'd just pick up the bass and play it. I always enjoyed it. I then started trying to learn it. I got to reading some notes, although I never was the greatest reader, but I could read enough. But it wasn't until I was in San Francisco in the early '70s when I finally had my studio apartment by myself – no girlfriends, no nothing, and I had just gotten divorced, that I practiced. That was actually the longest time that I [intensely] practiced, it was for like eight or nine months. It's just amazing [how it came about] when I look back at it now. I look back at it now and say, 'You're crazy! You did that?' I just about picked up the bass and started playing. I listened to a lot of records when I was a kid. I absorbed music and actually got to understand what music was.

Cadence: *As you've mentioned, initially you weren't going to be a musician. You got a grant to attend Stanford Business School's MBA program but left after one year. Was that the right decision? What were your plans when you left?*

RD: My plans were just to get out of Stanford, move up to San Francisco and to play some music. I met my wife up there and that changed some things. I did decide to become a jazz musician after I met her.

Cadence: *Early in your career you had a steady Monday night gig with Chet Baker at a San Jose pizza parlor after Baker had gotten out of jail.*

RD: I liked doing that but Chet was a sad cat. He'd steal and shoot up all the time. I wasn't with him that long in California but he got out of the joint and went right to his mother's. We started rehearsing some things there and then we started doing this gig every Monday night. We did it for about nine months. After that I would see him from time to time after I became a jazz musician full time. It was a sad thing because he'd stand at the top of the Village Vanguard,

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open the door and yell, "Ray, Ray, lend me a hundred dollars." And you'd say to yourself, 'Oh man, Chet Baker. What is this?' He did it more than once. I don't remember if I gave him money then, I might have. It just felt so bad to see somebody like that. There were young guys trying to get their careers going and here's this junkie up there. I was lucky that I never did any part of the drug thing. I was very fortunate. I saw guys get involved with that stuff and it would take over.

Cadence: *Some of your earliest recordings were with Bobby Hutcherson. How did you connect with him?*

RD: He was from Los Angeles. I met him in San Francisco and he was teaching everybody. He would teach in a couple of the clubs. You know, if you hung out in any of the clubs, you'd run into Bobby somewhere along the line. I wound up getting the chance to play with him. He came over to me and asked, "Would you be interested in playing a couple gigs?" One of the first gigs I did with Bobby was the Montreux Jazz Festival and then at the Fillmore in San Francisco, which was around the time that I met my wife too. [Pauses] Oh, man. It's a drag, a real drag.

Cadence: *What was the jazz scene you encountered when you relocated from California to New York in 1977?*

RD: Oh, my God, it was crazy. It wasn't like all the slick stuff that goes on today. That wasn't what was really happening with the clubs. The clubs really wanted to have good music. The older guys got the gigs and then, when I came, everything was moving around because there were some younger guys coming in who actually knew music, knew tunes and arrangements, so it was easy for them to play with each other without needing charts. In the '70s, it was more like the '50s, in terms of the scene. One of the things that's happened with the scene now is that a lot of the young guys don't know the older guys. I shouldn't even say just the young guys, it's all the musicians, a lot of musicians, younger and older, don't know each other. The month that I came to New York, Roseanna Vitro showed up from Texas, Fred Hersch showed up from Cincinnati, and Claudio Roditi came in from Brazil. It was like that, and if you had any knowledge of tunes [you would find work]. To tell you the truth, I don't really quite know what's going on in New York anymore because of all the teaching that's going on all over parts of the city and there are so many students. Teachers are busy but it's got to be tough [for the performers].

Cadence: *What were your early working experiences in New York City?*

RD: Jimmy Rowles is actually the person that put me in Bradley's. He told me, "[Bassist] Sam Jones is not doing the gig with me this week. Drummond, you just got here but I know you can do this gig." And I thought, 'Jimmy Rowles? Good lord!' He was a cat [who knew all the obscure tunes]. Jimmy Rowles? 'Why are you asking me to be with you? Are you crazy?' I had been listening to him out in L.A. He didn't use me as a sub out there but I used to see him while I was in college and say hello to him occasionally. It turned out that Sam

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Jones wanted to stay home that week with his wife, partly because there was a blizzard coming, which I got caught up in. I walked into Bradley's the first night with my bass and went up to the piano and started taking the cover off. I realized Bradley [Cunningham, the owner] was across the room wondering, "What is that boy doing?" He didn't say anything and we went and played the first set. I'd been in New York about six weeks at that point, if that. We finished the first set and I was waiting for Bradley to come over and yell and scream at me but Bradley looked at me with a severe grin and said, "Well, I guess you'll do, kid." And that was it, and ever since then, I was playing in bands and it got to the point that I was one of the regulars. I mean really one of the regulars. I couldn't believe it, I couldn't believe it. And then a week after that, I was with the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis band. I just happened to wind up in some situations where I was playing with the cats, the guys, and it was unbelievable. I couldn't believe it – Mel Lewis saying, "Alright, we're going to North Carolina. I want you to come with us and play bass." What? It was incredible really. I had no idea that anything like that would happen. I was getting a reputation in town but I didn't consider myself to be a hotshot. I was just a new guy in town and I was totally blown away by the fact that they'd asked me to play with them. I was thinking, 'What? I just got here. Geez, I can't believe it.' So, Susan and I kind of had a feeling we might be here for a while.

Cadence: You recorded two albums in the early '80s with Pharoah Sanders [Journey to the One, Shukuru]. His music is more free than what you're generally known for playing. Talk about playing with Sanders, how he came to use you, and how that music resonated with you.

RD: Oh, I loved playing with him. Pharoah used the same trio that David Murray used - me, John Hicks and Idris Muhammad. We'd go on tour with each of them. The guys in San Francisco knew me as a free player too. What happened was they'd need a bass player and if I said yes, they knew I'd make something happen for them. I always liked playing with either David or Pharoah, and I made a bunch of records with both of them. I also made one record with Horace Tapscott. I think playing in the avant-garde is the same as playing traditional. For example, Ornette was playing bebop, he was just playing it his way. When you look at the actual form of the music, and what you're being asked to do, it's the same as in a bebop band. It just has kind of a different lobe to it. I enjoyed hearing some of avant-garde but a lot of it, I didn't dig it. I guess it was during the second year that I was in San Francisco that, it wasn't that it started to make more sense, it was that I realized it was just another branch of the jazz tree and it would have a different growth. At first I didn't enjoy playing it but later I did, just not in the same way as traditional jazz. I like it now but if I were to play it today, it would kill me because it's such an intense music. But beautiful music is beautiful music, period. I did all kinds of gigs. I just like good music, that's my main criteria.

Cadence: What do you recall about recording Freddie Hubbard's The Eternal

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Triangle [Blue Note, 1987] along with Woody Shaw?

RD: I used to work with Woody too, with Bobby Hutcherson, before I got the chance to work with Freddie. I always loved Freddie's thing but I wasn't really interested in being in Freddie's band. Some of these guys would ask you to work with them and you'd do it and all of a sudden, now you're their guy. I said, 'Freddie, I'm sorry I can't.' It was just one of those things where I loved Freddie Hubbard and his music but I wasn't really too interested in becoming a water boy in the band.

Cadence: Are you saying you didn't want to stay in one band for too long?

RD: No, I was in Johnny Griffin's band for four years, as an example. I enjoyed playing with Freddie Hubbard, I just had too many other things that I wanted to do. Maybe people will be upset to read this but [I want them to understand that] I loved him and his music.

Cadence: Would you talk about working with vocalists Abbey Lincoln, Betty Carter, Etta Jones and Anita O'Day?

RD: Ooh, "Anita Or A Day," oh my God! That person was one of the most, oh my God, she was one of the most rude, one of the most, oh my God, just a terrible person, terrible, terrible, terrible person. She drank so much, at least when I had the chance to play with her. The only time I worked with her was on a two to three week tour with Jimmy Heath and Donald Byrd. I played with her and she was so out, so out, and so rude. One night Hank Jones got on the microphone to introduce her and said, "Now ladies and gentlemen, the great Nita A Day," and she went nuts. She went nuts, but it was some payback because she had made him look really bad in a couple of places where we were introduced just as people. We'd get to a gig and she'd start to complain, [speaks in a deep voice] "The bar's not open yet? Open the bar! I want a ..." 'What? What is this,' I'm thinking. That was my Anita O'Day experience.

Cadence: Hank Jones introduced her like that on purpose?

RD: Yes, Hank did that on purpose, he couldn't help it. It was like she decided that she was going to be a bitch on this whole tour. There were no human relations or rules. There were also some government officials there and some other things happened at some dinners. She trampled all over them. It was awful.

Cadence: How about Abbey Lincoln?

RD: She was wonderful, a beautiful person. She was always in love with Max [Roach]. I had the chance to actually sit next to her on a Douglas DC-9 plane once. On the plane they set up a little bar, and I don't know why, but whoever was running the festival we were headed to, asked me to sit with her in this area that was made up to be first class for Abbey. I'll just never forget that. She was so gracious, but she finally got drunk and then she started talking about Max again. It was always Max. He wasn't on the plane, they weren't together at all at that point. This was in the '80s. Oh boy, you've got me talking about some things that have happened to me. I had forgotten about these things.

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Cadence: Betty Carter?

RD: She was one of the first ones that I played with when I came to New York. I went to Chicago, Berlin, and other places with her. John Hicks was the piano player. We played Betty's music, it was all scribbled down. She had her charts and you would play the charts, period. Bam.

Cadence: Those vocalists were some of the most prominent jazz singers ever but in general, there's not a long list of vocalists you recorded with during your lengthy career. Why is that? Did you not enjoy backing them?

RD: That's the weakest part of my game – the lyrics. I have never been really particularly good at that. I mean I play a lot of tunes – I know the changes and melodies – but when it comes to the actual lyrics, I'm not into that. It's just one of those interesting things. I'm not [actually] singing but when you take a solo, you are singing. That's always been my game as a bass player to have the same kind of approach to music, and not just from the bass notes or from the rhythms, because that's where the bass gets its primary solos from. I decided that as a musician I wanted to be able to investigate to see what it would be like to be a bass player and try to approach the notes the same way that horns do. And in having done that, I kind of neglected the lyrics. I'll tell you, most bass players don't really play like that either. Most play the roots and the chords themselves. The notes that they pick are the basic architectural notes and that's not what I do, especially if you listen to me for the last five to seven years of my career. Somehow I've really been able to somehow reach a goal that I've been looking for as a bass player from the very beginning. I've reached lyricism on the bass. Not necessarily talking in terms of playing rhythmic figures, the kind of rhythms that the bass players are always playing. Guys these days write a lot of vamps, which is cool. It's a certain way of approaching it, but I still haven't heard ... There's some good players, lyrical bassists such as Dave Holland and Scott LaFaro. I've always liked those two. I've known Dave since '67 from his days with Miles.

Cadence: You worked with Stan Getz in 1989 on a planned seven-week European tour. In his book *Stan Getz: A Life in Jazz* he said that you quit mid-tour due to fatigue. What's the real story behind that?

RD: He put that in the book? That's real, I quit when we were in Scotland, I sure did. What happened was I had been on a six-week tour just before then with David Murray and I was just too tired. I had beaten myself up through the whole time. I had to tell him I just couldn't do it and they hired a Japanese-Dane bassist, who was a good player.

Cadence: *The Essence of 1991, DMP* is a special trio recording you made with Hank Jones and Billy Higgins. How did that session come together and talk about those two musicians and how it was to play with them?

RD: Oh, it was fantastic, fantastic, because you're talking about some serious grownup musicians and they just play, and the melodies, the harmonies, and the rhythms, they all come out. Nothing is forced. It's just marvelous music.

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I put that album together. I was trying to make a record with Gerry Teekens (owner of Criss Cross Records). I wanted to have the three of us go into Bradley's, where we had played a couple of times already, and record as the Ray Drummond Trio. I had it all set up but Teekens decided that he didn't want to pay that kind of money to the three of us. I even had lowered my price a little bit to get it done but he didn't want to have any part of it so I told him to forget it. He was trying to pinch on me because I was the low man on the totem pole and he thought I would go for anything once I saw the opportunity sailing away. I went on to talk to Tom Jung who owned DMP Records and he was interested in doing the trio. It was kind of a strange deal but the guys got what I wanted them to get. So, that's how that record got made.

Cadence: *The Drummonds was a trio you co-lead with Billy Drummond and his ex-wife Renee Rosnes that released four albums between 1999 and 2003.*

What was the genesis of that band? Did the concept start out as a joke?

RD: No, it wasn't a joke. I think Renee was asked by the Japanese to do a record and so she said to Billy, "Why don't the three of us do a record?" That's how the trio started, and the Drummonds thing, that just came from us having fun doing that first record. One of us said, "Gee, hey, we're the Drummonds, aren't we?" I think maybe a Japanese [agent] was standing off to the side – "Oh, oh, Drummonds. Sounds good!"

Cadence: *You've appeared on over 300 recordings and led a bunch under your own name in the mid-'80s to late '90s. Excluding what you did with The Drummonds, why haven't you recorded as a leader for well over twenty years?*

RD: I haven't been asked, but the other thing is, I haven't asked. I'll leave it at that, that's the way it is.

Cadence: *Which drummer did you find it easiest to musically connect with during your career?*

RD: That's a ridiculously hard question because you've got people like Billy Hart, Billy Higgins, Idris Muhammad, Ben Riley, geez, I just go down the list. People like Alvin Queen and Tain [Watts]. That's a tough one because there's so many good ones. There's not only one, they all have their own voices and they're the guys who really play. You can hear them coming down the street and know who it is. Carl Allen is another. He's a good player, man, and he's gotten better too. Carl's always been pretty good but the last few times I played with him, I really enjoyed it even more so than normal.

Cadence: *Were there musicians you declined to work with?*

RD: No, not really. I never got into a situation where somebody was so sad that I just couldn't do it. And I never really have gotten too much into politics, that's usually where that comes out of. It's usually not about the music, although I have seen some things. There was a very famous situation between Hank Jones and Benny Carter where they got to yelling and screaming at each other over a chord change at a recording studio. I wasn't there at the time but I heard about it immediately because I was working with Hank Jones at the time. I

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was supposed to have dinner with Hank and Benny and the band in the hotel that night but Benny wouldn't come down. He refused. Oh, it was terrible. It was about them arguing about a chord change and they kept yelling at each other. You'd be surprised at things that have happened. They didn't throw any punches, they could have. Hank Jones and Benny Carter, both of them, would knock cats out if they had to. You would never know about it because nobody would ever tell you about it. I could never [fight] with either one of those two, not because I'm afraid of getting beat up, but because I respect both of them. Whew!

Cadence: *You played with Sonny Stitt at times.*

RD: I wasn't exclusive with him. Sonny used to pick up musicians when he would go to different cities around the country and he would call me when I used to live in San Francisco. He was an incredible player. The thing was, because he was so well put together, a lot of cats thought they would just go up and sit in with him. So, instead of Sonny getting argumentative with these guys, he'd just put them on the bandstand and before they played, he'd ask, "Young man, how many keys are there on this saxophone?" And, of course, guys never think of that, I don't even know the answer, and it would frighten the hell out of all these saxophone players who thought they could play as bad as Sonny Stitt. There were a lot of cuttin' cats then. They'd sit in and Sonny would run 'em, oh my God, he'd run them over left and right and they'd sort of skulk away.

Cadence: *Here's perhaps the hardest question I'll ask you. Who was the most creative artist you ever worked with?*

RD: Hank Jones. There's also Barry Harris. Oh yeah, Barry, people still sleep on Barry. That's a tough question. I'd have Elvin Jones up there, and I'm gonna say this and you may say what? George Coleman also.

Cadence: *You started teaching in 1975 at Monterey Peninsula College of Music. What was different about the way you taught or stressed compared to others?*

RD: I was trying to take musicians and get them to think because most of these guys were not going to be professionals. I was trying to have them understand that they have a voice and I wanted them to develop their voice. You can always put your fingers on the notes, you just practice, practice, practice, practice. Most of the guys that got any kind of that process, seemed to get better because they were starting to use their voice. I'm not saying they did it but they were in on the process. It's tough and the rough part of it is not just playing the note, it's really about the whole process of letting the music happen. If you can let the music happen, then you know you're on your way to getting your own voice out. It's a beautiful process. It's incredible when you hear great music but some guys don't get past that hurdle. There are some beautiful players out there but when I'm listening to them I'm thinking, 'What is this guy telling me? What is he doing as far as the music is concerned?' I love this music.

Cadence: *Would you share a few anecdotes from your career?*

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RD: I don't actually have stories to tell. I just feel quite happy that I was permitted to spend time with a lot of these truly great artists through luck. That's what it was. I mean to hear the great Ron Carter on all the records that I grew up with, listening to them and getting the chords, and then later on in my life, to actually hang out with him and he's hanging out with ME! He's actually wanting to hang with me? What? Ron Carter?

Cadence: *How many basses do you own and what's the history behind your favorite bass?*

RD: *I still have the bass I came to New York with, I bought it in London. I've had it for almost fifty years. I have another bass that I like better and I'd been using it more over the past few years. I spent a few grand on it a number of years ago. It's not old. I think both of my basses are World War II age.*

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

RD: I've liked to read. I used to listen to music, I have so much different music downstairs. I'm not into boats. I'm not into race cars. I'm not into fishing. [His daughter Maya adds, "We're trying to get him into something but he just ..."]

Cadence: *What would we be surprised to hear that you like? A guilty pleasure?*

RD: That would be news to me too. I love New England Style Whole Belly fried clams but they're hard to find around here now. I watch TV all the time these days. [Maya adds, "I know what you like. There's Star Trek. We haven't been watching that for a while but he loves that. He'll watch a marathon of Star Trek all day. Lately, he's been watching the old movies from the '30s, '40s, '50s on the TCM channel."]

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

The first question is actually a question you gave me to ask Ron Carter during his interview. You said: "The bass presents "a challenge because the bass has no frets. It's a challenge to be of service to the music with your own voice each time you play the bass. Would you comment on the challenges you still face on your instrument?"

RD: Yes, the first challenge of playing the bass is that you don't have any frets like you do with guitars and ouds. The second challenge is intonation, which is a really important part of producing musical notes. And then, for me as a bass player, it's important that the music you get out of the bass is musical. If you lose contact with the music you can wind up ruining yourself as an artist.

Harold Danko (piano) asked: *"Ray needs to know how important he has been to the musicians he's played with. Can you say something about your great time feel and how it is you manage to be so relaxed amid all the energy in your beat?"*

RD: Wow, that's so nice of Harold to say that. Well, I don't know. Paul Chambers and the other guys I mentioned, they're all part of [what I do]. That's an interesting question. I would have never thought to observe that. I don't

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see why not to be relaxed. I mean if you're going to be angry at somebody or flustered or stressed, what are you doing up there in the first place? That's kind of a Miles Davis answer. Nobody asked you to come up there and be frightened. I don't know, I can't answer that because I just had an idea about what I wanted to do and went and did it.

Dezron Douglas (bass) said: "Dear maestro Drummond, thank you for every note, thank you for your words of encouragement, and thank you for seeing the big picture and being such an incredible part of the portrait of African American Classical Music. Your albums as a leader featured some amazing writing by yourself. I'm curious about what you were thinking about conceptually in regard to material, personnel and logistics in the making of Susanita and Camera in a Bag?"

RD: Camera in a Bag was a silly one. Niels Lan Doky is responsible for that. We were on a tour in Japan and Niels hadn't brought his regular camera so he went into a store and bought one of those pocket-sized disposable cameras that were new at the time. We all looked at it and said, "Hmm, camera in a bag," and that's how that came about. The title track of that recording was built on the melody from "Over the Rainbow." And then with Susanita, that title track was a song I wrote for my wife Susan. That was written the second or third month that I knew her. It just came out. As far as choosing personnel, I like to think of it as the Miles Davis approach where you hear people and their sounds [in your mind] and put their sounds together to make the music you want. That's how I do it.

Dezron Douglas also asked: "You and John Hicks were a formidable and fantastic duo. Can you reflect on him and how the two of you influenced each other?"

RD: John was an incredible player, and the thing about John was that he just wanted to play, play, play, play, play. That's all he really wanted to do and he would write a tune every once in a while. We made a record called Two of a Kind that just happened. I don't even remember how it came about. Somewhere along the line, Allen Pittman [of Theresa Records] decided that he wanted the two of us in the studio. We didn't know what was going on and we just went into the studio and did it. We had a pretty good sound together to start with and somehow we just started playing. We decided which tunes to do, some of which I had never seen before but it didn't matter because John had it and he knew what he wanted to do with it so all I had to do was to follow John. We did that a lot. We were lucky enough to have done a bunch of records with different cats. It was just one of those things that happened. I first met him with Betty Carter's band in 1978. John Hicks, oh, all my friends are gone.

Bill Mays (piano) said: "We had a duo together and put out two recordings for DMP back in the early '90s. I will say that playing with you were some of the happiest moments in my duo-playing career. I wrote a song for you called "One to One" which was also the name of our duo. Would you talk about our time

Interview: Ray Drummond

together?"

RD: Yeah, Bill was special. My college roommate was his Navy roommate. That's just one of those things. That's how I met Bill and then we put together a little jazz festival in Pomona which featured Bill and his trio. We lost our shirts, of course. It was just terrible but I got a chance to meet him. I moved up to Northern California and saw Bill once or twice a year after that but it wasn't until the mid-'80s that we actually played together. We're both Bill Evans freaks and we played some interesting music together.

Kenny Werner (piano) said: "Glad you're doing Ray, he deserves attention. I'll ask a favorite question of mine. Do you think music is the message or the messenger?"

RD: That's very nice, thank you. I think the answer to that question is both the messenger and the message. I think that you can very easily play something and never hear it again and yet, you've been part of a spiritual experience, so I would say both.

Cadence: Have you ever had an out-of-body experience?

RD: Oh yes. There was one out-of-body experience where I was playing with Michael White, the violinist from John Handy's band. I was in Michael's band, living in San Francisco. It was with violin, piano, bass and Indian drums, and later conga drums. This was a band that was kind of out as you can see with that instrumentation. We were in a performance in Napa playing and it got very intense, and before we knew it, the four of us were out. We weren't in the street but we were inside the concert hall inside ourselves. I mean we were really there and when we finished, we looked at each other like, "Yikes, yikes!." We couldn't even speak to each other because we knew we crossed a line. That happened to me a couple of times but not as identifiable to us instantaneously. It really does happen though.

Cadence: How do you feel after something like that happens?

RD: In Napa, it felt really good. It was positive. It was something that you're not sure about that you're gonna share it, even to talk about. It's something that you probably would think that artists would see as the goal for the creation of their art. I felt it that way. It was weird because I met a young lady that night who - it was one of those things where you're not looking for anything and here you are [finding someone]. It was fascinating.

Billy Drummond (drums) asked: "How did you end up playing with Johnny Griffin? How long were you in the band, and who were the other musicians in the band while you were there?"

RD: I did a bunch of things at that time, including playing in the Woody Herman Big Band. I was in the Johnny Griffin band for 5-6 years. The band was mainly Ronnie Matthews, Kenny Washington and me. I ended up in that band through Matthews. He put me on that gig at the Monterey Jazz Festival. I had known Ronnie for a few months and there became an opening in the band and he called me. Johnny Griffin was my mentor in the sense of

Interview: Ray Drummond

growing up. It wasn't so much music as it was being a person and having some experiences where you're actually getting the chance to hang with some of the people overseas who had known Johnny for years. We would share the stage sometimes with Dexter Gordon who had his own band with Rufus Reed, Eddie Gladden and Kirk Lightsey. It was the same manager for both bands. Johnny was a very warm, wonderful, and silly guy. I even went to see him once at his house in France when I had a few days off while playing with Kenny Werner. He was like a father, like a coach, he was just a great guy. I really enjoyed being his friend and I always liked his music. He was very straight up and down. It was a good band to be in.

Billy Drummond also asked: "Are you or are you not an audiophile?"

RD: That's a stab directed at me because he's a super audiophile and I'm not as far down the line as he is but he's wanted for me to go by his house and hear some of the rigs that he's got.

John Patitucci (bass) asked: "Dear Brother Ray, I know that you were a huge part of the magic that went on at Bradley's, with so many great pianists and other players. Can you give the folks here a peek at what that was like, and what you treasured most about that experience? I just want to add that I love, respect and admire you so much and I hope I get to see you before too long."

RD: Oh wow, I'm really quite honored with these guys asking me these questions like this. It's too bad I'm out of the business. The obvious thing about being at Bradley's was it was an opportunity to share some music with your colleagues. It's always a learning experience, as far as I'm concerned, to play, but you're talking about Mt. Olympus and the Gods. They were all up there in Bradley's and guys just came in and played. It was all so much fun. Oh geez, a guy would start playing and you wouldn't know what it was until halfway through the tune or until the first chorus, and then you'd just go to town and have a ball because you're playing the bass parts or taking a solo and seeing if we can come up with a new arrangement and then remember what it was we did. Kenny Barron and I were especially adept at that. We'd just start playing a tune and we'd remember that we'd played that tune weeks or months before in a certain way. He'd start playing and I'd start playing and we'd laugh and maybe even come up with a little arrangement right there. That was one of the many things that you could do at Bradley's. Oh my God, and that was really something special. You'd have many of the musicians there, the guys who could really play, and great music. We have nothing like that in New York now.

Cadence: How was it to play in front of your peers at Bradley's?

RD: I loved it. I know that some people say that they get nervous but are you kidding me? What are you doing up there if you feel that way? I listen to students and other people talk about how they're nervous but that's something that really doesn't have to be there. Just have fun and play the wonderful tunes. That's what I've also thought.

CADENCE INTERVIEW WITH PIANIST PAUL GIALLORENZO

BY LUDWIG VAN TRIKT

Cadence: You are one of the few artists who still record for a Records label. Please talk about your relationship with Delmark Records?

PG: I think part of the reason is that putting out records in the traditional sense (making LPs/CDs, distributing and promoting them) is expensive and time consuming, and many labels that are putting out noncommercial records these days seem to be artist-run labels that put out mostly their own records, or those of their friends. Delmark is somewhat rarer in that it operates as an actual business and, while I can't speak for them, I think it manages to stay afloat because of the extensive back catalog they have and the work of the new owners (since 2018) to digitize and license a lot of older material they have, much of which is blues and R&B. Most of the appeal of working with Delmark is the history of the label and all the great artists with records on it, including Sun Ra, Roscoe Mitchell, Rob Mazurek, Jeff Parker, and many of my local contemporaries. Also I have 2 earlier records on Delmark (GitGO "Force Majeure", 2014 and Paul Giallorenzo Trio, "Flow" 2017) and it made sense to me to try to continue the relationship for this release, even though there are now new owners. Actually because of that, I thought it was a worthwhile challenge to engage with them and in a way, try to revitalize the current catalog and help encourage them to put out more contemporary jazz albums, as they've only put out a few since taking over. Another option is to self-release, which is attractive but hasn't much appealed to me because I'm not inclined for much self-promotion and I'd rather invest my time in writing and producing music and not dealing with the business and marketing angle any more than what is already necessary as a jazz/indie artist in this day and age.

Cadence: Have you been surprised by the staying power of the compact disc (a medium which was predicted to die several years ago)? The second part of this question is: Do you see an economic return to having your music recorded this way as opposed to say streaming services?

PG: I'm not surprised that musicians continue to release music on compact disc (CD) and that many listeners (and critics) continue to buy or listen to them. What is surprising is how many people I know who don't have a CD player (or a record player or a cassette player) and only rely on their phone and bluetooth speakers for listening to music. But the CD makes a lot of sense to me, still, especially now that digipaks seem to be the norm (as opposed to plastic cases which easily crack). Digital-only releases also make sense, but for me, as a performing and touring artist, there continues to be value in having a physical product to sell/distribute. I've seen usb sticks and I'm surprised that medium hasn't grown much for music sales. Cassettes seemed to make a comeback a few years ago, and I think they're similar in many ways to CDs, but to me, a CD is more versatile and can be transferred to different devices digitally. Vinyl records are great but impractical - hard to transport, take up a lot of space, and can't be listened to outside your living room. I think physical products in general are on the decline and each of these has their disadvantages, but for me, some physical object still

Interview: Paul Giallorenzo



Photo Credit: Peter Gannushkin



Photo Credit: Peter Gannushkin

Interview: Paul Giallorenzo

seems necessary. I'm sure that will change. Either way, I think it's preferable to sell music, whether it's a physical product or an mp3 from a site such as Bandcamp, than to stream it. The sale of one album of mp3s is more lucrative than a thousand streams, but you kind of need to have both. If this music were more popular, maybe it would matter more and there would be real money to fight over, in terms of trying to get the streaming services to pay better rates, but I can't really spend too much time worrying about that.

Cadence: *While we are talking about revenue from jazz; are you able to sustain a career without a bread and butter gig?*

PG: No, I teach a bit. But that's ok and it enables me to do whatever I want with regard to music and not have to compromise.

Cadence: *The pianist Martial Solal (who incidentally is still alive at 96) once said that he could tell when Ahmad Jamal didn't practice. What is your practice regiment with both the piano and composing?*

PG: These days, I ideally practice at least an hour a day. Years ago it was more like two, but I've found it's better to practice more often in shorter intervals than the opposite. In either case, regular practicing doesn't always happen and I find that when I'm not practicing enough, my fingers become a little less agile and my mental life - the running commentary of music in my head - becomes less verbose. It doesn't feel great, but it also seems to help me sort of break out of patterns and idiosyncrasies and listen differently and have more fresh compositional ideas. At the same time, I used to feel that I was at my best compositionally only if I was practicing a lot, and, especially, only after I'd already practiced a lot that day. Needless to say, this could sometimes be quite restrictive and put on a lot of pressure, not only to practice a lot, but to feel that was a necessary precursor to composing. And that my composing was best to be done only after a long day of practicing, otherwise that state was sorted of wasted and I'd have to start over the next day. Lately, I've been able to compose more from my head and not as a direct result of keyboard actions and patterns, which is very freeing and I'm currently trying to build on that, to the point where I could compose entirely independently of the piano, like a novelist sitting in a cafe or something. The piano is a great tool but also can be very distracting for composing, especially as an improviser.

Cadence: *Chicago has a long history of racial segregation and I get the impression (please correct me if I'm wrong) that with the so called jazz avant garde that same separation is evident amongst the artists. Please comment?*

PG: Chicago definitely does have a history of segregation. From my perspective this does seem to continue into the jazz avant garde scene, though I feel like nobody really wants it to be this way or perpetuates this on purpose. Chicago is a geographically large city and it seems like most of the segregation has a lot to do with where people live and spend their time. I don't know that I'm informed enough to speak about demographics, but I think it's natural for people to spend their time with like minded folks in the communities where they live and work. It does seem like there are different ecosystems in the north and south sides of the city, and while there used to be great venues I would go see or play music at a lot in the south side (like the Velvet Lounge and the new Apartment Lounge), those aren't there any more and the venues that I tend to spend the

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most time in these days are near where I live on the north side - Elastic Arts (I'm actually a co-founder), Constellation, and the Hungry Brain mainly. The factors that cause this are complex and it's not a preference for it to be this way, but it does seem like now more than ever folks are intentionally trying to open up lines of racial and gender homogeneity in creating bands and bills, which is refreshing to see and be a part of. Just like for years people have been rightfully complaining that there aren't enough women playing jazz or in the audience and I've always been like, yeah, I know and I don't like that either. There's no simple way to change these deeply embedded structural realities but it's encouraging that lately things do seem to be changing and moving more freely.

Cadence: When I first heard of your music (through your Delmark Recordings) it was as though you seemingly arrived on the scene being a leader. What sideman opportunities marked your early career?

PG: Good question. I'd had formative experiences working in improvised contexts with many Chicago based musicians including Fred Lonberg-Holm, Guillermo Gregorio, Rob Mazurek, Mars Williams, Jim Baker, Steve Hunt, Matt Lux, Michael Zerang, Dave Rempis, Tim Daisy, though not so much as a sideman or part of any real continuous groupings where I wasn't the leader or co-leader. Fred and I have played a lot over the years, and I've had a duo project with Guillermo that had a recent convening in Brooklyn in 2022. More recently, I've been with bassist Christopher Dammann's group "Restroy" for the past 7 years, which features local legend Avreeayl Ra on drums. Playing with him and the rest of the group (James Davis on trumpet, Mabel Kwan on piano/keyboard) has been a very rich and refreshing experience. But, I think when I was starting out, I was still figuring things out, finding my voice as well as what I was trying to do. I was never fresh out of music school as a hot young pianist on the scene and I don't think that I did one thing really well, which I think is often how you attract band leaders as a young musician. A lot of what I did in my earlier years was improvising in ad-hoc contexts that often seemed to be on the noisy side of jazz or on the jazzy side of noise. Also, I think the piano is or at least was not the most popular instrument to recruit in a "free jazz" context, for reasons of harmonic influence as well as the simple fact that many pianos in venues were not well maintained and sounded like crap. That's gotten a lot better around here in the past 20 years, thankfully. Mainly, I guess, I've always been more focused on doing my own thing and taking my time with things and not really trying to be a people pleaser in a sense.

Cadence: There is a duality behind your artistry where we have your acoustic trio coupled with a number of projects that have you playing various electronic keyboards. Please talk about that musical split and the different bands that you are involved in?

PG: This relates to the last question. The piano is a difficult instrument for multiple reasons, but adding to that is the impracticality of it - pianos are often out of tune, sounding poorly, or otherwise non-existent and you need to bring your own keyboard. That necessitated me getting into keyboards and electronics - not just digital pianos (which I never really cared to use until recently), but synthesizers and abstract sounds. One early project was Breakway - a trio of me and Brian Labycz on synthesizers and Marc Riordan on drums. It was pretty noisy and bombastic. That group was fun and I think we sounded

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like no one else. We haven't played together for about 10 years but we did put out a few albums and did a few tours. [paulgiallorenzo.com/breakway]. Another project is Masul, a duo with Swiss contrabass saxophonist and composer Thomas Mejer, which includes lots of electronics as well, in the vein of collage combined with pulse. We put a record out in 2007 [creativesources.bandcamp.com/album/arousal-city] and now many years later we actually have another album coming out later this year inspired by a multidisciplinary performance piece we created and performed in Switzerland this past fall. In the past, I sometimes would see what I'm doing as either acoustic piano-style or more abstract electronics/sound-style, and the group Hearts & Minds (with bass clarinetist Jason Stein and drummer Chad Taylor), which aside from my trio is another main focus these days, manages to mix both styles, even if I don't play acoustic piano in it. I play synthesizer and electric piano and it kind of mixes both the abstract sound world with a more pianistic approach of notes - chords, melody, etc. I have done some solo piano work that includes mic-ing a piano and affecting it in real time - what I think of as electronic preparation. I plan to work in that context more in the near future.

Cadence: Your website is not entirely fleshed out so for our audience's sake let's delve into your beginnings; starting with you being a native New Yorker? What is your formal and non-formal education? Were you able to benefit from being a sideman in an established band in either city?

PG: I grew up in Long Island, NY and moved to Chicago to attend Northwestern University in the late 90s. I realized after arriving that I wanted to focus on music but didn't have the classical skills to switch into the music conservatory there, nor the interest. So I focused on studying jazz, mostly on my own and also by taking lessons, classes, and playing in combos through the jazz department. As a non-music major, there was a limit to what I could participate in and the level of interest and care they could afford me, but I managed to get a lot out of being there. I discovered "improvised music" and "free jazz" during this time, and that's what really drew me in, so I spent a lot of time at downtown venues like the Velvet Lounge, the Hot House, and the Empty Bottle. Towards my last year at school, I was in a 7-piece hip-hop/funk/free jazz group and we started a collective practice/performance space, which eventually grew into Elastic Arts, a nfp arts org that I led as director for 15 years. This organization and the excitement of creating and maintaining an experimental music venue in this special creative music scene of early 2000s Chicago is probably what kept me here, in the beginning at least. While I didn't have a lot of regular "sideman" experiences per se, I did benefit from seeing and playing in improvised contexts with many of the city's notable improvisers during that time.

Cadence: In looking at your gigs from 2023 there were about a dozen or so; I didn't see anything listed for 2024? Are you able to tour behind your new disc on Delmark?

PG: Yeah, I've just completed a tour in June with the trio, and we have another show in September in South Bend - Merriman's Playhouse. Right now I'm working on booking more shows for the winter/new year.

Cadence: Your touch on the piano and phrasing are so idiosyncratic that I

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wondered; suggestions do you have for students in regards to developing a voice?

PG: Ha, don't go to music school! Only half joking. Yeah, it's really about figuring out what you want to do, what you want to sound like. Often, that means who you want to sound like, in which case, go for it, you have your work cut out for you. But sometimes what you want to be doing and sounding like doesn't really exist, and you just have to try to cultivate it and make it real and turn it into a method or a system as much as you can. During the pandemic I spent a lot of time not playing piano and when I decided it was time to get back to it, I had to rebuild my technique in a lot of ways and part of what I did was create exercises that had more to do with what I wanted to sound like and what I wanted to be doing in a real improvised context and not just doing exercises that would give me the potential to do "anything". I've learned it's better to focus on what you want to do specifically and yes that's limiting, but that's the point. Steve Lacy and his book *Findings* has been a big influence on this thinking.

Cadence: What can we anticipate from you in terms of your future musical plans?

PG: Hearts & Minds has an album coming out in the fall on Astral Spirits and we're currently finalizing a European Tour for October. I also have a collective trio with local saxophonist Gerrit Hatcher and drummer Julian Kirshner that focuses on the music of Frank Wright, Cecil Taylor and others, working with both existing and new material. We did a few things this past spring in Chicago and Milwaukee with more planned for the fall. I do find myself focusing more on playing outside of Chicago these days, which generally means playing less often, but that's ok. Beyond that, I'm preparing to record a solo album that brings together various electro-acoustic impulses and styles. And I'm continuing to write, with the plan of putting together a larger working group that focuses less on recording and touring and more on just playing locally, at least initially.

Interview with Gabriela Martina

"States" (self-produced). What immediately impressed me is that measured against the hundreds of discs and LP's I get yearly the promotional materials are both so elaborate and well crafted. Please comment?

GM: First of all: thank you so much! I happily take those roses ;-)) It is nice to hear that you pay attention to this since I really put a lot of thought in that part of the package on how to present my music as an entity. The sound will always remain the most important part of it all, but I am very aware that the presentation does matter. Be it for festival organizers, for you as a journalist or radio host and most of all, for a potential new audience member that could become interested in what we're doing as an ensemble. So, thank YOU for noticing.

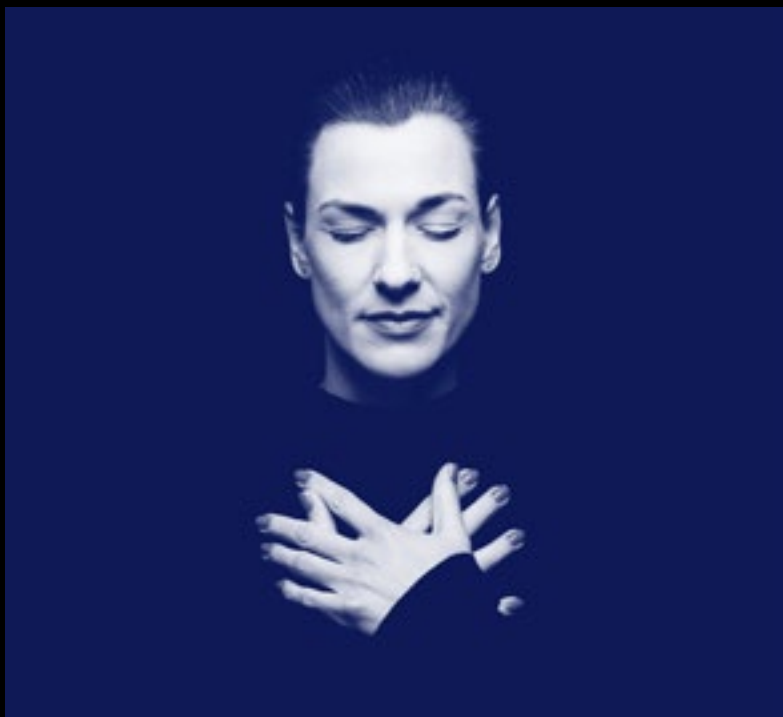
Cadence: Although you are using outlets like SoundCloud for your music there must be something about physical media which is still valid for you.....?

GM: I do still like the physical aspect of an LP or even a CD. Holding something in my own hands, admiring the artwork of the cover and reading the liner notes does somehow feel good and more 'real' in many ways. But I do have to admit that I wouldn't have printed CD's anymore if it isn't for some journalists or other press people who still prefer to receive it that way. We are in the year of 2024, and I don't see the point of spending the money as an independent freelance musician if no one has a CD player anymore and all the musicians put their music on Spotify anyways. We, as musicians, have to re-invent ourselves and have to find other ways of making our income. I don't think 'selling T-Shirts and mugs as some sort of brand' instead of the music can be the solution either. I wish I would have a great idea on how to solve this issue, but I think that requires a lot of brainstorming in the music communities and I try to stay positive and hopeful.

Cadence: Please talk about your musical life prior to your arrival in America; formal or non formal jazz education? What lead you to become a jazz singer/singer?

GM: Well, I grew up on a farm in Switzerland in a family of six total and already at a very early age, I was constantly exposed to music making from since I was born. We used to yodel as a family and had some performances in the traditional Swiss yodel costumes (yes, I do have pictures!). All of my siblings play an instrument, my Mum is a classical singer and my father is part of a yodel group to this very day! Swiss folk music, classical music, songs from various musicals and Mahalia Jackson was on at our home on a daily basis. I used to play the violin for eight years, joined many choirs, was part of a youth musical and started voice lessons at the age of fifteen. At the age of twenty, I went to Vocaltech in London and studied there for one year. After that, I went back to Switzerland, where the options were either studying classical or jazz. I wasn't interested in jazz at all until my studies in the USA. I always eyed at

Interview: Gabriela Martina



Gabriela Martina_STATES_photography by J.Villa

Interview: Gabriela Martina

Berklee College of Music, where I started my studies in 2008 and graduated in 2010. That's when I suddenly realized how much all the musicians I admire so much grew up with jazz and were influenced by it.

Cadence: Please capture what it was like to arrive in Boston & New York (where you lived for 13 years); what was the music scene in both cities like? Where you able to work immediately being a singer?

GM: Boston and New York are two entirely different cities. As famous as New York is for Jazz, living there as Jazz musician is a totally different reality. I have to say that I simply jump into the cold water and recorded a demo CD at the very beginning of my arrival in Boston. That demo CD lead me to perform at a vocal competition at Scullers Jazzclub during my first semester at Berklee and also at Steppin' Out 2008, a fundraising event for a hospital that's quite famous for some great artists. I don't think I was really aware of what that meant at that time. I just wanted to keep singing as I did in Switzerland and simply saw it as 'another gig'. To keep sustaining such opportunities is a whole different story. Boston didn't have (and unfortunately still doesn't) many venues for jazz musicians to play at that time. There are some spots outside of town that you kinda need to know about. I got more and more invited to play music for weddings, company events or private parties and that gave me the idea to fund my own booking agency Red Velvet Sounds. You have to be open to many different kinds of gigs in order to make ends meet on an economical level. But if you treat every single gig opportunity as a chance of growth and learning, it'll pay back later in your life.

Cadence: One of the questions that I want to further delve into is when you were looking for gigs in Boston & New York; were you able to perform your original songs? I mention this because the bulk of your recordings showcase original song writing.

GM: I co-wrote a lot of songs before my time in the US and was part of tons of different musical projects that are not mentioned on my website. I wrote some original song ideas earlier, but my true first compositions started actually with my time being in the US, funny to say. I guess I needed to leave my home base for that inspiration? So, when I had some tunes together I wanted to try them out with some great musicians immediately and yes, I played them in clubs with my ensemble at that time alongside with some jazz standards and other covers that I was inspired by. My first EP 'curiosity' (2020) with five tunes was created during my time at Berklee 2008-2010. It was the beginning of many more albums to come.

Cadence: Let's delve into the nuts and bolts of your artistry; since the bulk of your recorded output are originals. How do you compose in terms of the music and lyrics?

GM: I would have to bring a couple of examples to elaborate on that question: 'Ain't Nobody' from the EP 'curiosity' (2010): I remember that 'Ain't Nobody' was written at night and I was enjoying a glass of red wine. I was living in a shared flat with a Korean guy near Berklee, right next door to Fenway Park

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(Red Sox!). Pieces come to me quite unexpected and I certainly wasn't prepared for 'Ain't Nobody'. It came out of a process of 'noodling' on the keyboard and I just enjoyed it. That's it!

'Witch Hunt' from the album 'No White Shoes' (20216): I was teaching at a general music school near Berklee at the time to earn a few dollars for my rent. The nice advantage was that I could also use the rooms and a real piano instead of only a keyboard. One day I sat there and closed the door for about 8 hours. I had my little Zoom recording device with me and recorded all the voices with it. At home, I shyly showed it to my partner and thought it wouldn't work anyway. But he was thrilled! That prompted me to record it in the studio a few months later. Funnily enough, I was very surprised that people could already hear a yodeling aspect. I hadn't noticed it at all at the time. It's probably the first piece where my yodeling roots became audible again since I yodeled as a child.

'Thirsty Flower' from the album 'No White Shoes' (20216): I'd have to use AI for a moment to go back to my mid-20s, to bring back my feelings from back then. No, joking aside! But I really don't have a 'technique' or a plan when I write such pieces. I wanted to try out lots of different textures using my voice as an instrument rather than using words. For me, words often get in the way as a means of expression because I have so much respect for them. I see myself more as a 'sound creator' than a 'lyricist'. I consider that to be a whole other level and I'm still far too young for that.

'Full Circle' from the upcoming album 'STATES' (2024): The entire piece is extremely nervous and filled with an urgency that should make the listener sit up and take notice. An incentive for a necessary, urgent change against climate change.

The outro of 'Full Circle' is very important. It describes how the world could be like again after climate change: nature, flower meadows, animals and people of every nation united everywhere, all hand in hand in a circle and at peace. Yes, it sounds so simple and perhaps a little naive, but isn't that a state that most people probably hope to achieve again one day?

'Come On Home' from the upcoming album 'STATES' (2024): I took a piece as a model that touched me deeply: 'Both Sides Now', the later version by Joni Mitchell arranged by Vince Mendoza. I wanted to somehow capture that 'feeling' and write a new composition that touched me. For me, flugelhorn has a beautiful, warm and loving sound which fits the theme of 'family' very well. Jason Palmer plays these lines so full of love and compassion that I still get teary-eyed sometimes when I listen to him.

Cadence: When you were living in the USA you had your own booking agency called Red Velvet Sounds. Please tell us about that experience?

GM: As I already mentioned above, I got more and more invited to play music for weddings, company events or private parties. That eventually gave me the idea to start my own booking agency Red Velvet Sounds and hire the musicians I would like to play music with. I founded Red Velvet Sounds in 2014 and

Interview: Gabriela Martina

managed a pool of over one hundred musicians, organizing and programming live music for corporate and private events throughout the New England Area. Such a responsibility requires a ton of organizational and social skills, but also extensive skills in booking, contracting, promotion and marketing (including graphics and layout design), website design, social media, video direction and production, grant applications, fundraising, communication between musicians and event organizers, and booking accommodations, transportation and visas. In most ensembles, the vocalist is the bandleader as well so these practicalities and main idea overall was not new to me. I felt pretty confident about managing events like this, but I have to say though that some clients do really test your patience and your sense for justice. The experience of running my own booking agency has certainly thickened my own skin and also made me more patient with all kinds of people. It was a great learning experience. My business ended unfortunately with corona back in 2020.

Cadence: How does an improvisation-based vocalist practice her craft? Give us a glimpse into a typical musical day in your life?

Practice? What is that? ;-) I am honestly not sure if I would call my singing these days as part of a practice routine of some sort. I simply sing along a piece of music, don't think about it too much and have fun with it. When I listen to for example a classical piece I often catch myself singing some counterpoint line with it. With a more pop oriented tune I sing some non-existing harmonies during the chorus, bridge or anywhere I feel like it and if there's a jazzy tune, I try to complement the solo with some riff or call/response or something. I try to find pleasure with music more than seeing it as a practice routine. For me it's important that it is any kind of music I like and that can be music of any genre really. My ears and my heart recognize good music and that is what I resonate towards. That fulfills me and becomes a need, an urgency to not be able to let go anymore. It's like breathing, delicious food and making love.

Cadence: Recently the pianist Mathew Shipp went on Facebook and wrote a profane tirade complaining about jazz journalist always asking about influences. So, while I am not going to ask about your musical influences; I found it interesting that you mentioned American writer Gertrude Stein as having affected your lyric writing. Please comment?

GM: 'Alpha Bird' and 'The Circus' from the upcoming album 'STATES' (2024) present this style most. Since most of my lyrics on this album are written in the style of the incredible poet Gertrude Stein, it will be quite difficult for the listener to figure out what my ideas really are behind these sentences. And that's a good thing! I like to leave the interpretation open. I always write the lyrics last, as I only record the melody first in a kind of 'gibberish'. Rhythm, flow, texture, phrasing etc. come first, the meaning of the actual composition only shines through much later in the process. I try to let the music guide me.

Cadence: Why did you decide to leave America? Now that you returned to Europe, the Netherlands, have your opportunities for performing increased?

Interview: Gabriela Martina

GM: The album 'STATES' was written between 2019-2020. I realized that there was a lot of frustration, anxiety and also a lot of question marks coming up while composing. It was the early days of Corona and I was still in my Master's program at the New England Conservatory of Music (NEC) in Boston. The fact that we simply couldn't play music together anymore was a real hammer blow! Countless 'Black Lives Matter' demonstrations followed and Boston was suddenly a shrouded city with military tanks, soldiers and police officers. That time was frightening and unfortunately still is. The following November, the political atmosphere became more and more heated and people didn't know whether Trump would be re-elected or not. Then came the fall of the Capitol, which went down in history. I think this was the moment my husband and I have decided to leave. Another big reason for leaving was the dysfunctional health care system in the United States that didn't really help when thinking of potential family planning.

I wouldn't be able to say that my opportunities for performing have increased yet. I think this takes time and fact is, the aesthetics of jazz musicians here in Europe are quite different from what I was used to in the United States for so many years.

Cadence: You are of the first generation of jazz singers who have the tools of The Internet at your disposal. Does social media and various streaming outlets help contribute to your bottom line?

GM: Not yet! But I have to be honest that I'm not really a fan of social media. I am still not quite eager enough to 'crack that code' of social media, even though I am very aware that in the music industry, there is absolutely no other way than going this route. Meaning, if I want to have any sort of success with what I create as a musician. Any social media expert out there who would like to help an independent freelance musician? ;-)

Cadence: What is the best way for our readers to buy and support your music?

GM: Well, my music will also be on Spotify against all my will, but otherwise no one will be exposed to my music and it almost seems to be the one and only possibility these days. I do have some CD's for sale on my website and my earlier album 'Homage to Grämlis' (2023) is also available as a double LP. So please visit my website for more info: <https://www.gabrielamartina.com/shop>

Kosher Jammers by Mike Gerber

Jazz writer Martin Williams, in conversation with Charlie Parker's one-time producer Ross Russell, disclosed something tantalisingly inconclusive; he said: "I think it was a sociologist who did some kind of tabulation about the ethnic and national backgrounds of jazz musicians. Of course Negroes were first. And I think next were Jews, next Italians ... After that, things came down to such a scarcity that it didn't mean much, as I remember."

Whether Jews really have produced, after African Americans, more jazz musicians than other minorities I'm aware have figured prominently, I would hesitate to say.

As Dan Morgenstern however told me, before he retired as director of the Institute of Jazz Studies, and as cited in my new book, *Kosher Jammers*: "Jazz reflects the idea of America as a melting pot because minorities made such an enormous contribution to this music, it comes out of the encounter between the African and the European – that's a kind of shorthand, it's over-simplified, but what does that European influence mean? It means Irish, Jewish, Italian, Spanish. And if you look at American jazz musicians, minorities really play a dominant role."

Jews and black Americans were precluded from entry to certain professions until well into the twentieth century, so many found advancement in entertainment, including popular music, the Jews as entrepreneurs as well as musicians.

Dr Bruce Raeburn has shown that New Orleans Jewish musicians were involved in jazz in its embryonic stage, and the Jewish presence became more pronounced when the music gravitated to Chicago and New York. But they were not yet nearly numerous enough to warrant an assumption rapidly formulating in the public mind, and propounded by cultural commentators, that jazz and Jews were somehow intimately connected.

One point of confusion was the 1924 premiere of *Rhapsody in Blue* that the commissioning bandleader Paul Whiteman hyped as "making a lady out of jazz". George Gershwin, its Jewish composer, made no such claim as far as I'm aware; he was upfront about his adoration of jazz, blues and other black music forms that, peppered with a touch of Jewish, inspired *Rhapsody*, his other classical works, and his popular songs.

Another epochal event was the 1927 first talkie movie *The Jazz Singer*, starring Al Jolson, America's most popular singer-entertainer of the era. It is a saga about Jewish assimilation in Jazz Age America in which jazz, as imperfectly understood, is the medium through which the Jolson character transcends the shtetl mentality of his fictional cantor father. Few today would mistake Jolson, whose actual father was a cantor, for a genuine jazz singer, but the movie consolidated the conviction that Jews were responsible for the popularisation of black music.

Blacks, Jews, and an establishment-defying new genre – a combination guaranteed to spook the bigots, among them motoring mogul Henry Ford, as ranted in his article 'Jewish Jazz – Moron Music – Becomes our National Music'.

Feature - Kosher Jammers

It was published in 1921 when urban American popular music was fast mutating, becoming blacker in inspiration, also more than a touch Jewish as Jewish songwriters were so heavily involved.

Most “Great American Songbook” tunes, so called, were composed between about 1910, when jazz was germinating out of an earlier syncopated form, ragtime, and the mid-fifties, when rock erupted on the scene. And the best songbook tunes, although rarely written with jazz in mind, have attained the status of jazz standards, beloved by generations of jazz musicians, whether adhering close to the melody, improvising mainly on the harmonies, or constructing their own melodic line over the chord changes.

In *Kosher Jammers*, I’ve dedicated an extensive chapter to consideration of whether songbook standards can be said to have contributed to the way jazz evolved. My reason for doing so was because Jewish songwriters were so prolific that they even influenced non-Jewish peers such as Cole Porter.

I referenced www.jazzstandards.com, which lists the top thousand most recorded standards, and discovered that six of the top ten standards were composed by Jewish songwriters – headed by Johnny Green’s ‘Body and Soul’ – nearly half the top hundred were, and around a third of the top thousand.

Among those I contacted was Gunther Schuller, whose *Jazz: Its Roots and Early Development* and *The Swing Era* are musicological studies of the way jazz progressed before bebop. As nowhere in them is there any indication that the songbook might have played some part in that evolution, I asked him if that contribution had been underestimated.

Schuller agreed: “I think the great American songwriters contributed enormously, although, as you say, inadvertently to developments in jazz. Not so much in its sound, but in its harmonic and structural developments beyond and away from primarily the blues and simplistic early New Orleans and ragtime standards.” These songs, Schuller added, “forced improvising jazz musicians to expand their ears to wider ranging harmonic, more modulating progressions, and in turn expanded their creative horizons”.

By the mid-1930s, when jazz went mainstream with the popularity of big swing bands, it was Jewish clarinettist Benny Goodman who led the charge thanks to his band’s exposure on coast-to-coast American radio. It is to Goodman’s credit therefore that, with his patrician mentor John Hammond’s encouragement, he determined that the centrality of the African American in the development of jazz should be publicly recognised. Goodman, who’d grown up in poverty in Chicago, risked his success, during the acute economic depression, to hire black artists, engaging Fletcher Henderson to create arrangements for his big band, while in his small satellite combos, African American artists were given starring roles.

When Goodman announced plans to include pianist Teddy Wilson and vibraphonist Lionel Hampton on a tour down south, *DownBeat* magazine predicted a race riot. In the event, audiences swallowed their prejudices and acclaimed the artists.

Morgenstern has pointed up how significant was Goodman’s racial breakthrough, jazz the first publicly integrated sector of American life a decade before Jackie Robinson joined the Dodgers baseball team.

Jewish clarinettist Artie Shaw, Goodman’s contemporary, went even further by integrating black musicians into his big band, with vocalist Billie Holiday

Feature - Kosher Jammers

out front. “I just hired them because I wanted them in the band. Hot Lips Page, Billie Holiday – they sounded good,” Shaw told me.

Nevertheless, I contend that it’s no coincidence that Shaw and Goodman did what they did. Or that Abel Meeropol wrote Billie Holiday’s most famous song, the anti-lynching classic ‘Strange Fruit’, or that the first recording of it was for Milt Gabler’s Commodore, America’s first specialist jazz label, or that Holiday introduced it at Café Society, an integrationist New York jazz club founded by Barney Josephson. Like Shaw and Goodman, Meeropol, Gabler and Josephson were Jewish.

So Jews engaged in jazz were at the forefront of efforts to ensure proper recognition for the black artists they idolised. The broader historical context is that, despite inevitable tensions, Jews and their black compatriots were often closely allied in the struggle to bring social justice to the United States. One of my interviewees was black critic Stanley Crouch, whose reflections on African Americans and Jews in American culture and society I found fascinating and illuminating.

Jews, Gabler and Josephson among them, can moreover be counted among the most significant facilitators in jazz history. Some others include: Irving Mills – Duke Ellington’s personal manager from 1926 to around 1940, the years during which Ellington forged his international reputation; Joe Glaser – in my book I mainly look at him through his relationship with Louis Armstrong; Alfred Lion and his partner Francis Wolff at Blue Note, the most iconic of all jazz record labels; Orrin Keepnews, co-founder of the Riverside and Milestone labels; Contemporary Records founder Lester Koenig on the west coast; Max Gordon, who owned the Village Vanguard jazz club, and his wife Lorraine who took over when he died; impresario Norman Granz, who was outspoken against any second-class treatment directed at the black artists he engaged. And jazz festival pioneer George Wein, acknowledged by Stanley Crouch as having “promoted more jazz concerts here and abroad and paid the salaries of more jazz artists than anyone in the history of the music”.

Most Jewish American jazz musicians have not sought to express their Jewishness in their music – not overtly anyway. Saxophonist Stan Getz said he always sought to sound black, but that it came out sounding Jewish. Several others have spoken in similar terms.

As for intentional attempts to mesh jazz with Jewish, Yiddish jazz gained fleeting prominence in 1938 when Benny Goodman’s band, with Jewish trumpeter Ziggy Elman featuring a klezmer solo, performed ‘Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen’ at Carnegie Hall. The song, adapted from a New York Jewish musical, became a jazz standard. In recent decades, there has been a proliferation of Jewish-themed jazz – jazz fused not only with klezmer, but also with liturgical music, with music from the Judeo-Hispanic Ladino tradition, and with Jewish music that originated in the middle east and north Africa. And the radical Jewish music composed and curated by John Zorn, much of it jazz related, has become widely appreciated beyond just the Jewish community.

Kosher Jammers: Jewish connections in jazz -- Volume 1 the USA, by Mike Gerber (Vinyl Vanguard, 2024). Paperback ISBN 9798224744800 (406 pages); ePub ISBN 9798223775706.

Reviews from Abe Goldstien from the website www.papatamusredux.com. Go to the website for more great album reviews

STEVE ASH: YOU AND THE NIGHT

CELLAR MUSIC 042423. (RECORDED JANUARY 2023)

"There's no place like home" would be an appropriate title for pianist Steve Ash's latest release on Cellar Music. Not only was the session recorded in the familiar setting of his home, but the eight tunes played on *You and the Night* feel right at home for Ash, bassist Harvie S and drummer Alvester Garnett. The trio welcomes you into the blues of Duke Ellington's "I'm Just a Lucky So-and-So," the angularity of McCoy Tyner's "Effendi," the bebop lines of Charlie Parker's "Cheryl" and the reflective mood of "For Heaven's Sake" with effortless and expressive interplay and solos. Recorded by Harvie S, *You and the Night* is the definitive example of musical partners knowing the right thing to play at the right time. Imagine yourself sitting in Ash's home enveloped in the warmth and comfort of *You and the Night*. It's obvious from this session that home is where the heart is, because there is a lot of heart, soul and joy in this "home-made" recording.

BOTTOM LINE: Like a jigsaw puzzle, all the pieces of this new release snap together perfectly — the variety of tunes, the sensitive playing of the musicians, the homelike setting of the session and the crispness of the recording.

CHRISTIAN MARIEN: HOW LONG IS NOW

MARMADE RECORDS 002 (RECORDED APRIL 2023)

I have a feeling Christian Marien listened to some old Jimmy Giuffre recordings before going into the studio to record *How Long Is Now*. However, rather than simply recreating the instrumentation, folk-like melodies and intertwining guitar and reed lines of Giuffre's work, Marien and his band approach the music with a greater sense of freedom and energy. Stepping out from his normal seat in the ICP Orchestra, Tobias Delius shifts from assertive tenor playing to more free flowing Giuffre-esque clarinet on the seven tracks. Like Jim Hall in the original Giuffre groups, guitarist Jasper Stadhouders provides counterpoint to Delius' lines but with a bit more edge. Drummer Marien and bassist Antonio Borghini provide the perfect blend of structure and space for Delius and Stadhouders to fully explore the playfulness and sonorities of the compositions, all written by Marien. I have a feeling Jimmy Giuffre would enjoy this adventure. I sure did!

BOTTOM LINE: Strong players, outstanding tunes and telepathic interaction between the musicians definitely puts this release on my top records for 2024.

Papatamus Redux

RICHARD NELSON & MAKROKOSMOS ORCHESTRA: DISSOLVE ADHYAROPA RECORDS 0053 (NO RECORDING DATE AVAILABLE)

At first glance, the new release from Richard Nelson and the Makrokosmos Orchestra grabbed my interest. The name conjured up the cosmic sounds and free flowing improvisations of the Sun Ra Arkestra. Then consider the “orchestra” which includes familiar names such as saxophonist Adam Kolker, trumpeter John Carlson, bassists Ken Filiano and Matt Pavolka and drummers Scott Neumann and Rob Garcia, plus an opportunity to check out new names such as saxophonist Tim O’Dell, bass clarinetist Alan Brady and the leader, Richard Nelson on guitar. Three extended cuts promised an opportunity for these players to stretch out. However, at first listen, Dissolve did not grab this listeners attention. On “Dissolve,” for example, long, dense, “Hitchcockian” moods finally gave way to a brief Adam Kolker solo. A Nelson solo on “Float” was sandwiched between what Nelson describes as “floating clouds like sonorities in the wind. Like a box of Cracker Jacks, you have to sift through dense material to find the prize — some solid, yet short solos.

BOTTOM LINE: If you are a fan of modern jazz meets contemporary classical music, you may appreciate the grandeur and scope of this ambitious project. Personally, I prefer one or the other.

GEOFFREY DEAN: FOUNDATION AMP 59TO (RECORDED JUNE 2023)

This recording disproves a statement once made by George Bernard Shaw — “Those who can do, those who can’t teach.” The four educators featured of Geoffrey Dean’s Foundation certainly do! They do justice to a selection of lesser-known tunes from composers such as Sam Rivers, Duke Pearson, Elmo Hope and others. Pianist Geoffrey Dean does it all with impeccable taste and touch — from the sublime ballad playing of Sonny Clark’s “Conception” to the quirky unconventional blues of Andrew Hill’s “Yokada Yokada.” Trumpeter Justin Copeland does a journeyman’s job on tunes originally recorded by trumpeters such as Miles Davis, Johnny Coles, Donald Byrd and Art Farmer (without imitating them) as well as crafting trumpet lines for tunes such as Sam Rivers’ “Cyclic Episodes” which were never recorded by trumpeters. Harish Raghavan does yeoman work in laying the groundwork for the group to explore the melodies and harmonies of the nine selections. Drummer Eric Binder does his usual best in driving the group through burners, ballads and blues. Let’s hope this recording is truly the “foundation” for another volume of hard bop era tunes performed by this outstanding ensemble of teachers who are doing it!

BOTTOM LINE: There are only two words to describe this collection of lesser-known tunes from the hard bop era performed by a quartet that deserves to be known — well played.

Feature Review



Justin Chart - Today's Tomorrow. Universal Music Group

Justin Chart, alto saxophonist, composer, bandleader and his jazzmen are making music for all of the right reasons.

Justin Chart, alto saxophonist, composer, bandleader and his jazzmen are making music for all of the right reasons.

Look inside "Today's Tomorrow". There are beautifully wrought pieces of jazz, adorned with space and brilliance.

Justin Chart, and his ever changing cast of sidemen have created something new and compelling.

In a world of auto tuned AI, and copy and paste, Justin Chart shows us that he can write an incredible piece of music, yes, on the spot while he is playing it, and seamlessly and fluidly do what few can do.

Sure, many jazz artists improvise with ease, however that is within the construct of a pre-written song.

Chart intuitively writes the melodies, rhythm, calls chord changes and pulls it off like he had played it a dozen times before.

Chart is a force of nature as well as a master improvisational architect, both subtle and sophisticated.

Piano man Saul somehow both cinematic and funky, chiming with sonorous rhythm embraces Chart's pathway to shine with his spectral signature.

Each signature has its own emotional voice, and each emotion has its own unique outcome.

When put in the right pair of hands, the bass can balance groove with grace.

Peter Marshall lays the grooves for Chart to take wing so fluidly. Marshall gets a spectrum of sound that is balanced, dark, rich and gnawing, and he is able to combine and communicate these at will.

Justin Chart and crew play so tightly with imagination and forward-thinking, yes this falls in the category of jazz, but it's so much more sonically. A man who says something without words, is remarkable.

Chart, Marshall, Saul and Lobato push their musical boundaries with bravado.

Their versatility and harmonic combinations converge so well. This album sounds like it was charted out and rehearsed.

Their musical conversations with each other speak to me as well. Guitarist Joe Diorio once told me as an artist you

have to have something to say. As soon as I heard the first cut on Today's

Tomorrow, "Nocturnal Taste" I wanted to give ear to what his horn was saying.

There is shimmering futurism in the way Chart can wrap you in cloak of warm velvet when he wants to:

Feature Review

I have never said this about an artist, many of his riffs give me the chills. "A Velvet Vortex," is like a cool breeze on a hot summer night.

It rings of balladry, through chiming cascades of Charts fluid virtuosity.

"My Point of True" is fast, graceful and grooves moving through ever-changing patterns as the musical ideas flow from Chart to Saul from Marshall to Lobato, these guys paint with style in their sound, it is truly remarkable. a shot of sound!

I love that Justin Chart keeps on putting out fantastic live albums, great live jazz albums like this are far and few between. He writes his melodies in the moment. "A New Set of Keys" is a sassy tune, upbeat, soulful, full of energy, slightly euphoric and driven by Marshalls bass, and Chart's catchy riffs.

It feels like the vast LA landscape I picture Justin Chart living in, vast and layered with depth and imagination.

Hard Bop, I love the way Chart fires off riffs like a peregrine falcon flying through the canyons.

Fans of jazz, those looking for something truly new and different should also sign on just to hear the magic of how these four gentlemen are truly symbiotic sound giants.

Chart is an artist who has a greater purpose. No tricks or gimmicks. You can hear the substance and longevity in Charts melodies, just turn up "Happy For Sure".

A beautiful bittersweet refrain for sure!

Feel the blunt punch of drummer Robert Lobato, he's right on the money, with sophistication and solid grooves.

"Mid Moment" is a sublime and soulful emotive drift reminding me the power of this album is a sound that could define the word jazz, Cha-Ching Messrs. Chart, Marshall, Saul and Lobato!

Third time listening to "Better Than Jazz" two words: Throbbing Frenzy!

"We All Disappear" Chart's Post Bop riffs set the vibe as Marshall and Lobato move into more energetic realms.

Cool is not something you can work at, you either have it or you don't. Chart may not be "The Birth of The Cool" but he is a man of the cool for sure. Easily and effortlessly.

There's a soulfulness to this album, it's these four gentlemen playing with a controlled loss of control. You can feel Charts rage and passion woven together, both glorious and beguiling.

Today's Tomorrow. A deep title indeed. Most people would obviously think today is tomorrow.

If you ponder this sagacious title you realize it is the awareness and sensation of tomorrow, felt today.

I can't help but wonder if that is what Chart is trying to convey.

I listen to the masters, Stitt, Monk, Evans and Getz and many more.

They would all welcome Chart in today, and Today's Tomorrow.

Richard Wilson

New Issues

INGRI BJARNI FRAGILE MAGIC SELF ISSUED

INGRI BJARNI P; BARBER REINART POULSEN, BASS; MAGNUS TRYGVASSON ELIASSEN D
Impulsive / Fragile magic/ Visan/ Glimpse/ Suburb/ Uti a Gotu/ Introduction/ Sleepness Nghts in June/ einn tveir 52:07

I am working from a download so except for the cover picture there is no information about the trio. I would love to know who the bassist and drummer are as they provide excellent accompaniment. But this is Bjarni's outing. There are a couple of short bass solos, one arco, and one longer one on Sleepness Night, which are quite good. The bass is really attuned to the piano and at times is right in sync with the piano. They play the melody together on the out chorus of Uti a gotu. The drummer is very tasteful and appropriate throughout. All of them being in sync really shows up as they all reflect the melody on Introduction.

After listening to three tracks my thoughts are: What if Debussy or Satie played jazz. The music is moody and impressionistic. This mood continues through the recording. The melodies are straightforward accompanied by some complex chords. The piano solos always maintain the feel of the melody. In many ways one could listen to the improvisations as variations on themes.

While most of the tunes are on the slow side, Introduction is a bit more up tempo and even features a short drum break. The overall feel of the recording is one of moodiness, or as I sometimes like to say, introspective, in way that is reminiscent of Bill Evans.

A very interesting recording.

Bernie Koenig



New Issues

SONNY ROLLINS, FREEDOM WEAVER: The 1959 European Tour Recordings RESONANCE 2065

DISC ONE: ST. THOMAS / THERE WILL NEVER BE ANOTHER YOU / STAY AS SWEET AS YOU ARE / I'VE TOLD EV'RY LITTLE STAR /HOW HIGH THE MOON / OLEO / PAUL'S PAL / SONNY ROLLINS INTERVIEW / IT DON'T MEAN A THING(*) / PAUL'S PAL 2 (*) LOVE LETTERS(*). 68:37. DISC TWO: I REMEMBER YOU / I'VE TOLD EV'RY LITTLE STAR2 / IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU / OLEO 2 / WILL YOU STILL BE MIINE?/ I'VE TOLD EV'RY LITTLE STAR 3/ I WANT TO BE HAPPY / A WEAVER OF DREAMS / IT DON'T MEAN A THING 2(*)/ COCKTAILS FOR TWO / I'VE TOLD EV'RY LITTLE STAR 4(*)/ I WANT TO BE HAPPY 2. 57:41. DISC THREE: WOODY 'N YOU(**) / BUT NOT FOR ME(**) / LADY BIRD.(**). 52:24. Rollins, ts; Henry Grimes, b; Pete LaRoca, Joe Harris(*), Kenny Clarke(**) Stockholm, Sweden; Zurich, Switzerland; Laren, Holland; Frankfurt, Germany; Aix-en-Provence,France. 3/1959.

Any of you out there that have missed Sonny Rollins as much as I have, here's a triple blessing from the jazz gods. This was his last tour before a notable sabbatical under the Williamsburg bridge. For that select few that seem to think the only worthwhile Rollins is in a trio context have at it. Returning from the acclaimed Village Vanguard dates on Blue Note from two years before is drummer Pete LaRoca who is heard on most of the first disk from March 4th with the little-known Joe Harris rounding out the last few cuts. The second platter from the next day follows the same pattern. Originally from Pittsburgh Harris had been residing in Sweden the last three years so he was a logical choice to sub for LaRoca those four tracks. The final cd finds drum-master Clarke laying down almost an hour of hot bebop which no doubt Newk definitely dug. Also from Steel City, Mastertrapster Klook pioneered many percussive innovations and has long been considered the godfather of bebop drumming. His astute presence on the third platter was a true gift to this listener. As for double bass ace Wilbur Ware he was a certified veteran although younger than Clarke. In possession of a devastating sense of swing his big bull was the pillar around which many a record session was built. As the old cats used to say "he could swing you into bad health". Like a good calculator one could count on him. Sad to say, all of Newk's rhythm comrades have since passed.

Regarding the repertoire, many of the selections are repeated over the three disks but as was the case with Sonny he always had something different to state solowise. He must have really dug the Kern/Hammerstein "I've Told Every Little Star" (four versions) because it was issued three months later domestically on Meets The Contemporary Leaders. There is also a very short interview segment that doesn't add that much. There is so much material to be heard here that trying to dissect it in detail would like trying to review the Holy Bible. There is no question that this is a historic release, although it has been partially available in a cd split with Horace Silver & an inferior 3-disc set on an import label(Solar). This is the one to acquire in that Newk delivers a master class in tenor-ology that is as fresh as today. Definitely recommended.

Larry Hollis

New Issues

THE EASTER QUARTET LIGHT END NOT TWO MW1037-2

INVERSION / TIGHT CLUSTER / LIGHT END. 54:32.

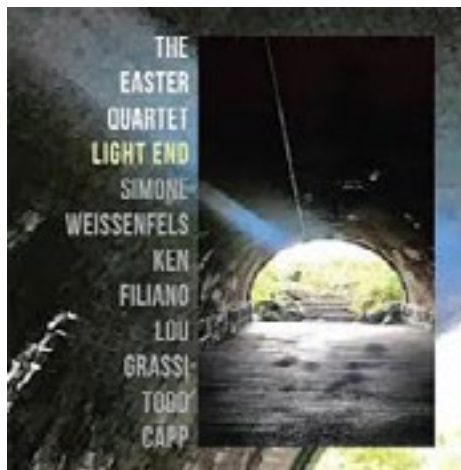
Simone Weissenfels, p; Ken Filiano, b, effects; Lou Grassi, Todd Capp, dr, perc. 10/26/2022, Brooklyn, NY.

Leipzig-based Simone Weissenfels's global jazz presence fortunately encompasses performances in New York. There in 2019, she formalized impromptu collaborations with bassist Ken Filiano, drummer Todd Capp, and drummer Lou Grassi by naming The Easter Quartet. There are two drummers? you might ask. The answer would be Yes. Free improviser Weissenfels is all about imagining and then creating spontaneously shifting sonic environments that surround the listener. Her depictions on piano involve constant motion with prismatic colors of varying shades, subtly darkening to suggest haunting shadows or suddenly revealing startling brilliance or suddenly dramatizing events of fervent engagement. No songs, conventional rhythms, or melodies happen. Rather, her dynamic, spontaneous emotional statements demand that attention must be paid in a non-notated vein akin to Sturm und Drang performances adapted for the twenty-first century. And so, the two drummers comprising half the quartet double the pleasures provided by their percussive piquancy and provocative patterns, not to mention doubling the fun from two musicians with their own individual sonic contributions. They just happen to play the same instrument, but, immersed in extraordinarily zealous dedication to the music, they imagine and then express complementary ideas. Refusing to allow the group's uniqueness to be unremembered, Weissenfels's worldwide contacts benefited her decision to document the quartet's works. She contacted Marek Winiarski, the founder of the Kraków-based label, Not Two Records, which applies various lavish resources in the production of avant-garde jazz recordings. The result is *Light End*, an album of three extended tracks unencumbered by outside constraints. The first track, "Inversion," begins its 21-plus minutes with treble-clef tone-painting, slowly splashing hues animated by the resonance of Filiano's bass lines. Grassi and Capp enrich the textures with soft restraint. So subtle is the change of mood that the gradual "inversion" seems to start around 5:35 as the volume increases. But the contrast is unmistakable a minute later as the music's delicate manner wanes. Ardent force advances. After that, a distinctly different temperament ensues, locking in the listener for a roller-coaster-like ride during which the drummers don't take back seats. Weissenfels's palette expands to include the full range of the piano's variegations, instead of solely the brief treble-clef streaks within the introduction. At 13:40, the aggressiveness of her attacks evolves into yet another "inversion." Suddenly, at decreased volume, single descending notes as first-time sustains replace tumult. Filiano bows keenly in high positions. Mysterious delicacy returns, as does pensive attention to tonality. With the diminution of volume, Weissenfels's splashes of treble tones recede unexpectedly into an accompaniment of Filiano's arco solo, slow

New Issues

enough for tremolo embellishment, throughout the full range of the double bass. At approximately 21:18 (for, once again, the changes are so gradual), Grassi and Capp, respectfully in the background after 13:40, support again with Filiano the force of Weissenfels's ending. "Tight Cluster," perhaps a titular description of what's to come, commences quietly too...at pianississimo volume, even. But the initial threads of the piano and bass's lower bass clef quavering without a tonal center—offset by Weissenfels's upper-treble-clef dapples in the opposite sonic extreme—suggest enigmatic minor-scale things to come. Though Filiano develops an improvisational presence from the starting pedal point, sustained for minutes yet by Weissenfels too, her timbral opposites gradually—so gradually—merge in the center as Grassi and Capp establish the growth in textural complexity with supportive percussiveness. Eventually, the sonic clusters that Weissenfels calmly introduced swell in vim and volume and volition to take the lead. Did I write "pianississimo?" I did. And it's true. But by 11:40, the quartet's pianississimo grows to truly fortississimo. While the piano's tones may be in tight clusters, its volume attains broad contrasts. By 12:15, the sonic portrayal of an awaking at "Tight Cluster's" beginning evolves into the group's thunderously passionate immersion in shared moments until the quick fade of its conclusion. "Light End" proceeds along a similar dynamic path, which the drums choose serenely—and intriguingly. Filiano provides effects and pizzicato rejoinders to the percussive atmospherics and to the bass drum's thumped accents. Weissenfels enhances the track's percussiveness, apparently with plucked piano strings. Indeed, "Light End" evolves into a track of interactive effects by seasoned professionals. Eventually, it surges into the uninhibited, once-in-a-lifetime extemporization of musical unity arising from fierce musical intensity and boldly inventive artistry.

Bill Donaldson



New Issues

JOHN BASILE HEATING UP

SPRINGTIME JAZZ 010

UNDER THE INFLUENCE/ FOR ALL WE KNOW/ GIRL TALK/ SEE SAW/ MOON AND SAND/ NEVER WILL I MARY/ SUMMER'S DAWN/ LIKE A LOVER/ TEAR IT DOWN/ COUNTENANCE. 40:43
Basile,g ; David Finck, bass; Carmen Intorre Jr, d April 2024. NY

Many moons ago while searching for a bassist for my first recording, I had the pleasure of hearing bassist Michael Moore in a small club in Fort Lee, NJ. Michael was one of the finest bassists I had ever heard. His work with Bill Evans, Jim Hall and eventually a full time spot in Dave Brubeck's group would elevate his status to one of the most significant bassists of his time. So that evening in NJ Michael was playing duo with a guitarist I hadn't heard of before named John Basile. The sounds I experienced that night would stay with me to this day. I was so impressed with John's playing and his pristine sound that I looked forward to hearing him again. Unfortunately it would be some forty plus years before that would happen. My brother Tom Kohl, an accomplished NY pianist mentioned to me that he was doing a gig with a guitarist named John Basile. "That's awesome Tom" I said "he's really good". I soon learned that after a successful musical career that included performances and recordings with many Jazz superstars like John Abercrombie and Michael Brecker John had taken a detour into a different occupation. But the good news was that John found his way back home to the fine art of Jazz Guitar and I've been listening to his newest recording "Heating Up"

The clarity, pure tone and impeccable phrasing on "Heating Up" is surely a sound to behold. John's original "Under The Influence" gets us started. This elegant melody with some fluid bossa accompaniment invites us in to the precise approach of the trio. Outstanding chordal and single note lines merge with the bass and drums to create pure perfection. Cy Colman's "For All We Know" brings some medium swing with lots of heart and soul. John's melody statement and solo, as technically impressive as they are, leave lots of space, allowing each note to sink in. He carefully converses between his single notes and some colorful chord work. David Finck's solo is equally melodic and spacious with superb tone. Neil Hefti's "Girl Talk" is done as a bright tempo bossa with more chordal and single note eloquence and an outstanding bass solo. "Moon And Sand" brings forth its darkness and sensitivity as the trio becomes one with this magical Alec Wilder classic. Driving medium swing delivers Frank Loesser's "Never Will I Marry". With some fine drum work by Carmen Intorre and Finck's intuitive sense of where and when to place his swinging bass notes we are invited to ride along with them. A special shout out to John's original ballads "Summer's Dawn" and "Countenance". Harmonically and melodically they both demonstrate John's gift for composition and his ability to breath real feelings into his work. A crisp up tempo version of Wes Montgomery's "Tear It Down" has the trio cut loose with some hard swinging perfection.

If you're a fan of perfect guitar playing that is carefully orchestrated and phrased with balance, depth and impeccable tone, this CD is for you. So glad to see John Basile back on the scene.

Frank Kohl

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SHAREL CASSITY/COLEEN CLARK, ALLIANCE

SHIFTING PARADIGM 198.

WINGSPAN / SYL-O-GISM / LINGER / GEMINI / MAIDEN VOYAGE / LA TRISTEZA /
SOMETHING NEW / CARO-LI-NA / THERE BUT FOR THE GRACE OF...(*). 45:09.

Cassity, as, ss, flt; Clark, d; Hannah Meyer, p; Carmeni Edwards, b; Kellin Hanas, tpt(*).

The dated view of female musicians used to be they could only be considered on piano or occasionally guitar and flute by those days are thankfully long gone. While all-women ensembles can go back as far as the International Sweethearts Of Rhythm or Ina Ray Hutton's Melodears they are still not as prevalent as they should be in this so called enlightened age. Now comes a quartet of two vets and a pair of newcomers that would probably stump many in a Flying Blind test.

The altoist is a perennial Rising Star poll winner who should be a known artist among the jazz cognoscenti and Clark is a seasoned percussionist with many credits under her belt. Perhaps the other two names are of unknowns; pianist Meyer, at a mere 21 years, is a real find as is upright bassist Edwards both their resumes are detailed inside the package in multi-instrumentalist Michael Dease's erudite annotation. They enhance the setlist with charts "Linger" from Edwards with smooth flute piping and Meyer's "Something New".

Impressive elsewhere they step to the front on the classic "Maiden Voyage" (Edwards) & the aforementioned Meyer on just about every track. This is a player to keep an eye out for. The set list also contains two originals by co-leader Clark fleshed out with works from Mary Lou Williams, Jimmy Heath, Harold Mabern and Mulgrew Miller with whiplash altoing from Sharel. So far, this is the sleeper of the year in this writers estimation and can't be recommended enough.

Larry Hollis



New Issues

**AKIKO TSURUGA,
BEYOND NOSTALGIA,
STEEPLECHASE 31596.**

TIGER / HAPPY BLUES / MIDDLE OF SOMEWHERE / BACK TRACK / I'LL CLOSE MY EYES / BEYOND NOSTALGIA / MACK THE KNIFE / DANCING CATS / WHAT A DIFFERENCE A DAY MAKES. 65:55.
Tsurugaorg; Joe Magnarelli, tpt; Jerry Weldon, ts; Ed Cherry, g; Bryon Landham, d. 2/2023.

**JOE MAGNARELLI,
NEW YORI OSAKA JUNCTION,
STEEPLECHASE 31939.**

NEW YORK OSAKA JUNCTION / LAMENT FOR LORRAINE / WHAT'S NEW / COUSIN JOANNE / THESE FOOLISH THINGS / REVEREND TSURUGA / EMILY / THE WEDDING / THE END OF A LOVE AFFAIR. 63:15.
Magnarelli, tpt, flgh; Gary Smulyan, bars; Akiko Tsuruga, org; Rudy Royston, d. 2/2022.

At first glance the pairing of these two compact discs may seem puzzling but on closer examination it will make more sense. First off, the leaders of both releases are a married couple. Secondly, there are several similarities; the labels are the same, a Danish company with an impressive catalog and a shared recording engineer.. Those session date were held on the same month a year apart unless it is a case of a typographical error.

The Magnarelli platter was released first and was your typical two horn quartet date. The only factor not typical is instead of brass and reeds (alto/tenor) the big baritone of Gary Smulyan locks in to fill up the horn holes nicely. It reminded me of the classic Donald Byrd/Pepper Adams coupling of yore. They essay five compositions from the leader sprinkled with four standard works that make for a variegated listening program. Smulyan is a given continuing to carry the bary torch since the passing of Adams and Magnarelli, like Jim Rotondi & Anthony Hervey is finally moving out of the shadow of Tom Harrell. As for Joe's spouse her more recent issue is a bit more populated. After more than two decades on the NYC scene and early associations with Lou Donaldson and Dr. Lonnie Smith she has built up a discography of a handful of albums. Neither a screamer nor a snoozer she is a somewhat subtle player in the manner of Mel Rhyne or Shirley Scott. Where there were no tune credits on the Magnarelli disc over half of the charts on her release show up. Another difference is the welcome presence of guitarist Cherry who lays out on some of the more hardbop takes but contribute mightily to the more soul jazz titles and on the Kurt Weil piece which is taken as a trio feature. The ensemble blending of the horn is extra tight and it's a pleasure to check out Jerry Weldon again. A respected yet undervalued vet of the jazz organ tradition he stands tall against Maganrelli's burnished brasswork. Although listed in the his instrument credits his fluent flugelhorn on the standard "I'll Close My Eyes" made this writer think of the much-missed Art Famer. I could go on and on but by now you get the picture. Both of these fine issues have a permanent place in my record rack. Larry Hollis

New Issues

JIMMY BENNINGTON COLOUR AND SOUND

CHURCHBELLS: LIVE AT THE GREEN MILL CJR 1270

KUNG FU / SERIOUSLY / SNEAKY / PLEASE MAKE UP YOUR MIND / THE HITCHIN' POST / THE CHURCHBELLS OF WILLISAU / A DANCE FOR KEIKO 39:27.

Bennington, dr; Fred Jackson, Jr., as, ss; Artie Black, ts; Dustin Laurenzi, ts; Mike Harmon, b. 2/12/2017, Chicago, IL.

Drummer Jimmy Bennington finally got in to play at Chicago's Green Mill Jazz Club. Actually, Bennington finally filled in. Bennington writes in the liner notes to CHURCHBELLS: Live at the Green Mill that his Colour and Sound group performed as a replacement. The person who had kept Bennington from performing there, for whatever reason, didn't issue the invitation. Kathy Kelly, the founder and artistic director of the Chicago Jazz Composers Collective, did. Since 2001, the CJCC has sponsored monthly Sunday concerts from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. at the Green Mill, thereby providing opportunities for Chicago's jazz musicians to perform original works. Kindred jazz spirits, Bennington and Kelly receive inspiration from natural sounds, humor, world music, and percussiveness as they investigate endlessly prismatic colours and the purity of sound. So, the timing was right. Bennington was ready. His friend, George Belle, recorded the live session that became CHURCHBELLS. Another friend, Bill Peterson, took photos. And the Colour and Sound musicians were ready with their own compositions. Bennington's "The Churchbells of Willisau" indeed demonstrates not only his commitment to both colour and sound, but also to his shared interest with Kelly in the straightforward sonority of bells. Bennington and bassist Mike Harmon, without horns, simulate the impact of the church bells' effects upon listeners in Willisau, Switzerland. Bennington's commanding crescendo on cymbals and then drums represents the anticipation before the Swiss bells' clangor. North Dakota-native Harmon with lower-register harmonics captures without rhythm or traditional chord changes the reassuring sensations created by the bells—more like sustained vibrations from massive clappers than the pealing of hand bells. Bennington provides the colours through taps mostly in the center of the cymbal, occasional rolls, or bass-drum thumps. "The Churchbells of Willisau" consists solely of the sonic interpretation of a memorable experience. However, CHURCHBELLS, consistent with the CJCC's mission, includes original compositions written by the other band members too. Tenor saxophonist Artie Black's "Kung Fu" opens the album. Bennington starts the piece with accelerative strokes on two tuned drums before an exclamatory rumble and a powerful cymbal crash. Free improvisation ensues after the group's three saxophones state the brief melody, more mystical than expected and without the pugilistic force suggested by the title. It becomes evident that—consistent with their absence on previous Colour and Sound albums—no chorded instruments provide accompaniment, thereby allowing otherwise looser rhythms and exchanges of ideas. After the saxophonists' early arranged threaded harmony separates into individualistic strands, their improvisational lines intertwine again. Another tenor saxophonist who, like Black, graduated in jazz studies from Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music, Dustin Laurenzi contributed to CHURCHBELLS's two pieces: "Seriously" and "Sneaky." In contrast to "Kung Fu," both of Laurenzi's compositions, though of significantly disparate moods, establish a characteristic rhythm. After his outstanding minute-long solo improvisation, which in itself earns applause at the start of the performance, Laurenzi contrasts "Seriously's" perambulatory bass lines and the drums' popping and rolling textures against the

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saxophones' minor-key brooding expressed by long tones extending over the bar lines. Laurenzi sets up a faster tempo for "Sneaky," during which Harmon breaks out into his own solo before Laurenzi's, during which he sneakily alludes to Denzil Best's "Move," among other eloquent spur-of-the-moment gems. Laurenzi's fellow saxophonists also deliver solos developed from "Sneaky's" oblique harmonic structure. Fred Jackson, Jr. completes the repertoire of compositions written by saxophonists, both of his chosen pieces having been played on Colour and Sound's Boom! Live at The Bop Shop album. "Please Make Up Your Mind" is the most traditionally melodic track on CHURCHBELLS. The lyrical quality of Jackson's solo suggests a poignant imploration, which builds to a dramatic ending of effective pauses, an exciting increase in volume, and the dynamic splashing of cymbals. Jackson performs on soprano sax the first chorus of his "The Hitchin' Post." Then, all three tenor saxophonists engage in an animated musical conversation, one repeating another's final spontaneous phrase as the start of his saxophone's voice in the triologue. Rich and varied colours blend into musical visualizations, and striking sounds abound on CHURCHBELLS: Live at the Green Mill.

Bill Donaldson

BOBBY BROOM ORGANI-SATION, JAMALOT LIVE. STEELE RECORDS.

INTRO ANNOUNCEMENT / SUPERSTITION / BAND INTRODUCTIONS / LAYLA / THE TENNESSEE WALTZ(*) / THE JITTERBUG WALTZ(*) / THE HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN / TADD'S DELIGHT(*) / THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD / SPEAK LOW(*).64:27. Broom,g; Ben Patterson,org; Kobe Watkins,d. 8/4/14.8/19/14,(*)8/1/14,8/4/14,6/8/19. Greensboro, NC,Appelton,WI,(*) Nashville, TN, Chicago ,IL.

It beats me why guitar man Bobby Broom doesn't get the full recognition he deserves. Lord knows he has paid enough dues. His profile among jazzers has increased in recent years due to a six year spell with tenor titan Sonny Rollins and opening shows for a major rock act. Immensely versatile he can cover all the bases genre-wise but he has a special affinity for soul jazz as shown by his work with the practitioners of the Hammond B-3 organ. Extending the legacy of Melvin Sparks, Randy Johnston, Quentin Warren, Kenny Burrell, Jimmy Ponder, Ed Cherry & others he zips through changes with weed-eater speed. But he is far from alone in his job:

Ben Paterson is still in his twenties but his fingers are equally adroit on organ and piano with several albums to his credit. Live at Van Gelder's from 2018 on Cellar Live is particularly endorsed. Just another Philly organist to add to the list. In the time department it's left to the capable hands of Kobe Watkins who steps out center stage for a fiery spot on the Fats Waller number. As an opening act for Steely Dan the bulk of the material is from August of 2014 in concert halls. The last three tracks are from a stay at Chicago's Jazz Showcase while the ¾ Tennessee excursion is appropriately caught at the famed Ryman Auditorium. A tad short on playing time this listener would have loved to hear a funky boogaloo and a good old shuffle in G, but, alas, maybe next time. As Brother Jack used to say "A real good'un".

Larry Hollis

New Issues

WILLIAM HOOKER FLESH AND BONES

ORG MUSIC

FLAMES/ MY BLOOD/ CAPTIVITY/ COURTS/ SEWING THE SEAMS/ TRUE DAT/ REVEAL A TRUTH/ BLACK LIVES/ ILLUSTRIOUS POSTERITY/ AGELESS/ THE SOULS OF FIRE 53:53

Ras Moshe, ts, ft; Charles Burnham, vln; On Davis, g; Hilliard Green, bass; Luke Stewart, bass
William Hooker d New York 2023

I am familiar with Hooker as I have previously reviewed an album of his. He is a very interesting player.

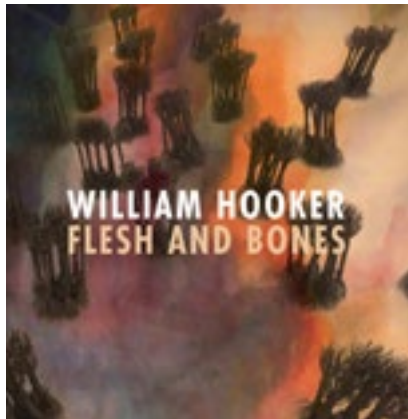
The record opens with flute and drums and then builds nicely. Clearly this is Hooker as composer. The piece reflects great interplay between flute and guitar with other instruments filling in. This is followed by some really raucous playing like everyone is trying to escape Captivity

After a couple of group improvisations—at least that is what they sounded like to me—we get some melody on tenor. Hooker then comes in with some nice accompaniment, and then things break loose again, led by Hooker. On True Dat hooker uses brushes very effectively. And reveal a Truth is actually in time with some great cymbal work by Hooker and great violin playing by Burnham. While Illustrious Posterity is an interesting violin solo.

Overall this is a CD largely of what sounds to my ears as aeries of collective improvisations, with a few solo tracks. Moshe and Burnham stand out as soloists, but clearly everyone contributes to the over all sound.

As a drummer who plays this type of music I can say how much I enjoyed this record. Hooker as leader is careful to know his place as a drummer and provides excellent support throughout. There were times I wished he came forward and took his pace as a soloist.

Bernie Koenig



Carla Bley

May 11, 1936 – October 17, 2023

A 35-YEAR PHOTOGRAPHIC CHRONICLE:

With Carla Bley's death, music lost a profoundly original and witty voice. An avowed autodidact, she blazed her own trail – as a musician, and as a woman - in a world which took its time in granting her respect commensurate with her achievements. Her Venn diagram contains consequential overlaps with, in no particular order: Monk, Weill, Ellington, Satie, Basie, and Tadd Dameron. Nate Chinen wrote an excellent obituary for this First Lady of American Music, published in the legacy print media of record: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/17/arts/music/carla-bley-dead.html>. During her decline, Chinen had become Bley's designated preference for that gig, and there was constructive collusion, to get all the details exactly right. So his obit was just like one of her charts: honed and nuanced to the Nth degree, coming as close to perfection as mere humans can.

There are, though, a couple of things worth noting which Chinen didn't include: First is her setting for an excerpt of Malcolm Lowry's text from his novel *Under the Volcano*, recorded in Hamburg in 1984 (Lyrics: Texte und Musik Live, on *Cosmos*, LP), with herself and Rainer Bruninghaus on synthesizers, Steve Swallow on piccolo electric bass and Jack Bruce on electric bass, snare and vocals. More than a decade on, and in the midst of the smooth jazz miasma, this magnificent miniature is very much in the closer-to-the-edge-than-to-the-center spirit of her earlier *Escalator Over the Hill*, with Paul Haines' surreal poetry having been succeeded by Lowry's surreal prose.

It pairs nicely, preceding the closer from Bruce's own early-70s solo album *Harmony Row* (Polydor), "The Consul at Sunset", his and Pete Brown's meditation on Lowry's protagonist anti-hero lush Geoffrey Firmin. "Consul" ends with the sound of a drink being poured and its first quaff being savored, which smoothly segues into the opening of Bley's album *Dinner Music*, beginning with a similar pouring, though hers is followed by a (politely restrained) belch, before the band rips into one of her now-classic-standards "Sing Me Softly of the Blues", featuring a Roswell Rudd trombone solo for the ages. Playing those three cuts in uninterrupted sequence on the radio is always fun.

Last but not least is Bley's participation in the first three – and, many would say, the strongest – albums produced by Hal Willner featuring various artists interpreting the music of a single composer, debuting with Nino Rota (*Hannibal*), followed by Thelonious Monk and then Kurt Weill (both on A&M). Her large-ensemble arrangements are highlights on all three, no mean feat in so much heady company.

Carla Bley - 35 Year Photo Chronicle

Anyone not familiar with Bley's music need only enter her name on YouTube. Most every time I go there, I find something previously unseen, and usually wonderful. May it always be so.

This is not the first time I've written about Bley for these pages. Let me refer you to Cadence of July 2023, pages 32 - 35, wherein I reflect about that most expansive and unique magnum opus of Bley's, the two-hour-plus Escalator Over the Hill. The photo which ended that piece also ran on the cover of that issue, and also ends this piece.

Bley herself appears in 20 of the 21 photographs. Steve Swallow appears in nine. Long her cohort and champion, they'd first played music together around 1960, when they appeared in bands at the then-new Phase Two in Greenwich Village, across the street from a laundromat, to which they would repair during set breaks, to tend their respective loads of wash. He had become her bassist of choice by the early 1980s, at about the time Swallow embarked on his quest to make a jazz piano player out of composer and conductor Bley.

It was during their duets phase, on into the late '90s, that I began to hear them finish each other's musical thoughts, usually by pulling something unexpected and beautiful out of the other, constantly spiraling the narrative upward as their conversation developed ever further. These frolics were a joy to behold. Swallow's role in their ongoing creative symbiosis should not be underestimated. They'd been musical and life partners for more than 30 years when Bley died. He was her other half, and they were each other's better halves.

Swallow himself is another consequential musical figure, with a uniquely wide and deep history, who has long operated outside of the spotlight, despite having shared many of those with folks such as Sheila Jordan, Jimmy Giuffre, Paul Bley and Michael Gibbs, to name a few. When I first interviewed him at length, late in 1979, for Jazz Forum, in the days of its English-language edition, Swallow was happily as employed as he wanted to be, juggling his schedule to work in the bands of not only Carla Bley but also John Scofield's trio, and with Gary Burton, his longest-standing commitment. (Burton was already long a champion of Bley's work, devoting two entire albums to it: early on, *A Genuine Tong Funeral*, on RCA, and later, *Dreams So Real*, the nicest collection of Bley's tunes I've heard upon which she herself does not play.) Swallow was thriving in not having to be in charge, thus allowing him to concentrate more on the music. Although he wasn't talking much about it yet, he'd also just recorded his debut as a bandleader, *Home*, still the closest I've ever heard to a perfect album. There is much more to be said about Swallow, but that's another story.

Mentioning him at such length here is to set him in proper context for the essential role he played in Bley's life and career, and also for what follows here: Were it not for Swallow, this photographic collection would not have been collated. It was at his behest that I scoured my archives to choose a few of the most lasting - and telling - images of the late Ms. Bley. I pulled about 40, half

Carla Bley - 35 Year Photo Chronicle

of which you will see here, including a few of those chosen for her immediate family.

At the remove of more than four decades – long before my archive’s filing system had evolved into any degree of comprehensive accuracy – there may well be errors in the precise dating of a few of the earlier images, my only alibi being that my memory, like swiss cheese, is filled with holes, and, in defiance of science, different things fall into those holes on any given day...

In any case, let me offer herewith some glimpses into the life of an American musical pioneer, as I saw and documented her over a period of 35 years.

All photographs are © Patrick Hinely, Work/Play®, and, unless otherwise noted, are previously unpublished.

Unless otherwise noted, all recordings referred to are on the WATT/xtraWATT label, distributed by ECM.

Further recommended reading: Amy C. Beal’s 2011 book Carla Bley (American Composers) from the University of Illinois Press, ISBN 978-0252078187

To quote Ms. Bley from the libretto to Escalator Over the Hill: Anything not said wasn’t yet known.

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1. Photo credit © Patrick Hinely

1. Portrait, for *Swing Journal*, outside Gramercy Park Hotel, New York City, November 20, 1982. On the previous evening, Bley had conducted Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra (LMO) at the Public Theatre, featuring her arrangements, music recorded that same month for LMO's second album *Ballad for the Fallen*. She'd been that group's arranger and pianist since its founding in 1969 and self-titled first album (*Impulse*) and would remain so even after Haden's death in 2014. The photo was to accompany my interview with her for the Tokyo-based magazine's regular feature "100 Questions". To my knowledge, that interview has never been published in English. Somewhere, I hope I still have a transcript...

2. Performance, *Jazz City Festival*, Edmonton, Alberta, August 21, 1982. Carla is seen deep into listening to her band, taking in what her charts sounded like when actually performed by a full band, which was something she didn't get to do all that often. It was primarily the same players who had recorded her *Live* album and most of *I Hate to Sing* the year before and would record the film soundtrack for *Mortelle Randonnee* (Mercury, France) a few months later.



2. Photo credit © Patrick Hinely

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3. Photo credit © Patrick Hinely

3. Backstage, Jazz City Festival, Edmonton, Alberta, August 21, 1982. Carla expressing her disdain for being photographed, which I did not take personally. This was my reward – or punishment – for getting right in her face with a camera, uninvited, for the very first time. It could be her visual rendering of a tune she'd recently written and recorded for Pink Floyd drummer Nick Mason's album *Fictitious Sports* (CBS): "Boo to You Too".



4. Photo credit © Patrick Hinely

4. Some Bley band members at sound check, Jazz City Festival, Edmonton, Alberta, August 21, 1982. L – R: Tony Dagradi, Steve Slagle, Bley's then-husband Michael Mantler, Bob Stewart and Vincent Chancey. I think they were waiting for the sound crew to begin checking individual levels, or maybe for Godot... She had a penchant for players like these, and would compose with them in mind: virtuosi who eschewed stylistic restraint, and possessed their own recognizably personal sound as well as versatility and wit.

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5. Photo credit © Patrick Hinely

6. Sound check, Jazz City Festival, Edmonton, Alberta, summer, 1989. Duet partner bassist Steve Swallow checks the tuning while Carla sorts charts. This was the summer following the recording of the first of their three duo albums, *Duets*, and by now, Swallow had made significant progress in making a jazz piano player out of the renowned Ms. Bley. The process remained ongoing for years, in a constant ascent. Wonderfully conversational narratives unfolded in every piece, as she learned to trust her instincts and go with the moment while he encouraged and challenged her at once. It was a delight to behold: he could marvel at her music and at the same time add to it. Speaking in two voices, they gloriously presented an ongoing saga of the human condition.

5. Performance, Seventh Avenue South, New York City, June 30, 1983. A show of hands. The gig was uptown in downtown, very much a scene, at the popular club founded by the Brecker Brothers, and the band was premiering some of the tunes which they would record later that year for the *Heavy Heart* album, Carla's first foray into 'quiet storm', aka 'smooth jazz', and about as mainstream as she ever got, though she was simply encoding her music into the relatively superficial stylistic context then reigning as flavor of the month. Critics bitched, but that's what critics do. The tunes were still very much compositions only she would write: sturdy, quirky and graceful vehicles on a par with what she'd been writing for more than 20 years. That sure looks like the same bracelet she was wearing in Edmonton the year before. The players seen beyond her are Slagle and Stewart.



6. Photo credit © Patrick Hinely

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7. Photo credit © Patrick Hineley

7. Backstage ablutions before performance, Jazz City Festival, Edmonton, Alberta, summer 1989. Long a favorite image for both subjects (as well as the third one, seen reflected in the mirror on the left), this has been published in CD booklets as well as in a book from and about ECM. Very much a fleeting moment caught in progress, and the sort of thing that happens far less than 1% of the time, thus making the other 99+% worthwhile.

8. Double portrait, with Steve Swallow, at home, Willow, New York, July 20, 1991. A part of the Grog Kill Recording Studio in their basement was this space which could also be deployed as a photographic studio, and my hosts indulged me, seamless paper backdrop and all, resulting in, among others, this sweet shot.



8. Photo credit © Patrick Hineley

Carla Bley - 35 Year Photo Chronicle



9. Photo credit © Patrick Hinely

9. Gardeners at work, at home, Willow, New York, July 20, 1991. After the studio shoot and a change of wardrobe, a gardening tool was assigned to me, and I wielded it well enough to earn a sumptuous evening repast, including gin and tonics on the deck, late in the afternoon, while the sun set and the grill warmed up. It was a visit I will always treasure.

10. Warming up for soundcheck, The Roxy, Ulm, Germany, October 30, 1998. The heat hadn't been turned on until the artists arrived, so Carla kept on her traveling wraps. This was the duet tour during which the *Are We There Yet?* Album was recorded. Talk about serendipity: I'd just hit town that afternoon and while checking in at my hotel happened to see, on the counter, a flyer for the concert, which was the first I'd heard of it. Yet, once I'd hoofed it over to the soundcheck (about a kilometer), I was welcomed as if I had been expected.

10. Photo credit © Patrick Hinely



Carla Bley - 35 Year Photo Chronicle



11. Photo credit © Patrick Himey

11. Backstage after the gig, Roxy, Ulm, Germany, October 30, 1998. Carla and Steve, looking more averse than skeptical about being involuntarily photographed. This was a visual nano-drama they performed most every time I ever saw them. At some point while this was going on, their road manager, Bill Strode, photographed me photographing them, and that photo is included in the booklet for *Are We There Yet?*, though none of my own photos were, but I got my turn in 2002...



12. Photo credit © Patrick Himey

12. Rehearsal, Looking for America sessions, Carroll Rehearsal Studios, New York City, October 6, 2002. At the piano, Carla takes delight in hearing her new music come to life in the hands of the band she hand-picked for this project, her first in the studio, rather than a live performance context, with as large a group – 19 players. I delighted in being there as her hand-picked photographer – my photos of the sessions, as well as some my images of surreal Americana, filled the CD booklet (everything but the front cover), which was designed by Bley, who was also an excellent picture editor and graphic designer. Previously published in *Coda*, #310, July / August 2003.

Carla Bley - 35 Year Photo Chronicle



13. Photo credit © Patrick Hinely

13. Rehearsal, Looking for America sessions, Carroll Rehearsal Studios, New York City, October 6, 2002. Conducting her first hearing of some new music. As I said to Steve Swallow, years later, I felt like I was present at the creation. He said no, I was present at the fruition: I had missed

all the agonizing over every note for every chart for the entire album, and that the blood, sweat and tears had seeped deeply into the floorboards of Carla's writing studio. Saxophonist Andy Sheppard can be seen in the distance, and engineer Tom Mark behind him. Previously published in Coda, #310.

14. Recording sessions, Looking for America, Avatar Studios, New York City, October 7, 2002. Carla consulting with her daughter, Karen Mantler, in this context the organist and glockenspiel player, and a musician of note in her own right. While I must acknowledge this photograph's technical shortcomings, I nonetheless love the intergenerational moment it captures. Karen's recording debut, at about age 4, was with her mother, on Escalator Over the Hill. Previously published in Coda, #310.



14. Photo credit © Patrick Hinely

Carla Bley - 35 Year Photo Chronicle



15. Photo credit © Patrick Hinely

15. Recording sessions, Looking for America, Avatar Studios, New York City, October 7, 2002. Carla and Steve listening to a playback in the control room. This was the only time I ever caught these folks together in repose when they didn't put on faces for the camera. I think they were listening to a take of a particularly challenging piece. But then all her pieces were challenging – they just sounded simple...

16. Soundcheck for Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra (LMO), JazzFest Berlin, November 3, 2005. I knew Carla would either love this picture or hate it. She hated it. I still love it.



16. Photo credit © Patrick Hinely

Carla Bley - 35 Year Photo Chronicle



17. Photo credit © Patrick Hinely

18. Soundcheck/rehearsal break, Steve Swallow Quartet, Institute for Contemporary Art, Boston, April 16, 2010. L – R: Chris Cheek, Carla Bley, Steve Swallow, Steve Cardenas. Little did I know, going in, that this would be the final performance by this quartet, as they would subsequently become a quintet with the addition of the Catalonian drummer Jorge Rossy, but we'll get to that. Cheek and Cardenas were both veterans of the 2005 roster for Haden's LMO, so they were not in unfamiliar company here. Swallow had finally decided to take the helm of a group to play his music, old and new, and managed to recruit Carla to play the Hammond B-3. Carla seemed more relaxed than usual, which I would account to this being the first time I'd worked with her in a musical situation where she was not the bandleader, the one who had to be constantly, responsibly in charge. I think she was having a pretty good time. I think they all were. I was too. In my life, these sorts of things don't happen all that often. I am thankful that they happen at all, especially in such good company.

17. Soundcheck for Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra, JazzFest Berlin, November 3, 2005. The long-standing musical director and the bandleader/bassist consult about a chart. The repertoire featured in the concert was from LMO's then-recent fifth album, *Not in Our Name* (Impulse) and it was a performance for the ages. This is another technically-challenged image, but it depicts two giants in a way that when I look at it, I can still, nearly two decades on, almost hear both sets of wheels turning... Who else could have arranged Barber's "Adagio for Strings" for horns - and improved on it? And who else would have played lead on bass!



18. Photo credit © Patrick Hinely

Carla Bley - 35 Year Photo Chronicle



19. Photo credit © Patrick Hinely

19. Soundcheck, Steve Swallow Quintet, Birdland, Neuburg am Donau, Germany, October 29, 2011. Carla was adding notations to the chart of a Swallow tune. This was early in the band's European tour, and fine details were still being nailed down. Birdland Neuburg is the most wonderful small-hall space I've ever seen used as a performance venue. Intimate, ageless, gracious. If the lore I heard was true, the space had once been a nobleman's wine cellar. Arches ad infinitum, good sight lines, good sound, good management. We need more such places. (shameless commercial interjection: coffee cups bearing this image are available to supporters of this magazine). This was a finalist for the 2012 Photo of the Year award from the Jazz Journalists' Association.

20. Band photo, Steve Swallow Quintet, Hotel Berlin, Berlin, November 7, 2011. L -R: Steve Cardenas, Carla Bley, Steve Swallow, Jorge Rossy and Chris Cheek. This was late on the morning after their gig at JazzFest Berlin. This is the same group which would record Swallow's album *Into the Woodwork* the next week, in France. (That album is exquisitely packaged, but I cannot claim to be impartial on the subject). I love the variety of facial expressions, which was totally unprompted: only the configuration was arranged. We wrapped up just in time: within a minute of finishing this otherwise rather impromptu shoot, the hotel staff began clearing the space for another event. Life goes on...



20. Photo credit © Patrick Hinely

Carla Bley - 35 Year Photo Chronicle



21. Photo credit © Patrick Hinely

21. Band photo, Carla Bley/Steve Swallow/Andy Sheppard trio, following rehearsal, Joy Of Music School, Knoxville, Tenn., for Big Ears Festival, March 22, 2017. They'd just worked through some new music, including "Beautiful Telephones", which would have its world premiere that evening. I didn't know then that this would be my last meeting with Carla, but I like to think of it as a nice photographic high note to go out on. A variation of this photo, with Big Ears (and Bonnaroo) impresario Ashley Capps joining the group, recently ran in a prominent legacy media jazz publication, though there it was erroneously dated as 2019 (and when, after being chided for omitting it entirely, spelled my name wrong, though they finally corrected that, but not yet the date)...

Nils Paul Danielsson

October 15, 1946 – May 18, 2024

Palle Danielsson was a stalwart-become-senior statesman of the European and especially Nordic jazz community. His was the pulse of the planet, anchoring many a star-studded group's front line while he, with drummers such as Jon Christensen, Peter Erskine or Edward Vesala provided sturdy platforms upon which entire ensembles could frolic. He now rides the groove eternal.

Much like his pre-eminent Scandinavian contemporaries - Denmark's Neils Henning Orsted-Pedersen and Norway's Arild Andersen - Sweden's Danielsson was known for his vitality, versatility, muscle, and wide-minded thoughtfulness. As Alyn Shipton put it, in *Jazzwise* "His agility as a soloist across the whole range of the bass was remarkable". Pianist Gareth Williams, who recorded with Danielsson in 2019 (*Short Stories*, on Miles Music, splitting the bass duties with Chris Laurence, another under-sung giant), put it this way to *London Jazz News*: "Adventurous, gifted and unencumbered by the weight of tradition..." Yet he knew whereof the tradition came, or am I the only one who hears the heritage of Blanton, Pettiford, Mingus, and LaFaro in Danielsson's work?

Of that Nordic three, he made the fewest recordings as a leader, yet shone just as brightly in the foreground of the background: he didn't feel the need to be at the helm, but he was always adding propulsion from the engine room. When I asked *Weather Report*, Kenny Wheeler and John Abercrombie veteran Peter Erskine to describe Danielsson's playing with three adjectives for this tribute, he gave me four: Robust, Pitch-perfect, Grounded yet wide-open, and Dependable. "Palle Danielsson was one of the most brilliant musicians I have had the pleasure to know. His musical solutions were never predictable, but they were always so good." Erskine has posted a clip on YouTube from the 1992 sessions in Oslo for his initial trio album with Danielsson and John Taylor, *You Never Know* (ECM), and Danielsson's lively playing therein, sinewy, singing and surprising, very much brings to mind a direction Scott LaFaro might taken, had he lived longer...

Danielsson was off to a good start early on, playing with visiting Americans such as Ben Webster and Lee Konitz at Stockholm's Golden Circle, and recording there, in 1965, with Bill Evans, though the technical quality of that recording is far from ideal. He also worked with George Russell, Eje Thelin, Monica Zetterlund, and Karin Krog, and in 1968, he and drummer Jon Christensen recorded with pianist Steve Kuhn (*Watch What Happens*, MPS). His leader debut was at the head of a sextet including Bobo Stenson, Jon Christensen and Lennart Berg, on an entire side of the 1971 Swedish album *Club Jazz 5* (SR). In that same year, fellow bassist Barre Phillips chose him, along with Barry Guy and Jean Francois Jenny-Clark, as the other members of

a bass quartet to make an album with percussionist Stu Martin (For All It Is, JAPO/ECM).

The Danielsson/Christensen more-than-a-rhythm-section was most famed – and never sounded better – than on recordings by Keith Jarrett’s mid- to late-70s ‘European’ quartet with Jan Garbarek (all on ECM). While their two studio albums are memorable (the blazing debut *Belonging* and its glowing successor *My Song*), all three live recordings (double-discs *Nude Ants* and *Sleeper* and single-disc *Personal Mountains*) are incredible, with every member of that gleefully unfettered band lifting up all the others, repeatedly setting the stage afire.

When ECM instituted its rarum series in 2002, giving selected artists the opportunity to choose and collect their own album’s worth of work on the label, the first two volumes were Jarrett and Garbarek. Jon Christensen closed the 20-volume series a couple of years later. Only Palle didn’t get his own volume, though he could have included excerpts from albums by Enrico Rava, Collin Walcott, Tomasz Stanko, Edward Vesala, Anouar Brahem and Dino Saluzzi as well as Garbarek in the company of both Jarrett and Bobo Stenson. This oversight is only compounded by his passing, though, for all we know, he was offered the opportunity, and declined. He was just that kind of guy.

Be that as it may, ECM’s parting salutes have surely been righteously laudatory. Steve Lake: “...he was very much a complete player, a melodically imaginative, warm-toned bassist, with a great sense of drive.” Fellow bassist and label founder Manfred Eicher: “With his very special sense of soulfulness and precision, and his determination to serve the whole band sound, Palle always seemed able to illuminate the music and to lift it to the next level”.

The same could be said of Danielsson’s contributions to the live recording of Charles Lloyd’s quartet with Michel Petrucciani (*A Night in Copenhagen*, Blue Note) and, later, Petrucciani’s trio (*Live at the Village Vanguard*, Concord, and the studio album *Pianism*, Blue Note). Danielsson contributed mightily to Erskine’s four trio albums with John Taylor (ECM) and three of Taylor’s trio with Martin France, plus their quartet outing with Julian Arguelles, dedicated to Kurt Vonnegut (CAM). More recently, he’d worked in trio with Rita Marcotulli and Erskine. Their 2005 live recording under her name, *Jazz Italiano* live 2006 (*Casa del Jazz*) is lovely and lively, and their collectively-titled live album from 2014, *Trio M/E/D* (abeat) is sublime.

Marcotulli is also part of the quartet on Danielsson’s only full album under his own name, *Contra Post* (Caprice), along with Joakim Milder and Anders Kjellberg. Its ten pieces feature five Danielsson compositions, the most in any

one place. The sweetest, if lesser known, of his recordings is *Togetherness* (Dominique), duets with his older sister, pianist Monica Dominique, herself another significant figure in Swedish jazz; a second album of their duets is said to be forthcoming. Other small-ensemble involvements with pianists included trios with Adam Makowicz (*Sonet*), Ketil Bjornstad (*Emarcy*), Alessandro Galati (*Via Veneto Jazz*) and Mathias Landaeus (*MA*).

Danielsson could also thrive in the freer, stripped-down trio format with only a horn player and drummer. An excellent example of this was 1975's *The Wide Point*, with Albert Mangelsdorff and Elvin Jones (MPS), and later *Paris Abstractions* (Cowbell) with Benjamin Koppel and Daniel Humair, as well as several others in even woolier company. One particularly striking gathering was for Claudio Fasoli's *Bodies* (originally on Innowo, CD reissue on Playaudio), a quartet comprising the saxophonist, Danielsson, Guitarist Mick Goodrick and drummer Tony Oxley, an interesting mix if ever there was one.

A project about as Nordic as it gets also bears mention: *The Adventures of A Polar Expedition* (Cowbell), composed by Koppel and his fellow saxophonist Hans Ulrik, with Danielsson, Jon Balke and Alex Riel.

Danielsson was also part of the later incarnation of *Reflexionen*, bringing a Nordic voice to the adventurous Swiss / American / French quartet with Urs Leimgruber, Don Friedman and Joel Allouche, for their studio album *Remember to Remember* (ENJA) and a 1987 live one at Montreux (B&W). Another involvement meriting mention is *Sanctuary* (*Ida*), a 1991 trio album with guitarist Philip Catherine issued under saxophonist Barney Wilen's name.

Danielsson was also known to go further afield from jazz, such as for Nordic folk-based projects with Ale Moller and Lena Willemark. Willemark and Danielsson are also part of the *Village Band*, along with Milder and Stenson, whose 1991 album *Live at VILLAGE* (Imogena), nicely displays their wide and deep collective stylistic span. Danielsson's folk-flavored forays bring to mind Dave Holland's 1970s adventures in Nashville with progressive country, aka 'newgrass' musicians, bringing a different, freer kind of vibe to rurally-rooted folk music, taking it a step or two further, with kinetically graceful energy.

Danielsson's work with fellow Swede Bobo Stenson was extensive, in Stenson's quartet with Garbarek and Christensen (*Witchi-tai-To* and *Dansere*, ECM), as well as other contexts, including Nils Landgren's *Ballads* album (*Tromben*, later reissued on ACT) and Charles Lloyd's album *Fish Out of Water* (ECM), which led Lloyd, never one for pedestrian prose, to post this posthumous praise on Facebook: "...your spirit of strength and sensitivity anchors us in the richness of the earth and the freedom of the sky." Closer to home, Danielsson was part

Passing Glances Nils Paul Danielsson

of the By Five team, with Stenson, Milder, Ulf Adaker and Jonas Holgersson or Magnus Ostrom which recorded tribute albums (all on Touche) to Thelonious Monk, Miles Davis and, giving Danielsson the most opportunity to shine, Charles Mingus.

Another worthy involvement with Stenson was the band Rena Rama, along with drummer Leroy Lowe and saxophonist/flutist Lennart Aberg. Their 1975 live album (originally on Organic Music, CD reissue on Caprice) includes Danielsson's arrangement entitled "Romanian Folk Song". Danielsson had also worked with Aberg in larger ensembles, such as for Green Prints (Caprice) in the mid-1980s, and they attained new heights on Aberg's 2000 album 7:Pieces (Phono Suecia), for a 16-piece band, including Stenson and Erskine. The album includes "Lena's Tune", a love feast of a quartet feature for Aberg, Stenson, Erskine and Danielsson.

My sole meeting with Danielsson was when he came to Berlin in 2001 as part of Aberg's 16-piece ensemble, to perform the music on 7:Pieces, at that year's JazzFest. 11 of those 16 players had appeared on the recording, though this time they were without Erskine; the drummer was the Finn Jukkis Uotila.

WALKING BASS

Our first encounter occurred when Danielsson arrived at the festival's designated artists' hotel. Here we see him demonstrating walking bass technique... (previously published as frontispiece to the book 40 Years of JazzFest Berlin, 1964 – 2004).

STAGE WIDE

Here Danielsson and Uotila are seen among the Aberg ranks at soundcheck in Haus der Berliner Festspiele, with the bandleader and trumpeter Bosse Broberg up front. (previously unpublished).

ALONE

Honestly, I can't recall whether he was puzzling over the chart in front of him or just having a still, thoughtful moment in the midst of a combined soundcheck and de facto rehearsal on a tightly-scheduled stage, but I like the feeling of repose-within-the-whirlwind this image evokes. (previously unpublished).

VERTICAL WITH ABERG

This image with Aberg depicts Danielsson more poetically. Had he been in crisp sharpness, the impact of the image could have been diminished, and I like to think Palle would be just fine with appearing fuzzily, but sturdily, in visual congruity, contributing to the composition of the photograph with the same solid stateliness he brought to the band's music. (previously published in Jazz Calendary 2008 (Jazzprezzo, ISBN 978-3-9810250-3-3).

All photographs are ©2001 by Patrick Hinely, Work/Play®.

Passing Glances Nils Paul Danielsson



Photo credit © Patrick Hinely

Passing Glances Nils Paul Danielsson



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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.

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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 Dulberger
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Cadence Fest-NY Jazz Storries



Ken Filliano, Cheryl Pyle, David Haney

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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

Cadence Fest-NY Jazz Storries



David Haney, Claire Daly, Steven Bernstein

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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

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

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

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, gimbri; 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 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

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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 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

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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' 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 - Amina 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 Przybylowicz 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 biggest stage in his home town.



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?

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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



Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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.

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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 Arveeayl 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

Interview: Ari Brown

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

Interview: Ari Brown

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]

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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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 / MUSEEUM / 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 had a good Italian group in 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 liked 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 is 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 adept 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 overall 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

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