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VOLUME 51 NUMBER 1

JAN FEB MARCH 2025



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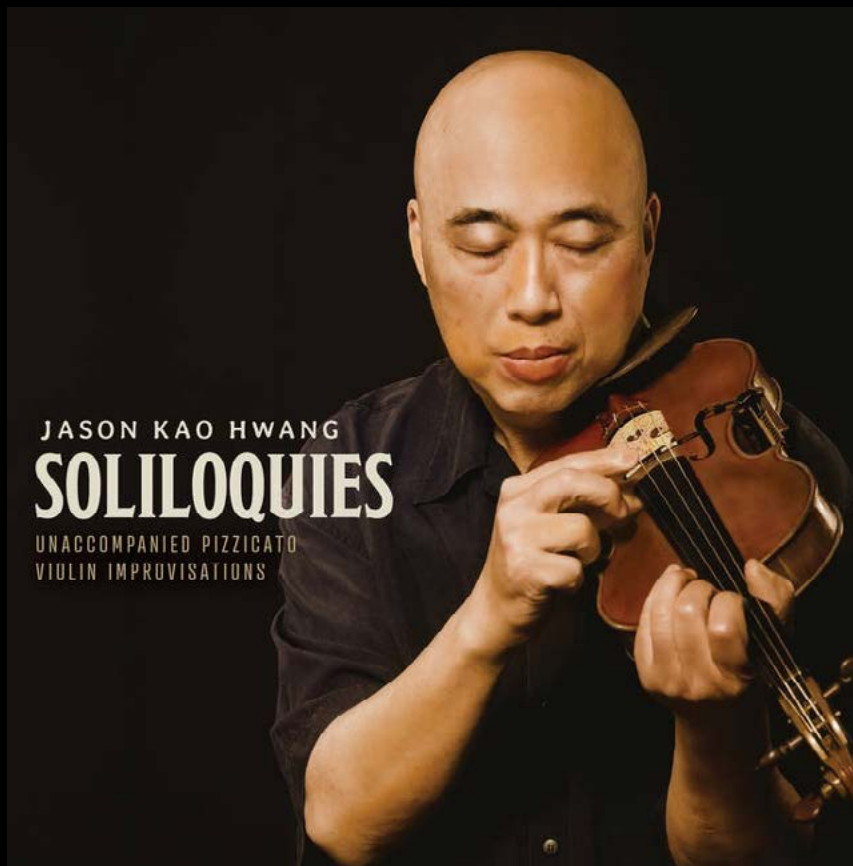
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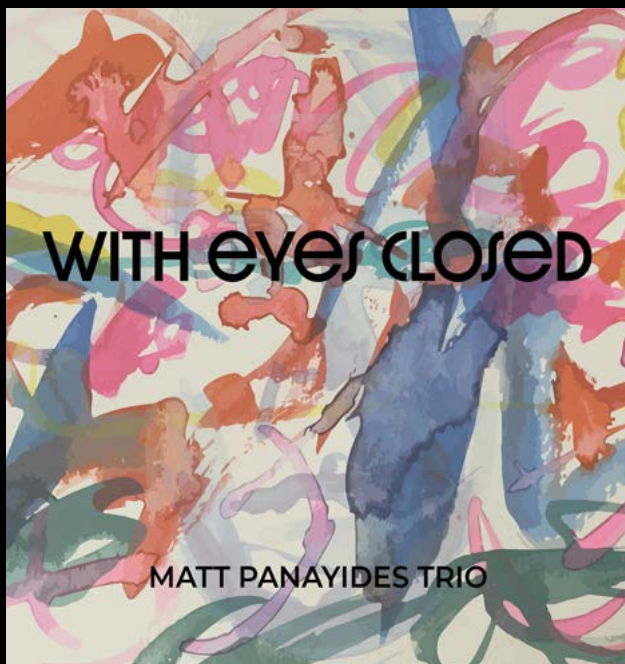


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Joined by Steve LaSpina on bass and Anthony Pinciotti on drums, Panayides brings new energy to compositions by modern jazz masters like Wayne Shorter, Joe Henderson, and Cedar Walton, alongside his arrangements of timeless standards such as "Moon River" and "I Fall in Love Too Easily." The acoustic sound, centered around Panayides' Victor Baker guitar, marks a departure from his prior effects-driven work, embracing resilience and renewal in every note.

This album captures the spontaneity and vibrancy of a live performance, with the trio delivering dynamic reinterpretations that honor the music's exploratory spirit. Across 11 tracks, the clean, resonant tone and seamless interplay offer listeners a journey through rich soundscapes that celebrate jazz's timeless essence while showcasing the trio's exceptional artistry.

"Panayides demonstrates imaginative compositions and fluid interplay, delivering a compelling trio performance." - [Jazz Journal](#)

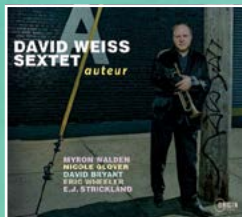
"With expressive guitar work and emotional depth, Panayides crafts an album filled with rich, nuanced soundscapes." - [Dee Dee McNeil, Strings & Things](#)

"This recording is a vivid exploration of modern jazz, balancing its structure with masterful improvisation." - [Musical Memoirs](#)

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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

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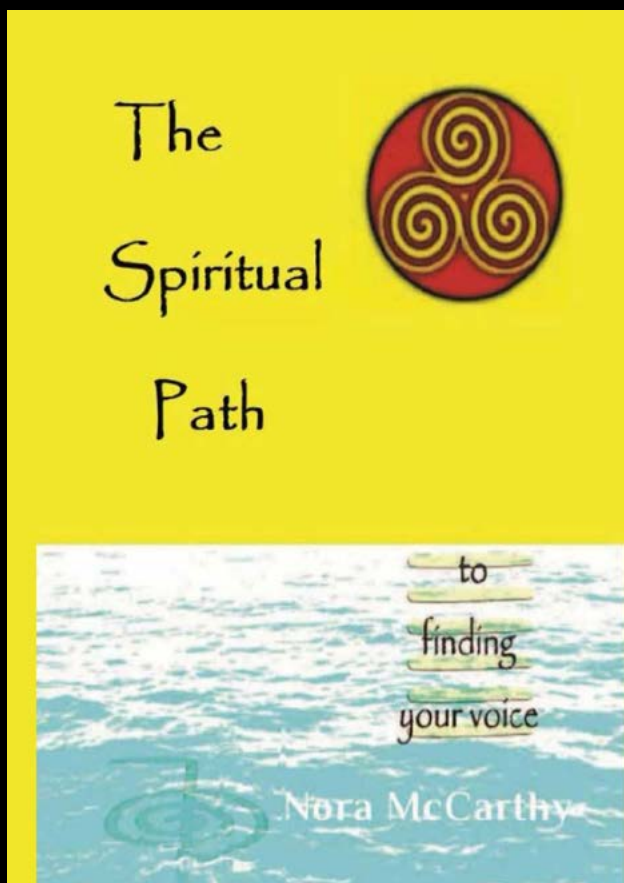
www.lnkfi.re/scandinavian-impressions

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



The Spiritual Path to Finding Your Voice

by Nora McCarthy



The Spiritual Path to Finding Your Voice is the distillation of a singer's lifelong journey of musical discovery, creative exploration, spirituality, and the process of vocal and professional development that results in a tangible, cognitive, spiritual practice guide designed for all singers, regardless of style, experience or ability.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Creative Jazz Vocal Artist, Composer, Poet, Lyricist, Actor, Author, Educator

"A unique and original singer and an important force in the advanced New York jazz scene, McCarthy's musical roots run deep. Her burnished alto voice is rich with a distinctive style that cuts a broad swath from soul, rhythm & blues, jazz, bebop, post-bop, and the free, avant-garde idioms but her sound is reminiscent of the great voices and horns in jazz." Carlo Wolff, Journalist, Author, Jazz Critic

ARTIST WEBSITES:

<https://www.noramccarthy.com> - <https://www.mic-art-music.com>.

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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

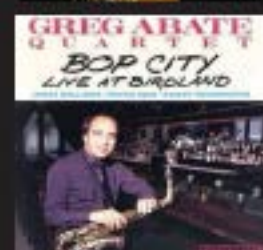


Discover *You Asked For It* and the entire magical musical catalog of Laura Ainsworth and listen happily ever after...

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Citizen Jazz (FR)



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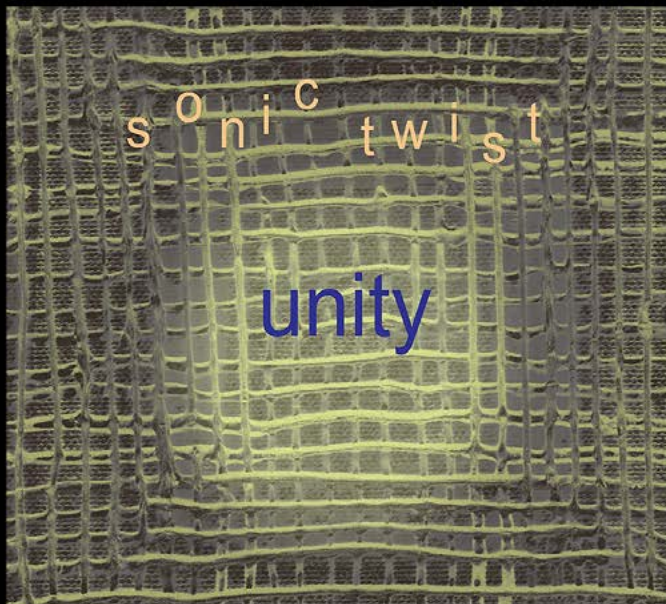
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might be the closest approximation to the "black classical music" promised by Rahsaan Roland Kirk and others in the 70s! Yet Marsh is definitely his own visionary here, too carving out a sound that's as powerful as it is individual, with a unique sound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



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Downbeat

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Los Angeles Times

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DOWNBEAT ★★★★★

Jazz Journal UK ★★★★★

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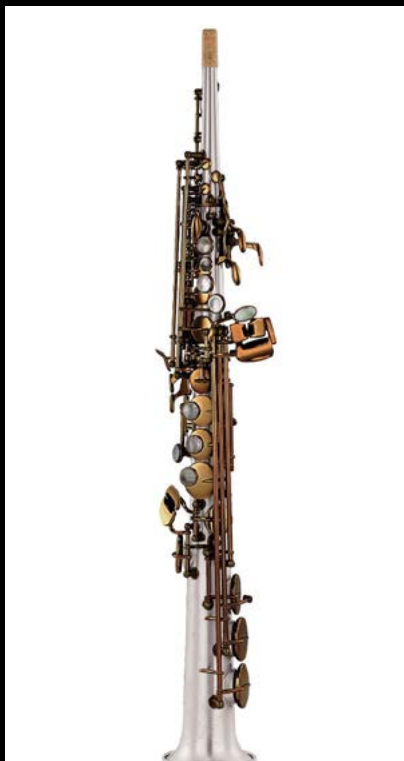
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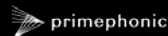
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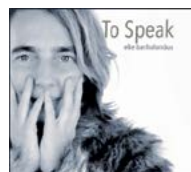
JHM 303
Gebhard Ullmann
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JHM 304
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JHM 306
M.E.A.N.
drei



JHM 308
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To Speak



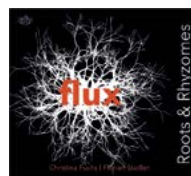
JHM 309
Georg Ruby & Sascha Ley
The Laughter of the Red Moon
Dedicated to Hildegard Knef



JHM 310
MEGA MASS
Murmurs and wails



JHM 311
Joachim Ullrich
Family of Choice
Five Simple Songs



JHM 312
Christina Fuchs & Florian Stadler
flux
Roots & Rhizomes



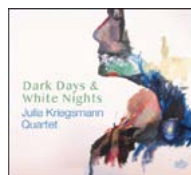
JHM 313
Clémence Manachère
Unterwasser & Helge Sunde
Serpents et Echelles



JHM 314
Jonas Stuppin & Stefan Berger
Aurora Borealis



JHM 315
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JHM 316
Julia Kriegsmann Quartet
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Top Recordings 2024



NEW RELEASES - JEROME WILSON

FAY VICTOR/HERBIE NICHOLS SUNG - LIFE IS FUNNY THAT WAY, (*TAO FORMS*)
CHARLES LOYD - 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 - ESTRELLRO 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*)
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

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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*)



Top Recordings 2024



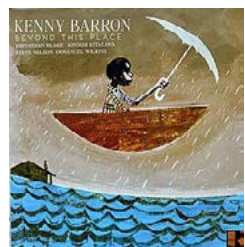
NEW RELEASES: - LARRY HOLLIS

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PARADIGM
AKIKO TSURUGA—BEYOND NOSTALGIA—STEEPLECHASE
LOUIS HAYES—ARTFORM REVISITED—SAVANT
SOMETHING ELSE!—SOUL JAZZ—SMOKE SESSIONS
KENNY BARRON—BEYOND THIS PLACE—ARTWORK
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JACK WALRATH—LIVE AT SMALLS—CELLAR MUSIC.
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ALEX SIPIAGIN—HORIZONS—BLUE ROOM



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MEL BROWN—CHICKEN FAT—IMPULSE
B.B. KING—LIVE IN JAPAN—GEEFFEN
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
PRESENTS
JON DE LUCIA - THE BRUBECK OCTET PROJECT - MUSAEUM
CLAUSUM 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

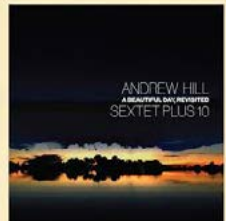


Top Recordings 2024



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)



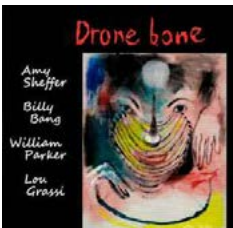
NEW RELEASES -ZIM TARRO

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" (SS)
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 – 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

Top Ten Concerts 2024



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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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



JAN FEB MARCH 2025

Vol. 51 No. 1 (455)

Cadence ISSN01626973
is published by
Cadence Media LLC,
P.O. Box 13071,
Portland, OR 97213
PH 503-975-5176
cadencemagazine@gmail.com
www.cadencejazzworld.com

Subscriptions 1 year:
First Class USA: \$65, Outside USA : \$75, PDF Link \$50

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ALL FOREIGN PAYMENTS: Visa, Mastercard, Pay Pal, and Discover accepted. POSTMASTER: Send address change to Cadence Magazine, P.O. Box 13071, Portland, OR 97213 Published by Cadence Media, L.L.C. © Copyright 2021, Cadence Media, LLC All rights reserved. Reproduction or use of contents prohibited without written permission from publisher (except use of short quotes, please credit Cadence Magazine.

FRONT COVER

Clockwise from upper left

Houston Person
Ganavya
Rob Scheps
Warren Benbow
Jamie Baum
John Abercrombie

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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Short Takes - Lexington



Guitarist ROYCE CAMPBELL in rehearsal with the Vosbein-Magee Big Band, for their September 28, 2024 concert in Lexington, Virginia. 14 of the 15 tunes on the evening's program were Campbell originals (the other being "Body and Soul"), with 11 in big band arrangements by Campbell's late uncle Carroll DeCamp, along with 4 more by a quartet featuring Campbell with V-MBB's rhythm section. The concert was recorded for an album to be released on Max Frank Music. (Photo and text ©2024 by Patrick Hinely, Work/Play®)

Short Takes - Philadelphia

PHILADELPHIA: Romanian pianist Lucian Ban and US violist Mat Maneri made a stop at The Perch on 9/20/24 (Fire Museum Presents) as part of an abbreviated pre-tour (their future gauntlet of shows were months away) in support of their second ECM duo album. Their music, based on the Hungaria Folk music that spurred the imagination of the great Hungarian composer Béla Bartók, who, in the early 20th century, collected and transcribed numerous pieces from Transylvania. The duo, both Bartók fans, used these songs as “springboards and sources of melodic material” for arrangements “that capture the spirit of the original yet allow us to improvise and bring our own world to them. If you go deeper into the source material, new vistas open up.” Ban and Maneri embraced the subject matter with a weighty grace that captured the Folk music’s barren beauty, along with a heavy outpouring of loss and hope. After an early rendition of “Harvest Moon Ballad,” which began with Ban bleeding out chords that slowly dissolved into the air, the pianist played a sample of a 1911 wax recording of “Make Me, Lord, Slim and Tall,” performed by Romanian Folk performers, before the duo covered the piece. Most of the time, the music was expansive but there were plenty of turbulent sections on the back of Ban’s creative distortion inside the piano and Maneri’s artful plucking and striking which aroused the senses...I listed Anna Webber’s Shimmer Wince recording as my top pick of 2023 so it was sad when she had to cancel the group’s Philadelphia appearance last year due to one of the band members catching COVID. Webber finally brought Shimmer Wince to Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) on 9/21 and it was worth the wait. Her intent with the band is to “explore the applications of just intonation [just intonation (or pure intonation, an ancient tuning system based on the natural harmonics and resonances of notes), is the tuning of musical intervals as whole number ratios (such as 3:2 or 4:3) of frequencies] in a Jazz/improvised context, including its intersections with rhythm and groove.” For this performance Webber (ts, flt) had Adam O’Farrill (tp), Elias Stemeseder (synth) Lesley Mok (d) and Christopher Hoffman (cel). Each tune was varied and morphed over time to include segments of unusual but pleasing sounds. “Wince” began with a trumpet solo and evolved into a combined jaunty rhythm that led to the leader’s powerhouse tenor feature. “Fizz” built to towering pillars of brass peaks over a turbulent base, while “Periodicity 1” started with solo cello arco spurts, soon joined by tenor pops and short foghorn strikes. “Squirmy” was electronic-based and featured Webber on flute. A traditional Georgian hymn was also covered. Webber explained the group’s unusual name to come from a merger of two of her compositions’ titles...Berlin-based, Swiss trombone master Samuel Blaser is one of Europe’s top trombonists and a prolific recorder as a leader who plays with an explorative lyricism. He made his first stop in town as a performer on 9/25 at the Black Squirrel Club with his Triple Dip trio (Russ Lossing, p; Billy Mintz, d) as the last gig of their tour. Veteran American artists Lossing (who has played with Paul Motian, Billy Hart, Tim Berne) and Mintz (who has played with Lee Konitz, Eddie Daniels, Mose Allison, Charles Lloyd) have played with Blaser for many years and their mutual intuition and uncanny musical connection makes for stunning improvisation that is abstract and evolving without being destructive. Their music was freely improvised and centered around nine compositions penned by Blaser and Lossing. Lossing explained at the start – “We make no plans, let’s see what happens here.” Mintz has a unique, minimalist style of playing that adds an intangible to the mix, while Lossing displayed a wide range

Short Takes - Philadelphia



Lucian Ban and Mat Maneri at The Perch on 9/20/24
Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Samuel Blaser on 9/25 at the Black Squirrel Club
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Short Takes - Philadelphia



Ganavya at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) on 10/4
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Short Takes - Philadelphia



Lesley Mok at The Perch on 10/10
Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Zach Brock, Bob Lanzetti and Keita Ogawa at the Black Squirrel Club on 10/17
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Short Takes - Philadelphia



Susana Santos Silva at Studio 34 on 10/27
Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Brandon Lopez and Steve Baczkowski at the Maas building on 11/7
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Short Takes - Philadelphia



Don Byron on 11/9 at the Black Squirrel Club
Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Abdullah Ibrahim on 11/10 at the Annenberg Center
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Short Takes - Philadelphia



Billy Harper and Dezron Douglas at Solar Myth 12/17
Photo credit © Ken Weiss



David Murray, Sekai'afua Zankel and Bobby Zankel at Solar Myth on 12/21
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Short Takes - Philadelphia

of styles including a touch of Boogie-Woogie at one point – “Well,” he later explained, “That was more of a Boogie-Woogie piano, so you got to go with the piano.” Lossing also supplied some humor. Prior to “Root Beer Rag” he revealed the tune came about because Blaser, “Is Swiss and they don’t have root beer in Switzerland. He came to the States and I gave him a root beer and he flipped. He became a root beer junkie!” Later on, after playing Blaser’s “Jingle,” Rossing announced, “That was a Samuel Blaser tune “Jingle.” He made several million dollars off of that and it was used for a root beer factory in Korea.” On one late unannounced outstanding piece, Lossing opened with one hand inside the piano to dampen the strings and was soon joined by Blaser’s pleasingly mirrored passages over a bed of Mintz’ galloping hand drumming that had more than a bit of organic tabla presence to it...If you are not familiar with the name Ganavya by now, you no doubt will be soon because she’s a force to be reckoned with. Best known as a vocalist, she’s a soundsmith, a wordsmith, a multidisciplinary creator. Trained as an improviser, scholar, dancer, and multi-instrumentalist, she’s from a family of performers and has been performing since the age of 12. Her set at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) on 10/4 included pianist Chris Pattishall who supplied sympathetic piano comping. She announced it to be “not a performance, but a prayer,” an apt description as her gorgeous voice and open-hearted presence founded a spiritual bath of beauty and compassion - leading to a transformative event for those open to receiving her message. Slipping off her shoes before stepping on stage, her first piece, a poem by an old Sufi mystic, was interrupted by an audience member’s phone loudly ringing out - “You have arrived at your destination!” Ganavya stopped singing and laughed. “That is really beautiful. No, really, I’ll tell you why at the end of the song.” Turns out the interruption mirrored the poem which professed a goal of being a broken cup that keeps accepting love but not filling up. “What ever love is given to me, I will let it out.” She explained that the poem was an indication that they were dealing with the same problems that we are dealing with today and that they solved them, but she warned, we are just not listening to the warnings today. Ganavya spoke from the heart often during the set, acknowledging the stress she encountered as a youth which led her to alcohol and darkness. Thankfully, she eventually moved forward to realization and abstinence. This night she went on to sing about love (“Sink into your eyes. Love is an ocean”) and other poems and prayers in English, as well as Tamil. She spoke of being in Wayne Shorter’s home (she contributed lyrics to Wayne Shorter and Esperanza Spalding’s opera Iphigenia) and unexpectedly broke out into prayer with him. She implored the audience to sing with her (“Really, you’ll feel better if you do”) and then at set’s end she gave thanks. “By singing with me you have put my heart at your feet”. This was a special evening and the long line of fans that waited to tell her what the performance meant to them was further proof of that. It’s easy to predict a MacArthur Foundation “Genius Grant” is in store for her...Brazilian pianist Amaro Freitas’ rise out of the slums of Recife has been nothing short of spectacular. His solo set on 10/8 at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) was a celebration of love and respect for nature, as well as his experiences in the Amazon and his encounters with the Sateré Mawé indigenous community, all of which influences his music. Blending Jazz with traditional Brazilian sounds, his playing was extremely percussive and

Short Takes - Philadelphia

energetic, with a good deal of work inside the piano. His second piece opened with him dampening the piano strings with his left hand and rapid, chording with his right, while altering smiles and grimaces. He ended the composition as if it were a boxing match – pounding away on the keys while dodging and moving his torso on the bench. The third tune began with a strong Classical feel that continued his heavily, percussive approach. After an extended run, he ended with a sparse, achingly beautiful tail that softly massaged the senses after such intense playing. Next, he explained that he wanted to pay tribute to the Amazon rainforest and the enchanted spirits who watch over the community that lives there. He looped himself vocalizing wordless sounds and also looped in bird calls, flute and shook a cluster of large native seeds to create a jungle milieu. He later prepared the piano with various “toys” to create an array of stunted and unusual sounds before hitting on a very insistent, atonal segment. A late ode to his beloved mother was engaging. “I will play a simple and beautiful song for my mother. My mother used to sing with me before bedtime.” He was able to get the listeners to sing “lah lah” along with him during the song and seemed genuinely moved before ending on an electrified mbira... The Perch hosted the dynamic duo of pianist Phillip Golub and drummer Lesley Mok on 10/10 (Fire Museum Presents) for a set featuring original compositions, standards and improvisation to complete their 6th and final show of their tour. The well-schooled Golub unspooled a likely Ran Blake film noir influence on an early tune and later hit on large chunks of pulsatile attacks on the keys and playing inside the piano while Mok was aggressive, laying down a delightful rocky road of percussive additions and demonstrated some admirable brush work. Their rendition of “Nefertiti” was fractured and a joy to hear. At one and a half years in, The Perch remains an oasis for intimate shows of high quality with an amazing piano and an upstairs kitchen stocked with free adult beverages, fruit, candy and pizza. Owner Jeff Carpineta rescued the site to prevent its demolition for condo development and runs it with an altruistic and community building mindset. As one listener said this night – “This place is too good to be true!” ... Conjuring up intriguing song titles and a catchy band name admittedly remains challenging for the trio of Zach Brock (vin), Bob Lanzetti (g) and Keita Ogawa (d), each a member of the popular Jazz-Funk group Snarky Puppy. They acknowledge the group’s name Brock, Lanzetti, Ogawa isn’t the most exciting of monikers and they remain open to suggestions. Their lack of imagination in title selection however bares no reflection on their glittering playing skills. Their appearance at the Black Squirrel Club on 10/17 allowed each artist to stretch out from their roles in Snarky Puppy while maintaining an earned connection, allowing for the integration of diverse influences - including elements of Jazz, Folk, World music, and even some experimental grooves, along with a lot of improvisation. They began with a Lanzetti tune called “Vases But No Flowers,” so named because the author’s girlfriend cleaned his house and noticed there were plenty of vases but no flowers. Ogawa’s Peruvian/African flavored tune “Jando” followed. He explained that he had great interest in Peru’s landó music so he wrote a piece with elements of that in it but since he is Japanese, he added “a Japanese J” in the title. “Happy Place” was a feature for Brock and turned into a cross between a square dance and the Mahavishnu Orchestra. Brock said he wrote it during a flight filled with turbulence as a way to clear fear from his mind. The wild tango that was “Los Caballeros” was inspired by the movie “3

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Amigos," and Ogawa's "Moro Morocco," which is based on his interest in Gnawa music, completed the first set. Interestingly, it began with solo drumming that sounded like taiko drums. What stood out as a bit unusual about their performance was that none of the three seemed to break a sweat yet they were all over their instruments. Ogawa rarely moved his arms while continually altering rhythms and avoiding patterns... Portuguese trumpeter Susana Santos Silva had to list her name spelled backwards for the week of gigs she had planned in the States in order to slip into the country from her current home in Stockholm, Sweden. Her last performance before heading down to play in Mexico was at Studio 34 on 10/27 (Fire Museum Presents). It was a duo hit with drummer Jordan Glenn (they had both played in town along with Fred Frith a few years back). Santos prefers duo gigs over solo shows and is especially fond of trumpet- drum duo performances as drums add no harmonic input to her playing. Glenn was an extremely apt fit for her sonic explorations with his unusual sticking's and sparse, pointillistic support. Santos continues to be one of the most interesting sonic expanders and is relentless in her creative exploration and dissolution of boundaries on her instrument. She explained post-set that she had Classical training for a number of years but found, "It was so strict, I felt so enchained but then in a moment of enlightenment, I knew I had to find a way I could express myself." ...Brandon Lopez (b) and Buffalo's resident wild man Steve Baczkowski (multi-inst) at the Maas building (Fire Museum Presents) on 11/7 pitted two of the most vibrant conjurers of Free Jazz-Noise Music. They last played together in town as a trio with Gerald Cleaver a few years back, but Cleaver moved out to California for a primo teaching gig, and they've continued as a devastating duo. Their music certainly has more than its share of colossal moments and body movement physicality. Baczkowski spends a good deal of time on the ground, working his baritone. When standing, he's in constant motion, as is Lopez, who stares defiantly into space, directly through the audience. During one early outstanding episode, Baczkowski played from the floor with a metal can serving as a mute. With time, the metal can was blown out of the horn. It rolled across the stage to an alert listener who rolled it back, allowing it to be plopped back into the horn's bell. Baczkowski eventually stood to deliver a tender, nursery rhyme-esque section before dropping back to his knees for some monstrous blowing, twisting his head side-to-side, while Lopez strummed rounds of thunder. Baczkowski, speaking to Cadence before the set, noted that he had studied with baritone saxophonist Hamiet Bluiett. "I definitely have a toe in the stream," he offered. He's been playing baritone since the age of 12, at which time his teacher switched him from alto because he had the longest fingers in the class, and someone had to play the unwieldy beast of a horn. Baczkowski said he's never looked back...The Black Squirrel hosted the Todd Marcus Quartet (Marcus (b cl), Ethan Bailey-Gould (g), Michael Bowie (b), Eric Kennedy (d) featuring Don Byron on 11/9. Marcus, one of the few artists worldwide to focus on the bass clarinet as a main instrument, has been performing with clarinetist supreme Byron since 2011. They both enjoy publicizing what the neglected instrument has to offer. At the start of the first set, Byron spoke of studying with the late/great Joe Henderson and how Henderson served as a big influence for him. An early cover of Byron's "Delphian Nuptials," composed in tribute to African-American playwright

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Lorraine Hansberry for use in a documentary, commenced with a long clarinet intro and evolved into an elegant piece with a waltz-like bounce. Marcus soon followed with his own original composition "Green Nile" which included a good deal of Middle Eastern sounds in homage to his Egyptian roots, by way of his father. Marcus explained that he grew up in New Jersey with no connection to Egypt until traveling there with his family as a youth. Between sets, Byron sat in the front pew, speaking with a listener who apparently had Byron play in his wedding band back in the day. Byron offered, "I've played thousands of brides, bar mitzvahs, bat mitzvahs and weddings. I used to say that if I played your wedding, you'd stay married, because everyone did, until I ran across some people recently who didn't." The second set was also invigorating with an aggressive opener, and later "Amy Pookie," a tune for Marcus' wife Emily. He named it that way as a joke after someone called her by the wrong name of Amy. A beautiful ballad named "Waiting," composed during the pandemic, ended the night as a tribute to the joy Marcus felt being able to play for an audience again, as well as with other artists, after the COVID 19 restrictions lifted...South African pianist Abdullah Ibrahim, a 2019 NEA Jazz Master, was on the road at age 90 with Cleave Guyton (fl, pic, cl, sax) and Noah Jackson (b, cel) on 11/10 at the Annenberg Center. Best known for the Marabi-derived "Cape Jazz" grooves that made him an icon of the anti-apartheid struggle, he's made a career out of producing serene music that sparkles with a deep Blues feel. He avoids pyrotechnics, centering on melody with sudden harmonic shifts and occasions of dissonance that stir the meditative mood. He's always performed best while alone at the keyboard, and that remained true for this performance which came off as disjointed at times. Perhaps Ibrahim needed rest periods to recover his strength? He'd play a segment and then his band would come back on stage to play, often by themselves as a duo, and then they'd exit. It was as if two concerts were going on within the same set. The night opened with Jackson's solo bass effort on "In a Sentimental Mood" and then Guyton's solo on "Giant Steps" while the leader sat patiently at the piano before launching into his own extended solo section of pieces that bled from one to another with hints of some of his previous works. Was that "The Wedding?" Was that "The Mountain?" Later compositions that were covered during the night included Ibrahim originals "Peace," "Tuang Guru," "Nisa," "Mindif," "In the Evening," as well as Monk's "Skippy," a variation on "Tea for Two." For his short encore, the pianist sat on the piano bench, facing the listeners, but looking down, with his right hand palming the right side of his face and the left hand on his left knee while the band stood to his right, along with his assistant, as he intoned a heartbreaking lament about the pain of slavery sung in both an indigenous language and English- "I see the harbor lights from my slave ship ...I hope I see my home... There was no one to welcome me home to the land I was born in." ...It's often the gigs you don't expect to be so thrilling that turn out to be the most memorable ones. The Dezron Douglas Quartet with Emilio Modeste (ts, ss), David Virelles (p) and Joe Dyson Jr. (d) at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) on 11/16 turned out to be the best performance of the year for me. Douglas doesn't get the opportunity to headline that often (his first time was over 3 years ago, which came in Philadelphia) and he said he always wants to make the best of it and play lots of music. Douglas certainly excelled from his spot in the rear of the stage this night, grinning widely throughout the over-90-minute set.

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New Orleans-bred (and Kidd Jordan mentored) drummer Joe Dyson Jr. impressively drove the quartet from start to finish with insistent force, along with Douglas' muscular bass work. Modeste's propulsive tenor statements added much to the frenetic compositions, and it was easy to see why Douglas refers to the young hornist as "Luke Skywalker," although I thought it was Modeste's stellar soprano work that was most incantatory. Virelles made his debut with the quartet as George Burton was not available and added so much (Cuban) flavor to the mix that it was hard to imagine anyone else playing piano for the group. The sold-out set (Douglas is drawing from a wide audience now that he's been working with the Trey Anastasio Band) began with "A Call to the Ancestors, a nod to the Art Ensemble of Chicago, as the band faced towards the left before playing a note. The first tune was "Warrior," which elicited screams from the audience, a situation that continued often during the night. Next up was "Willow," a composition by Philadelphia's own, the late Pat Martino. Douglas explained, "It's a song I fell in love with a few years ago." Pieces by Modeste and Dyson followed, as well as a Douglas original named after a very flavorful and savory Egyptian soup that filled the air in the Egyptian-dominant New Jersey neighborhood he lived in for a time. The night ended with what Douglas announced as a segment of Charlie Parker's that was a favorite of the recently passed Roy Haynes. It turned out to be "Fiesta" and served as a brilliant Virelles feature ...Norwegian powerhouse Avant-Garde quartet Cortex (Thomas Johannsson, tpt; Kristoffer Berre Alberts, sax; Ola Høyer, b; Dag Erik Knedal Andersen, d) plus guitarists Hedvig Mollestad and Nels Cline at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) on 11/20 expertly merged composition and improvisation into a tight weave. Their music was high energy but never felt out of control. Johannsson's bold and brassy trumpet was well balanced by Alberts' earthy saxophone tone and craftiness – whether it be tugging on his chin while holding the reed tightly in his mouth or standing one legged, using a thigh to mute his horn. Mollestad was making only her second trip ever to the States, this time as a guest with her fellow countrymen and seemed content to add colorations without ever seizing the spotlight for herself. No such wall flowering for the esteemed Mr. Cline, he stepped up at times to shred, to the delight of everyone...The Air Legacy Trio with Marty Ehrlich (sax, flt), Hilliard Greene (b) and Pheeroan akLaff (d) at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) on 12/13 honored Air – the legendary improvisational collective trio of saxophonist, flutist, and hubkaphone inventor/player Henry Threadgill, bassist Fred Hopkins, and drummer Steve McCall that thrived from the '70s through the mid-'80s playing the compositions and arrangements of future NEA Jazz Master Threadgill. It was Threadgill who recommended Ehrlich to step into his role in the trio, along with akLaff, who had filled the late Steve McCall's spot in the last edition of Air in the mid-1980s. The Air Legacy Trio completed their 3-city tour this night on a high note. Commencing with an invocation that started with the mystical clanging of akLaff working tiny bells and then gongs, the trio covered a number of stellar pieces including "Air Song," "Difda Dance," which was named using the nickname for saxophonist Kalaparusha Maurice McIntyre, "Paille Street," "B. K.," "80° Below '82," a hoppy waltz-esque tune filled with an excited Ehrlich blowout session, "We obviously were taking it where it was supposed to go," he said. After "Through a Keyhole Darkly," a coin flip determined the next tune to be "Achtud El Buod (Children's Song)," which Ehrlich explained was

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“scurried off at the Montreal International Jazz Festival. It included a red-hot drum solo, followed by alto sax quotes of “Mama’s Little Baby loves Short’nin’ Bread,” and finally Scott Joplin’s “The Ragtime Dance.” Ehrlich clearly explained the trio’s purpose – “We’re extending, we’re not recreating the compositions Henry Threadgill wrote for Air.”...The same stage a night later was inhabited by percussion master Adam Rudolph’s amorphous electro-acoustic ensemble Hu Vibrational which mixed deep percussive African rhythms and Afro-Jazz with elements of Hip-Hop and Electronica. The septet included Alexis Marcello (el kybd), Jerome Harris (el b, vcl), Harris Eisenstadt (perc), Neel Murgai (el sitar, vcl) Tim Kieper (perc, dusu n’goni) and Tripp Dudley (tabla, perc). Rudolph expounded on his idea of circularity and orbiting of the music. By using sonic modulation, he is able to create a spiritual experience arc designed to orbit around and around with each musician adding subtle statements and colorations. There was plenty of space and the players would drop in and out as they saw fit, making for a cosmically transportive experience. Their use of electronics and reverb elevated the simplicity of Rudolph’s finger snaps, and later Marcello’s episodic hand claps, high up into the air, as major musical generators....Texas tenor saxophonist Billy Harper had a fun two-night one-off project at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) with the presentation of two of his classic albums – Black Saint on 12/16 and The Believer on 12/17 with the help of his quartet - Freddie Hendrix(tpt), Francesca Tanksley (p), Dezron Douglas (b), Aaron Scott (d). I caught the latter set and as advertised, the 1980 work was brought to life. “Is It Not True, Simply Because You Cannot Believe It?,” “I Do Believe” and “Believe, For It Is True!” were delivered over the span of one hour by way of Harper’s full throated tenor exchanges and Hendrix’ piercing trumpet. The two nights were recorded and may be available to the purchasing public in the future... Philadelphia-based alto sax hero Bobby Zankel celebrated his winter solstice 75th birthday in grand fashion on 12/21 at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) by presenting his Warriors of the Wonderful Sound with special guest David Murray exploring pieces from Zankel’s 2023 release A Change of Destiny, inspired by the history of enslaved persons at the “Philadelphia White House” of George Washington. Zankel’s long-standing ensemble (Bryan Rogers, ts; Fabien Enger, tpt; Sumi Tonooka, p; Lee Smith, el b; Pheeroan akLaff, d; Ruth Naomi Floyd, vcl) were especially energized by the packed house and the presence of the esteemed guest saxophonist. The leader’s special night commenced on a high note as his wife, the talented poet Sekai’afua Zankel, stood between her husband and Murray and read some of her poetry.

REFLECTIONS AND RECOLLECTIONS, 50 YEARS LATER... MY FIRST FORAY INTO NEW YORK CITY IN PURSUIT OF THE JAZZ MUSE

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I finally feel ready to write about this early endeavor, to approach it as, if not history, hopefully at least of historical interest. Despite copious, heartfelt efforts to do so at the time, I was in too much of a hurry to put my newly-minted Journalism degree to use: I had not lived long enough to have anything to say. Now, I've had enough time to begin figuring out where I am coming from, and thus also what I can bring to it, and to put things into some perspective, hopefully before the accuracy of memory has evaporated. One thing will lead to another, if seldom in a straight line...

In May, 1974, at age 22, I was beginning to realize that I did not own the world, nor did it owe me a living, though I had yet to completely give up on either prospect. Worse than that, I had aspirations of becoming a jazz snob, not yet aware that term is a synonym for "asshole". I no longer felt at home in the rock of my earlier youth, no matter how progressive, too much of which had descended into an over-amped vortex of decadent, noisy excess. Even the Allman Brothers Band, the eminent cultural icon native to the world this southern white boy had grown up in, whose original groove is still in my blood (for which I am glad), had devolved into disarray after two of its founders died tragically early deaths. Carlos Santana was the only rocker I found worthy of keeping up with, since his rendering of Joe Zawinul's "In a Silent Way," had turned me on to Miles Davis' album of the same name, and with "Marbles", he had turned me on to its composer, John McLaughlin. My final live music pilgrimage before graduating from college was to hear Weather Report, then still in full I Sing the Body Electric exploratory mode, and at that Nashville gig, a table tent touting the next month's offerings at the Exit/In included a new quartet, Oregon, on Midsummer's Night, which indeed worked out like a dream...

A much earlier chance encounter with the Winter Consort - via Herb Alpert, off all people - had led me to their seminal third album Road, a live, lively recording which included, besides Paul Winter himself on sax and the late cellist David Darling, all four members of the yet-to-be ensemble Oregon: guitarist Ralph Towner, bassist Glen Moore, oboist Paul McCandless and sitar player and percussionist Collin Walcott. Here was acoustic music that could whisper with as much power as any amplified walls of sound could pound the foundation. Their music was conversational, witty and engaging, bubbling up from a deeper wellspring than much of what I'd been hearing - and it was not deafening! Their pebble hit my pond at a most opportune time. The ripples have since been spreading ever wider, enabling so many other doors in the jazz world to open for me. I couldn't get enough of those guys then, and I still can't. I was lucky to be able to hear them several times, in several states of mind and in the USA, before visiting them on their collective home ground: Manhattan.

The 400 or so miles didn't seem like all that far, but I'd never seen so many toll roads. A newly-ascendant OPEC's squeeze had resulted in even/odd-day rationing

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** Larry Karush (1946 - 2013) and Glen Moore had been friends and musical colleagues since the mid-1960s. Both had migrated from Portland OR to New York by the early 1970s. He and Moore recorded a duet album, May 24, 1976 (JAPO), and he appeared, along with saxophonist Bennie Lee Wallace and David Earle Johnson, on Oregon's 1977 album Friends (Vanguard). Karush was also a member of Steve Reich's Piano Ensemble. He would later be part of the trio MoKaVe, comprising Moore, Karush and percussionist Glen Velez, which recorded 3 albums (Audioquest). Karush also recorded a solo album, Art of the Improviser (Naxos), and Piano Crossroads with Velez, Howard Levy and Djimo Kouyate (Nomad). He was easily as gifted a player as any jazz or classical pianist of his day, but with a wider vision than most, and a greater interest in the music itself than in the music business, which is why you may well not have heard of him. It's not like he tried to remain under the radar, it just worked out that way. Karush did not like to be photographed, and I respected his preference, a decision I now regret.*

for gasoline, at prices 50% higher than the year before, but still below one dollar per gallon. Nixon remained in the White House, but not for long. En route to NYC, I'd caught a rare East-coast performance by L.A.'s Firesign Theatre in Washington, DC, just a few blocks from the White House, during which Tricky Dick was righteously skewered, lambasted and lampooned. I laughed so hard it hurt.

Soon after arriving, one of the first things heard through the grapevine was that Duke Ellington had died. Even among the more 'out' players I was hanging with (who hadn't yet been at it long enough to be labeled the 'traditional avant-garde', a non sequitur if ever there was one), Duke's departure was respectfully lamented. Few figures had towered so high for so long in the jazz world. With the cluelessness of youth, I had nary a clue about all that history, and went about my merry way in a new land I found strange, slightly dangerous, and filled with wonders. Adapting to the relentless pace of New York City, every day brought explorations in new directions.

As a guest of Glen Moore, I was headquartered in a corner of Glen's corner of the loft of pianist Larry Karush* and his wife, multi-media artist Michelle Berne. Their sparsely-furnished spacious studio sat on the southern cusp of Soho, at 3 Mercer Street, just above the ever-bustling crosstown artery Canal Street. From there, it was only one block east to Broadway, and Dave's Luncheonette, home of great egg creams, a 24/7 hang for the pioneering folks living in SoHo's old industrial lofts, the same people who were just beginning to be priced out of the area by yuppies with hot tubs. Dave's usually had a waiting line for its phone booth, the quietest in the neighborhood. McCandless, who lived all the way over on East Broadway, came there to call his lady friend (later his wife) in Atlanta.

Dave's corner was also the western end of a multi-block subway station complex serving several lines. You could connect to anywhere from there. The fare was 35 cents (it is now \$2.90). One block south lay Frank and Jay Clayton's Lispernard Loft, a performance space as well as their residence, where I was granted, as a friend of Glen, use of the washer and dryer. There was very much a feeling of sharing, of being in a community of creative spirits making common cause, a sort of small town within The Big City.

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It was a few blocks up, north of Houston Street, to fabled Greenwich Village, specifically the West Village, most of our stomping grounds being within a couple of blocks on either side of 6th Avenue: Bleecker, where Porto Rico Importing had the best price on coffee beans roasted and ground fresh daily. The Blue Note wasn't there yet on West 3rd. Up Mercer, at West 4th, there was a brand new venue called The Bottom Line.

A few blocks further to the north, and west, was Chelsea, where Towner and Walcott had apartments in the same building, albeit on different floors. Right around the corner from them was Mi Chinita, at the time billing itself as a Chinese - American - Filipino restaurant, though it was more like a diner. Regardless of ambiance, the food was great, and affordable. I have yet to experience more scrumptious bean sprouts. The "Mi Chinita Suite" closes side one of Oregon's 1973 recording *Distant Hills*, featuring five discrete group-improv miniatures in styles as varied as its namesake's cuisines, yet, in like manner, all fitting nicely together, with flavors contrasting rather than conflicting.

Minetta Lane, all two blocks of it, will always stand out in my memory. It spans from MacDougal to 6th Avenue, with Minetta Street dropping down diagonally from its midpoint to meet Bleecker at 6th. Those were convenient short cuts between lots of places, though the first time I traversed the greater Minettas, I got a serious case of the Willies, for I happened upon a building I recognized as a location from the recent movie *Serpico*. I had just seen that film shortly before heading to New York and its depiction of the NYPD scared the bejesus out of me. I hit town more frightened of the police than of criminals. As it turned out, I had no bad experiences with either.

Though touristy shops offering sandals, water pipes and the like had taken over many of the Village's storefronts, there was still haute street cuisine to be had at reasonable prices for those willing to dine al fresco. Within one same block were two enterprising below-the-sidewalk vendors, one using the spelling 'falafel' and the other 'felafel'. Emanating from both of those quasi-subterranean pita palaces were exotic aromas, from grills where piles of green peppers and onions awaited sizzling sausages, all served up for a couple of bucks. We were there one day with Karush, who asked for one without the sausage. When told it would still cost the same, he said that was fine, to just stuff in a few more peppers and onions, and the chef looked at him like he was crazy. He was not. He was a vegetarian.

At the corner of Minetta and MacDougal was the venerable Café Wha, storied site of local debuts for the likes of Bob Dylan and Jimi Hendrix, where I would hear Oregon, again, in August, just after Nixon's resignation. Two doors up was the even more-venerable Café Reggio, where I've sipped many a cappuccino over the years, first as Moore's guest, and, in 1982, hosting another kid new in town, a guitar player named Bill Frisell...

The Karush/Berne loft was plenty big enough for musicians to gather, and gather they did. Early one afternoon, it was just Moore on bass and Jan Hammer playing a drum kit which I helped him cart up the stairs from his yellow Volkswagen squareback. Their exchanges moved in an upward spiral, energetically setting sparks flying. Another time, guitarist John Abercrombie joined in, along with a personably earnest if still rather angry-sounding young man then known as Marc Cohen on tenor sax – the same man we now know as a gentler soul, pianist Marc Copland. There was much joyful noise. I had never witnessed so much

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spontaneous creative combustion up close in one place at one time. I was hooked. Evenings were a time for walks. A mile or two was nothing: good exercise and a subway fare saved. Going north several blocks, into the Village, we traversed Washington Square Park, where the loft impresario, saxophonist Sam Rivers, he of Studio Rivbea, could usually be found leaning against what seemed to be his own personal tree, quietly observing the scene: couples necking, folkies busking and dealers moving dime bags.

Another few blocks north, up University Place, brought us to Bradley's, where, that evening, pianist Mike Nock was holding forth with bassist Rick Laird, who, on upright, was still recovering his hearing after playing hundreds of concerts on electric bass, as part of the original incarnation of the Mahavishnu Orchestra. Nock spun solidly exotic melodies over the firm foundation of Laird's subtle muscle in an open-ended conversation. He was not a showy pianist, but deep and thoughtful, and glad to be back in New York after several years' sojourn to the Bay Area and adventures with The Fourth Way, which had included experiments with things like Ring modulators, a device which he introduced to Cannonball Adderley's piano player - Joe Zawinul...

I didn't even try to photograph in either of those situations, but did manage to catch up to all of those guys, camera in hand, within a few years, amen.

Then there were the evening sessions at studios, both rehearsal and recording. At Blue Rock we heard pianist Paul Bley, with whom Moore had played and recorded within the last couple of years, and session drummer Bruce Ditmas, along with two barely twenty- somethings Bley had recently summoned from Miami: Pat Metheny and Jaco Pastorius. They had one side of the room to themselves, and their collective electric conversation had elements of both shredding and thrashing as they prodded and pushed one another further and further. Bley, in an aside to Moore, said he hoped to capture the spirit of the newbies' fearlessness on tape. Who was aiding or abetting whom hardly mattered. They kept the ball in the air. Just two kids with big ideas, new to the big city, hoping to find niches of their own, which, to put it mildly, they did. They were trying out different routes through the tunes they would record soon thereafter, including several by Carla Bley. The resultant album would be issued under all of their names on Paul Bley's own IAI label (and later bootlegged on others, under Jaco's name).

Another evening we ventured further north, into midtown, to The Record Plant, at fellow Oregonian Collin Walcott's invitation, where he was playing tabla duets with Badal Roy - on a shag rug, no less - as part of a 12-man roster, including Abercrombie, for Drum Ode, saxophonist Dave Liebman's second recording on the still-nascent ECM label, with producer/owner Manfred Eicher in the house, all the way from Munich, to follow up on Liebman's 1973 label debut, Lookout Farm. As we were coming in, a visibly disgruntled man in a straw cap, carrying a pair of conga drums, was heading out. Moore greeted him by name but I didn't catch it, and the man kept going without much more than a mumbled grunt.

It would be several years - long enough that when he told me his version of the story, David Earle Johnson could laugh about it - before I learned that he indeed had been the evictee, and that he had been tossed from the session by producer Eicher, for smoking weed in the studio. In any case, with Johnson now gone for more than 25 years, the entire episode has entered the lore, possibly making him the only musician known to have been tossed from an ECM recording session for

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smoking reefer!

This transgression also ended up getting Johnson un-invited from Abercrombie's Timeless trio sessions with Jan Hammer (replaced, as it turned out, by Jack DeJohnette) for ECM the next month, though, nearly a decade later, the Abercrombie/ Hammer/Johnson trio would finally get to record together, resulting in the album *Midweek Blues*, on Plug, a subsidiary of Gene Perla's PM label. Perla was also the bassist for this Liebman session. Small world. There is far, far more to Johnson's legacy than that, but that's another story, one I am overdue to write...

In Eicher's defense, I must say that even though smoking weed most anywhere in New York's jazz world, including recording studios, was a tradition dating back at least as far as a young Louis Armstrong, and had been far from uncommon for decades, it was still illegal, and Eicher may or may not have had his own work permit in order, much less the necessary corporate formalities for ECM Records, and it could well have been that he wasn't willing to take a chance on being nailed as some sort of accessory in a small-time dope bust, for that could lead to larger, costlier legal problems of the federal variety, all this at a time when he was still operating on a constantly-stretched shoestring, for all this transpired before Keith Jarrett or Pat Metheny had burgeoned ECM's coffers.

To say that everyone in the studio was being deferential toward Eicher understates the case. No matter who it is, the producer is always the one who's paying the bills, and in New York, recording studios are like taxis: the meter is running whether or not the car is actually moving. Yet this mysterious, sometimes zen-like navigator was seldom seen micro-managing, or even with his hand on the helm. When he had to, Eicher could make things happen, but seemed to prefer to allow things to unfold of their own accord, as long as they did so at an acceptable pace.

At that point, Eicher was still building the ECM brand, and 1974 was an especially fertile year for the label. On this same USA foray, at another studio in town, he had Paul Motian recording his *Tribute* album, his second for the label. Earlier in the month, up in Boston, Gary Burton and Steve Swallow had created *Hotel Hello*, the latter's label debut, and, on the other side of the pond, April had yielded the debut album for Jarrett's quartet with Jan Garbarek, Palle Danielsson and Jon Christensen, *Belonging*, as well as *Luminescence*, featuring Garbarek playing Jarrett's music with a symphony orchestra. Eicher was on a roll: the summer would encompass not only Abercrombie's aforementioned label debut trio, but also *Ring*, featuring the teaming of Burton and band (including Swallow, Metheny, Mick Goodrick and Bob Moses) with Eberhard Weber. A couple of days after that, he would team Burton with Towner for their duet album *Matchbook*. In the fall, Steve Kuhn would join the ECM roster with *Trance*, featuring Swallow, DeJohnette and Sue Evans, and the solo album *Ecstasy*. By year's end, *Solstice* would also be in the can, the first album for the quartet of Towner, Weber, Garbarek and Jon Christensen. The label's accumulation of accolades was accelerating, with German record-of-the-year awards for Weber's debut album *The Colors of Chloe* and Jarrett's triple solo LP *Bremen/Lausanne*.

1974 was also a pivotal year for Oregon. They were still abuzz from their first European tour, in March (my piece reviewing a recording from that tour, as well as that band in a larger context, appears in *Cadence*, Volume 47, #4, Oct/Nov/Dec 2021). Oregon would record their album *Winter Light* in July and August.

Reflections and Recollections

It must have been June by the time I experienced a monumental evening at the studios of WBAI-FM, the local Pacifica Network affiliate, featuring Moore and Towner playing conversational duets live over the late-night airwaves. They freely roamed the universe, exploring tunes I'd never heard before, completely in the moment yet already part of the permanent firmament, brand new and old as the hills all at once, rendered with, in turn, wit, sinew and filigree. At that point, they'd been at it for another year and a half since recording *Trios/Solos*, and Towner's solo debut *Diary* (both on ECM) had been in the can for several months, though it would not appear until later that year, including several tunes first heard here, and gloriously at that.

Their shared vocabulary was constantly broadening, and their exchanges became even more intricate and intimate. Either could take the ball and run with it, and did, spurring the other into spirited response, not so much finishing each other's sentences as propelling and extending their exchanges in more new directions, not off the grid, but beyond it. They spun tales so engaging that it was as if nothing else existed, much less mattered, while the music was being created. I wish there were a recording of that broadcast.

One day, out on my own, I decided to check out the New Music Distribution Service store, on Broadway below Prince. It was adorned with colorful tapestries, the work of Moki Cherry, trumpeter Don Cherry's wife. There were all sorts of temptations in the LP bins. In retrospect, it's a good thing I didn't have a credit card - I'd probably still be paying it off. Prominently displayed was the 3-LP box set I'd purchased through mail order a couple of years before, Carla Bley's and Paul Haines' *Escalator Over the Hill*, on the house label, NMDS. (My musings on *Escalator* appear in *Cadence*, Volume 49, #3, July/August/September 2023).

While I don't remember much about leaving NYC, or about the trip home, I do remember a great feeling of relief at having escaped unscathed, a feeling which would repeat itself dozens of times, at the end of every subsequent visit, as I emerged from one tunnel or another into New Jersey, through the coming decades, but those are other stories, yet to be told...

Captions: All photographs were made during May or June, 1974, well before my understanding of many photographic technical niceties, especially those allowing one to shoot in what is known as available light, but in fact was more like available darkness... Unless otherwise noted, all photographs are previously unpublished.

All photographs are ©1974 by Patrick Hinely, Work/Play®.

Reflections and Recollections



CANAL STREET. This was the view across the street to the south, a few steps down the sidewalk from my digs at 3 Mercer Street. My first venture into New York street photography. Photo credit Patrick Hinely, Work/Play®



JAN HAMMER & GLEN MOORE. Informal jam at Karush/Berne loft, earlier on. This is the oldest photograph in my portfolio of jazz people. Previously published in my 2008 Jazz Calendary (Jazzprezzo, Germany). Photo credit Patrick Hinely, Work/Play®

Reflections and Recollections



JOHN ABERCROMBIE & GLEN MOORE. Informal jam at Karush/Berne loft, later on. The curlicues in front of Moore's torso are not smoke: they are the strings of Abercrombie's guitar. Previously published in CD booklet for :rarum XIV, Selected Works of John Abercrombie (ECM). Photo credit Patrick Hinely, Work/Play®

Reflections and Recollections



JOHN ABERCROMBIE, MANFRED EICHER & DAVE LIEBMAN, Drum Ode recording session for ECM, The Record Plant. Drummer Jeff Williams is seen in the background. Photo credit Patrick Hinely, Work/Play®



BADAL ROY & COLLIN WALCOTT. Drum Ode recording session for ECM, The Record Plant. Everyone in the room stopped what they were doing to listen to these guys get acquainted while the engineers got their mic levels set. Photo credit Patrick Hinely, Work/Play®

Reflections and Recollections



PAUL BLEY. Quartet rehearsal, Blue Rock Studio. The pools of light were few and small and Bley was moving around a lot, which made nailing this image feel like an accomplishment in itself. Photo credit Patrick Hinely, Work/Play®



RALPH TOWNER & GLEN MOORE. Performing on air at WBAI-FM. Previously published in these pages, Volume 47, #4, Oct/Nov/Dec 2021
Photo credit Patrick Hinely, Work/Play®

HOUSTON PERSON INTERVIEW UP AND DOWN THE ROAD

By Ken Weiss

Houston Person [b. November 10, 1934, Florence, South Carolina] is well recognized for his soulful, thick-toned tenor saxophone playing but he wants it known that he is more than a Soul Jazz player, he's spent his career digging into many areas of music as a leader and with others such as Gene Ammons, Ron Carter, Cedar Walton, Charles Earland, Lena Horne, Lou Rawls, Horace Silver, Dakota Staton, Grant Green, Richard "Groove" Holmes, Charles Brown, Tiny Grimes, Johnny Lytle, Shirley Scott and Joey DeFrancesco. Dizzy Gillespie once said of Person, "He's one of the best... He's got bull chops!" Person learned from some of the best early on. While stationed in Germany with the Air Force, he got schooled at jam sessions by fellow American servicemen that included Cedar Walton, Eddie Harris, Don Ellis and Don Menza. After time with organist Johnny Hammond, where he first met vocalist Etta Jones, with whom he would go on to play with for the rest of her life, he branched out as a young bandleader in 1966 to record with Prestige Records, making a number of popular albums. His career never slowed down from that start. He remains a well-recorded leader and an in-demand sideman, especially for vocalists, with whom the estimated number has reached 100. This phone interview took place on November 14, 2020, just as the COVID-19 deadly winter surge was on the horizon.

Cadence: *We're doing this interview less than two weeks after the passing of your wife. On behalf of the readers and myself, our heartfelt condolences for your loss.*

Houston Person: Thank you.

Cadence: *Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, you were performing up to 7 – 8 months a year on the road and a few more months locally. You turned 86 four days ago, how difficult has it been physically to keep up that pace as an octogenarian?*

Person: I've done pretty well with it, I'm feeling great. You know, taking care of yourself on the road is mainly it. Getting your proper rest, proper food, and playing the music that you enjoy playing. I enjoy the people. That's what sustains me, the music and the people of different cultures.

Cadence: *Why have you kept up that pace? Do you have to for financial reasons or perhaps you can't imagine life without performing?*

Person: I enjoy music. I'm lucky that I'm able to do something that I love and do it the way that I want to do it. Over the years, I've been lucky to play with the greatest musicians and I'm just having a wonderful time. That's why I keep doing it.

Cadence: *When we initially talked about setting up this interview, you told me, "My records keep me going." Would you talk about that?*

Person: I have so many things that I haven't done yet that I want to do and accept those challenges and the joy of just doing music. It really centers around

Interview: Houston Person



Houston Person - Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Interview: Houston Person

music, doing music that I enjoy doing. That's what keeps me going, there's always the next one.

Cadence: *What kind of projects would you like to do that you haven't already done?*

Person: There are still some musicians that I would love to play with, and I haven't done too many big, orchestral things. I'd like to do some of that in the future. I've just about done every format that I would like to do. I would like to try something with spoken word.

Cadence: *Which musicians do you desire to play with?*

Person: No, [Laughs] because I'm gonna leave somebody out and then there's gonna be a ... I'd rather not. Most of the musicians, I enjoy, so whoever comes along I would enjoy playing with. There's some guys out there that I would still like to play with, and I hope they want to play with me! [Laughs] There's so many different guys with different approaches to music and I would like to get involved with all that stuff. I would like to do a great R&B album, which is something I haven't done in a longtime.

Cadence: *You were born in South Carolina, why were you named Houston?*

Person: My father and mother would have to answer that. I really don't have the slightest idea, but I got that name, and I haven't changed it. [Laughs] I thought it was kind of strange too. I'm actually Houston, Jr. My dad's name is Houston, but I don't know where he got it.

Cadence: *How did you develop your deep, big sound? What's the key to creating a big tone on the saxophone?*

Person: I guess that's what I heard. I practiced in the bathroom and the tile would bounce the sound back at me. I worked a lot on sound. And hearing Illinois Jacquet, Arnett Cobb, Gene Ammons, and all those R&B saxophonists like Tom Archia. I wanted a big, pretty sound and I developed it.

Cadence: *Do you think anyone can develop a big sound on saxophone?*

Person: I think they can get the sound that they hear if they work on it. We all hear different things; we all walk to our own beat. I got it by practicing whole tones – holding the tones and listening to it in the bathroom. Back in South Carolina, where I'm from, we had a farm and my brother, I'd put him as far away as I could and see if he could hear me. I'd blow into the horn and try to get it as loud and big as I could. He'd be on the other end and I'd ask him if he could hear me. That's how I worked on my sound, and the marching band helped me.

Cadence: *Your speaking voice is also so deep and rich. What's the extent of your singing experience?*

Person: I sang in the church choir, I sang in the glee club, and I sang in the high school choir. I was singing before I was playing, but I did have the experience of singing. People have asked me if I sing and I've told them that I don't sing. [Laughs] When I started out in the music business, I always wanted a band as a traditional band that they used to have in the old Swing days with the big

Interview: Houston Person



Houston Person - Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Interview: Houston Person

bands, where the band had a vocalist, dancers, and a comedian. It was more of a show. That's what I wanted, so I had a singer – Etta Jones. I had what I wanted – a vocal/instrumental group – and it worked well for me. I like the approach of giving the audience a full spectrum of what I do.

Cadence: *How has your playing evolved over the course of your career?*

Person: I'm doing what I want to do so it's developed quite a bit if you look at it from that angle. Comparing me to other guys? I went another way. I have certain feelings about music and presentation that I wanted to develop.

Cadence: *What, if anything, are you still working on today regarding your presentation of music?*

Person: Just researching songs and keeping up with the musicians who are out there. I'm in contact with a lot of different guys and I've developed a lot of different friendships. I have an appreciation for all musicians and what they're trying to do. I hear a lot from the other guys, and I get a lot from them. I take what I need. I've had the opportunity to play with a lot of different guys, of which I'm proud of. I'm proud to be associated with them.

Cadence: *What have you learned not to do?*

Person: I learned not to be late. [Laughs] I've learned not to ignore my audience and not to blame the audience for not responding to what I'm doing. That's one of the biggest things. I feel that anything that happens on the bandstand is my responsibility. You've got to learn how to find your audience. The other thing is not to ignore my other musicians on the bandstand. Everybody should be appreciated and be allowed to showcase what they do best. Also, you've got to be ready for the performance and to be dressed for the occasion. Approach everything professionally but have fun.

Cadence: *Articles about you have typically described you as the standard-bearer of Soul Jazz – the last of a dying breed. Is that a fair description of you?*

Person: If they think so. [Laughs] I don't think so. [Laughs] Titles are alright, but I think my output of albums would tell you something different. I'm just a guy in the crowd. It's out there, what I do, so if some people feel that way then it's alright with me. I generally don't like pigeonholing people. I know you've seen my output and it explains it all. I play everything. [Person asks for a pause here to speak with Russell Malone who is on the other phone line]. Like Russell and I do albums together, so what do you call that? I have an album out right now with Dena DeRose and an album with La Lucha. What do you call that? I just love music – R&B, Pop? Whatever it is. If it's a great melody, it's alright with me. People get hung up on labels and they miss a lot of music that way. I don't label anything. I grew up on Country & Western, and R&B and Gospel, so all those things have to be a part of what I do, if I'm gonna be honest. I put it out there and you make your decision. It's funny how people have got to label everything before they can appreciate it or not appreciate it. You know, some people say I'm just a chitin circuit guy. What does that mean? That could be derogatory but to me, that's praise. [Laughs] More of us need to come up

Interview: Houston Person



Houston Person - Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Interview: Houston Person

through that. It used to be you got your experience that way.

Cadence: *Do you feel the term “Soul Jazz” is derogatory?*

Person: In some ways that people use it. That term is used laudatory and derogatory. I know what they are trying to say when they use that term and it's just a glorified chitlin circuit, really. And a lot of people don't consider it real Jazz, they just stick that soul on there. For some people, it's a racial term, but I don't want to get into that. And music has always had that – “race records” and R&B. It's funny when they say Gospel music means that it's Black and inspirational music means it's white. [Laughs] It's crazy. They use these terms, and over the years, it's been ingrained in us.

Cadence: *As you earlier pointed out, you've done a lot during your long career. I know you're very humble but another NEA Jazz Masters class was just announced and at this point, you're 86 and you've not been named a NEA Jazz Master. Any thoughts on that?*

Person: No. Hey, that's their domain, and I appreciate the artists that they have named. I think it's a nice program and every musician that they have named has been deserving of it. It's funny, a lot of people do ask me that. I'm enjoying playing music and, in my mind, I've been successful with what I'm doing. I'm enjoying it, and I'll let that stand. I know people have written letters on my behalf, which I didn't know until afterwards, and I enjoyed what they said. People know I'm there and I'll accept that. I'm good with it.

Cadence: *You've made a career out of playing Soul Jazz, or whatever it is to be called, which was popular in the '60s. Why did that genre fall out of popularity, and why aren't more people playing it today?*

Person: Maybe it is because of its name and people being [turned off] by the derogatory elements. Here's the thing, somewhere along the way, and this isn't Soul Jazz's fault, musicians started forgetting the people. We forgot the basic elements of Jazz. All of a sudden, we forgot about people loving to dance to Jazz. Jazz is dance music, that's what it is. And we cut that element out of the music. We took the Blues out of it. We just stripped it of the qualities that people liked, and that's what you got. And people went to something else. People still want to dance, and they still want to hear the Bluesy music, they still want to hear the music swing. And most of all, we took the fun out of it. Everything now has to be so concertized. You can't have fun the way you used to. Those elements, they count. You take other music, you can dance to it, it's fun. We got away from all of that, the basic elements that made Jazz happy. From the Louis Armstrongs and the Dizzy Gillespies, the entertainment phase was taken out of it. That's the real culprit, and guys have got to get back on track. That's what I'm saying about being responsible. It's not the people that went away from Jazz, we ran them away.

Cadence: *The Blues and Jazz had always been intertwined. When you came up, everyone was playing the blues, but now that's changed. What's happened to the Blues in today's music?*

Interview: Houston Person



Houston Person - Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Interview: Houston Person

Person: We forgot our culture. We have a distinct culture and we got away from it, and you get away from it, and the people are gonna leave you. Somebody told me, “Black people don’t listen to Jazz anymore,” and I said, ‘Yes, they do,’ but it’s got to have those elements. I’m saying it’s your responsibility [as an artist] to find a way to that audience.

Cadence: You pointed out that jazz was dance music and your goal is to create that feeling of making people want to get up and dance. The irony is that you don’t dance, you never learned. Why is that?

Person: No, I don’t dance but I love to see people dance. Watching dancers will give you a feeling of how to approach tempo, how long to play a song, and other things. And the younger guys didn’t have the opportunity to play in big bands or play for dancers, play behind a vocalist, how to accompany. That’s not an indictment, it’s just we need to pay more attention to that and it’s the responsibility of the artist to do that. If you go back and look at Dizzy, Louis Armstrong, Illinois Jacquet, Lester Young, they all had an entertainment side too. Everything wasn’t so heavy all the time. I didn’t dance but I learned how to dance on the horn. I learned how to edit my solos. I learned a lot from dancers, dancers told me where the tempo was. Sometimes, if I started a tune off too fast, the dancers would sway a certain way and they’d give me the tempo if I didn’t have it right. They’d also let you know when to stop playing, which is very important. [Laughs] You’ve got to learn to edit your solos. Sometimes the listener can lose interest, especially if you’re not saying that much.

Cadence: You favor covering Jazz’s great standards. How much interest do you have in making something new out of those popular tunes?

Person: I love those songs, they’re a connection. For the listener, they’re a connection to their past memories. I love doing those songs, that’s the Great American Songbook. Now how can somebody call that Soul Jazz? It’s okay to change them as long as you don’t lose the meaning of the song. One thing I’ve tried to do is play the songs the way the composer meant for them to be played and then try to improvise a little, but you don’t want to do so much that you overwhelm the song and lose all the meaning of it. That’s where I’m at, and I know certain critics say Jazz isn’t supposed to be sentimental. They try to set us too far apart from the rest of the music industry but there is room for sentimentality in Jazz also. You don’t just want to strip it down so that it’s a bunch of notes, and that’s what we’ve managed to do a lot.

Cadence: I’m Just a Lucky So and So [HighNote, 2019], your most current recording, is full of golden chestnuts that haven’t been overperformed by others. Was that your intention?

Person: Yes, always you want to bring something new, something you’ve forgotten about. I approach that title song, which everybody remembers as a Duke song. It was a dancehall favorite. The words are nice to that song also. I try to bring a little of the old and a little of the new and try to put it all in one little package. I don’t mind being sentimental.

Interview: Houston Person



Houston Person - Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Interview: Houston Person

Cadence: *As you said, I'm Just a Lucky So and So's title comes from the Duke Ellington composition. Does that title also apply to how you think of yourself?*

Person: Yep, that's the reason I named it that. I'm just lucky to still be playing this music and happy.

Cadence: *You've thoroughly researched the Great American Songbook. Who are some of your favorite neglected composers and ignored songs that you've identified?*

Person: I have music anthologies, and I have found some good things. One tune I discovered from Raintree Country is "Never Till Now," Mario Lanza sang it. That's a beautiful song. That's one, I gave you one, but there's a whole lot of stuff out there that hasn't been explored yet. I keep going back to Jule Styne and Johnny Green. I admire so many great composers including Cole Porter, Duke Ellington, Benny Golson, Benny Carter, Burton Lane and Rodgers and Hart.

Cadence: *How many times would you consider recording the same standard tune?*

Person: I can do it twice. When I was coming along, you had to learn to play the songs fast and also interpret them as ballads. If you look, a lot of songs we play are not the tempos the composers wanted them played in, so I've tried to approach tunes that way. One tune I did that way was "Too Late Now," a tune by Burton Lane. I recorded it as a bounce - a little faster - and then on another album I recorded it as a ballad.

Cadence: *From the outside looking in, it appears things came easily for you. You came to New York, found quick employment, developed a lasting relationship with a talented singer, you rarely went a year without releasing one or more records, and you've continued to frequently perform well into your eighties. What struggles have you had during your career?*

Person: People have been good to me, [Laughs] I haven't struggled. I've tried to do music that people can relate to. I haven't been afraid to play the Blues or to be sentimental. I've tried to stick to the factors involved in producing good music.

Cadence: *You've often said that it's important to you to be uplifting, to bring joy to the listeners, but we're all human, we all have our days of deep despair. How do you give a joyful, inspirational performance on those nights when you're going through personal turmoil?*

Person: I try not to give it to my audience, however, if I should hit a sad note that affects someone that way, and you always are, sometimes that brings joy. I know that people [in despair] have wanted to hear my music and I'm glad that I had something that made them feel better. I'm just happy that I can do that. I've found that it's not hard for me to play my music [when times are difficult for me] as long as I stay away from that repertoire. I have a vast repertoire so I can draw from a lot of things and get myself through it.

Interview: Houston Person

Cadence: *You've drawn inspiration from a number of the music's greats and Illinois Jacquet remains your main influence. What about Jacquet so inspired you?*

Person: He was a great instrumentalist, a great musician, and he was a great entertainer. I think put all that together and you got what I would consider my guy, and there were a bunch of them. He wasn't the only one. All those tenor players from that era because each of them was an individual.

Cadence: *Did you have a relationship with Illinois Jacquet?*

Person: No, I had no relationship with him. We met later on in life and we played some double bills in Chicago. He was just a guy I liked. I was in the South so I didn't get to see much, I just got to see Jazz at the Philharmonic, which was extremely popular, and from there I got all his albums because he was recording on RCA which was a huge label and I could get his records in the South. From him I went to other guys, but he was the guy to start with.

Cadence: *Do you see yourself as an entertainer?*

Person: I don't see myself in the role of an entertainer. I wasn't out there like Jacquet was, I'm more subdued than those guys back then. [Laughs] Like that walking the bar era, playing the horn.

Cadence: *You never walked the bar?*

Person: I did it one time in Atlantic City, New Jersey. [Laughs] I had a good time; I just never had another opportunity to do it often. But there are other forms of entertainment – talking with the audience, announcing the tunes – that's more my thing. That and doing a little historic thing on them.

Cadence: *You perform with the audience in mind but there are other musicians who take the stance that they are creating "art" and should not be influenced by the likes and wants of the public. Where does that sit with you?*

Person: Well, ask them how it sits with them, they don't work. [Laughs] Everybody has their own approach. Now you can do an approach and it becomes entertainment. Miles would turn his back to the audience, or he walked off the stage. When he did it, it was entertainment, it became entertainment. Everybody has a different thing; it's just how your audience appreciates it. Thelonious Monk, he danced while the other guys played. Any little factor... I saw Monk at the Village Gate once, but I wasn't quite getting into the music, and then he got up and danced to the music and he brought me into the music. Through his appreciation of it, through his enjoyment of it, he allowed me in. I thought, 'Wait a minute, if he's enjoying it, I got to listen a little harder, I'm listening to the wrong thing.' You know, showmanship doesn't have to be jumping up and down. It's just your way on the bandstand.

Cadence: *You were active in New York City during the heyday of the '60s to '70s Free-Jazz and Loft era music. What's been your relationship with and feelings on Jazz's Avant-Garde music?*

Person: As long as it swings it was alright with me. I knew Ed Blackwell, Ornette Coleman, I knew all those guys, and to me, they were swingin'. That's

Interview: Houston Person

all that matters. I'd listen to that music – Mingus and the Slug's crowd. I listen to everybody.

Cadence: *Did you ever play in a Free music setting?*

Person: No, I never did. Ran Blake and I did an album together, and I did some things with Ethan Iverson. I've done a variety of stuff. I keep myself involved in all of it.

Cadence: *What's your relationship with the other great living tenor saxophonists of your generation such as Benny Golson, George Coleman and Wayne Shorter?*

Person: Love 'em all. I just heard from Benny and George. We're all just working musicians, and if we get a few minutes, we call each other, checking with each other to make sure we're still kickin'. They are great guys, just wonderful. I have a nice relationship with Benny and George.

Cadence: *A fascinating thing I found when researching you is that you compose pieces but prefer to cover other people's music and let others play your compositions. Is that true?*

Person: That's true. I don't write that much, and I like other people's music. I get great tunes from guys and that's fun for me. I generally just do research and stay out there looking for material, and I come up with some good stuff.

Cadence: *But why don't you want to play your own compositions?*

Person: I don't think they're adequate, to be honest. They're sitting on the stand over there and I need to work on them a little more. And I'm starting to do that now because there's nothing else to do. Before I was working so much, I didn't have that much time to put in it. I haven't pushed my own music that much.

Cadence: *You are well-known for backing up numerous vocalists. What attracts you to performing in that setting?*

Person: I just like it. I've recorded with a ridiculous number of vocalists and they like me, and I like them. I like that [setting] because when I went to the movies, that's what I saw – musicians and a vocalist. I became attracted to that, and then I really got into it by learning the lyric and realizing that the vocalist and I were both supporting the lyric. We were partners. That's how I approach it and each vocalist requires something different. I have fun with that.

Cadence: *Etta Jones and you had a special musical relationship from the time you met in Johnny Hammond's band in the early '60s, until her 2001 death. What made Etta Jones such a special artist?*

Person: She was a great singer. When I met her, she didn't have a band and I didn't have a vocalist, so I said, 'Let's go for it.' She went for it and then I took that band all over the world.

Cadence: *What would we be most surprised to hear about Etta Jones?*

Person: She was unusual because she was totally accessible. No attitude, no nothin'. She'd give time to everybody. Me, I was just the opposite. [Laughs] I called her "The Ambassador." I didn't spend that much time with people, I was

Interview: Houston Person

busy running a business. I did all the booking, I did it all myself with no agent. We had a nice thing.

Cadence: *Let's talk about your early days. It's well documented that you grew up in a household that valued a wide range of music. What was your musical experience in the church?*

Person: I sang in the choir, sang hymns and gospel music. I got the experience of singing both.

Cadence: *You came to the saxophone late. You didn't switch from piano to tenor until your parents gave you one for Christmas at age 17. Why did you change instruments?*

Person: Oh, I never was a piano player, I was ducking it every time. They just wanted us to have some musical training, so I did [piano] but there was really no interest until I got the saxophone.

Cadence: *When did you know that you wanted to seriously play the saxophone?*

Person: When I got it and I started playing in the high school band. It was when I went to my Junior-Senior Prom and I saw a college band, the South Carolina State College Collegians. I saw that band and that's when I decided I wanted to be a musician.

Cadence: *How did it feel to hold your own saxophone for the first time?*

Person: Awkward. [Laughs]

Cadence: *After high school, you joined the Air Force and were stationed in Heidelberg, Germany, where you participated in weekly jam sessions at a club with musicians from the 7th Army Jazz Band including Don Ellis, Eddie Harris, Cedar Walton, Leo Wright and Don Menza. What were those jam sessions like?*

Person: Those guys were so great; they were ready for prime time when they came. I had just started. I was, oh man, every night I was gettin' beat up. [Laughs] It was fun, really fun, and a very important part of my development was playing with those guys, and Eddie Harris making me practice. I never felt discouraged and they never gave me reason to feel that way.

Cadence: *Eddie Harris was especially important to you, you often practiced together. How did he help you?*

Person: Just practicing and knowing that he would do it by getting up early in the morning and started playing.

Cadence: *After college in 1962, you had the opportunity to sit in with Coleman Hawkins at a New Haven club. Talk about that night, playing duets with Hawkins.*

Person: It was fun and an experience for me, a great experience. In fact, someone told me he had mentioned that session in his book. We had two or three sessions in New Haven. He was a great guy and gave me all the encouragement in the world.

Cadence: *You must have been nervous to play with him.*

Interview: Houston Person

Person: Surprisingly, I wasn't. Those guys, they make you feel welcome. I remember I went to Birdland one night and I said, 'I'm gonna play tonight.' It was Johnny Griffin and Mingus on the bandstand, playing a jam session. And they saw my horn and Johnny Griffin said, "Come on up. You wanna' play one?" I went up and played with them. I shouldn't have, [Laughs] but it was fun.

Cadence: *What did Hawkins have to say about your playing?*

Person: Naturally, he wasn't gonna put me down, he wasn't that kind of guy. He offered some encouraging things, and we played a few nights together. He said, "You're on the right path. Just keep doing what you're doing." That was great.

Cadence: *Working with organist Johnny Hammond ['63-'66] was your big break. How did he come to hire you?*

Person: we both lived in the same town, Hartford, Connecticut. I was going to Hartt College of Music at the time and I'd go to his jam sessions. Back then, there were jam sessions everywhere. Bands were playing and music was everywhere, it was great. Eventually, we hooked up and he formed a group with me and Virgil Jones.

Cadence: *You left Hammond and went out on your own as a leader at age 21. Was it unusual at that time for such a young artist to get a record deal without having done a more extensive apprenticeship in other known bands?*

Person: Yep, but I did it. I just did it, I just started. I had a little organ trio, playing around Boston, and it developed what it developed into. You know, it's funny, I did two albums with Johnny, one on Riverside, one on Prestige, and then one day I was sittin' around not doing anything wondering what I was gonna' do and I just called Prestige. I heard them talking in the background saying, "Are you ready for him?" And they said, "yes." I couldn't believe it! All I did was call. That's why I say I had no rough times.

Cadence: *Did you have to negotiate how much they were to pay you?*

Person: No, I knew not to be crazy now. I got in the door and now I had to work to prove to them that I belonged there. I tried to use sound business principles, not music principles. I gave up a lot. I owe Bob Weinstock [founder of Prestige Records] a lot for sticking with me. He really got me started in my career, so I thank him very much for that.

Cadence: *Your relationship with Prestige Records ['66 - '73] led to a steady stream of releases under your name. What type of restrictions were placed on you? How much say did you have in the choice of musicians and song choices?*

Person: I have had no restrictions my whole career, never. I'm a lucky so and so.

Cadence: *Which Prestige release are you most proud of?*

Person: Every album I've made, I stand by. I stand by everything I've done, and if you want to hit me, I'll take the hit for it. None of us are one hundred percent, and I did so many different things, so there might be certain periods that you might not accept what I was doing. I was with a label called

Interview: Houston Person

Westbound doing mostly disco stuff, but I enjoyed that. Hey, it's music and I stand by that. I did three albums with Cedar Walton, all of them are great. It was with Cedar, Curtis Fuller, Vernel Fournier. Now, that's some good stuff, if that's what you like. There are some other things I did which were more popish and big bandish. Hey, it's all out there. [Laughs] If you're asking me to pick one Prestige recording out for myself, I'd say on certain days the Cedar Walton stuff, on other days... My biggest selling album was Goodness! and that was with organist Sonny Phillips.

Cadence: *Do you listen to your old recordings?*

Person: Yeah, I listened to some last night.

Cadence: *Are you able to listen to them and not be overly critical?*

Person: Yeah. I listen to a lot of stuff. I listen to music from an entertainment standpoint. I don't pick it apart; try to see what they're doing. If it makes me feel good, you're alright with me.

Cadence: *What current music do you listen to?*

Person: Everything. Last night I was listening to Eileen Farrell with Robert Farnon.

Cadence: *Some of your early music found a new home in the acid jazz genre that popped up in the '80s. Fantasy even released two of your Prestige sessions as part of its Legends of Acid Jazz series. Talk about your music getting appropriated into that scene.*

Person: Hey, it's alright. Acid Jazz, Soul Jazz, whatever. [Laughs] Seriously, I'm glad about being included in all the stuff. I don't want to give you the false feeling that I'm a snob. No, I appreciate it. I feel good that people can appreciate it and still remember it. It keeps it out there so I'm alright with it and I'm happy.

Cadence: *You've made six duet recordings with Ron Carter. Would you say something about that pairing?*

Person: We just having fun and playing great music. We get a chance to express ourselves and play the way we feel. And Ron is great. I don't have to tell you about Ron, he's the band.

Cadence: *Would you share a few stories that you have from past experiences?*

Person: I have no stories. I'm telling you the truth. I have no stories and maybe that's why I'm here so long. [Laughs] No memories, just music, and then I come home and relax. I just go up and down the road, having a lot of fun. I'm uninteresting. [Laughs]

Cadence: *Readers may not realize that you're not only a successful musician, but you've been a very successful producer of, not only your own records, but of many other artists including Etta Jones, Ernie Andrews, Joey DeFrancesco, Charles Earland, Red Holloway, David Fathead Newman, Lorez Alexandria, Dakota Staton, Barbara Morrison and Freddy Cole. How did you learn that craft?*

Person: By producing my own records, that was it. When I went to Westbound, I started producing my own records and I have produced every one of my

Interview: Houston Person

albums since then.

Cadence: *Why would you do that?*

Person: To amplify my presentation, my thoughts, on how I should be presented. Not because the other guys didn't do well, everybody did well by me – Bob Porter, Cal Lampley, Ozzie Cadena- they all did well by me and did their best for me. But I noticed that when record companies want to fire somebody, they always fire the artist, not the producer, so I said, 'I better be the producer too and produce my own stuff.' And then other artists started coming to me, asking me to do theirs. I also became a [talent] scout for artists too. I've had a good run.

Cadence: *Did labels pay you to produce since they didn't have to hire someone else to do it?*

Person: That could have been some of it too, which was great for me. I got more and I really got inside the inner workings of the record companies.

Cadence: *How about your experience working with Rudy Van Gelder?*

Person: The best. I always called him my producer regardless. [Laughs] He helped me a lot. I can't even measure how much he helped me, and a wonderful guy. Rudy was not difficult, just don't touch his equipment, it's not your equipment. When you're in his house, behave like you'd like someone to behave in your house. That's all I'll say on that, and when the album comes out sounding great, that's why it sounds great, because the equipment was right and you didn't touch it. We always got along, and I think we were together for forty years. I let everybody do their job, and if everybody does their job, you're gonna be successful. He did some great albums for me. Every one of them, because he knew what to do to get the sound. I wouldn't put too much stock in what the guys said about him, except what I'm telling you. [Laughs]

Cadence: *Another extraordinary thing about you is that you work your own gigs, you don't have outside help. You book your own tours, find new clubs to play, maintain relationships with concert promoters worldwide, and schedule your own recording sessions. How and why do you do all that?*

Person: Because I know it's done. It takes a lot of time so that's why I go home afterwards, get my rest.

Cadence: *Do you also provide all those services for other artists?*

Person: Yes. I work putting their budgets together and all of that, whatever. The music is their job, putting it together administratively, is my job. I like doing that.

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

Person: I don't know if you're surprised or not, I don't care, but I play Scrabble. That's it. Just relaxin', looking at TV and Scrabble. I'm getting back into Canasta now. I watch light stuff on TV and the news. I watch comedy, quiz shows, anything that doesn't require a lot of thinking. I save that for the news channels.

Cadence: *What does the post-pandemic future hold for Houston Person?*

Person: I'm just gonna keep making music and that's it. I've had things lined

Interview: Houston Person

up, but I've had to cancel them and now we're headed into another dark period.

Cadence: *The final questions have been given to me by other artists to ask you: Ron Carter (bass) asked: "Why are verses of songs so important to you?"*

Person: Which Ron Carter?

Cadence: *The Ron Carter.*

Person: Okay. I interpret the song with the lyrics. Some of the verses are beautiful if you explore the lyrics. I can only express the lyrics through oral means without you hearing the words. So, I'm trying to set up the main song, which usually people are familiar with, but they haven't heard the tune set up in its full capacity. I like to give the listener a little surprise. I like to set the tune up in a different way than the usual 4 bar or 8 bar piano introduction and sometimes I don't even play it. I like the verses to set up the tune and bring a little element of surprise. The other important thing that we don't do enough of is to look in the left-hand corner and see the way the composer intended the song to be performed. I try to do that with every song. And then the composer and I, we compromise on tempo, but I make sure that the tempo is more in keeping leaning towards his feeling of the song, and then I get more out of it. I've found out too that a lot of songs we are playing, that we've upped the tempo on, were ballads, and I've tried to compromise on tempo, but not to destroy the meaning of the lyrics. If you read the lyrics and really get the meaning of them, it's kind of hard to play that song a different way. Once it's in your unconscious mind, you know that it's a sad ballad and if you play it at a breakneck tempo, it's not gonna make sense. That's where you lose the interpretation of songs and we've got to pay attention to that more. Just talking about me in general, I like to investigate the lyrics, the left-hand corner, get what the composer meant for it to be, and then I take it over and try to keep within the composer's and my feelings.

Cadence: *Knowing the words to a song helps you to emotionally interpret it. How do you approach an instrumental piece that doesn't have words? Does that present a hurdle for you?*

Person: No, it's happy times then, but tempo is really important.

Ron Carter also asked: *"Do you have a favorite key?"*

Person: I'd say, for range – F, E-flat, A-flat and C. When I choose a key, I want to put it right in the meaty part of the horn for range. It's like a vocalist choosing a key that's maybe one key too high or one key too low. With my current repertoire, those are the keys I use. Of course, all tenor players play things in B-flat. In the early days, usually the composers were writing the tunes in keys that were easy for the piano players because it was just piano music then.

Melissa Aldana (tenor sax) asked: *"I am always curious about the process and how our mind changes as we get older and more mature. How has your relationship with music improvisation changed as you've gotten older?"*

Interview: Houston Person

Person: Editing the solos. That's it. I mean, playing the notes that are important and really respecting the melody and the lyrics. As you get older, you learn that.

Melissa Aldana also asked: "How has your relationship with practicing the horn changed throughout the years?"

Person: I've moved from one thing to the other but the thing that has stayed steady for me is scales. Really just always re-practicing scales and different scales from different cultures. I don't practice as much as I used to, but my attitude is to keep working. If you're practicing, you're working, you're playing your instrument. That's the main thing you want to do, you want to keep playing the instrument.

Cadence: What is the history behind the horn you favor?

Person: It's a 1964 Selmer. I bought it from a great tenor player here in New York. I don't want to mention his name because when I bought it, I was sworn to secrecy.

Grant Stewart (tenor sax) asked "Of all the greats you've played with or heard - Gene Ammons, Hawk, etc. - whose sound was the most impressive when you heard them live, and what especially about it struck you?"

Person: I didn't get a chance to hear any of these guys much except on record. Man, both of those guys. I'd say Gene Ammons, Illinois Jacquet, Percy France and a taste of Lester Young, everybody had a taste of Lester Young. All those guys came from uniqueness. They all were unique; they all had their own thing, so I wouldn't venture to say that they weren't successful in the sound that they wanted. I'd say that Hawk was comfortable with his sound and Jug was comfortable with his sound, and then you get to a guy like Lockjaw Davis and you say, 'Wait a minute!' [Laughs] Arnett Cobb, all those guys. I saw Gene Ammons once. I didn't get a chance to see those guys because I was living in New Haven and after that, I was on the road myself. But on recordings, they all had great sounds and a unique way of playing.

Grant Stewart also asked: "What was your most memorable/life changing gig? What was the worst or scariest gig you ever played?"

Person: Oooh, oh man, there's a lot of things that were memorable. It could be a record date I had with Horace Silver, or a record date I had with Lena Horne, or a record date I had with the guy I wanted to play with all my life - Ray Brown. There were a lot of milestones along the way but those were three of them. As far as the scariest gig? I'd like to relabel the question as what was my most nervous gig and say that they all were nervous gigs at the beginning of my career. I've been pretty lucky but I do have to say that I've always prepared for what I was doing.

Cadence: How was it to finally play with Ray Brown?

Person: That was it, yeah. It was a great feeling, everything was there. And he was so fun to play with. He was always happy on the bandstand.

INTERVIEW WITH ROB SCHEPS, REEDS, FLUTES, COMPOSER, BANDLEADER

by Ludwig vanTrikt

Cadence: Please capture what the Boston jazz scene was like while you were there? This time saw you leading your own groups .

R.S. Boston was vibrant and rich when I was there. Locals included George Garzone, Jerry Bergonzi, Greg Hopkins, Billy Pierce, John Lockwood, Bob Moses and Jimmy Mosher.

The clubs were the Willow, Ryles, Charlie's Tap, Wally's and 1369 Jazz Club. My first jazz gig as a leader was at the Willow in Somerville. Ryles had music upstairs and downstairs. I saw Pat Metheny with Miroslav Vitous (another one of my teachers), and Roy Haynes.

I formed the True Colors Big Band. We played at Ryles, Johnny D's, The Rathskeller, and great sold out shows at 1369. 1369 was the hang. My Quintet played weekends there.

I heard Joe Lovano with Mel Lewis; Paul Motian Trio with Frisell and Lovano; Steve Lacy, Roscoe Mitchell, Dewey Redman, Rashied Ali, Kenny Werner, Cecil McBee and more.

I took a lesson with Lovano in the basement!

Donald Brown included me on his going away gig. We played Nefertiti with Billy Kilson on drums. That club was the locus for so many of us.

My band mates and friends were Donny McCaslin, Ken Brooks, John Medeski, Josh Roseman, Marshall Sealey, Mark Taylor, Jim Black, Chris Speed, Bruno Raberg, Ben Wittman, Dominique Eade, Andy Gravish, Dave Fiuczynski . Amazing.

I was a member of the JCA- Jazz Composers Alliance Big Band. We performed with incredible guests- Dave Holland, Sam Rivers, Anthony Davis, Henry Threadgill, Marty Ehrlich, Wayne Horvitz, Tim Berne. We made a CD, Flux, that featured Julius Hemphill and Sam Rivers.

Boston was the springboard to NYC for many of us.

Cadence: As far as you know is the Boston jazz scene still vibrant?

R.S. Boston seems to be still cooking. I haven't played there in a while, but the Regatta Bar and Scullers are still going. I played with those clubs years ago and they're both good venues. They also have the Mad Monkfish and the Lily Pad. Jerry Bergonzi. has a weekly gig there with my friend, trumpeter Phil Grenadier.

Cadence: Let's talk about you then moving on to New York City.....

R.: I moved to New York City at age 22, a common trajectory for young musicians

from Boston. A bunch of us moved there at the same time: Rachel Z, David Fiuczynski, Andy Gravish, Greg Jones and many more.

Interview:

Rob Scheps



photo by Francesco Truono

I had grown up outside of New York City, so it was familiar territory, but it's a shock to the system to move to New York.

Incidentally, there was a lot of work when I moved there and things got busy fairly quickly.

Jazz gigs, weddings, record dates, etc. I even did parades on Long Island because drummer Keith Copeland had told me on the road with George Russell, "when you get to New York take anything – a rehearsal, a parade," I took his sage advice :-)

I got to NYC at 22. After growing up nearby on Long Island, I was familiar with Manhattan, but nobody's ever really ready to encounter it.

I called 60 friends and colleagues on the phone from Boston to touch base and let them know I was coming.

On my first day in New York, the phone rang after one hour. My girlfriend said it's for you. It was a gig with Brother Jack McDuff at Showman's Café in Harlem for the following Saturday night. The gig came via my friend, McDuff's drummer Rudy Petschauer.

Typical of New York to have you dive right off the deep end. I was young and eager, and went out to play almost every night. There were jam sessions everywhere. The Village Gate on Saturday and Sunday afternoons; Pat's on 23rd St. in Chelsea on Thursday nights. My first club gigs under my own name were at the Angry Squire, also in Chelsea, which became my neighborhood. My band was Joel Weiskopf on piano; Essiet Okon Essiet on bass, and Ben Perowsky on drums. Subs were Ben Wolfe on bass; drummers Bill Stewart, Troy Davis, and others. We played all over NYC. Blue Willow, Rathbone's, First On First, Zazou, Honeysuckle, Birdland, and many gigs at the aforementioned Angry Squire.

The Village Gate was a special club for me. I had a friend on the inside and got to see a lot of great shows for free. Dr. John with Lew Soloff and Ronnie Cuber; Toshiko Akiyoshi, and Lew Tabackin's big band; The Lounge Lizards with John Lurie, and George Gruntz's All-Star big band. Oh yeah, and a stellar show by Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra. The Gate had an upstairs, downstairs and the terrace. On the terrace I sat in with Reggie Workman and John Medeski's duo. I believe I also played with Jaki Byard and Dennis Irwin. I already knew Jaki from NEC. New York was just spilling over with jazz. One day on the terrace of the Gate I found myself seated at a large round table with Don Friedman and Billy Hart. I turned to Ben Perowsky and said "this is unbelievable." Ben grew up in the city. Unlike me. He turned to me and said "that's New York, man". I had then and still have a 1938 Conn soprano sax. I put the horn in a basket on the back of my bicycle and rode around Manhattan sitting in. One place was Caliban on the east side.

Trumpeter Joe Magnarelli had a steady gig there and I would go and sit in with him. I once played the soprano at the Squire sitting in with Kenny Werner, Ed Schuller, and the great Rashied Ali. We played I'll Remember April and I remember being surprised and pleased at how great Rashid played straight

ahead. Man, he was swinging. Living and playing in New York there's a diaspora that spreads outside of the city where you sometimes meet other crews of musicians in Connecticut; in the Catskills; in New Jersey, etc. This was all part of my regimen, and there were connections being made constantly. In New Jersey, I played some sessions with the very great drummer Ron Davis. Ron had worked with Bill Watrous and Chuck Mangione. We played with other New Jersey-ites like guitarist Bob DeVos, bassist Dean Johnson, guitarist Dave Stryker and many others.

In New York, when you sit in you often find yourself on stage with your idols. At the Blue Note late at night I played with Lonnie Plaxico and Billy Hart. That session was seven nights a week and started around one in the morning. I recall playing with and meeting for the first time, legendary drummer Barry Altschul at a place at 47th St. and 8th Avenue called Michael's Pub. Drummer Jeff Williams took me to the Village Corner just down the street from the Gate where I met and sat in with the tremendous pianist Frank Kimbrough when Frank still had a long ponytail. Then there was Augie's. Larry Goldings first took me up there. It was at 105th and Broadway a couple of doors down from Birdland in its then location. Through Larry I met and played with epic young cats like Peter Bernstein, Bill Stewart, Freddie Bryant, Andy Watson, and Billy Drummond. This place was a casual dive bar that served as an important incubator for young bebop cats of the era. I also remember sitting in there with Jesse Davis and Joel Frahm among others. I was in a quartet that had a Saturday night residency there. Spike Wilner on piano, Sean McGloin on bass and Gene Calderazzo on drums, brother of the great pianist Joey Calderazzo. It was all happening at Augie's and that room later became what is today the jazz club Smoke. I guess you could still smoke in clubs at that time because I remember having a couple of cigarettes at the bar when bassist Tony Scherr bought me a beer. I was never a smoker, but dealing with the two guys who ran the club, Gus and Caesar, made you want to smoke and drink.

Cadence: I am going show a bias here by asking you to give us a glimpse into two of my favorite pianists Don Friedman & Jaki Byard; particularly what they were like as men. Of course anything musically that they imparted on you?

Don Friedman, as we know, was the pianist on two classic Booker Little records -Out Front and Victory and Sorrow. He was also a member of Clark Terry's band for many years.

He was a gentle guy whom I didn't know very well. Always cordial and nice though.

The most I played with him was on a record date at Tony Bennett's studio in Englewood, New Jersey on the day before Thanksgiving. An honor.

I enjoyed his playing on that date. It was swinging, smart and elegant. Hendrik Muerkens played vibes on that date too.

Jaki was a whole different kettle of fish. He was on the faculty at NEC for years,

but had whittled down his presence to one day a month by the time I arrived. Trombonist/arranger Pete McGuinness and I formed the True Colors Big Band and we performed in Jordan Hall with Jaki as guest soloist on piano. We played his spectacular charts, including Spanish Tinge#2 and Garr.

Jaki was very funny. When people were skating and not really making the chart, Jaki would say, “lies, lies, lies”.

He was originally from Worcester Mass, but became an in demand pianist in Boston. By the time we played with him, he lived in New York. He also played alto sax.

When I was at camp in Pennsylvania at age 13, our big band played Spanish Tinge, so I was aware of Jaki even back then.

As you can tell from recordings with Charles Mingus, Jaki played the whole history of jazz piano from stride up through free jazz.

Jaki was a masterful musician and a mentor we all loved.

Cadence: Let's talk nuts & bolts stuff regarding your abilities as a multi instrumentalists; particularly your ability to play the soprano saxophone?

R.S. Many musicians over the recent years have seemingly abandoned playing the soprano because of the difficulty of keeping it in tune. Please talk about how you balance playing multiple instruments against the backdrop of a very busy musical and personal life.

Well, my main axes are tenor sax, soprano, sax, and flute.

For many years, it's been split between tenor and soprano equally. They are both homebase.

I started playing soprano in high school. We had a very good jazz band, and I played lead alto which meant doubling on soprano, particularly for Thad Jones's Charts.

Sidney Bechet was the first important soprano soloist, although he also played clarinet.

To me soprano playing focuses on John Coltrane, Steve Lacy, Wayne Shorter, Dave Liebman, Jane Ira Bloom and Steve Grossman . These are the most important stylists on the instrument.

Coltrane made the soprano his other main instrument along with tenor as did Wayne Shorter a few years later with Miles. Coltrane's sound changed at the beginning. It was a little nasal and more oboe like. I feel like later he found his center and created a beautiful round tone. He mostly played it on waltzes Take A Look, My Favorite Things, Chim Chim Cheree, Afro Blue, Inchworm, but he used a lovely warm sound on ballads like Every Time We Say Goodbye. It was also the exact right instrument for India.

Wayne Shorter is another role model for playing tenor and soprano sax equally well. The soprano was made for Wayne.

His work on it with Miles Davis, Joni Mitchell, and Weather Report bears this out. I saw Wayne live about six times and it was amazing..

Lacy was a different kind of duck. He came to Portland frequently with his

bands. I also saw his sextet as Sweet Basil in New York. His approach to the horn was unusual. He extended the range upwards into the altissimo. But what he did that was unique was he extended the low range by playing the horn against his leg. I've tried to incorporate both of these techniques having more success on the upper end.

I spoke to Steve once at a party after a concert in Portland. A thoughtful guy. We talked about his time with Gil Evans.

Leibman was one of my teachers in Canada and famously played only soprano for about 15 years. That's what he was doing when I got to know him. His singular Yogi-like journey on the soprano while issuing the tenor made him into one of the great sopranos stylists. I learned a ton from him over the years.

Jane is a very nice person. I invited her to one of my gigs via postcard once. She wrote me a nice letter expressing regret and having to miss my show. Later she sent me a chart of her tune Mighty Lights in the mail.

She may have been the first one to use electronics effectively on the soprano. Grossman played more soprano than tenor when he joined Miles replacing Wayne Shorter.

I saw him with McCoy Tyner at Sweet Basil but he was only playing tenor then. Joe Farrell was also an important soprano player using it on his own records like Moon Germs and Outback, but also playing spectacularly on Chick Corea records such as Return To Forever, and The Leprechaun. Cadence: You seem to maintain a busy schedule as a working musician; but do you have a working band tours? Sometimes. But my model is a little different. I have regular bands in seven cities. The primary one is the Rob Scheps Coretet in New York City. The other bands are in Seattle, Portland, Denver, Atlanta, Kansas City, and Honolulu.

The regular band in each of these cities has pretty steady personnel and consists of very adept cats, so I can play my music with all of them.

Right now in June 2024 the New York band is working a series of dates, but in September, it'll be The Seattle band.

Cadence: *Wow this is a playing model that I never heard of.....*

R.S. It works well and allows for some variety of interpretation.

Cadence: *The trajectory of artist decades past was (particularly saxophonists) to do a ballad album, a big band and strings recording and finally a date featuring the standard jazz repertoire. Could you imagine doing this?*

R.S. Maybe so. I find that to be mostly an antiquated model.

I prefer to mix and match, but to still create records that have a thread and some cohesion.

That said, there are certainly great examples of these particular kinds of record dates. Bird with Strings, Clifford Brown with Strings, Billie Holiday - Lady In Satin. Zoot Sims - Waiting Game.

John Coltrane struck gold when he made Africa Brass volumes one and two. I believe Eric Dolphy and McCoy Tyner were responsible for the orchestrations.

Trane sounds fantastic with a modern big band exploring some of the modes and chords he was using in his quartet, in expanded versions.

Interview:

Rob Scheps



Interview: Rob Scheps

Records of standards are a dime a dozen, there are tons of them. Some of them, of course are great. Baritone saxophonist Gary Smulyan made an interesting record titled *Hidden Treasures*, where he played great tunes that were relatively unknown but written by well-known composers.

That was an interesting CD.

The Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra made some great sides with singers like Ruth Brown and Joe Williams. Of course, Thad's arrangements were perfect. Ultimately, though whatever kind of record you want to make, there should be some stylistic cohesion or even an underlying plot. Just my viewpoint.

Cadence: So glad we're doing the interview because I as a listener never had a complete picture of your performance life. Roughly we have tracked your arrival in New York City over twenty years ago. Were you able to always sustain a career just playing and recording during the subsequent years leading up to now?

R.S. Yes, my career has been moderately sustainable. Even when I lived in New York City, I was working in New Jersey, Connecticut, Long Island, Massachusetts, and occasionally Providence, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Philadelphia!

Ever since I got a car, I have been booking gigs out of town and stretching the limits of where I go to play. There were periods where I was mostly around in Boston working; or in New York City as the surrounding area working. But my MO seems to be one of peripatetic wanderlust.

Tonight I performed at the Plaza Hotel in New York City. The last gig before that was at a church in Scottsdale, Arizona.

In the near future, I have a series of gigs in New York State, two composition residencies in Idaho and Pennsylvania; A series of shows in Oregon and Washington state; and things down the pike in New Mexico, Arizona and possibly Texas.

Recording is a part of my job. It happens in New York, Boston, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Oregon, Kansas City, Seattle, Honolulu, etc..

I love going to Europe. In recent years, I played in Munich, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Oslo, and in Finland.

There were always excellent local musicians to play with. I like to go to museums in these cities and learn about the local history of each place. Actually, one of the best recent museums was the Dinosaur Museum in Price Utah. The Phoenix and Tucson areas also have excellent museums.

We're never gonna see it all and learn it all, but we can try. Glad to talk about working with Al Grey, George Russell, John Abercrombie, and others.

Cadence: Please talk about your long association with The Gil Evans Orchestra beginning of course with the man himself?

Meeting him and your subsequent involvement with the group (that continues beyond his passing)?

R.S. I started playing with the Gil Evans Orchestra at the great club Sweet Basil in New York City on March 1, 1993. Trumpeter Miles Evans-Gil's son, hired me after we played together on a Bob Moses record.

On my first gig, I played alto sax, soprano sax, flute, and soprano sax.

The first piece we played on the first set was Jimi Hendrix's Little Wing. A Gil standard. I played every Monday there for a year. The somewhat shifting personnel included saxophonists Chris Hunter and Alex Foster; trombonist David Bargeron; trumpeters Lew Soloff, Alex Sipiagin, and Miles Evans; pianists Gil Goldstein and Delmar Brown; bassist Mark Egan; and drummer, Kenwood Dennard. Master guitarist Hiram Bullock was a frequent guest. The subs were out of this world, trumpeter Ryan Kisor, bassist Darryl Jones; and trombonists Robin Eubanks and Conrad Herwig. The band also played the Cutting Room in NYC.

A very memorable gig was the Spoleto festival in Charleston SC in 1994. For that show, we had the expanded orchestra with three french horns, Tom Malone on trombone and tuba, five trumpets, and multiple woodwinds. I played flute, piccolo, alto flute, clarinet and bass clarinet. I believe Maria Schneider conducted. The band played the Wall To Wall Miles Festival at Symphony Space on the upper west side of New York. We performed the album Sketches of Spain in its entirety with Maria conducting and Wallace Roney stepping in for Miles as the trumpet soloist. What a gig that was.

Also on that festival were Joe Lovano, Tom Harrell, Mulgrew Miller, Cameron Brown, Eddie Henderson, Joe Locke, and Jimmy Cobb, whom I got to speak with in the dressing room. I performed one concert with Gil in Boston. My time with the Orchestra starting in 1993 was after his passing..

Cadence: This next question regards the late great guitarist John Abercrombie and what you mentioned to me as being hundreds of performances. Please as with the prior artists that you mentioned give us a glimpse into both the man, his artistry and any interesting stories from those years?

To clarify, I played with John an awful lot, but it was not 100s of performances. It was a number of live shows coupled with hundreds of sessions at his house.. we played together many many times.

The repertoire usually consisted of standards mixed with John's original compositions, often the newest ones.

He had a great sense of humor, a very funny guy, and he was a raconteur. He told great stories and often I would hang with him hours after the rest of the band had gone home.

We also used to frequent a Chinese restaurant near his house called Golden House. They had a tank filled with giant goldfish. There was a waiter named Wing.

This is where John taught me to drink a martini his way. Vodka martini up dry with a lemon twist. I have often ordered this drink in a posthumous salute to him.

Many of the stories he told were about his contemporaries, the cats he came up with. Chick Corea, Dave Holland, Randy and Mike Brecker, Greg Kogan, Richie Beirach, Dave Liebman, Gene Perla, Ralph Towner, Glen Moore, and many others. It was a hang hearing these stories but it was also an oral history that John shared with me. That was priceless..

Stories about the band Dreams, and his time as a sideman with Billy Cobham also factored in. He expressed on many occasions that the two most important

influences he ever had were Jim Hall and Bill Evans.

When you know this, it informs your listening to John in a different way. He was one of my best friends and I loved him. It's a huge loss, not having him here.

Cadence: What is equally fascinating about your playing with John Abercrombie is he rarely recorded with saxophonists in his groups; did you ever record together?

R.S. Thanks. Of course it was an honor to play with John; almost always in quartets. John did have a CD with Joe Lovano. I think it was called Within A Song. He also toured with saxophonist Billy Drewes in his band a little bit. I played tenor and soprano with John. We performed together in Pennsylvania, Connecticut, New York... We had a band called the John Abercrombie/Rob Scheps Quartet. Drummer Eliot Zigmund and bassist David Kingsnorth rounded out the band.

John had a series of excellent bands throughout his career, but it should be noted that for the last 10 or 15 years of his life, he had a stellar quartet with Marc Copland on piano, Drew Gress on bass and Joey Baron on drums. That band had a special alchemy that wouldn't have worked with any other group.

Cadence: Let's conclude this interview by describing some of the various bands that you have led and currently are at the helm of?

R.S. Sure.

In Boston in the 80s, I had the True Colors Big Band, an all star aggregation with players such as Donny McCaslin, John Medeski, Curtis Hasselberg, Marshall Sealy, Andy Gravish, Wes Wirth, Josh Roseman, Chris Speed, Dave Finucane, Kenny Brooks, Doug Yates. Incredible energy, and creativity.

I also started the Rob Scheps quintet featuring such players as Joel Weiskopf, Ian Froman, and Kerry MacKillop.

Both bands performed around Boston at various clubs: the Willow, Ryles, the Western Front, the Middle East, Charlie's Tap and the venerable 1369 Jazz Club which we talked about before. Also, the Boston Globe jazz festival.

Other odd venues ranging from the Rathskeller known as The Rat to the comedy club Catch A Rising Star, Brandeis University and the private Algonquin Club.

The repertoire was eclectic, running from Sun Ra to the Dirty Dozen Brass Band.

In New York, I began the Rob Scheps Coretet. We played all over the city. This band was the embryonic beginning of the band I still lead today in fact as I write this, we're playing in New York City tonight at the Cutting room on Park Avenue.

Variants of the Coretet occur when traveling outside of New York.

Coretet North above NYC;

Coretet West in Portland, Oregon

And Coretet Oahu in Hawaii.

Usually 4 to 5 pieces, the group expands and contracts based on circumstances, allowing for some flexibility.

There was a sextet version in New York City that went about 8 years with stable

personnel. We played a zillion New York area clubs, but also headlined at the Ottawa Jazz Festival in Canada.

The Coretet and its current incarnation has been together about 14 years. Jim O'Connor on trumpet, Jamie Reynolds on piano, Cameron Brown on bass, Anthony Pinciotti on drums, and myself on saxophone and flute.

In Portland, I formed Rob Scheps Big Band. It started out as a small big band with seven horns.

It quickly expanded to a full 16 piece as needed by the charts we were playing. This band was extremely eclectic playing everything from Weather Report to Bob Mintzer to originals. It was very exciting, but a little tamer and less wild than True Colors had been in Boston.

In 1997 I formed a jazz/funk unit with my friend Kim Clarke the bassist from Defunkt and Joe Henderson. I had seen Kim many times in New York City with Defunkt and was very impressed. Her adaptability on electric bass led us to form this kind of musical hybrid band called Magnets!

We released the CD entitled Live at the Earshot Jazz Festival. It was recorded live on Halloween night in Seattle and came out pretty great. Kim is from Queens, New York and has a history of booking us in her hometown area. In this band I play(ed) tenor and soprano.

A main objective when we formed the band was to play Kim's quirky, funky original music. I contribute fewer compositions to this band than I do to others. Vibraphonist Bryan Carrott plays in the band and we have gone through a succession of drummers including Ronnie Burrage and Bill McClellan.

The more recent model of the Coretet is to have steady versions of the band in multiple cities. Outside of the main group in New York I have bands in Kansas City, Seattle, Portland, Denver, Honolulu, and now Atlanta.

There are great resourceful musicians everywhere that allow me to bring this music to different places and share it with new audiences.

I'd like to share what I picked up from Sam Rivers- what you say on the mic when you have kind of a light crowd is "tell them what they missed!"

I published a book in 2023 entitled Rob Scheps : 30 Original Compositions. I have been composing more prolifically since 2019 than ever before. There are 25 new pieces just since the publication of the book, and my band focuses on these compositions in performance and recording now.

Music is a continuum and my approach is to try to integrate the past and the future into the now and keep going while expanding and changing the music.

Link to Post about 30 Compositions:

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/15kyPVBRyr/>

Interview: Rob Scheps



ROB SCHEPS MUSIC

ROB SCHEPS: 30 ORIGINAL COMPOSITIONS



**INTERVIEW WITH JAMIE BAUM, FLUTES, COMPOSER,
BANDLEADER**

by Ludwig vanTrikt

Cadence: I am interviewing you during a time that you have a new Septet+ recording on Sunnyside (“What Times Are These”) and recently came back from a mini tour with another series of concerts coming up. Is your sense that in terms of the jazz performance world things have bounced back post Covid?

J.B.: I would say some things have bounced back and some have not. Some clubs and music venues closed and other’s opened. And, in some ways life as we knew it has “come back,” though differently. While things never stay the same, we have all been affected by Covid in some way or another and I think that has shaped and influenced our lives going forward. From what I have seen, there seems to have been a tremendous number of artistic projects/ recordings that were created during that time, which would make sense since most artist were staying home for unusually long periods. In the absence of performing, teaching and touring, many were developing new projects. I guess the “silver lining” would be the resulting amount of creativity and unusual amount of consecutive, concentrated “focus time.”

Cadence: “What Times Are These” is noteworthy on so many levels including your incorporating the Septet+ and guest vocalists along with the use of poetry by women poets. How do you get a massive project like this off the ground financially during a time when jazz cd sales are at best erratic?

J.B.: Certainly, having even just the Septet+ for so many years doing many performances, tours and recordings has been a huge financial commitment for me. Adding four vocalists and a percussionist to “What Times Are These,” made it even more costly. While it has been very challenging, with the increasing success and recognition the band achieved through performances and recordings, over time, we’ve been offered better and better paying gigs and some financial support. That said, my recent recording, “What Times Arte These” was made financially possible by a combination of grants, “crowdfunding,” Sunnyside Records support and having subsidized it with my personal finances. It is, of course, unfortunate (and often means less possibilities to record and develop projects by artists) that the music business is unable (or unwilling) to create more sustainable and equitable formats to help those musicians who are not subsidized by their labels (which is the vast majority), nor compensated for their work from most streaming, broadcasting and sales platforms. I don’t want to blame the independent record labels as I know things are more difficult for them as well. And I also want to mention that there are musicians who are trying very hard to make a difference and change the situation by speaking out to our “lawmakers” and through organizing...

Interview: Jamie Baum

Cadence: *Were you able to do any recent touring using guest poets or vocalist with the complete Septet+?*

J.B.: We did do several performances before recording the music in preparation for the recording dates, and also did a CD-release performance in NYC to celebrate its release. As you might imagine, in addition to the huge financial expense to present the entire group in concert, the fact that most of the musicians have either their own projects and/or are “in-demand” sidemen makes it very challenging to find dates where everyone is available. With this particular project where much of my composing was with these specific musicians in mind, I am reluctant to use subs when any of them cannot make it. We do though have some performances booked in 2025 that I’m excited about and looking forward to.

Cadence: *Please give us a glimpse into the workings of your artistry; how do you compose (using the piano or the flute)? What kind of practice routine do you maintain for the flute?*

J.B.: When I compose, especially for this size group, I usually start at the piano to come up with with my initial ideas, melodies and harmonies. I will often sing the melodies in my head, in the shower or when I’m doing other things, to get a sense if they work and/or to try to hear what might need to happen next. In my mind, I am often thinking about the concepts I want to work with and will get an idea and perhaps first try it on the piano. Once I have some ideas, I will put them into my Digital Performer sequencing program so I can hear them in “real time” since I’m not a good enough piano player to be able to execute that. Also DP offers me the possibility to hear many melodic and rhythmic lines at the same time to see if they work, something that would be difficult for me to do at the piano. The sequencing program also allows me to move sections around and try different version of things until I decide what I want and what works best.

For the flute, I practice every day and the number of hours I can spend at it is mostly determined by both my schedule and the availability of the practice room in my building. I generally try to do 2 to 4 hours a day at a minimum. I did a lot more for many, many years however between my schedule, composing and other recent family obligations, it’s been a challenge to find more time, though I do hope to again in the near future.

Cadence: *Please elaborate upon the various themes on your new recording especially in light of the forthcoming American presidential election?*

J.B.: Well, of course at this point we’ve already had the election and the results are clear. Needless to say it is a challenging time to be living in the US (though I know this will have far-reaching effects worldwide), especially for artists (among other marginalized groups). When I began my work on this recording, choosing poems, clarifying the themes and concept I wanted to focus on and composing the music, it was in 2020 just after Covid shut everything down. I had no idea what the political situation would become here or what things

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would transpire in other parts of the world. In some ways, one always hopes that by the time their work is finished and is released commercially, that the themes and the music will still be relevant. “For better or worse” as they say, the themes found on my recording are probably even more relevant now than when I began...

The title of the recording was inspired by Adrienne Rich’s 1995 poem “What Kinds of Times Are These” and refers to my experience of what was going on around me both with the outbreak of Covid-19 and what was happening socially and politically.

Soon after everything shut down in March, 2020 and I was confined to my mid-town NYC apartment, I discovered Bill Moyers’s website “A Poet A Day,” and while I’ve never been a huge poetry person, every day Moyers posted a poem that you could read, view a video of the poet reading it, and see Moyers interview the poet about it. This really drew me in.

From that, I got inspired to work on a new project for my large ensemble, deciding to do something I’d never done before - work with poetry as lyrics, composing music for it and writing for vocalists. I chose poems where I found something that “spoke to me” and I could express that feeling musically; I let each poem dictate what I would do, and who I would have sing it and solo on it. I knew the themes I wanted to work with although I didn’t yet know the order of those composition but allowed it to unfold as I went and as things became more clear.

While each composition’s meaning for me is discussed and elaborated in the liner notes that come with the recording and can best be interpreted individually by listening to the music and reading the poem, I offer here some examples:

On “In Those Years” by Adrienne Rich, the beginning passage reads, “people will say, we lost track of the meaning of we, of you. We found ourselves reduced to I.” I highlight this passage and in particular the word “I” by having the vocalist repeat it (with a piano ostinato accompaniment) while having the tempo speed up to give word more urgency and intensity.

Poet-novelist Marge Piercy’s “I Am Wrestling with Despair,” is a dystopian “cri de coeur” about the cruelty of the radical right towards the poor and women. The juxtaposition of the repeated yet displaced guitar / piano intro that continues through the first chorus gives an unsettled feeling.

The opening line of poet Naomi Shihab Nye’s “My Grandmother in the Stars,” (“It is possible that we will not meet again on earth, to think this fills my throat with dust”) was written about her grandmother in Palestine. At that time I’d been sharing in the caretaking of my mother, whose dementia / Alzheimer’s had progressed to a point where I couldn’t even play it for her. However, working with that poem and composing the music for it became a life-line for me, offering me a place to put my feelings about my mother and that experience. In essence, it is difficult, shocking and depressing to see the direction of our

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politics and socio-economic climate that has taken shape, accelerating over the past 20 years (though many believe it is a natural outgrowth happening far longer). Music has always been a vehicle of expression for me as was this project.

Cadence: *Since founding the Septet in 1999 would it be accurate to say that this lineup has been an artistic and financial success?*

J.B.: Oh...success is such a subjective concept. Of course it would be wonderful to make lots of money and be known world-wide (and I would be happy for that), however, my main goals have always been to be able to work at my craft to improve, perform and record as much as possible. Recognition and success, while personally gratifying, usually translates to more visibility, more options and being able to work more...and if that happens, it's a great thing and is more inline with my goals! Being able to keep the band together (with some personnel changes at different times) this long has been an incomparable opportunity for me as a composer. Knowing the musicians I am composing for in addition to having had this length of time to learn and understand how to orchestrate and arrange for this instrumentation has been a gift. Living in NYC, I have been very lucky to work with so many great musicians who both have the skill and mind-set to play the many unconventional ideas I've wanted to explore with this band.

Cadence: *How do you balance being a busy artist with living your life in terms of dating or marriage, family responsibilities and the mundane parts of life?*

J.B.: I think that is always a big challenge for everyone no matter what field, depending how demanding one's vocation and aspirations are. For me personally it has always been, and continues to be, a difficult challenge trying to balance family obligations and a satisfying personal life with the demands of being a musician, and often times one area suffers. Sometimes I don't get enough time to practice or compose, and sometimes I don't give enough time or attention to friends... Luckily I have been married to another musician who understands the demands of the daily focus and practice I need on my instrument, who I also frequently play and tour with...so that helps. But life presents unplanned and unforeseen interruptions that force you to make choices about your priorities and sometimes I get them right and sometimes I don't...but unless we can find more hours in the day, whichever choices we make, there is always "a price to pay." For example, for three years I shared in the care-taking of my mother who lived in Connecticut and suffered from dementia/ Alzheimer's (mentioned earlier) until she passed this past February. That took a significant amount of time away from every part of my life, but it was the right thing to do and I was glad to be able to be there for her. Now, I have been focused on getting back to a more regular practicing, teaching and performance routine.

Cadence: *Do you think that it is necessary in order to release music that it's helpful to have music with a theme? For instance in 2018 the record "Bridges"*

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connected the musical dots a number of different cultural dots. Please answer the first part of that question and kindly delve into “Bridges”?

J.B.: I don't think that it is necessary in order to release music that it's helpful to have music with a theme. I think that all approaches to creativity are valid and can be used and employed at different times. Personally, for me, I have found that I enjoy working with whatever is inspiring to me at that particular moment in time, that gives me a focus to explore ways to develop ideas and formats for myself (and my band) as both a composer and improviser. For example, because you have asked about “Bridges” ...at the time I wrote the music for that recording, I had been doing quite a bit of touring in South Asia (including India, Nepal, Bangladesh, etc.), a lot of listening to the music from those cultures, in addition to doing performances with musicians from those countries, both in NYC and there. I love the music and cultures from that part of the world so became interested in trying to find ways I could take ideas from that music to enhance my own. Of course, I understand and have great respect for their musical traditions, its complexity and the number of years, time and devotion it takes to play and understand that music so I was not trying to write or play in those styles. I was just trying to take some elements to expand my palette and work with them in my own way. Working with Amir ElSaffar, who played in my band during that time, was also influential. We had some discussions about the similarities (and differences) between Maqam, Qawwali and sacred Jewish music that were illuminating and inspired some of the music I wrote and recorded on Bridges as well.

Cadence: Do you foresee to continue recording for Sunnyside Records? Are there any plans to release your music via vinyl?

J.B.: I hope to continue to record for Sunnyside. “What Times Are These” is my fourth recording for Sunnyside and I feel very fortunate to have their support. I have a very good relationship with them and live just a few blocks from their office so enjoy going to visit for a coffee from time to time. The label has a very long history for putting out great music and I am honored to be a part of that legacy.

Sunnyside does not release their music on vinyl, at this point, and I don't think my earlier recordings have been reissued on vinyl either.

Cadence: Your recently completed a tour of parts of India and would love to get a glimpse into that experience both musically and non-musically? Was this your first time?

J.B.: I actually just returned from a 4 1/2 month tour with the first half being in Europe (Germany, Austria and Spain) and the second half in Kathmandu and Delhi. This was my fourth time performing at the Jazzmandu Jazz Festival in Kathmandu and my third time performing in Delhi. I love Nepal and each time I've gone to play at that festival has been special. Also, that festival lasts a little over one week so that amount of time offers the opportunity to get to know a little of the city, the music and some of the musicians and fans. It's a wonderful,

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special place and the people are very warm and friendly. It has some similarities to India (though India is quite vast with several different dialects and cultures) however there are also influences from further East including Tibet, China and some of the other surrounding countries, in addition to the many visitors and tourists from Europe and Australia. This time when I went to India, I stayed only in Delhi for one week but was actually happy to have more time there to explore parts of the city and get to know some of the people. The other times I was there I didn't have any free time since we were performing, rehearsing and giving workshops.

I love that part of the world, the music, the culture, the food, the world view... and so any chance I can get to go, I will gladly take it. It is very different and one really experience a paradox of the juxtaposition of the very old and very new.

Cadence; Going from talking about one of humanity's most ancient civilizations to AI. What are your views on this burgeoning technology and its potential use and misuse in Jazz?

J.B.: To be honest, I don't know much about AI and in particular it's impact on music except what I have heard and read...mostly I've heard about it in context of it's use in music in the film and television industries. Of course, I would be opposed to it's misuse in any form, however while this might sound naive, I believe there will always be a need and place for live and creative music because musicians need to create, perform and connect with others, and most people need to experience that emotion and connection that can only be had in a live and/or recorded activity. It reminds me of when people talk about whether the CD is obsolete and/or unnecessary...all I can say is that many musicians I know like to compose, perform and/or record thinking and conceiving of their music as a group of pieces that relate, perhaps that has an arch and order to them to communicate a vision, statement or concept they are working with. Many musicians, including myself still find the idea of liner notes, telling a story, a concept and a feeling in addition to having something tactile and finite, to be essential...albeit I know I'm a bit of a dinosaur!

Cadence: I am interviewing you during some extensive touring by you and your band; thus, please address a statement that Esperanza Spalding made about how she noticed that even for someone like herself (a higher profile artist) performance opportunities across the world have dramatically decreased?

J.B.: Actually, the 4 1/2 week tour I just returned from that you are speaking of was not my own tour nor did I do any of the booking for it. I was a sidewoman in pianist/composer Monika Herzig's group and we were on tour celebrating the release of our fourth CD and 10th year performing together. I do however have a tour coming up in January with my own quartet. To be honest, for me booking the quartet tour recently was much easier than I'm used to because I've been booking my large group, The Jamie Baum Septet+, for several years. Booking the Septet+, despite the success of our recent release (with a 5-star

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review in DownBeat) has become even more difficult because it has now become a 10-piece band (with vocalists and percussion) fitting the needs of the new material. Booking a band of that size (even when it was just a seven-piece band) was always a challenge because it requires a large stage, more backline, and of course more money, not only for artist fees but hotel rooms and flights! Like I said though, I did not book the recent tour I was on with Monika's band so I can't speak to the challenges she faced. She did a great job keeping us on the road for so long with many nice performance dates.

Without knowing the specific issues Esperanza Spalding was speaking about (i.e. fee, venue size, travel requirements, etc.) it is difficult to assume the context of the conversation, and so I wouldn't want to make a comment or dispute her experience. While I have always found it challenging to book performance opportunities, we are finally coming back from the "covid period" where everything was halted! I think it took quite a while for performances to return to the pre-covid level (especially with many of the clubs having closed permanently), so to me it seems like this period is a busy time.



Book Look

WASHITA LOVE CHILD,
THE RISE OF INDIGENOUS ROCK STAR JESSE ED DAVIS,
DOUGLAS K. MILLER. 369 PAGES,
LIVERIGHT PUBLISHING.

Before reading this splendid biography I was under the illusion that I was one of but a few longtime friends of the protagonist but that was not the case. Like fellow Oklahoman Will Roger he apparently never met a stranger. Towards the end of this tome are lists of interviews taken by the author and others that lay claim to the fact. And they were not all musicians although players made up the majority group that celebrated him the most. The initial chapters read like the usual biography detailing the various tribes involved and their movement in relocating as the western portion of our nation became so-called "civilized". There are loving portraits of Jesse's parents whom were nicknamed Mamacita and I called Chief. The former played piano while the latter handled the drums in a local two-beat band. Anyone unfamiliar with Native American culture and the "land of the redman" (Oklahoma) would do well to peruse these chapters. I remember the family had a great record collection so it's little wonder the son was drawn to music. In the fourth chapter we find our hero a history major in the town of his birth (Norman, OK) while gigging with local garage bands around the area. It was around this time he joined Big Joe Lewis, Porkchop Markham & others to back popular rockabilly singer Conway Twitty (Harold Jenkins). All this before heading west to seek recognition of his immense talents. After arriving in Lala-Land Jesse quickly established a reputation as a go-to session player in the numerous studios. There he showed his versatility on recordings from jazz pianist Ben Sidran to blues masters like Albert Collins, both B.B. & Albert King to rock & pop figures such as Bob Dylan, Jackson Browne and all the Beatles (save Paul). After hooking up with fellow Oklahomans he made his major band affiliation with Gary Gilmore and Chuck Blackwell both transplanted Okies to form the bedrock underpinning for the Taj Mahal combo eventually issuing a half-dozen titles for CBS/Sony. This period is covered extensively and thoroughly by the author and should be required reading to all music lovers. Readers no doubt will relish the next chapters that cover JED's solo albums, his onstage appearances with Rod Stewart and the Faces & probably his greatest video shots with George Harrison & crew at the Concert for Bangladesh. This period finds him at the peak of his artistic powers but far from his original roots at times. With his street cred at its highest this was probably the happiest time in his adult life. That joy was offset by what followed with bouts of deep depression. Plus work was scarce. There was the occasional Graffiti band gigs with John Trudell but nothing the stature of previous exposure. Throughout the Eighties he would make periodic returns to OKC usually ovwe Often during these visits he would look me up and we wound up going up to Tulsa to play at Jimmy Markham's Paradise Club. There was no noticeable decrease in his picking prowess to these ears. The main thing I admired about his playing was his naturalness. Eschewing gizmos & gadgets one always heard the sound of a guitar not some highly synthesized tone trying to emulate another instrument. This was true from the beginning until near the end. From cover to cover this is just a beautiful book. Get it.

Larry Hollis

Book Look

THE SPIRITUAL PATH TO FINDING YOUR VOICE NORA MCCARTHY

By Chris Brandt

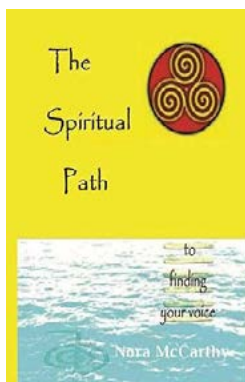
What Nora McCarthy has gathered together here is a monumental achievement. If you use your voice at all – to entertain, to persuade, to teach, or to sing in the shower – this book will help you get the most out of it – it does it all – teaches us techniques and exercises, guides us in our thinking and meditating, inspires us, and even helps us find the core (or heart, or soul) of our genuine voice.

One of the things that makes this book so useful is the melding of Eastern spiritual life teachings with Western empirical and rational thought. McCarthy explains the terms on both sides of the East/West “divide” and brings them together to heal that historical breach.

McCarthy reflects on her most influential teachers and describes a learning experience she had singing solo for the first time in a club on the L.E.S. many years ago where she and bassist Juini Booth had a regular weekly gig. To start off their first set, Juini asked her to just start singing and when he heard something, he’d come up and join her. “Try being both focused and submerged in the music while letting go—free falling as it were; in the process yet unaware of self; fearless and surrendered; all at the same time not easy to do. That’s improvisation!” Let us not forget that free falling in dreams, a Malaysian shaman once said, is the way to learn to fly.

Christopher Hirschmann Brandt, writer, translator; a man of the theatre, and a college professor teaches poetry workshops in the Fordham University English Department’s Creative Writing Program, and lectures in Fordham’s Peace and Justice Program.

Brandt’s poems, essays, anthologies and translations have been published here and abroad in many prestigious international journals; the National Poetry Magazine of the Lower East Side; The New Yorker; Seven Stories Press; Univ. of California, Berkeley; Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña; and, the on-line journals Syndic, AMP, and (One).



New Issues

EMILY REMLER COOKIN' AT THE QUEENS

RESONANCE 2076

DISC ONE: MOANIN' / HOW INSENSITIVE / AUTUMN LEAVES / POLKA DOTS AND MOONBEAMS / SAMBA DE ORFEU / HOT HOUSE—WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED LOVE? / WEST COAST BLUES / TENOR MADNESS. DISC TWO: OUT OF NOWHERE / MANHA DE CARNAVAL(*) / CISCO(*) / YESTERDAYS(*) / ALL BLUES(*) / SOMEDAY MY PRINCE WILL COME (*) / SO WHAT—IMPRESSIONS (*) / D-NATURAL BLUES (*). TOTAL TIME: 1:38:31.

Remler, gtr(all tracks); Cocho Arbe, p; Carson Smith, b; Tom Montgomery, d. 5/28/84. Carson Smith, b(*) / John Piscid, d(*). 9/19/88. Las Vegas (all tracks). Subtitled Live

In Las Vegas 1984 & 1988 this is a package all music aficionados especially guitar hounds need to pick up. To be totally honest I had forgotten how good a guitarist this woman really was. Not completely unfamiliar with her work I had a couple of her Concord albums yet her strongest impression came from a jazz club gig in the early eighties in a strip mall of all places. As usual, there was no respectable crowd due to lack of advertising strictly word of mouth. Fronting an upright/traps backing she had shucked her shoes before the first set ended. No idea who the bassist was but I wanna say the drummer's name was Kelly and he hailed from Chicago. Both were fairly young and quite accomplished on their instruments.

To my knowledge Ms. Remler never released a live album during her short lifetime so this pair is more than welcome. Taken from radio airshots from Alan Grant's weekly show on local station KNPR there's a ten tune program with a foursome from '84 and a trio performance of eight numbers from late '88. All of the participants are unknown to me except for upright ace Carson Smith the older brother of Putter Smith who many readers may recognize. His rock solid bull fiddle provides the prominent underpinning on both sets like he has done previously with Gerry Mulligan, Chico Hamilton, Chet Baker. Etc.

As for the leader, she is the dominant voice as she glides effortlessly through scripts from Miles, Bobby Timmons, Trane, Tadd Dameron and Wes Montgomery. Much has been made of her ties to the last mentioned but there were other six-string threads woven into her distinctive style. This writer hears not only her octave work but other slight influences; the clean, crisp articulation of Pat Martino in her lines, a chordal knowledge out of Jim Hall & Tal Farlow, a tropical flavor akin to Ernest Ranglin and like her peer Kenny Burrell she's never too far from the blues. And if you think this lady can't swing just check out her coupling of "So What/Impressions". Whew! This should serve as a welcome reminder of her musical prowess.

Larry Hollis

New Issues

GEORGE CABLES, I HEAR ECHOES, HIGHNOTE 7356.

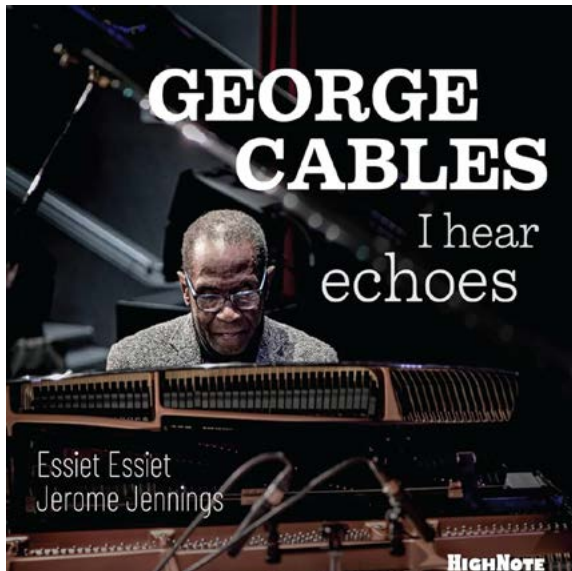
ECHO OF A SCREAM / ECHOES / SO NEAR SO FAR / MORNING SONG / PRELUDE
TO A KISS / CLOCKWISE / LIKE A LOVER / YOU'D BE SO NICE TO COME HOME
TO / BLUE NIGHTS / JOURNEY TO AGARTHA / PEACE. 65:39.

Cables, p; Essiet Essiet, b; Jerome Jennings, d. 1/30 & 5/2/2024. NYC, NY.

Lets face it; there are a multitude of really good professional piano players plying their trade on the current jazz scene. Then again there's very few great ones. The only contemporary this scribe can think of would be the great Kenny Barron who at 81 is just a year older than George. In many ways he reminds me of my favorite all-time pianists Wynton Kelly. Not stylistically mind you but how both men seem to be taken for granted and how neither one ever reached the top of the polls.

Back to the business at hand. For this superlative trio date Cables has enlisted the assistance of two top-shelf men. Essiet Okon Essiet has been the bottom anchor on almost all seven under the Highnote logo while trapster Jennings, at 44 years of age is the young pup present, sports a thick resume. Both take the solo spotlight throughout with a snare hand-drumming straight out of Ed Thigpen On the barely recognizable "You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To". There's a tip of the hat to upcoming keyboardist Arcoiris Sandoval (any kin to Arturo?) on the next to last tune, four Cables originals and a solo piano piece to wind thins up. Another nice one to add to the Highnote stack.

Larry Hollis



New Issues

DAVE STRYKER

STRYKER WITH STRINGS GOES TO THE MOVIES

STRIKEZONE RECORDS 8827

IN YOUR EYES/ CINEMA PARADISO/ YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE/ TAXI DRIVER (MAIN THEME)/ THEME FROM SHAFT/ CAVATINA/ FLIRTIBIRD/ LOW KEY LIGHTLY/ MOONGLOW/ DREAMSVILLE/ EDELWEISS 62:06

STRYKER, G; XAVIER DAVIS,P; JEREMY ALLEN, BASS; MCCLINTY HUNTER, D BRENT WALLARAB, COND; MARK BUSELLI, JEFF CONRAD, TPT; GREG WARD, AS, SOP; JIM PUGH, TIM COFFMAN, JEFF PARKER, ANDREW DANFORTH, RICHARD DOLE, TBN; SARA CASWELL, MICHELLE BLACK, JOSEPH OHKUBO, RACHEL PATRICK, ANNA CZERNIK, BRYSON KARRER, NOELLE TRETICK GOSLING, TRICIA BONNER, MARISA VOTAPEK, SAGE PARK, SARAH COOK, SOPHIE BUSELLI, VLN; KATHY HERSHBERGER, DEREK REEVES, ALEX HOBERTY, VLA ; YOONHAE SWANSON, STEPHEN HAWKEY, CEL 2/24-25, 3/10 2024 BLOOMINGTON, IN.

Among the some 25 albums Dave Stryker has recorded under his name “Stryker With Strings Goes To The Movies” is a project that stands alone in today’s guitar world. Bringing us back to a time when jazz guitar was featured atop classic string and horn arrangements like the memorable days of Wes Montgomery or Kenny Burrell. Stryker has had a long and fruitful career, aside from his extensive original recordings Dave is well known for his work with Stanley Turrentine. I’ll say that it’s easy to see why Stanley Turrentine, one of the most soulful saxophonists of all time would collaborate with someone like Dave Stryker. Both players have that special gift of putting the right notes in the right place.

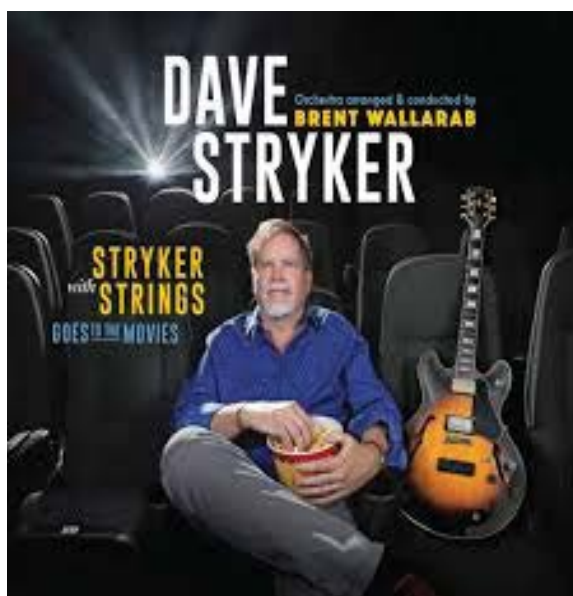
Opening with “In Your Eyes” from the movie “Say Anything”, Brent Wallarab’s colorful horn arrangements introduce this soulfully confident piece as it unfolds into a unison melody statement between violinist Sara Caswell and Dave Stryker. Stryker breaks loose with his signature, in the groove soloing followed by Caswell’s equally fine sonic dance with all the right stuff. The two soloists then come together for a conversational interlude of magical interplay. “Cinema Paradiso” from the movie of the same title gets a lush horn and string arrangement intro. Here Stryker states the melody with warmth and clarity demonstrating patient phrasing and breath. Solos by Pianist Xavier Davis and Stryker are rich and carefully constructed with lots of heart and soul. As always Stryker knows how to build the perfect solo, creating just the right amount of tension and release. A mellow bossa feel presents “You Only Live Twice” the title track from the James Bond movie. Stryker’s lush tone and phrasing gives the melody a clean and expressive read and his solo glides nicely amongst Wallarab’s tasteful string arrangements. A sweet electric piano solo by Davis adds another layer of expressiveness. Stryker and Wallarab work together as one to deliver a beautiful arrangement of the theme from “Taxi Driver”, successfully conveying the complexity of Robert DeNiro’s dark and disturbing character. Greg Wards haunting alto voice captures the feel of the original Bernard Herrmann score and then some. “Shaft” gets down and funky with some nice horn and string arrangements laying down the canvas for Stryker to tell the story. “Cavatina” from “The Deer Hunter”

New Issues

begins with an exquisite nylon string melody statement before Stryker transitions to electric guitar. The group as a whole does a wonderful job of bringing forth the feeling of what the cast of "The Deer Hunter" was experiencing as they were leaving their homes in Pennsylvania to an uncertain future in Viet Nam. Ellington/ Strayhorn's "Flirtibird" is sultry and very Ellington as Stryker again does a masterful job working with the melody and orchestral arrangements followed by fine solos from Mark Buselli on frugal horn and Stryker. "Low Key Lightly" brings more Ellington/ Strayhorn magic, both tunes from the movie "Anatomy of a Murder". Moonglow opens with some captivating string arrangements that blossom into medium swing as Stryker and Jimi Pugh on trombone share this classic melody. Solos by Stryker and Pugh swing hard and sweet followed by a short shout chorus. "Dreamsville" takes a slow and tasteful pace that would put a smile on Henry Mancini's face and Stryker's melody interpretation is nothing short of perfect. Rodger's and Hammerstein's waltz "Edelweiss" finishes the set with some fine solos from Davis, bassist Jeremy Allen and Stryker.

The more I listen to Dave Stryker the more I recognize what an important voice he is in the evolution of jazz guitar. His clarity and ability to space things out just right coupled with his strong soulful voice is untouchable. "Stryker With Strings Goes To The Movies" is a fine example of his abilities.

Frank Kohl



New Issues

DAN DEAN

VOCALIZE

DANDEAN DDM2024A

RACHMANINOFF: 14 ROMANCES, VOCALIZE OPUS 34, NO.14/ PROKOFIEV: TOCCATA IN D MINOR, OPUS 11/ COUPERIN: LES BARRICADES MYSTERIEUSES/ STRAVINSKY: L'HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT, TRIUMPHAL MARCH OF THE DEVIL/ HOLST: SUITE 1, MVT. 2, INTERLUDE/ PROKOFIEV: MONTAGUES AND CAPULETS/ FAURE: PAVANE IN F# MINOR, OPUS 50/ RACHMANINOFF: PRELUDE IN G MIN, OPUS 23, NO.5/ PROKOFIEV: L'AMOUR DES TRIOS ORANGES: MARCHE, OPUS 33/ KNOPFLER: GOING HOME (THEME OF LOCAL HERO) 40:00 MERCER ISLAND, WA 10/3/21 - 3/3/23

Dan Dean Vcl, fretless bass, whistle

Originally I felt woefully unqualified to review Dan Dean's latest cd "Vocalize" due to its classical content. However I found myself so captivated by his presentation that I now view it as a door opening experience. If I had to categorize it I'd call it creative music that transcends being labeled, in a sense liberated from the confines of genre.

What Dean has done is single handedly perform, record and engineer ten classical pieces using his voice, fretless electric bass and lots of technical wizardry. We journey through the works of Rachmaninoff, Prokofiev, Couperin, Stravinsky, Holst, Faure, and Knopfler. Starting with Rachmaninoff's "Vocalize Opus 34" Dan uses his voice to present multiple vocal tracks, giving the effect of a choir with accompaniment. The end result is simply stunning. Prokofiev's "Toccata in D minor, Opus 11" is another fine example, layering his voice to deliver an up tempo, magically imaginative barrage of sound, color and texture. Rachmaninoff's "Prelude in G minor" has multiple layers of vocal tracks articulating this rhythmically active piece with lots of drama. Gabriel Faure's "Pavane in F# minor, Opus 50" is another fine especially rich offering with multiple voices of different timbre weaving together to create a sonic landscape of brilliance. I was especially moved by Mark Knopfler's "Going Home". The piece itself is absolutely gorgeous and Dan honors that elegance with the highest degree of care. It should not be overlooked that Dan is a masterful bassist. His solo on this piece with the fretless electric bass is absolute perfection.

So with the extraordinary artistic and technical skill demonstrated by Dan Dean on "Vocalize" the listener can surely be taken away by this incredible music. Regardless of whether your a Jazz or Classical listener your in store for a blissful musical experience. Dan Dean's "Vocalize" is an amazing achievement and one of my favorites for 2024. Sent from my iPad.

Frank Kohl

New Issues

MARK DRESSER AND PAUL NICHOLAS ROTH - SIGNAL BLUR

EARWASH RECORDS

READY-PLAY/ DANCE/ JAMMED/ PARADOX/ WEATHER/ CIRCLE/ WAY/ ADDING 36:58

Mark Dresser, bass; Paul Nicholas Roth as, composer New York, no date

Another duet record, this time bass and sax. The record opens with an interesting jagged composition, followed by some very interesting interplay between the two players. It sounds like they have been playing with each other for a while. And this is followed by a nice mellow melody with some bowed bass. The bass contrasts nicely with Ross' airy tone, especially when he plays harmonics.

I am also enjoying the compositions. They appear as simple but jagged lines which allows for interesting interplay from the bass. This is very evident in Jammed, which is not a jam but an interesting composition with wonderful interplay between Dresser and Roth. And Dresser has a great solo on Paradox.

An interesting feature of Roth's playing is his using contrasting trills and growls, which he uses effectively. The growls also contrast nicely with his over-all tone. The bass growls on Way provide a great contrast to Roth's melodic line.

I really enjoyed this record. My only complaint is that it is too short. It left me wanting more.

Bernie Koenig

PAUL DUNMALL AND KEVIN FIGES - DUOS

MY ONLY DESIRE RECORDS

THE CHAT; TENOR AND ALTO SAXOPHONE #1/ CLARINET AND ALTO FLUTE #1/ TWO FLUTES/ TWO SOPRANO SAXOPHONES/ TWO ALTO FLUTES/ BARITONE AND SOPRANO SAXOPHONE #1/ CLARINET AND ALTO FLUTE #2/ TENOR AND ALTO SAXOPHONE #2/ TWO FLUTES #2/ BARITONE AND SOPRANO SAXOPHONE #2 39:52

Paul Dunmall, ts, as, clt, flt alto flt; Kevin Figes, as, ss, bari s, Flt alto flt Bristol 23 August. 2022

I love duos. Then interesting thing here is the amazing interplay between these two players. I am not also sure who is plying what on some of the tracks but that is not important. What is important is how they work together. I am familiar with Paul Dunmall as I reviewed a record of his some years ago.

The different horns create some very nice contrasts, even when they are both playing the same horn as on the duo for two flutes. One can hear different sonorities from each player. And the same holds for the two soprano duet. This is especially clear when they end up playing the same phrase together. Each player clearly has his, and they contrast well. own style and tone I also must admit how much I love the alto flute. The alto flute duet is probably my favorite track. And the tracks with the greatest contrasts are the soprano and baritone duets. Partly due to the difference tone of the instruments but also due to the different styles of the players I always think of duos as musical conversations. And like all conversations, most of the time they are talking to each other but every once in a while one player goes off on his own tangent. But they manage to get back together. A great record for all reed players.

Bernie Koenig

New Issues

KEVIN FIGES AND JULIE TIPPETTS - HAPPY APPLES

MY ONLY DESIRE RECORDS

THE THIRD HARMONY/ WINTER/ WHO'S GOT THE BREAD/ GALLOP TO SOMEWHERE/ NEARLY HOME/ NOH MARKET/ FISH BASKET/ SNAKE TICKET/ HAPPY APPLES/ AUNTY BERYL'S STOCKINGS/ STATIC START/ PUDDLE JUMPING/ DUNE DIMENSIONS/ WATER CARRIAGE/ DUCK OFF 40:08

Kevin Figes, As, Ss, Flt, Bass Flt, P, Transistor radio, chicken; Julie Tippetts Vcl, Zither, Happy Apples, ducks, perc Bristol, 22 Feb 2023

Vocals, saxophones and different sound effects. My kind of record. Tippetts has a nice range and Figes horns blend well with it in different registers. The various use of sound effects is both fun and effective. I think the fun part dominates. I really like the use of the gong on Who's got the Bread. And the harmony on Gallop to Somewhere is great. The first track which takes up about a third of the recording is worth the price of admission alone. Tippetts and Figes are truly in sync in both phrasing and harmony. And the various special effects just add to the overall ambience of the music.

The last ten tracks are all under a minute and it sounds like the two of them were just having fun with all the effects, especially the duck sounds; But the first five tracks all are serious and show great interactions between the two performers.

Let me just say that I love this recording. I think it would appeal not only to jazz fans but to fans of avant-garde classical music

Bernie Koenig

DAVE BITELLI AND OLLIE USUSKIN HARLESDEN SESSIONS

MY ONLY DESIRE RECORDS

DETERMINATION/THE REMINDER/ JUST GO/ CAUTION/ THE RISE/TOLD YOU ONCE/ TEMPERMENTAL/ PARTICULATE MOTION/THE UNDERNEATH/TRAIN/ THE AGREED 2 STEP/ PARTLY PARTY 49:13

Dave Bitelli, ts; Ollie Ususkin d no recording information

I am really looking forward to this as one of my main playing situations is with a sax player. But as a drummer I am quite critical of other drummers. In duets I like the drummer to be interactive with the horn. After half way through this recording I find that Ususkin is more of a time keeper than an interactive player. To be fair I cannot criticize him for what he not.

It sounds like he has a basic kit of snare, bass ride cymbal and hi hat. I don't hear tom toms. He maintains a good basic beat supporting Bitelli and using accents and short phrases effectively.

Bitelli plays some nice phrases and uses dynamics well, and Ususkin follows these dynamics effectively. This is especially the case on Caution. And this is followed by a nice mellow piece, The Rise, with Ususkin on brushes. Bitelli's melodic lines here are quite nice.

In short this is more of a drummer accompanying a sax player than an interactive duo.

Bernie Koenig

Reviews from Abe Goldstien from the website www.papatamusredux.com. Go to the website for more great album reviews

**SATOKO FUJII: YAMA KAWA UMI
NOT TWO RECORDS. (RELEASED DECEMBER 6, 2024)**

Some jazz instrumentalists, such as Lester Young, were known for their ability to tell stories through their playing. Others, like pianist Satoko Fujii, are known for their ability to paint pictures. As the title of her latest release suggests, Fujii, along with trumpeter Natsuki Tamura and drummer Ramon Lopez, create a musical vision of Yama Kawa Umi — the mountain side sea. Much like the breathtaking vistas, towering cliffs, deep blue waters, cascading waterfalls and secluded coves of the mountain side sea, the music of Yama Kawa Umi offers a sense of raw, untamed beauty. The opening track — “Headwaters” — is a case in point. It begins with a thunderous explosion of sound coming from the full trio only to be silenced by some well-placed single piano notes morphing into cascades as Tamura and Lopez tumble along the water’s path. Many of the other eight tunes on this journey follow the same pattern — shifting from serene passages to turbulent collective improvisation. At times, Lopez’s sensitive brush work conjures up images of sand slowly shifting on the shore only to be engulfed in a wave of rhythmic flurry. Tamura’s range of whispers, snarls, blasts and blurts emulate the wind as it travels through the rugged terrain. Like a waterfall, Fujii’s piano playing can be as precise as a single drop or as imposing as a torrential downpour. There are moments in each tune when all three musicians interact while at other times they perform as soloists or in various duo configurations. On “Signposts”, Fujii’s single notes are echoed by Tamura as if in a secluded cove. There is also an echo of Thelonius Monk’s “Misterioso” on this tune. On “Cold Water” Lopez and Fujii play a call and response pattern with Tamura’s trumpet interrupting the conversation. Although this is only their second recording as a trio, it is obvious that Fujii, Tamura and Lopez are totally in sync, working together to create an aural picture of the raw, untamed beauty of the mountain side sea. They deliver a masterpiece with Yama Kawa Umi!

BOTTOM LINE: The music on Yama Kama Umi shifts from calming, pristine themes to thundering, powerful passages. Using their individual and combined improvisational skills, pianist Satoko Fujii, trumpeter Natsuki Tamura and drummer Ramon Lopez create an aural portrait of the untamed beauty of Yama Kawa Umi (Japanese for mountain side sea).

Papatamus Redux

JASON PALMER: THE CROSS OVER, LIVE IN BROOKLYN GIANT STEP ARTS GSA 16 (RECORDED AUGUST 2023)

Jason Palmer calls the meeting to order with his opening trumpet call on this live session recorded at Ornithology in Brooklyn. One by one, the other participants enter the conversation. Drummer Marcus Gilmore comes in with blistering rhythms in a free exchange with Palmer. Next comes Larry Grenadier introducing a strong rhythmic bass line to the proceedings. Saxophonist Mark Turner is the last to join, just in time to accompany Palmer on the melody of the angular up-tempo opening tune — “B.A.M.D. (Budgets are Moral Documents).” After exploring all the harmonies, melodies and rhythms of that tune, the band goes on to perform eight more originals for a total of almost two hours of pure energy and interaction. Unless you were at Ornithology that evening, the two-CD set released as *The Cross Over, Live in Brooklyn* could be tedious listening, but Palmer and the band manage to keep things interesting. For example, “Same Bird” starts with a bass and drum duo before the rest of the band launches into the relaxed mode of this tune that features Palmer’s solo quoting Monk and “As Time Goes By.” Gilmore introduces “Beware of Captain America (A Line for Wayne Shorter)” with a drum solo that evolves from quiet brush work to explosive rhythms before Palmer’s shofar-like trumpet blast brings the group together. Palmer and Turner introduce “Dream For the Freedom Fighters (Those Who Fight To Keep the Dream Alive)” in unison before each member of the band launches into solos on this contrafact of “You Stepped Out of a Dream.” There’s the funky flavor of “Do You Know Who YOU Are? (A Line for Dr. C. West)” to the bluesy feel of “The Cross Over (A Blues for A.I.)” Regardless of the nature of the tunes, Palmer and Turner, who have been working together for the past decade, are the perfect combination of swaggering trumpet and sinewy saxophone, much like Cecil Bridgewater and Billy Harper in Max Roach’s pianoless quartets, and Grenadier and Gilmore are the perfect bandmates to propel them through two hours of inspired improvisation. My only issue with *The Cross Over, Live in Brooklyn* is the total length of the recording, the longer tunes (ranging from 11 to 21 minutes) and the extended solos. Trying to dedicate two hours listening to what the audience at Ornithology experienced that night was a challenge. Wish I could have been there.

BOTTOM LINE: It’s obvious the audience at Ornithology enjoyed the energy, compositions, solos and ensemble work of trumpeter Jason Palmer, saxophonist Mark Turner, bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Marcus Gilmore on this live recording. You will as well, but it will require two hours of serious listening to some serious music presented by some of today’s most compelling and competent musicians on *The Cross Over, Live in Brooklyn*.

Papatamus Redux

THE FURY: LIVE IN BROOKLYN GIANT STEP ARTS GSA 15. (RECORDED AUGUST 2023)

Don't be fooled by the name of this group. It is far from the dictionary definition of fury — intense, disordered and full of destructive rage. According to guitarist Lage Lund, the music of this collective tends more to the reflective, prioritizing group interplay and development while still leaving room for the members' individuality. The members Lund refers to are saxophonist Mark Turner, bassist Matt Brewer and drummer Tyshawn Sorey. Although some of these musicians have worked together in various combinations, this is their debut recording as a performing unit. Live in Brooklyn has The Fury working through seven originals penned by band members as well as one from Myron Walden. The tunes, which vary from the up-tempo "Like a Flower Seeking The Sun" to the balladry of "Of Our Time" and the pastoral mood of "Vignette" to the funky feel of "Couch," seem to be nothing more than jagged fragments of melodies held together by extended solos and rhythms that never stop for a breath. Sadly, it just doesn't work for me. However, things finally gel on the final track — "Sonnet for Stevie" — which begins with a well-executed bass solo and staggered entrances from Sorey, Lund and Turner. There is no question that individually these four musicians are masters at what they do. Unfortunately, this live recording for The Fury may not be the best vehicle for them to do just that. Hoping to hear what they are capable of in a studio setting.

BOTTOM LINE: Guitarist Lage Lund, saxophonist Mark Turner, bassist Matt Brewer and drummer Tyshawn Sorey have made a name for themselves on the contemporary international jazz scene. They come together on Live in Brooklyn as The Fury, but the results are not as strong as some of their earlier individual efforts.

BRIAN CHARETTE: YOU DON'T KNOW JACK! CELLAR MUSIC (RELEASED DECEMBER 6, 2024)

Early in his career, Brian Charette was working at a club in Harlem only to learn that the organ he was playing belonged to one of his heroes — Brother Jack McDuff. Since that time, Charette has become well familiar with McDuff — his style, his compositions and his many recordings. You Don't Know Jack! is a tribute to McDuff conceived by Charette and Cellar Music boss/saxophonist Cory Weeds. The eight tracks, including new tunes penned for this session and several McDuff originals, are stepped in the tradition of McDuff's classic Prestige dates but with a touch of modern sensibilities. Charette and Weeds, along with guitarist Dave Sikula and drummer John Lee cover all the bases — greasy blues, ballads, bossa novas, up-tempo swinger and soul-funk beats. There's even a boppish take on "Have You Met Miss Jones" renamed "Have You Met Joan?" Charette and Weeds go toe-to-toe tackling the melody lines

Papatamus Redux

of tunes such as the bluesy “Early America,” the bossa-infused “6:30 in the Morning” and the funky “Why’d You Have To Go and Lie To Me Boy?,” before launching into soulful solos of their own. Sikula’s guitar adds a bluesy flavor to the session particularly his solos on the up-tempo “The Jolly Black Giant” and the medium groove of “You Don’t Know Jack!” Lee’s drumming adapts to the mood of each tune, even giving a nod to Joe Dukes on the drum breaks of the easy going “I Like a Big Schnazolle.” Yet, rather than simply recreating the sound of Jack McDuff and his classic quartet with George Benson, Red Holloway and Dukes, Charette and gang have reinvigorated it with even more grit, grease and grooves. Once again, Cellar Music has advanced the sound of a bygone era with You Don’t Know Jack! Hopefully this tribute by Brian Charette and Cory Weeds will get young listeners to know the real Jack!

BOTTOM LINE: This tribute to organist Brother Jack McDuff could easily earn Brian Charette the moniker of “Brother” as well. Charette and saxophonist Cory Weeds breathe new life into a music that proliferated at small venues throughout 1950s to 1970s — the soulful, greasy, bluesy sounds of jazz organ, sax, guitar and drums. You Don’t Know Jack! not only captures that era but does so with some modern touches.

CHARLES TOLLIVER MUSIC INC: LIVE AT CAPTAIN’S CABIN REEL TO REAL (RELEASED NOVEMBER 29, 2024)

In 1972, the jazz world lost trumpeter Lee Morgan. About that same time, one might say we lost Miles Davis to the lure of jazz fusion and Freddie Hubbard to the commercialism of CTI Records. That left Woody Shaw and Charles Tolliver to carry on the tradition of Coltrane-inspired trumpet players. Shaw, who released his masterful Blackstone Legacy recording in 1971 was about to embark on a succession of records for Muse Records, while Tolliver was recording and touring with Music Inc. This recording captures the energy of Tolliver with pianist John Hicks, bassist Clint Houston and drummer Clifford Barbaro from a March 1973 date at Captain’s Cabin in Edmonton, Canada. The band had been touring Canada and the West Coast and as Tolliver remembers, by the time they got to Edmonton, they were a pretty tight band. “Tight” is exactly what you will hear on this double LP/CD featuring four classic Tolliver originals (“Earl’s World,” “Impact,” “Truth” and “Stretch”) a tune written by Houston (“Black Vibrations”) and a bebop classic from Neal Hefti (“Repetition”). Those familiar with the sound of Music Inc. will know what to expect on this release. Tolliver’s immediately recognizable bursts, flourishes, slurs, runs and growls dominate the session. From his Tyner-ish solo on “Black Vibrations” to his bop lines on “Repetition,” Hick’s skillset is on full display on each and every tune. Houston’s powerful bass lines weave in and out of the melodies and his introduction and extended solo on “Stretch” are icing on the cake. Barbaro’s loose, yet precise, drumming keeps the energy level high

Papatamus Redux

throughout the session. Although this is not the original Music Inc. lineup with pianist Stanley Cowell, bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Jimmy Hopps, it is just as fresh, powerful and energetic as those earlier sessions. So much so, that Tolliver would use Houston and Barbaro on his 1974 Live in Tokyo date. This “take no prisoners” date ranks right up there with Charles Tolliver/Music Inc. recordings on his Strata-East label. Kudos to Reel to Real Records for bringing this date to life!

BOTTOM LINE: Having booked jazz for more than 15 years in my community, you quickly learn that sometimes the magic happens and sometimes it doesn't. It certainly happened in March 1973 when Marc Vasey booked the Charles Tolliver Quartet at Captain's Cabin in Edmonton, Canada. From Tolliver's opening note of “Black Vibration” to the closing bass solo on “Stretch” this is the pure sound of Music Inc. — powerful, bold, energetic, inspiring and unmistakable. Recapture the moment with Live at Captain's Cabin.

ALAIN BEDARD AUGUSTE QUARTET: PARTICULES SONORES EFFENDI RECORDS 174 (RELEASED NOVEMBER 29, 2024)

For more than two decades, bassist Alain Bedard has been a force in the Canadian jazz scene. He is not only the leader of The Auguste Quartet, one of the country's best known jazz ensembles, but he is also the founder of Effendi Records. *Particules Sonores* celebrates both achievements with a recording that captures music composed and performed by Bedard, saxophonist Mario Allard, pianist Marie Fatima Rudolf and drummer Michel Lambert. The “sound particles” referenced in the title of this release define the range of moods one will hear — the flowing nature of “Compte-Rendu III, the rhythmic freedom of “Profumo Chaneleone,” the Middle-Eastern vibe of “A Goose Story” and the straight-ahead bebop of “Rescape des Temps.” The common element of the ten “sound particles” is the purity of the playing. Allard's lilting soprano sound is perfect for the plaintive melody of “Terrain Neutre” and the Latin American feel of “Il Cappello de mia Sorella.” He switches to baritone for a bebop romp through “Recape de Temps,” which is performed without Rudolf's piano. Not to worry, many of the selections provide Rudolf with ample space to showcase her flexible and fleet playing. Most impressive is her playing on “A Goose Story” and “Celeste.” Lambert and Bedard adapt to every “particular sound” and when they solo, they do so with a mix of passion and precision. Although the music on *Particules Sonores* may lack compelling musical surprises, it is packed with joy — the joy that comes from exploring the various tunes composed by members of The Auguste Quartet celebrating the two decades of success and influence of Bedard. Congratulations to Bedard and The Auguste Quartet for advancing Canadian jazz.

Papatamus Redux

BOTTOM LINE: To celebrate the 25th anniversary of his record label (Effendi), bassist Alain Bedard assembled his renowned Auguste Quartet for Particules Sonore. Joining Bedard for this celebratory release are saxophonist Mario Allard, pianist Marie Fatima Rudolf and drummer Michel Lambert. They celebrate Bedard with a range of moods, well-crafted compositions and arrangements, inspired solos and joy!

JAMIE SAFT TRIO: PLAYS MONK OYSTERTONES 005 (RELEASED NOVEMBER 22, 2024)

Would Thelonius Monk like the way in which the Jamie Saft Trio interprets ten of his classic tunes and one standard? I'll let Monk answer that — "The only cats worth anything are the cats that take chances." Chances are exactly what pianist Jamie Saft, bassist Bradley Christopher Jones and drummer Hamid Drake take on *Plays Monk*. It is obvious that each player has absorbed the music of Monk yet approaches it in their own unique way. Saft's purposeful hesitancy in his note selection in pure Monk. Yet, he does not merely copy Monk. His unique strong single note attacks, octave stabs, dissonant runs, quirky stride and colorful comping suggest the direction in which Monk may have gone had he not died in 1982 at the age of 64. Although Jones' solos are firmly grounded on the beauty of Monk's melodies, he also understands the harmonic and rhythmic complexity of the compositions. His walking bass line is ideal for "Children's Song," a lesser-known Monk tune based on "Nick Knack Paddy Whack," and when Jones takes the lead on tunes such as "Monk's Mood," he takes it on in true Charlie Rouse fashion — strong and declarative. Drummer Hamid Drake is constantly shifting from straight-ahead drumming to more of a Han Bennink approach of punctuating the melodies with an array of expertly placed drum rolls, cymbal splashes and brush strokes. Drake kicks off the opening track — "Raise Four" — with a nearly two-minute drum solo before launching into the familiar rhythmic pattern of that Monk classic. Whether the trio is interpreting ballads such as "Ruby My Dear" or up tempo swingers such as "Coming on the the Hudson," they do it with a sense of reverence and respect for Monk's music. More importantly, they are not afraid to take chances like on the only non-Monk tune on the session — "Everything Happens to Me." Saft begins the tune with the melody while Jones and Drake approach the tune with a much more freer approach. Somehow, they all manage to come together for the closing line of the tune. The Jamie Saft Trio *Plays Monk* is loaded with the type of players Monk would dig — cats that take chances. What better praise than that?

BOTTOM LINE: The star of *Jamie Saft Trio Plays Monk* is not the Monk-inspired playing of pianist Saft. It's not the melodic and deep tones of bassist Bradley Christopher Jones. Nor is the inventive drumming of Hamid Drake. The real star of this session is the tunes, tunes written by Thelonius Monk more than 70 years ago that still provide a foundation for these musicians to explore in new and creative ways.

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JOHN MENEGON: SOUND EMBRACE VALLEY JAZZ RECORDS (RECORDED JANUARY 2023)

For his sixth recording as a leader, bassist John Menegon assembled a group of musicians who share a geographic connection. They all are from or currently reside in Montreal, where this recording was made. That is quite different from his earlier recordings which mixed and matched players from Canada, the United States and Europe. Perhaps it's that common ground shared by Menegon, saxophonist Chet Doxas, pianist Jean-Michel Pilc and drummer Jim Doxas that contributes to the casual and collaborative nature of Sound Embrace. Or could it be the original compositions Menegon brought to this session? Although he is known primarily for his bass playing with folks such as David "Fathead" Newman, Anthony Braxton, Dewey Redman and other notable musicians (not to mention his own recordings), Sound Embrace showcases Menegon's exceptional writing skills. There's the loping bass line of "Hi Ho Silver" that morphs into a laid-back swing tempo and the Latin-infused rhythm of "The Light of Bley." Menegon excels at writing tender ballads such as "Love Bird," angular pieces such as "Lasso" and more atmospheric compositions such as "Safe and Sound." Then consider Menegon's choice in musical partners. Doxas' languid serpentine sax lines, often reminiscent of Charles Lloyd, are tailor-made for Menegon's compositions. Pilc's flexibility adds a range of colors to the tunes, from rhapsodic to knotty passages, single note flurries to suspended chords. Doxas' drumming sets the perfect mood whether the tune is funky ("The New Old"), flowing ("Devonian") or free ("3 Petals of a Flower"). Let's not forget the strong, lyrical and harmonically-advanced bass playing of Menegon as a soloist or intuitively interacting with the ensemble. There is something very special about Sound Embrace — perhaps it's the common ground the musicians share, Menegon's memorable compositions, the refreshing sound of the ensemble — or is it simply a damn good session that deserves your attention!

BOTTOM LINE: One of the titles on Sound Embrace is a classic oxymoron — "The New Old." As matter of fact, you can use a series of oxymorons to describe this session — The music is loosely tight with a subtle swing delivered by musicians who embrace the inside/outside with intricate simplicity

DAY DREAM TRIO: DUKE & STRAYS LIVE CORNER STORE JAZZ 0140-0141 (RECORDED IN DECEMBER 2023)

You might ask yourself where the melody is when the Day Dream Trio begins "Lush Life" with a bowed bass solo or when "Come Sunday" kicks off with a drum solo. But wait, because those familiar tunes will sneak up on you and unfold in a traditional/modernist approach on Duke & Strays Live. There is something refreshing about hearing these tunes reworked by pianist Steve Rudolph, bassist Drew Gress and drummer Phil Haynes. To paraphrase an automobile commercial from my youth, "this is not your father's Ellington and Strayhorn." It's close, but this trio adds something unique to the Ellington/Strayhorn library. Haynes punctuates the familiar tunes with an array of

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inventive and perfectly placed cymbal hits, brush strokes and drum rolls. Rudolph combines his strong single note attack with Bill Evans harmonic sensibilities to capture the swing and elegance of Ellington and Strayhorn without copying them. Gress keeps Haynes and Rudolph in check with his strong time keeping and lyrical solos. On their debut recording in 2009, the trio played "Day Dream." This time around, they cover 13 Ellington/Strayhorn classics ranging from a sublime interpretation of "Lotus Blossom" to a funky take on "Rockin' in Rhythm" to a medley of "Little Brown Book" and "Take the 'A' Train" (complete with the famous opening, changing tempos and the classic ending). Rudolph is given an opportunity to shine on a solo medley of "Single Petal of a Rose" and "Sophisticated Lady." Despite the more modernist approach to these tunes, Day Dream Trio remains true to one Ellington's tradition — It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing. In their own unique way, the Day Dream Trio swings on Duke & Strays Live, making it a must have for fans of Ellingtonia and modern jazz piano trios!

BOTTOM LINE: Jazz musicians have been covering the music of Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn since the day it was written. The trio of pianist Steve Rudolph, bassist Drew Gress and drummer Phil Haynes add their unique twists to the task in a set that is both familiar and refreshing, traditional and modern and inspired and inventive. If you are a fan of Ellingtonia, like me, you'll love Duke & Strays Live madly!

JOE FONDA: EYES ON THE HORIZON LONG SONG RECORDS 163/2024 (RECORDED DECEMBER 2023)

Joe Fonda has made many musical connections during his 40-plus years as a well-respected bassist, bandleader and composer. Eyes on the Horizon celebrates one of the most meaningful connections. Conceived as a gift from a former student to his master teacher, Eyes on the Horizon recognizes the impact trumpeter/educator Wadada Leo Smith had on Fonda. Since the time of their first meeting at the Creative Music Improvisors Forum in the early 1980s, Smith's artistic integrity, perseverance and ongoing creativity has been a source of inspiration for Fonda. To show his admiration for his former student, Smith's iconic trumpet playing joins Fonda on all seven originals written for this memorable session. Eyes on the Horizon also recognizes Fonda's connection with Japanese pianist Satoko Fujii, who he has recorded five duo albums since 2015, and drummer Tiziano Tononi, who he has collaborated with on seven albums since 2018. Although this is the first time these four musicians have played together, the common bonds and respect they have for one another results in a session that comforts, mesmerizes and engages the listener with every note. Whether it's the intricacies of a full quartet performance, the warmth of various trumpet/bass duos, Fujii's use of the total sonic possibilities of the piano or the percussive colors Tononi meticulously adds to the music, Fonda's compositions are always at the tipping point between structure and spontaneity. In addition to the pieces dedicated to Smith, Fonda and Smith

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perform a heartfelt duet on “Like No Other,” a piece dedicated to friend and vibraphonist Bobby Naughton. Because *Eyes on the Horizon* is all about connections, I suggest you connect with this outstanding example of modern jazz created by some of the masters of the art.

BOTTOM LINE: How do you say thank you to a musical mentor who has shaped your career? Bassist/composer Joe Fonda found the perfect way in *Eyes on the Horizon*, a recording he dedicates to trumpeter/educator Wadada Leo Smith. Better yet, Smith joins the ensemble along with Fonda, pianist Satoko Fujii and drummer Tiziana Tononi for a session of inspired solos, solid compositions and all-important spontaneity.

JACOB CHUNG: THE SAGE CELLAR MUSIC (RELEASED NOVEMBER 15, 2024)

The Cellar Music label does it again with a retro hardbop session! This time they pair members of the newest crop of young lions with a few former young lions to create a recording that is clearly reminiscent of the music of the original young lions from the 1950s! Although it may be refreshing to hear youngsters such as tenor saxophonist Jacob Chung embracing the musical styles of their elders, they seem more comfortable maintaining the status quo of that era rather than moving forward. However, they do an admirable job of it! For his second session as a leader, Chung balanced the youthful energy of pianist Tyler Henderson and bassist Caleb Tobocman with the mature energy of alto saxophonist Vincent Herring and drummer Joe Farnsworth. Combine that with six original Chung tunes, a ballad (“Embraceable You”) and a jazz standard (Duke Pearson’s “Jeannine”) and you have the recipe for a straight-ahead, in-the-tradition and tasty hardbop session. Kudos to Chung’s composing skills for capturing the classic hardbop sound on tunes such as the Latin-esque “My Aspirations,” the “Killer Joe” feel of “Thompson’s Pulpit,” the alto/tenor interchanges on “The Sage” and the race to the finish sprint on “Dim Sum.” Chung and Herring are the perfect partners to tackle “Jeannine,” while Chung caresses “Embraceable You” with his warm and big tenor sound. Farnsworth’s swing, Tobocman’s strong walking lines and Henderson’s bluesy solos are ideally suited for this classic sounding session. Therein lies my issue with *The Sage* — it is a classic session played with precision, energy and elegance, but lacking the one sound that keeps us listening to this music — the sound of surprise. Fans of hardbop will most likely enjoy *The Sage* as much as they enjoyed the classic sessions from the past. But if you are new to this genre, it’s time to acquaint yourself with some of the original young lions!

BOTTOM LINE: *The Sage* is a great example of how today’s young lions (with the addition of some older lions) are embracing the classic sound of the hardbop era. Nothing new here — except some of the names — tenor saxophonist Jacob Chung, pianist Tyler Henderson and bassist Caleb Tobocman — and some well-written hardbop originals.

Passing Glances Warren Benbow

WARREN BENBOW

(December 22, 1954 - September 29, 2024)

By Nora McCarthy

Warren Benbow, Drummer-Songwriter/Producer/Educator/Bandleader/Photographer, Author, Father and Friend, received his wings on September 29, 2024. A painful shock to all of us who knew him and a loss to the music world, without question, he left too soon.

Who was Warren Benbow? A world-renowned stellar artist and human being, Warren was full of life, love and music. He was involved with living – he cared about things, his family, his friends, his community, his music, his writing, his photography, his art; he was a very interesting man, and a kind man. For those folks who don't know who Warren Benbow was, I implore you to read his book, *A Drummer's Story*. You will learn about the man, the artist, the musician, and his magical musical life – all of his many accomplishments and all the greats he played with. Then listen to his music – he is his music. Google him, check out his YouTube videos, his FB page that is still up, and other social media hubs, read his posts shared by his many friends and followers, view his photos, the ones he took on a daily basis while walking around his neighborhood, the streets of Manhattan close to his home, capturing what he saw and turning them into works of art, and statements; the most recent being that of a pile of garbage on the curb - one of my particular favorites. Or the ones he took of himself, also among my favorites with the silly faces he'd make, in the dressing rooms and lobbies of the many places he performed. The ones of him on stage, or the ones of his latest recordings, and the one of him that he was so proud of, that was included in an exhibit in Poland of great jazz musicians. And last but not least, the photos of his drums—on display—in his living room—on stage—in crates before a tour; he was diligent in documenting his life. Yes, a drummer's story indeed.

Then there was Warren Benbow, the person, the father, the friend, the guy who, after you first met him, would make you feel as if you'd known him forever. Immediately open, immediately candid, he didn't exist in a box of his own making, he was accessible. A seriously caring, supportive, eccentric, total human being whose many friendships and the connections he cultivated are prime examples of his outreach and reciprocity and how he fully participated in this life experience both off and on the stage. He went that extra mile, and he showed up – literally and figuratively. If he extended his friendship it wasn't just some insincere gesture he performed like so many people in the music business do, he wasn't playing a role, he was for real. Genuine. That's what made him stand out, from all the rest, the others, the stereotypical ones. He was special and you could tell from the energy

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that surrounded him and that exaggerated smirky smile of his, also a statement that reflected more than met the eye – he had a theatrical streak as well in his DNA.

He played with music greats such as Nina Simone, Betty Carter, James Blood Ulmer, James Brown, Whitney Houston, Stevie Wonder - who also was his best man at his wedding, Jimmy Owens, Larry Willis, Eddie Gómez, Olu Dara, Michael Urbaniak, Sonny Sharrock, Teruo Nakamura, Luther Thomas, Gwen Guthrie, LL Cool J, SWV, and Mary J. Blige, and most recently with his Electric Jazz Project consisting of: Al MacDowell- Bass, Brandon Ross Guitar, Jay Rodriguez- Saxes and Flute, Graham Haynes- Trumpet, Chris Theberge- Congas and Percussion, Pete Drungle- Piano; and the Breath of Air Trio with Brandon Ross – guitar, and Charles Burnham – violin. Yet and still with all of the fame and fortune he was a part of, it never changed who he was at his core, his humanity, or his authenticity which always took center stage.

Shortly after I first met Warren in 2018, he showed up at my gig, at the Bar Next Door, surprising me. He listened intently, especially to the song Skylark which is a favorite of mine to sing and in retrospect I now understand what it meant to him. He sat close to the bandstand as I sang, submerged in the music and when I ended the song he let out a very audible moan of approval, like yeah, dig it, as if it were a part of the song, it fit right in, the timing was perfect. He owned that last statement. I'll take that I thought to myself from the drummer who played with the queens of jazz, soul and r&b. Later that evening when he got home he texted me this thoughtful message:

*"Nora, It was cool to see you and Jorge tonite at your gig at The Bar Next Store. You and your trio sounded great!
WB"*

Always professional, always respectful and classy, that was Warren. After that evening, he came to several other performances of mine including one with the Jorge Sylvester ACE Collective. I then invited him to the Cadence Jazz Festival at the Arete Gallery in Greenpoint, Brooklyn where he sat in and delivered a totally funky avant-garde creative performance.

I will forever miss his texts, checking in to see how I was doing, or to share his thoughts and feelings on something, a current event, social injustice, politics, or to just simply share his news, an upcoming or just released CD, or recent photos he took, words of advice, encouragement, always positive - helpful information, or to offer me guidance and

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wisdom about publishing my book that I was in the process of finishing and dealing with. He never forgot my birthday, or to wish me good luck, or to have a good day, or to “be thankful for today simply because you woke up which made it a blessed day.” Warren was the real deal, a real friend. Now this sparks my need to tell the story of how we met.

As a member of the now defunct Actor’s Fund, I attended an event for new writers interested in getting information from authors, new and established, about publishing a book. Since I was in the process of finishing my book and in need of this information for the next step, I decided to go and check out the event especially when I saw that a jazz musician/author was one of the panelists. After listening to the other authors share their information, the second to the last speaker was Warren. I saw him, of course, sitting unassumingly on a chair alongside the others in the front of the room, he looked like a jazz musician. He stood up and told a very humble story about his book and how he wrote it. His egoless demeanor was that of someone who brought something personal and of value to the meeting, someone who was there to talk about his book and his journey as a new author, and to share his writing knowledge and publishing info in a very honest and unassuming way. He wrote a book about his life, he told his story and now he was watching it play out again in another format – a book, which added yet another perspective to his life experience. As he spoke, he appeared to be equally as amazed as any reader would be reading it for the first time.

Afterward, there was a question-and-answer segment and then after that an opportunity for networking. As I walked around the room, I passed Warren who was leafing through his book and he stopped at a picture of his earlier wedding, looked at me and said, “This is my wedding; Stevie Wonder was my best man,” which immediately got my attention. Then I introduced myself and we began talking. That book was like stepping into his life. I stood there listening to his anecdotes one by one as he turned the pages. My being a jazz singer prompted a conversation about Nina Simone, Betty Carter, and Dee Dee Bridgewater. Warren had worked with many singers, some of whom were among the top singers in the business. I told him about my book, we exchanged information, and we became fast friends. One night shortly thereafter, he surprised me by showing up at the Medicine Show Theatre to see the play I was in and support me – apparently he lived in the neighborhood, I didn’t know that then but afterward he walked me to the train to make sure I got there safely and on the way there he shared many stories with me about those people who most influenced and touched his life. He often referred to his last

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wife Kwan, her passing and his loneliness since. Without going into too much personal detail, he revealed what was clearly a very painful void in his life. But he also declared with conviction, “I will fall in love again.” He wasn’t throwing in the towel – always optimistic for what tomorrow would hold. He also spoke about his children and how great they were and how proud he was of their creativity and accomplishments.

I met Warren at the end of his life. Approximately five years before his passing. In that five-year period of time, I got to know the man who was the embodiment of perseverance and determination. He never gave up regardless of the circumstances, no matter how big or small the challenge, that’s what he practiced and that’s what he preached. Altruistic to a fault, a humanitarian who believed in hope for the world, who had a big heart, who was funny, creative, inquisitive, giving, smart, enthralled with everything around him; a God loving spiritual man who was also real and down-to-earth. A true friend. Warren was an inspiration to me and to the many others who spoke so highly and lovingly of him at his Celebration of Life organized by his two beautiful children Kia and Kenn on October 21, 2024 at the Ellington Room in Manhattan Plaza, New York City.

“DO THE BEST THAT YOU CAN”

Those were the words of encouragement Warren texted me a while back. He was a mentor to me and when it came to publishing my book, he gave me advice up to the end, two weeks before he passed and shared his information as well as his hindsight and missteps regarding his own publishing journey with me. He wanted to see me succeed.

Please take the time to check out all of Warren’s music, his various groups, CDs and videos and especially the last CD, Benbow Reunion Band. “A conceptual musical art project by Kia Michelle Benbow with creative collaborators Warren Benbow and Kenn Michael. An autobiographical album of original music by the father/daughter/son trio featuring remakes of their dad’s classic tunes.” <https://benbowreunionband.bandcamp.com/album/benbow-reunion-band>

Warren Benbow was creativity, life, and love all rolled into one. Warren Benbow left his mark on this earth through his family, his music, the many people he touched, his positivity, and the hope he had for the world. That is his legacy. I for one, am grateful to have known him and plan on doing the very best that I can, always, and in his memory.

Passing Glances Warren Benbow



Passing Glances Warren Benbow



Passing Glances Roy Haynes

One of the lights has gone out of the world. Roy Haynes has passed at 99 years old. One of my first inspirations and heroes, I was lucky to see him live a few times and even interact with him for a few precious moments. At once modern and timeless, he was an artist that could have existed during Sumerian times or been at the heart of NYC 2050...you could never 'put your finger' on what he was doing, but the joy and intricacy he brought to all of music told you immediately you were listening to an innate master.

Here is a piece I wrote many years ago published in an obscure Jazz monthly. I was informed by the editor, who rubbed elbows with Roy at a trade show, that Mr. Haynes loved the article and took a dozen copies with him(!) It came out of my deep love and respect for the man, and after searching for it an hour, am happy to share. The photo is used with permission from the Pat LaBarbera personal archives for my Elvin Jones coffeetable book in progress. L-R is Roy, Pat LaBarbera, Elvin Jones (circa early 1980's). R.I.P
dearest Roy!!! Haynes!!!!

ROY HAYNES - ANY ERA

BY JAMES BENNINGTON

In 1996 when I was living in Houston, Texas, a friend calls me up and asks what I'm doing the next day. I say nothing and would he like to get together for lunch? Instead, he asks if I'd be interested in picking Roy Haynes up from the airport! Roy was coming in as the headliner for the Houston Jazz Festival and we were warned beforehand that he may be hard to deal with and to "watch out", so we were a little nervous. The day looked as though it would get off to a bad start as we had been given incorrect flight information and arrived late.

I saw Mr. Haynes sitting calmly by himself in the terminal and approached him with caution...immediately, I found that Roy was a kind and gracious person with a quick and, at times, cutting wit. At 71 he wore a very stylish casual outfit of khaki slacks, slip on dress shoes, and a striped sleeveless shirt. His head was shaved save for a "soul patch" in the back. As we assembled the group and got under way, I could see that Roy had more energy than the younger musicians he had with him, as well as a better attitude. Obviously, the rest of the band (except for pianist Dave Kikoski) was more excited about their next tour stop in New Orleans, treating Houston as a necessary evil. Roy, who's been doing this for 50 + years, was plainly excited not only about the night before them, but the sound check as well!

First, we went to their hotel and Roy goes to the bar while the band and the tour manager secure the lodgings. It turned out that the hotel had only reserved regular rooms for the band. While Roy sits at the bar (fully aware of what is

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going on), the tour manager tells the staff that Mr. Haynes must have a suite. He explains to them who he is, who he has played with, how many times he has played at the White House, etc. It's not until he mentions Miles Davis and Charlie Parker that the staff recognize a "name" -- one complimentary suite for Roy Haynes coming up (after much haggling and convincing)! Roy graciously asked my friend and I to join him and promptly offered to buy us a drink. I refused and bought Roy a Bacardi and soda and the three of us hung out while the rest of the group freshened up from their journey. An attractive waitress less than half his age focused her attention on Roy and flirted with him; she had no idea how old he was! Hell, I can't wear a sleeveless shirt and get away with it!

Once everyone was ready, we departed for the sound check. On the way, Roy talked to us about the old days (in the South especially) and the poor conditions for blacks then. How the band had to disinfect the beds and bathrooms, get their food from the backdoors of restaurants, etc. For a moment, we realized that Mr. Haynes has been around a long time. That feeling quickly disappeared though as we watched him rehearse his band; we watched and learned from a true master. How fresh his approach was! One thing I'll never forget is during one of the tunes in their set, a four-four swing tune, Roy did his famous triplet beat- the right hand playing the first two notes on the snare, the third on the bass drum with the left hand lightly muting the snare head. He did this rhythm for several choruses and took the music to another plane! Roy really went for it during the rehearsal; the show that night was more polished. That evening, when he was introduced he literally jumped from behind his kit exclaiming to the audience "I'm one of the last of the swing era musicians!"

As I recall, it was the fourth of July weekend and seeing Roy perform along with the colorful fireworks in the night sky was just beautiful...Though tired from the many events and the hecticism of the day, we watched from the wings that evening with a few smiles aimed at us from Roy himself, and we knew that being around and witnessing the timeless and uncanny magic of this man was a privilege in any era! Thank You Thank You Roy Haynes!

Post Script

I caught the perennial Roy Haynes several years later at the Jazz Alley in Seattle, and aside from watching him up close (by the high-hat), the night was especially memorable because after his set, I remember Roy sat alone at the bar eating oysters on the half shell and drinking beer. It was pleasantly surprising to see such a legend just sitting there along with everybody else. Only a few folks approached him, so I went up and reminded him of our meeting some years ago (I also got his autograph on *We Three*, one of my favorite records)... while we were talking, the bartender said he thought it was great that Roy was hanging out at the bar after his set and Roy looked surprised and asked what the other artists did. The bartender told him that most of them went back to the dressing room. Roy heard that and said, "Ah man, that's outta style!"

Passing Glances Barre Phillips



BARRE PHILLIPS (October 27, 1934 - December 29, 2024), duet performance with Joelle Leandre (born 1951), Total Music Meeting, Quartier Latin, West Berlin, early November, 1988. Sparks of surprise flew freely about the room as the two engaged in an open-ended conversation. It was my only meeting with this fearlessly creative spirit, and it was a good one. Photograph ©1988 Patrick Hinely, Work/Play®. First published in 2008 Jazz Calendari, Jazzprezzo (Germany)