





# SHAWN PURCELL

## OBLIVITY

featuring **WALT WEISKOPF**  
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DARDEN PURCELL BEN PATTERSON



"I can't find the words that convey the feelings that emerge from the presence of a great player. It happens once in a while and now is one of those times..." – **Pat Martino**

"Every once in a while, an album will come your way that both delights and impresses the ear. Like shooting stars, these are not completely rare occurrences, but it's the fortunate person who gets to enjoy the experience. If you are reading this while listening to Shawn Purcell's album "Oblivity," then today's your lucky day..." This album makes a statement and says a lot..." I will also go on record saying that I've never heard a guitar synth swing as much as Shawn's does on the album's title track..." – **Peter Erskine**

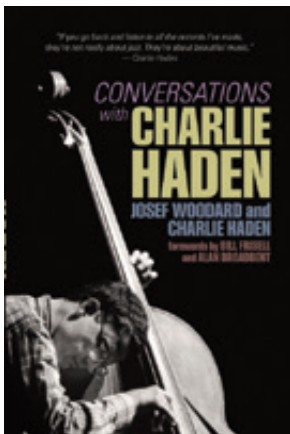


[WWW.ORIGINARTS.COM](http://WWW.ORIGINARTS.COM) [www.shawnpurcell.com](http://www.shawnpurcell.com)



# Conversations with Charlie Haden

by Josef Woodard and Charlie Haden



*"Charlie Haden's story is a classic American saga, and Josef Woodard allows him to tell it eloquently and in moving detail,"*

— Francis Davis

*"Woodard's treasure trove of interviews with Charlie Haden gives us such an intimate feeling of the jazz giant that we feel like we're sitting in the room with an old friend. . . . Haden opens up about his iconic musical associates over the years, allowing us rare access into the insular world of jazz itself."*

— Michelle Mercer

**\$19.95** 256 pages, paper, illustrated

# Charles Lloyd: A Wild and Brilliant Truth

by Josef Woodard



*"In his words no less than his music, Charles Lloyd has long been a storyteller with a seeker's heart. Joe Woodard captures his unique voice in this balanced and empathetic book: part profile, part testimonial . . . for anyone looking to understand one of jazz's great living mystery men."*—Nate Chinen

*"Charles Lloyd is an American original and about as enigmatic as a functioning human being and successful musical artist can be. Josef Woodard has untangled Charles's reminiscences and life lessons and put them into a linear path that tells the story of a remarkable life."*—Michael Cuscuna

**\$18.95** 240 pages, paper, illustrated

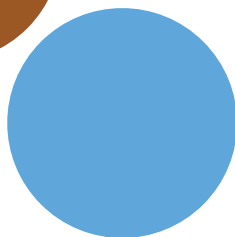
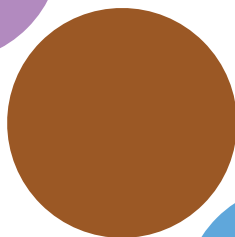
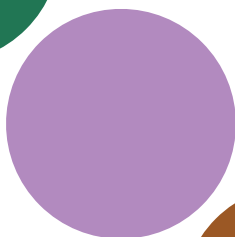
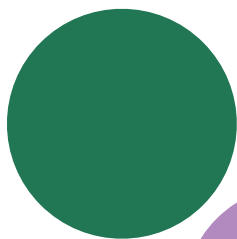
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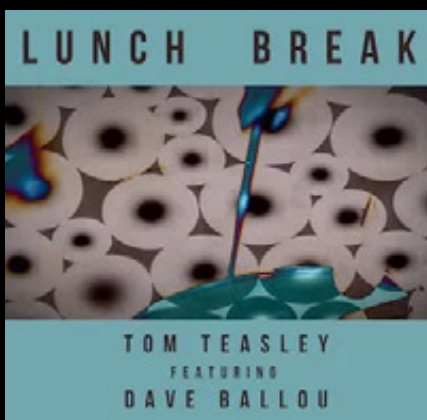
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7. What A Wonderful World
8. Put On A  
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10. Cute

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Guitar - Keb' Mo' (Track 6)

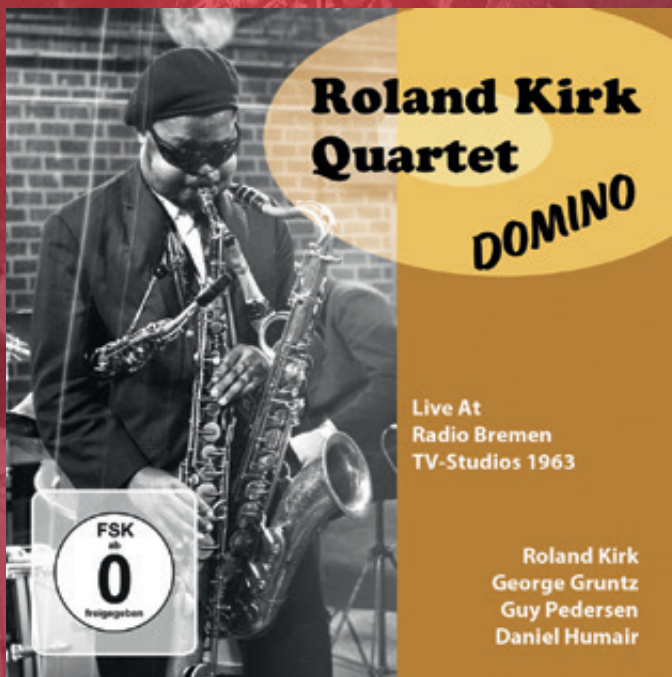
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- Multi-instrumentalist Kirk delivers dynamic performances. (Downbeat)





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**Andy Hamilton, Jazz Journal**

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**Des Cowley, Rhythms Magazine**



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**Bruce Gertz** , Double Bass; **Phil Grenadier** , Trumpet and Flugelhorn;  
**Rick DiMuzio** , Tenor Saxophone; **Gilson Schachnik** , Piano; **Gary Fieldman** , Drums

Octopus Dreams is the most recent album by bassist/  
composer/educator, Bruce Gertz (for Grammy  
Consideration in the upcoming Grammy Awards).  
It features a solid group of top performers of the  
East Coast Jazz scene and a great set of original  
compositions from the long time Berklee Bass  
Professor



SCAN ME

AMERICAN SUNSET, a twelve-song concept album, is a personal response to this very disturbing American political moment, a work about, of and for this time.

# LOUIS ROSEN



## AMERICAN SUNSET

Music and Lyrics by Louis Rosen

The cycle, AMERICAN SUNSET, was written between Election Day, November 5, 2024, and Inauguration Day, January 20, 2025, except for the organization of the text of "Executive Orders," which was completed in July, 2025.

Piano: **Charity Wicks**

Acoustic Bass: **Pete Donovan**

Vibraphone & Drums: **Andy Blanco**

All Vocals, Acoustic Guitar and Arrangements: **Louis Rosen**

Producers: **Louis Rosen & Scott Lehrer**

Recording & Mixing Engineer: **Scott Lehrer**

Studio: **Second Story Sound**

Mastering Engineer: **Oscar Zambrano, Zampol Productions**

Art Design: **Nathan Golub**

Thanks to Charity, Pete, Andy, Scott and Oscar for their splendid work bringing this piece to life.

Available at  
<https://louisrosen.com>  
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# BRILLIANT NEW WORK..

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

## THE MUSIC OF **MILTON MARSH** REVISITED VOL. 1



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

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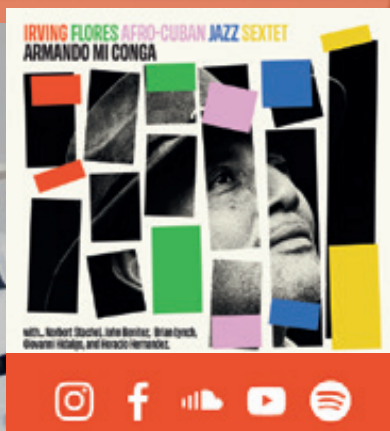
[www.mmarsh.org](http://www.mmarsh.org)



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Marcelo Martins  
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Rafael Rocha  
trombone  
Andre Siqueira



**Arranged and produced by**  
**Antonio Adolfo**

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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](http://tomhull.com)*

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Brian Morton, *Point of Departure**



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Nat Hentoff (JazzTimes review on 1st edition)



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"Gerber is a profoundly original writer ... His text is not only serious scholarship, but informal, conversational and full of surprises. This makes his interviews with musicians, record company bosses, musicians' managers, impresarios and jazz festival organisers speak with the exigencies of real life ... if you love jazz or even have little more than a marginal interest in it, you will not want to put his book down."

**Chris Searle, *Morning Star* jazz critic**

"An assured and informative book that opens up discussion on Jews in jazz while never denying the centrality of African-American ancestry."

**Garth Cartwright, *Jazzwise***

"A mightily comprehensive overview of the influence of Jews in jazz."

**Howard Mandel, president - Jazz Journalists Association**

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**Matthew Ruddick, *Kind of Jazz***

"Wonderful - absolutely fascinating ... a great, great book."

**Adam Sieff, *Jazz On The Beach* radio show**

Additional reviews at  
[www.mikegerberjournalist.co.uk/reviews](http://www.mikegerberjournalist.co.uk/reviews)

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FOOD FOR THE MIND'S EAR



# Once Upon A Time...



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

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

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



**Once Upon A Time**  
(Strouse/Adams)

By  
Laura Ainsworth



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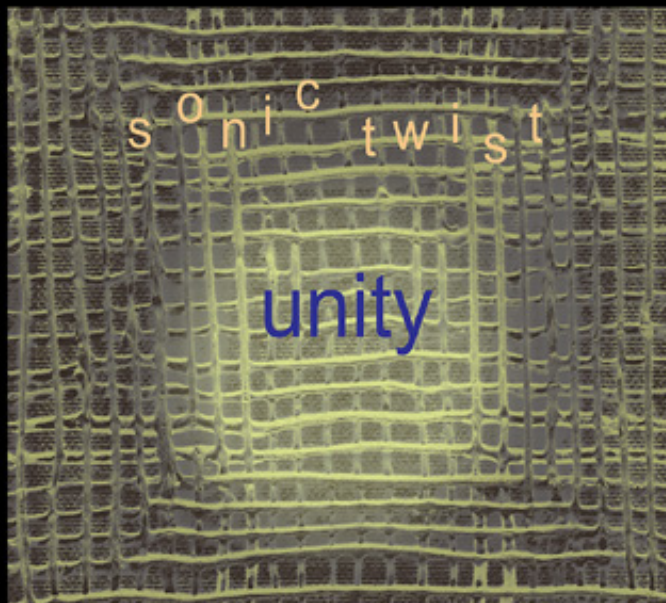
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“With the fine musicianship and Royce Campbell’s excellent playing, Vagabond is easily recommended to fans of modern big bands.”

— Scott Yanow

“Vagabond is one of the year’s foremost big-band recordings, one whose replay value is intrinsic and rewarding.”

— Jack Bowers

**World-renowned jazz guitarist Royce Campbell takes center stage on his 38th album — and his first-ever big band recording.**



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**TOP TEN ALBUMS OF THE YEAR  
CADENCE MAGAZINE CRITIC'S PICK 2025**



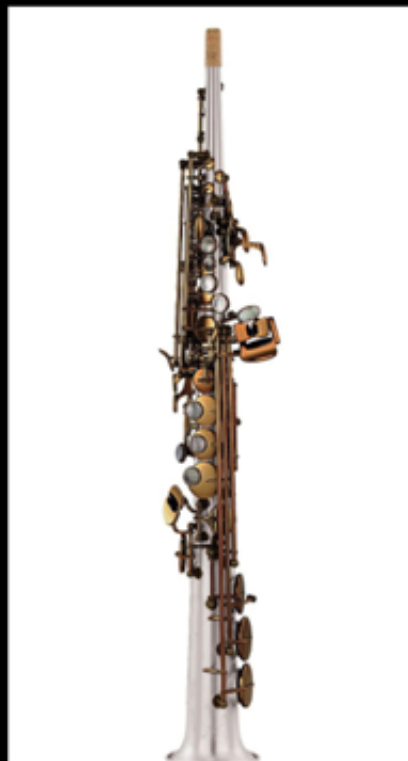
The Back 9 is an ideal introduction to another side of saxophonist Art Edmaiston, who has been a mainstay in Memphis' blues and pop music scene since 1990. It is also an excellent addition to drummer Steve Hirsh's growing catalogue of music. Together, they explore extemporaneous playing in a way that feels natural, honest and always exciting.

**Bandcamp link:**

<https://artedmaiston.bandcamp.com/album/the-back-9>



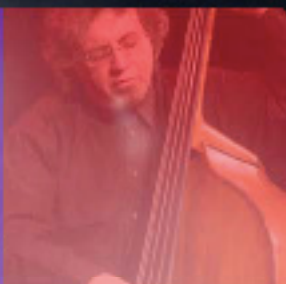
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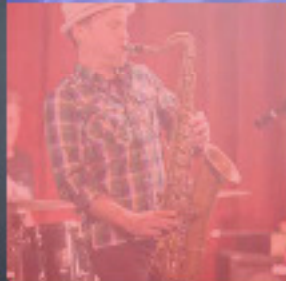
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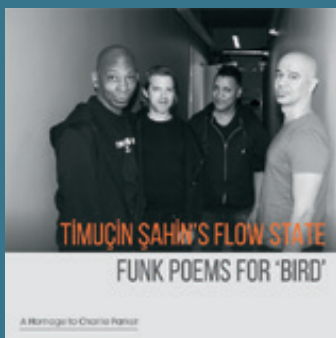
## **Will Mason Quartet: Hemlocks, Peacocks**

"a rigorous intellectual and artistic statement." – Avant Music News



## **Alejandro Florez: Beaches of Riches**

"this album reveals Flórez as one of our more original musician-composers, with a definite 21st-century vibe." – Blog Critics



## **Timuçin Şahin's Flow State: Funk Poems for 'Bird'**

"A fluid parkour with constantly changing facets and interpenetration of influences that would not have displeased the master creator of Bebop." – panm360



## **Collage Project: Off Brand**

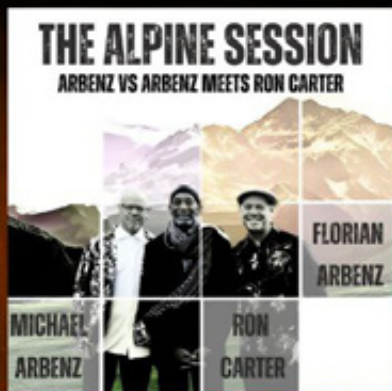
"the group thrives in the space between formalism and freedom, and with whip-smart compositions perfect for harnessing their respective talents." – All About Jazz



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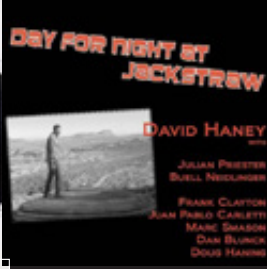
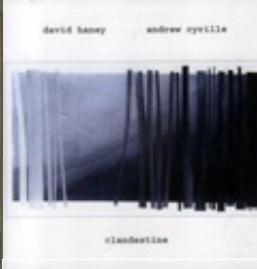
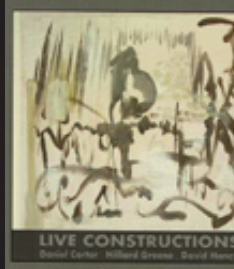
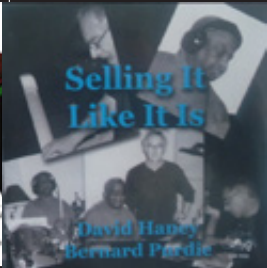
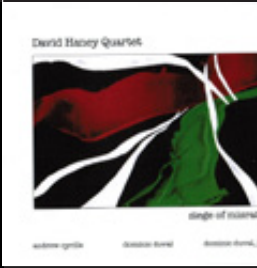
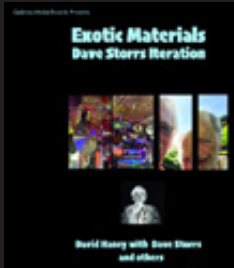
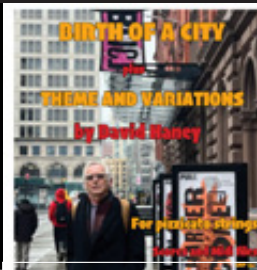
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# Contributors

**JAMES BENNINGTON** (Feature, Jazz Stories/ Interviews) *has collected oral histories and photographs of several artists, mainly published by Cadence Magazine and Modern Drummer Magazine. Bennington is also a drummer/ bandleader recording for SLAM (UK), Cadence Jazz Records/ CIMP/ CIMPoL (NY), Unseen Rain (NY), OA2 (Seattle), and his own ThatSwan! label (Chicago). Once mentored by Elvin Jones, Bennington celebrates nearly 30 years in the music field. He is a Dream Cymbals and Gongs Artist and is based in Chicago.*

**PATRICK HINELY** (Features, Jazz Stories, a Photo History) *makes his living as a photographer and is based in Lexington, Virginia. He has been photographing and writing about musicians since 1971.*

**LARRY HOLLIS** (Album/Book Reviews) *is a devout zen baptist, retired saxophonist & militant apathist. His work has appeared in mostly indie publications, liner annotation and Cadence for over four decades. Flanked by his books, records and videos, he lives an insular life in his hometown of Oklahoma City.*

**ROBERT IANNAPOLLO** (Album Reviews) *has been writing for Cadence for over 25 years. He also writes for New York City Jazz Record and ARSC Journal. He works as the circulation manager at the Sibley Music Library at the Eastman School of Music and considers himself lucky to be around all that music.*

**BERNIE KOENIG** (Album Reviews) *is a professor of music and philosophy at Fanshawe College in London, Ontario, Canada. He had two books published including Art Matters (Academica Press 2009). He is a drummer/vibist currently performing in a free jazz group and in an experimental group with electronics and acoustic percussion.*

**FRANK KOHL** (Album and Concert Reviews) *was born and raised in NY and is a professional guitarist living in Seattle. He is a graduate of Berklee College Of Music and has six CDs as a leader. Some of his recordings include Bassists Steve LaSpina, Michael Moore and guitarist John Stowell. Frank has performed at many notable jazz clubs and festivals from NY to Seattle.*

**JEFFREY D. TODD** *is Associate Professor of German and French at Texas Christian University. He plays saxophone locally in the Dallas / Fort Worth area, and is a lifelong jazz fanatic.*

**SHEILA THISTLETHWAITE** (Short Takes) *is a journalist and music publicist based in Saskatchewan, Canada. Her articles on the arts have appeared in publications in Canada and the U.S. She has been a board member, and has worked as a publicist and as executive director for jazz festivals in Calgary, AB and Kelowna, BC.*

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



## ABBREVIATIONS USED IN CADENCE

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



## Annual Edition

### Vol. 51 No. 1A (459)

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

Managing Editors:

David Haney, Colin Haney, Tana Keildh

Art Department: Alex Haney

Advisory Committee:

Colin Haney, Patrick Hinely, Nora McCarthy

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

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## CADENCE MAGAZINE EDITORIAL POLICY

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

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

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

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

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# Top Recordings 2025



## 2025 TOP NEW RECORDINGS - LARRY HOLLIS

SHAREL CASSITY—GRATITUDE—SUNNYSIDE  
ERIC ALEXANDER/VINCENT HERRING—SPLIT  
DECISION—SMOKE SESSIONS  
BRANFORD MARSALIS—BELONGING—BLUE NOTE  
BUDDY GUY—AIN'T DONE YET—RCA SILVERTONE  
JOE FARNSWORTH—BIG ROOM—SMOKE SESSIONS  
CORY WEEDS—MEETS JERRY WELDON—CELLAR  
BLUE MOODS—FORCE AND GRACE—POSITONE  
ERIC ALEXANDER—LIKE SUGAR—CELLAR MUSIC  
GEORGE COLEMAN—WITH STRINGS—HIGHNOTE  
ALVIN QUEEN—THE JAZZ CUP CAFE BLUES—CELLAR

## REISSUES/HISTORICAL - LARRY HOLLIS

CHARLIE PARKER—BIRD IN K.C.—VERVE  
TUBBY HAYES—ANTIBES 1962—JAZZ IN BRITAIN  
BACK DOOR—VIENNA BREAKDOWN—ESOTERIC  
JIMMY WITHERSPOON/ROBBEN FORD—JUMP BLUES  
LIVE 1972—LIBERATION HALL  
CHET BAKER QUINTET—FIVE FROM 65—NEW LAND  
ROY BROOKS—THE FREE SLAVE—TIME TRAVELER  
MEMPHIS SLIM—AT THE GATE OF HORN—CRAFT  
MILES DAVIS QUINTET—COMPLETE PLUGGED  
NICKEL—SONY LEGACY  
KENNY BURRELL—ON VIEW AT THE FIVE SPOT—BLUE  
NOTE  
ROLAND KIRK QUARTET—DOMINO—MIG{CD/DVD}

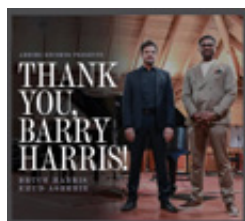
## 2025 TOP NEW RECORDINGS - FRANK KOHL

FLORIAN ARBENZ — THE ALPINE SESSIONS  
YUNMI KANG & JOHN STOWELL DUO — A TIMELESS  
PIECE  
DAVE STRYKER — GOES TO THE MOVIES  
ARI HOENIG — PUNKBOP- LIVE AT SMALLS  
LEO LARRATT — RAHIM'S BLUES  
DONNY MCCASLIN — LULLABY OF THE LOST  
SHAWN PURCELL — OBLIVITY  
MIKE STERN — ECHOES AND OTHER SONGS  
JOHNATHAN BLAKE — MY LIFE MATTERS  
RANDY NAPOLEON — WAKING DREAM

## 2025 TOP NEW RECORDINGS - ABE GOLDSTEIN

ERIC MCPHERSON — DOUBLE BASS QUARTET —  
GIANT STEPS  
JAMES BRANDON LEWIS — ABSTRACTIONS IN  
DELIVERANCE — INTAKT  
THOMAS RUCKERT — FOR ALL WE KNOW  
— CHALLENGE

# Top Recordings 2025



EHUD ASHERIE – THANK YOU BARRY HARRIS – ARBORS

MICHAEL BISIO – NUMBQ – MAHAKALA

JOE MCPHEE – WE KNOW WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS – ROGUE ART

THOMAS HEBERER – HIPPI HIPPI HOORAY – FSR

DAVID KIKOSKI – WEEKEND AT SMALLS – CELLAR

JORIS ROELOFS – RITE OF SPRING – ICP

STEVE HIRSH – THE BACK NINE – SELF PRODUCED

## REISSUES/HISTORICAL - ABE GOLDSTEIN

DAVE BURRELL – THE LOST SESSION – NO BUSINESS

RASHIED ALI – SIDEWALKS IN MOTION – SURVIVAL

ELLERY ESKELIN – ABOUT (OR ON) FIRST –

EZZTHETICS

KENNY DORHAM – BLUE BOSSA IN THE BRONX – RESONANCE

IRENE SCHWEIZER – IRENE'S HOT FOUR – INTAKT

GATO BARBIERI – STANDARDS LOST & FOUND

CHARLES MINGUS – IN ARGENTINA – RESONANCE

JIMMY BENNINGTON – BLUE VEILS – THAT SWAN

FRANK KIMBROUGH – THE CALL

HORACE TAPSCTOTT – LIVE AT WIDNEY HIGH 1971

## 2025 TOP NEW RECORDINGS - JEROME WILSON

ENSEMBLE C – EVERY JOURNEY – ADHYAROPA

AMINA CLAUDINE MYERS – SOLACE OF THE MIND

LINDA MAY HAN OH – STRANGE HEAVENS

FABIA MANTWILL ORCHESTRA – IN - SIGHT

JASON KAO HWANG – MYTHS OF ORIGIN

PATRICIA BRENNAN – OF THE NEAR AND FAR

VAN MORRISON – REMEMBERING NOW – EXILE

JIMMY FARACE – HOURS FLY, FLOWERS DIE

THE HEMPHILL STRINGTET – PLAYS THE MUSIC OF

JULIUS HEMPHILL – OUT OF YOUR HEAD

BRANFORD MARSALIS QUARTET – BELONGING (

## 2025 TOP NEW RECORDINGS - KEN WEISS

RAPHAEL PANNIER QUARTET/KHADIM NIANG &

SABAR GROUP – LIVE IN SAINT LOUIS, SENEGAL

SYLVIE COURVOISIER/MARY HALVORSON – BONE

BELLS – PYROCLASTIC

SATOKO FUJII TOKYO TRIO – DREAM A DREAM

PATRICIA BRENNAN – OF THE NEAR AND FAR

SYLVIE COURVOISIER /WADADA LEO SMITH – ANGEL

FALLS – INTAKT

# Top Recordings 2025



ALISTER SPENCE TRIO – GATHER  
HENRY THREADGILL – LISTEN SHIP – PI  
SPINIFEX – MAXXIMUS – TRYTONE  
MARTY EHRLICH EXALTATION TRIO – THIS TIME  
PLAINS PEAK – SOMEONE TO SOMEONE



## REISSUES/HISTORICAL - KEN WEISS

PHAROAH SANDERS – THE COMPLETE THERESA RECORDINGS  
ELLERY ESKELIN - ELLERY ESKELIN TRIO NEW YORK:  
ABOUT (OR ON) FIRST VISIT  
FREDDIE HUBBARD – FREDDIE HUBBARD ON FIRE LIVE  
FROM THE BLUE MOROCCO – RESONANCE  
RAHSAAN ROLAND KIRK – SEEK & LISTEN: LIVE AT  
THE PENDTHOUSE – RESONANCE  
CHARLES MINGUS - MINGUS IN ARGENTINA – THE  
BUENOS AIRES CONCERTS  
JIMMY LYONS – LIVE FROM STUDIO RIVBEA – 1974 &  
1976  
KENNY DORHAM – KENNY DORHAM BLUE BOSSA IN  
THE BRONX LIVE FROM THE BLUE MOROCCO  
RAHSAAN ROLAND KIRK – VIBRATIONS IN THE  
VILLAGE: LIVE AT THE VILLAGE GATE



## 2025 TOP NEW RECORDINGS - SCOTT YANOW

JOE FARNSWORTH – THE BIG ROOM – SMOKE  
SESSIONS  
IRVING FLORES AFRO-CUBAN SEXTET – ARMANDO MI  
CONGA – AMOR DE FLORES PRODUCTIONS  
SULLIVAN FORTNER – SOUTHERN NIGHTS – PIAS  
NENNA FREELON – BENEATH THE SKIN – ORIGIN  
CAITY GYORGY – HELLO! HOW ARE YOU? – SELF-  
RELEASED  
DAVID KIKOSKI – WEEKEND AT SMALLS – CELLAR  
BRANFORD MARSALIS – BELONGING – BLUE NOTE  
ARTURO O’FARRILL & THE AFRO LATIN JAZZ  
ORCHESTRA – MUNDOAGUA – ZOHO  
ANAIAS RENO – LADY OF THE LAVENDER MIST – CLUB  
44  
GONZALO RUBALCABA – FIRST MEETING –  
5PASSION

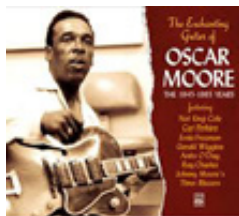


## REISSUES/HISTORICAL – SCOTT YANOW

BOB CROSBY – CLASSIC DECCA RECORDINGS OF  
BOB CROSBY ORCHESTRA/BOB CATS (1936-1942)  
MILES DAVIS – MILES IN PARIS – COLUMBIA/LEGACY  
ELLA FITZGERALD – LIVE AT THE CONCERTGEBOUW



# Top Recordings 2025



1961 – THE LOST RECORDINGS  
 RAHSAAN ROLAND KIRK – VIBRATIONS IN THE VILLAGE - RESONANCE  
 OSCAR MOORE – THE ENCHANTING GUITAR – FRESH SOUND  
 CHARLIE PARKER – BIRD IN KANSAS CITY - VERVE  
 ART PEPPER – AN AFTERNOON IN NORWAY – ELEMENTAL MUSIC  
 ANDRE PREVIN – EARLY YEARS – ACROBAT  
 MCCOY TYNER & JOE HENDERSON – FORCES OF NATURE – BLUE NOTE  
 VARIOUS ARTISTS – CLASSIC VANGUARD SMALL GROUP SWING SESSIONS – MOSAIC



**2025 TOP NEW RECORDINGS - GEORGE HARRIS**  
 EDDIE DANIELS – TO MILTON WITH LOVE  
 MIKE LEDONNE'S GROOVER QUARTET- TURN IT UP!  
 DENNY ZEITLIN – WITH A SONG IN MY HEART  
 BOB JAMES AND DAVE KOZ – JUST US  
 DIEGO FIGUIEREDO – I LOVE SAMBA  
 GUNHILD CARLING – JAZZ IS MY LIFESTYLE  
 HORACE SILVER – LIVE AT THE PENTHOUSE  
 GILLIAN MARGOT AND GEOFFREY GEEZER – GILLIAN MARGOT AND GEOFFREY GEEZER  
 FREDDIE HUBBARD – ON FIRE  
 KENNY DORHAM – BLUE BOSSA IN BRONX



**2025 TOP NEW RECORDINGS - ZIM TARRO**  
 DAVID "FATHEAD" NEWMAN - RETURN TO THE WIDE OPEN SPACES  
 ROB BROWN - WALKABOUT - MAHAKALA  
 DAVE SEWELSON, STEVE SWELL, MATTHEW SHIPP, WILLIAM PARKER & STEVE HIRSH – MUSCLE MEMORY  
 LOUIS ROSEN – AMERICAN SUNSET – DI-TONE  
 HENRY THREADGILL – LISTEN SHIP – PI  
 PATRICIA BRENNAN – OF THE NEAR AND FAR  
 THE HEMPHILL STRINGTET – PLAYS THE MUSIC OF JULIUS HEMPHILL – OUT OF YOUR HEAD  
 BUDDY GUY–AIN'T DONE YET–RCA SILVERTONE  
 JOHN TAYLOR, MARC JOHNSON, JOEY BARON · - TRAMONTO – ECM



# Top Ten Concerts 2025



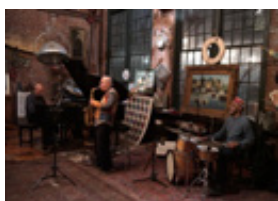
3/2/25 John Zorn's New Masada Quartet [Zorn (as), Julian Lage (g), Jorge Roeder (b), Kenny Wollesen (d)] at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop). Mr. Zorn requested no documentation of his group's performance so no photo is included.



3/11 Paolo Angeli at The Rotunda (Fire Museum Presents). The Sardinian master guitarist made a statement with the help of his uniquely crafted hybrid guitar that's got propellers, hammers, sitar, harp strings and lots more.



3/28 Thurston Moore with William Winant and Tom Surgal at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) offered a barrage of sound that included the use of a metal file to guitar strings and a red balloon shared by Winant and Surgal to corrupt their instruments.



4/3 Orrin Evans' 50 th birthday celebration at Chris' Jazz Café featured fellow piano heavyweights for a once in a lifetime collective of James Poyser (of The Roots), Marc Cary, Ethan Iverson and Elew.



4/4 Bobby Zankel reconvened his Wonderful Sound 3 with Cooper-Moore (p), Pheeroan akLaff (d) and Zankel (as) for the second time ever again at the Black Squirrel Club in honor of Cecil Taylor.



4/18 Roscoe Mitchell and Tyshawn Sorey at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) assembled sounds drawn from small and large instruments.

7/26 Alexander Claffy Trio with special guest Makoto Ozone at Chris' Jazz Café marked Ozone's return to town after 30 years and it was worth the wait, especially when ace drummer Justin Faulkner sat in for the last tune of the night.

# Top Ten Concerts 2025



9/6 Keir Neuringer/ David Middleton/Julius Masri at The Perch (Fire Museum Presents). Neuringer returned to his previous city of residence to present a trio set that soared to great heights. His solo set of all circular breathing that preceded the trio explored boundless sonic textures.



10/5 Lucian Ban (p) and Mat Maneri (vla) with their Transylvanian Dance project at The Perch (Fire Museum Presents) improvised on Béla Bartók's compositions and created a work of beauty. The opening set by bassist Jair-Rohm Parker Wells was a bonus.



10/24 Adam Rudolph Sunrise Trio at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) moved listeners from a primal start through a spiritual high. Rudolph and Kaoru Wantanabe's conga/taiko drum beatdown came on like a monsoon of sound.

## 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, PA – Thurston Moore (g, elec) with percussionists Tom Sural and William Winant at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) on 3/28 was a caustic journey through sonic space. Moore punished his well weathered guitar with screw drivers and metal prongs. He also did some of his signature move, rubbing his ax against his amp to scare up sounds while Sural jammed away on drums. Winant was active moving amongst a varied number of percussive instruments – even [humorously] using his hands to his mouth to create noise for a short burst. Both Sural and Winant also worked at different segments of the set with the same inflated, large red balloon against their mouths to craft unusual sounds. The trio, having played together for years, expertly worked as a unit making “music” for the strong of heart. Winant went above and beyond the call of duty by leaving blood on the stage – his hand bled from cuts to a couple knuckles...Vocalist Nnenna Freelon, back on the road after a 7-year hiatus, hit the age milestone of 70 this year but still looks and sounds fabulous. Her quintet at the Philadelphia Clef Club of Jazz and Performing Arts on 3/29 included Miki Hayama (p), Keith Ganz (g), Kenny Davis (b) and Jeremy Warren (d), all of whom did their jobs proficiently by not getting in the way of the featured performer. There may be bigger name vocalists out there that impress with vocal calisthenics but there are few that are as genuinely warm and inviting as Freelon. She’s very comfortable on stage and her between song sharing with the audience felt real, especially when dedicating “Dark and Lovely,” a beautiful tune dedicated to her granddaughters, as well as “Widow Song,” a tribute to her husband [Architect Philip Freelon who lead the design team of the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of African American History and Culture] who passed after 40 years of marriage. Those two songs were penned for her new album which she named *Under the Skin* because, “They say when you write, you write from the inside...these songs are a series of observations.” She also performed a number of popular tunes and Jazz standards including “Skylark” and a fun “Betcha By Golly Wow.” She concluded her set by saying, “We’d like to end with a prayer. I love prayer because one size fits all. It will fit your situation and I want to leave you with some good juju” before launching into a wonderful rendition of “Say A Little Prayer For You.” A modernized encore of “Moon River” followed...Tenor saxophonist Nubya Garcia, one of the breakout young English Jazz musicians making a name for themselves, played Ardmore Music Hall on 4/2 as part of her first headlining tour of the States. She’s quite comfortable on stage both playing as well as hawking for sale her custom blended incense sticks that she recommends playing along with her music. She says she burns it in her home studio to set a creative mood. Garcia pronounced herself to be self-taught and that that proved, “You can do hard things.” Garcia also set the mood at the start of her performance – “You can be in this space as you like. Close your eyes or dance,” and made it clear that her name is to be said correctly as “Nah-bye -ah.” She credits saxophonists Dexter Gordon, Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane as major influences although her music tends towards the smoother side of the spectrum. Things did perk up on “The Seer” which gave Lyle Barton (keys), Max Luthert (b), Sam Jones (d) and the leader a longer leash to roam...Pianist Orrin Evans turned 50 on 3/28 and threw himself one helluva birthday party spread over four days at Chris’ Jazz Café from 4/2-5. The 4/3 night was a piano blowout event featuring a once in a lifetime collective of some of Evans’ good friends – pianists James Poyser (of The Roots), Marc Cary, Ethan Iverson and Elew



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Nnenna Freelon at the Philadelphia Clef Club of Jazz and Performing Arts on 3/28 Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Tom Sargal and William Winant at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) on 3/28 Photo credit © Ken Weiss

## Short Takes - Philadelphia



Orrin Evans officiating his birthday celebration at Chris' Jazz Café on 4/3 with Ethan Iverson and Marc Cary  
Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Nubya Garcia at the Ardmore Music Hall on 4/2 Photo credit © Ken Weiss

## Short Takes - Philadelphia



Steph Richards on 4/9 at the Maas Building (Fire Museum Presents) Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Roscoe Mitchell at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) on 4/18 Photo credit © Ken Weiss

## Short Takes - Philadelphia



Rent Romus at The Perch (Fire Museum Presents) on 4/19 Photo credit © Ken Weiss



The Ancients (Isaiah Collier-William Parker-William Hooker) at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) on 4/24 Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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The Cookers - David Weiss, Azar Lawrence, George Cables, Eddie Henderson, Jaleel Shaw, Cecil McBee and drummer Billy Hart at the inaugural Germantown Jazz Festival on 4/27 Photo credit © Ken Weiss



The Klezmatics at the City Winery on 5/4 Photo credit © Ken Weiss



## Short Takes - Philadelphia



Gary Hassay at the Black Squirrel Club on 5/14 Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Marshall Allen with James Brandon Lewis, Luke Stewart, DMHOTE, Mike Reed, Elliott Levin at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) on 5/23 Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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(Eric Lewis) – along with Luques Curtis (b), Matt Parrish (b), Neil Podgurski (p), Mechi Boone (d) and Byron Landham (d). The second set found Evans acting as the producer, he only played piano himself a couple minutes, but he had lots to do with directing traffic. He opened the set saying, “I wanted to celebrate with people who I love and who have been a part of my musical journey and life.” The modus operandi involved each pianist taking a turn for a tune or two at the piano and occasionally being joined by one of other pianists joining in on electric keyboard which was set up facing the listeners, back-to-back with the piano player. First dibs went to Poyser who rendered Wayne Shorter’s “Footprints” and Mulgrew Miller’s “The Eleventh Hour” with the help of Curtis and Boone. Cary celebrated South African Jazz pianist Hotep Idris Galeta by playing Galeta’s “King Tut’s Strut” before Iverson did a bouncy rendition of “Happy Birthday” before launching into Monk’s “Evidence.” Elew was next with more “Happy Birthday” and then Freddie Hubbard’s “Red Clay,” which inspired Cary to join him by sitting on the stage floor playing a pair of kashakas (a simple percussion instrument consisting of two small gourds filled with beans). After the round of pianists were done, Evans, the consummate Philadelphia scene-builder, invited local talent on stage to play and once again, the pianists took turns playing piano, keyboards, or, in the case of the crazily talented Elew, scatting. The next two nights at Chris’ featured Evans with an all-star band of Sean Jones (tpt), Abraham Burton (ts), Buster Williams (b) and Nasheet Waits (d). I caught the first set on 4/5 and was impressed with the band’s collectivity and lack of dependence on solos that so many put-together all-star bands revert to. They played “Steppin’ In Minor” by Philadelphian drummer Bill (Mr. C) Carney and “I Want to be Happy,” but none of the bandmembers could officially name the other tunes they played. It didn’t matter, the vibe was joyous and inclusive. Evans’ super lovely wife, Dawn, happily passed out small stickers bearing the face of her husband and stickers that said 50 Shades of “O”...Bobby Zankel reconvened his Wonderful Sound 3 with Cooper-Moore (p) and Pheeroan akLaff (d) on 4/4 at the Black Squirrel Club in celebration of his mentor Cecil Taylor who passed 7 years ago on 4/5. This was only the trio’s second public performance – the first coming almost one year earlier at the same venue for what I felt was the Philadelphia concert of the year. This gig was also of that quality although shorter as akLaff had to split early to catch a flight to LA. Cooper-Moore played piano for the first time in 10 months due to hand pain issues but you’d never know it the way he pulverized the keys, making magic happen. The music wasn’t primarily an affair of muscular, abrasive tendencies, it featured real depth and feeling, but it certainly had its share of thunder. Zankel, a wonderful composer, led the trio with strategies learned from the great Cecil Taylor. akLaff spoke from the stage of his relationship with Taylor, recalling playing for the last time with Taylor and bassist Henry Grimes. Cooper-Moore revealed that he never met Taylor – “I didn’t feel worthy to go meet him.” Cooper-Moore also talked about going to Europe for the first time, it was with the late David S. Ware, and losing all his fingernails there by playing piano so hard. Cooper-Moore also spoke about the impact music can make – “Just hearing someone play music can change your life.” Zankel plans to release portions of the trio’s two nights of music in the future so be on the lookout...Guitarist Joe Morris performed with his past NEC

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student trombonist Dan Blacksberg, along with violinist Carlos Santiago on 4/5 at The Rotunda (Fire Museum Presents). The set was fully improvised and trance inducing. Blacksberg spends a good of his time on the Klezmer scene but is equally comfortable doing Free Jazz and matched up well with the adventurous Morris and the cunning Santiago. After their long initial improv ended, Morris said, "Play a short one? Yeah, 45 minutes! That's a Free Jazz joke!"...Canadian trumpet/fluegelhorn player Steph Richards has worked with an impressive array of people including Yoko Ono, David Byrne, Laurie Anderson, St. Vincent, Anthony Braxton, John Zorn, Muhal Richard Abrams and Henry Threadgill. Her duo with Pakistani-American drummer-electronics wizard Qasim Naqvi on 4/9 at the Maas Building (Fire Museum Presents) was a textbook demonstration of how dynamic brass sound manipulation that stretches the possibilities of the instrument can remain in partnership with a companion. Richards kept her sound developments strictly to manipulations on her horns – she didn't partake in guttural voicings as a number of other extreme sound sculptors like to add. She used a mute, a metal pan that vibrated when blown into, and she blew into a drum head with her trumpet. Naqvi was a creative match for her, spending the majority of his time on his array of electronics, including Moog and Buchla devices, to gently/tastefully add melodies that were in tune with Richards. He also spent a bit of time at the drums, playing understated mallets, which he also flipped around to play with the stick ends, as well as with brushes. An opening set by electric guitar duo Nick Millevoi and Andy Pitcher offered a nice contrast with loud, melodically rich music bearing occasional caustic riffs that were wild but contained...Eighty-five-year-old NEA Jazz Master Roscoe Mitchell had a two-night concert engagement 4/18-19 as part of Ars Nova Workshop's 25th anniversary season. Playing in duet with drummer Tyshawn Sorey, who is roughly 40 years Mitchell's junior, the two master composers/musicians further expanded their collaborative relationship, reaching back most notably to a 2013 album with trumpeter Hugh Ragin. I caught the first night's performance. One thing I've noticed through the years about Mitchell's appearances is that he's seated on stage as the audience filters in and is comfortable speaking with listeners before playing. The stage this night was enlivened by Mitchell's colorful artwork. The music involved spontaneous composition bookmarked by long segments of tiny percussive playing - Mitchell's custom dating back to his early days as co-founder of the Art Ensemble of Chicago. Mitchell's elaborate set up of tiny instruments - bells, child toys, chimes - large and small, gave him plenty to choose from. The bulk of the set found him alternating between massive bass saxophone and diminutive soprano sax. Much of his time on the bass sax was played only using his left hand while episodes on the soprano included a good deal of delightful pops, squeaks and squonks, as well as just pushing air. Sorey was a respectful foil, crafting sounds and supportive percussion. The highlight came at the end as Mitchell fiercely circularly blew through the bass sax with his hands on both knees while Sorey pummeled away on his set to reach an exclamatory high. Sorey saved his greatest collaborative effort for the after performance when he caught the legendary multi-instrumentalist from falling on the stage after tripping...Fire Museum Presents offered two great sets of eclectically diverse music on 4/19 at The Perch. Cellist Daniel Levin with Swiss saxophonist (as, ss) Laurent Estoppey not only crafted powerful music to be heard, but it was also meant to be felt. At the start, Levin implored everyone to

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move towards the front of the room - "For the vibrations." They started with Levin, who quickly worked up a sweat, bowing and Estoppey making popping sounds on his alto that he altered with very frequent changes in body posture. Estoppey favors exploratory sounds on his saxes but is also comfortable when it comes to subtle investigations. Levin, one of the premier cellists on the creative Jazz scene, dropped in refined Classical technique along with envelope expansion. His aggressive foot stomping on the venue's wooden floor sent reverberations throughout the space, it picked up late set when he did so with great anger. His go to ploy of ripping a page of paper from a spiral binder book and crinkling it for sound is always an effective *remise en bouche*. The two expertly matched sounds at times. Actual / Actual featuring Rent Romus (as, ss) followed. Romus, the Emmy award winning Finnish-American saxophonist, music producer and community activist based in San Francisco made an all too rare trip out East as the third stop on a 7-gig tour through three states. He led pianist Gerard Cox, drummer Troy Kunkler and Josh Strange (vib, tpt, el b) through a heartfelt improvisational set. Romus, who credits saxophonists Arthur Blythe and Stan Getz as close contacts who help train/mentor him, covered a beautiful Blythe ballad "My Son Ra." Post-set, he spoke of his disappointment that Blythe has not been recognized sufficiently enough for his contribution to the music. Romus strikes quite a mesmerizing spectacle on stage with his frenetic horn playing and occasional use of two horns at once, reminiscent of Rahsaan Roland Kirk. The trick is doing the two-horn blowing without coming off as gimmicky, which he pulls off well. His band was effective in championing his music and I liked when Kunkler dropped his sticks directly on his drum skins for unusual accents. The addition of local artist Matt Lavelle on bass clarinet and flugelhorn later in the set added another element to the night. Lavelle strolled on stage playing his clarinet, combing with Romus' alto for a Mardi Gras on acid effect. Soon he was hitting on flugelhorn and Romus was working up pleasing sounds on both of his horns at once. It sounded like a composed piece but when a listener asked for the name of the tune, Romus said, "No, what would you like to call it? That's the hardest part, coming up with names!" More top improvisational playing followed with more than a dash of Albert Ayler's spiritual freedom and a "Saints Go Marching In" quote by Lavelle. This was a great set and a great night. Lavelle may be moving to Berlin for an opportunity to teach/perform. He is no longer playing trumpet so that he can focus more on flugelhorn because few people play it and he was told years ago by the late, great trumpeter Roy Campbell that flugelhorn was his "real voice." Lavelle feels he can "sing" on it more than on trumpet...Powerhouse trio The Ancients (Isaiah Collier-William Parker-William Hooker) did a 2-night run at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) on 4/23-24 and I caught the second night. The group was originally formed by Parker to play concerts in conjunction with the Ars Nova-curated exhibition "Milford Graves: A Mind Body Deal" during its run at the Institute of Contemporary Art - Los Angeles. The group, aptly named, follows the spiritual path taken by the Art Ensemble of Chicago. Opening with extended small percussion playing, Parker played his doson ngoni and chanted, "Cut my chains, cut my chains. I've come this far." Collier, who graced the current cover of DownBeat Magazine at the time, was well placed between the two grizzled veteran Free Jazz stars. His playing has drawn comparison to

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Pharoah Saunders since the start of his career and he's maintained a respectful attachment to his musical predecessors. His runs of circular breathing and lengthy tenor sax excoriations were liberating and well supported by the aggressive bass and drum work of his bandmates. Rocking back and forth, Collier delivered quotes of known tunes such as "Amazing Grace," "It Don't Mean a Thing" and "Afro Blue," as well as hitting on a moving Blues segment and a crafty multiphonic declaration. Collier also spent time working with his array of "toys" to create unusual sounds. Parker grounded the music and helped it soar while Hooker was a driving force and upped the tension with his trademark guttural screams. At set's end, Parker graciously acknowledged how special the other musicians were. He first encountered Hooker in NYC in 1971 - "He had a long beard. It was 99 degrees and he was wearing a long overcoat, but that was the kind of thing you did in those days!" Parker went on to recognize that Hooker released his visionary album "Is Eternal Life" in 1977 and that he had followed his heart throughout the length of his career. In reference to Collier, Parker said, "Very few people these days can come out of the music schools and sound like themselves but Isaiah does...People talk about the tradition but the tradition is being born every day. His body is not ancient but his spirit is ancient." He also said, "There is entertainment but this is inner attainment." Hooker followed, speaking on the importance of Parker and how Parker's kind words this night made him tear up. Parker, always up for prankish talk - last year at the venue he invited everyone to come downstairs to the Green Room for a cookie (but no cookies were to be had). This night he said the reason the band was a little late this day was because, "We played basketball this afternoon so that got us a little late coming to the club but we did okay. We thought Isaiah could play better than he did, he's so tall, but he forgot his sneakers." Parker ended the night with the promise that - "And if you're ever in New York City, Matthew Shipp, the pianist, will take you out to dinner!" ...It's exciting to report on a new Jazz festival debuting in town. The inaugural Germantown Jazz Festival, brought to life by Khadijah "Renee" Queen, with support by Artcinia and nuts and bolts help from local star promoter Leo Gadson, made a triumphant splash landing 4/25-27. In addition to presenting a bunch of super talented local artists, the big draws were Bobby Watson on 4/26 and The Cookers on 4/27. Vegan restaurant The Nile was the setting for The Cookers, the hard-hitting cooperative group that formed in 2007 to deliver Hard Bop/Modal Jazz off the instruments of veteran star players that were perhaps overlooked as leaders. Trumpeter David Weiss has helped maintain the group, which has undergone a major transformation over the past 6 months. Saxophonist Billy Harper's music had been heavily featured in their playsets over the years however he has exited the ensemble and been replaced by another heavy tenor - Azar Lawrence. The rest of the band this night was pianist George Cables, trumpeter Eddie Henderson, alto saxophonist/local hero Jaleel Shaw, along with bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Billy Hart. Opening with Cables' "The Mystery of Monifa Brown" and McBee's "Peacemaker," which began with a beautiful, lilting piano and drum section before eventually giving way to a superior trio segment from the septet's oldest members - Cables, McBee and Hart. Another Cables' composition, "Blackfoot," which referenced Native American influences and made way for the first of two Lawrence showcases. Their set ended curiously with two songs by non-member Freddie Hubbard, who's ballad



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"Lament for Booker" featured Henderson's magnificent trumpet work. Hubbard's "The Core" was a late showcase for Hart, who stretched out for over seven minutes on his one solo of the night. Lawrence also seized the opportunity to impress with a solo that found him taking his glasses off, allowing him to get totally nasty with his soaring playing that touched on Pharoah Sanders, although he never reached the extreme highs reached during his past headlining visit to the city. Remnants of Billy Harper made a brief appearance when the band ended their set with a short rundown of "Priestess."... The Klezmatics at the City Winery on 5/4 were celebrating their 40th anniversary as an entity. It all started back in 1985 when San Francisco clarinetist Rob Chavez placed an ad in New York's Village Voice looking for Klezmer musicians. Frank London answered the call and brought in Lorin Sklamberg whom London had known only as an accordionist of Balkan music. Sklamberg (lead vcl, g, acc, p), London (tpt, vcl, p) and Paul Morrisett (b, tsimbl, vcl) have continued on as original members, along with longtime members Matt Darriau (cl, kuval, as, vcl) and Lisa Gutkin (vin, vcl). Klezmer music is based on the rich and colorful Yiddish language and allows for lively emotions – great joy and sorrow – which the "Jewish roots band" the Klezmatics do better than anybody. Sklamberg's piercing rendition of the Aramaic prayer "Yo Riboy'n" was tear jerking while London's "Kats un Moyz" ["Cats and Mice"] was playful. The band has delved into the music of Woody Guthrie in the past and Gutkin sang his "Gonna Get Through This World" with some Yiddish chanting between verses. "Elegy for the Innocents" was a striking mix of Jazz and Klezmer and featured London's most burnished and mournful trumpet playing with gleaming counterpoint clarinet by Darriau. As part of their momentous anniversary this year, the band is making it a point to highlight other leading artists in the field by inviting other top local klezmer performers to appear with the group as they travel from town to town on their yearlong victory lap. For their Philly stop, Susan Hoffman Watts (tpt, vcl) and Gregg Marvine (perc) of the West Philadelphia Orchestra were the glittering additions on a few songs. Watts comes from a storied family of performers and was introduced with the highest of praise by London as - "My favorite trumpet player in the Klezmer world." She performed two tunes and later came back on to sing a tune ["Vesenuy Khorovod"] she originally learned from London when they both played as members of the Klezmer Brass Allstars. After a fun rendition of Woody Guthrie's "Mermaid's Avenue," they encored with their theme song, enlisting the services of their two guests and spurred on, no doubt, by a raucous audience's ecstatic Hora dance... Gary Hassay made his third appearance at his new preferred venue – the Black Squirrel Club – on 5/14 with another New York City Free Jazz titan – pianist Matthew Shipp. William Parker and Steve Swell had appeared previously to complete trio gigs with Hassay along with drummer Tracy Lisk. The two sets this night were short but sweet as Hassay battled some health issues. He plays multiple horns but is currently sticking with the easily manageable curved soprano sax. He's got a bronze model and a custom-made mouthpiece designed to give the darker sound that he's after. When Hassay began the first set with an airy sax line, he set the mood for much of the night. Shipp soon joined in, marking the first time they played together. Hassay prides himself on being an excellent listener – as are Shipp and Lisk – and the music was marked by instant shifts and turns, as well as counterpoint. Shipp often changed tempos, steering the trio

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down side passageways with his shoulders working like pistons, striking the keys with finger stabs. There were plenty of well-wrought riffs but I found the quieter sections to be the most compelling due to the trio's instant high-level chemistry. Hassay's very human and dark soprano sound was picked up by Shipp's reflective playing and Lisk's economic drum work. Off stage, Shipp spoke of his VERY prominent social media wrestling match with noted Rapper André 3000 over the quality of 3000's new improvisational piano recording. Shipp has gone on a social media rant insisting that the release is, "Complete and utter crap" and "does not even deserve the attention of a critique it is so dreadful." "I'm getting over 50 Facebook requests an hour," he said, "with a couple nasty messages. It's really overwhelming!"... Two nights prior to birthday 101, Allen had one last go at it at age 100 at Solar Myth on 5/23. Leading one of his ongoing series of performances under the guise of Ars Nova Workshop's curated Marshall Allen's Ghost Horizons (of which a new recording has just been released documenting portions of previous groupings). This rendition of novel musician combinations was especially powerful with James Brandon Lewis (ts), Luke Stewart (b), DMHOTEP (g), Mike Reed (d) and Allen. Lewis' macho tenor blasts added a soulful fire to the other worldly sounds produced by Allen and DMHOTEP. Allen played a good deal of sax, in addition to his EVI. Lewis' fantastic blowout tenor solo inspired Allen to share his own climactic bursts on alto. Elliott Levin later came on stage to add some flute additions, adding a delicate texture to the offerings. DMHOTEP inserted some levity to the event when talking about the Ghost Horizons series – "The series began more than a year ago, basically to get Marshall off the streets."

Philadelphia, PA- Blues, R&B and Roots music star Fantastic Negrito already has 3 Grammy Awards on his shelf for Best Contemporary Blues album with more to come. His show at the City Winery on 7/1 was lengthy and entertaining. Styled colorfully from head to toe, he resembled the late Sly Stone physically and often sonically with a dollop of Prince and Screamin' Jay Hawkins. Featuring songs from his 2024 album *Son of A Broken Man*, Negrito spoke of growing up in Massachusetts and then Oakland, California as the 8th of 15 kids born to a stern Bahamian father. "My father was 63 and my mother was 30," he said. "My father was a broken man. I've accepted that I am basically old sperm!" He went on to say that his father stopped talking to him at the age of 12 and put him out of the house and into foster homes which spawned his new song "Living With Strangers" that he performed with a menacing, Rockish edge. His version of Leadbelly's "Where Did you Sleep Last Night" didn't have the authority of the original but Negrito bore the required inner pain to sing it. His popular tune "Oh Betty" was a highlight, along with his playful but poignant "Transgender Biscuits," which borrowed a segment from Lou Reed's "Walk on the Wild Side." Negrito ended his set with some helpful insight regarding hard times – "If it's broken, it can be useful. I made an album."... Bobby Zankel continued his yearly musical memorial honoring John Coltrane's July 17, 1967, death at the (very) hot Black Squirrel on 7/16 with his *Wonderful Sound 5*. This year's homage featured Zankel (as), Sumi Tonooka (p), Bryan Rogers (ts), Lee Smith (el b) and drummer Nazir Ebo, fresh off a tour with Joshua Redman. Ebo relayed that he had gotten the call a few hours pre-set that he was needed to fill in for an injured Pheeroan

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akLaff. Zankel has helped mentor many young artists in the Philadelphia area over the years and Ebo, a rising star percussionist, said he was always more than happy to help Zankel out. Zankel opened the night by saying, "The music John Coltrane left is in a different realm" and invited anyone who wanted to know more about Coltrane to speak with Zankel at the break. At this point, the core of Zankel's group has been covering this music for many years and have become expert excavators of the "holy" Coltrane works. This night, after the leader's stirring "Anthem to the Ancestors," they unleashed Zankel's high intensity arrangements of a Love Supreme's "Acknowledgement," as well as "Venus," "Reverend King," "Peace on Earth," and "Coltrane Time," a tune, Zankel pointed out, that local iconic saxophonist Odean Pope covers at all his own gigs. The quintet finished with Zankel's extraordinary original composition "Anthem to the Ancestors."...What a joy to have legendary Jazz masters Bobby Bradford and Andrew Cyrille in town for two one-off performances. Oakland, California-based guitarist Karl Evangelista arranged a two-night residency at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) for 7/17-18 with a septet of Bradford (tpt), Cyrille (d), Rei Scampavia (kybd), Luke Stewart (b) and William Roper (tuba) just prior to a planned New Jersey recording session. Bradford, who turned 91 on his second day in town, was an original member of the Ornette Coleman Quartet and has performed with artists such as Eric Dolphy, John Carter, Charlie Haden, George Lewis and his former student, David Murray. Sadly, Bradford lost his Altadena home in the January 2025 California fire and was at his 5th living space at the time of the appearance and was still looking for a new permanent residence. The other legend - Andrew Cyrille, a comparative youngster at age 85, made history by playing with Coleman Hawkins, Cecil Taylor, Milford Graves, David Murray, Peter Brötzmann, Oliver Lake, Anthony Braxton and Bill Frisell. An extra bonus for the special concert series was the fact that Bradford and Cyrille, two of the most good-natured artists in the biz, had not played together for "decades." Evangelista, who along with his wife Scampavia perform as Grex, the exploratory music duo which, "Explores the meeting point between surreal songcraft and the dark outer reaches of Free Jazz." Evangelista had organized the band as a way to premiere his composition "Taglish II," a new piece that explores his Filipino-American experience against the backdrop of the current era of uncertainty and unrest. I caught the first night's performance and the music was a mix of roving improvisation and electronically backed modern composition. At times, it seemed two groups in one - the throbbing electronic work by Grex, with Bradford and Roper sitting out, and then the more Free Jazz shaped abstractions after the hornmen took over. At the times that the whole band played, there was a fine coalescence of sound that was modern and searching in a Prog meets Free Jazz sense. Evangelist spoke of his long kinship with Louis Moholo-Moholo, the recently passed great South African drummer, before leading a performance of his own composition "Louis Moholo-Moholo" that began with a lengthy section of thumping drums and electric guitar probing leading to the addition of contemplative trumpet before the whole group entered. The leader also covered his tune "Malcolm Louis," named after his 3-year-old son and inspired by the work of Malcolm X and Moholo-Moholo. Evangelist explained that the piece is meant to touch on his concerns for, "What kind of world are we leaving for our kids?" Cyrille and Bradford still sound great and like themselves while creating spontaneous masterwork. This was my first time seeing West Coast based Roper and he's quite

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Makoto Ozone Alexander Claffy Adam Aruda at Chris' Jazz Cafe on 7/26

Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Andrew Cyrille Bobby Bradford at Solar Myth on 7/17

Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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Sumi Tonooka Bobby Zankel Bryan Rogers Lee Smith Nazir Ebo 7/16 at the Black Squirrel club  
credit © Ken Weiss

Photo



Fantastic Negrito 7/6 at City Winery Philadelphia  
Photo credit © Ken Weiss



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Keir Neuringer at The Perch on 9/6 Photo credit © Ken Weiss

## Short Takes - Philadelphia

the charismatic individual. He played a small tuba as well as a seashell and even sang an improvised section to a song backed by Cyrille on brushes - "Do you hear it? It's somewhere out there. Somewhere it's loud but I can hardly hear it. I don't know where it's coming from but somehow I know what it's about. It's about Juan, it's about Ceclia, it's about Lupe... That sound is disappearing. I guess they shouldn't have eaten those cats." ... Japanese pianist Makoto Ozone is often overlooked when the topic of great living Jazz pianists is brought up but he reminded those at Chris' Jazz Cafe on 7/26 just how magnificent he can be. Appearing as a special guest as part of bassist Alexander Claffy's trio (along with drummer Adam Arruda), this was Ozone's first performance in town in what he said was 30 years. With a photography crew documenting the event, the second set began with two pieces from late pianists - Chick Corea's "Matrix" and Bill Evans' "Waltz for Debby" - exquisitely well by the triad of virtuosos. Things heated up with Ozone's original piece - "Lazy Uncle" which came equipped with rhythm changes and fiery play. After the song's completion, Claffy noted, "Lazy uncle? It sounded more like crazy uncle to me!" "Well," Ozone answered, "we Japanese sometimes get our R's and L's mixed up!" After a lovely rendition of "When We Fall in Love," Claffy invited some local talent to the stage in the form of saxophonists Victor North and Dahi Devine, along with Branford Marsalis' longtime drummer Justin Faulkner for "Straight No Chaser." The vigorous additions of sax and Faulkner's thunderous percussion enlivened Ozone into a broad smile and a more muscular style of playing as a giddy romp ensued. Post-set, North noted, "Justin Faulkner's so good, it's like he brings a soccer team to play with him!" ... Fire Museum Presents threw itself a fundraiser on 9/6 at The Perch and purposely arranged the event to feature the wide range of Jazz, experimental and World music performances they present. Starting off with a sweet solo set by Iranian setar player Golkoo Hosseini, Keir Neuringer followed with a devastating solo display of circular blown soprano sax. Neuringer, who lived in Philadelphia during the 2010s (he's currently based in Ithaca, New York) blew me away the first time I heard him in a tiny art gallery space that Fire Museum produced years ago. It's fitting that he's found some notoriety working with the critically-acclaimed band Irreversible Entanglements because he plays like no one else I've heard. A master of circular breathing, his use of the floor and ceiling to alter sound, and his exploration of sonic textures remains uncanny and out of this world. Prior to his solo set, he spoke of the need for all of us to band together during these trying times. He passed out numerous circular saw blades of different dimensions that were strung to a rope with a drum stick attached for the audience to hit while he played. The blades, sharp and dangerous, were used as a tool to bond the listeners. By playing them together as a group, we attained a unifying connection. The trio of Neuringer, David Middleton (aka DMHotep of the Sun Ra Arkestra, g) and Julius Masri (d) ended the night on an uplifting high. Neuringer contributed more lengthy segments of circular breathing while Masri maintained a moving, pounded out base. The early portion, best described as fierce, eventually gave way to an unanticipated beautiful section triggered by Middleton's contributions. The latter part of the set surged to riveting great peaks that were thrilling.

## Short Takes New York Jazz Stories @ Joe's Pub



April 20, 2025 at Joe's Pub at the Public Theater in New York - Judi Silvano, Joe Lovano, Jimmy Bennington, Adam Lane, Photo Credit © Robert Sutherland-Cohen



April 20, 2025 at Joe's Pub at the Public Theater in New York  
Judi Silvano, David Haney, Joe Lovano, Jimmy Bennington, Adam Lane,  
Photo Credit © Robert Sutherland-Cohen

# Marshall Allen at 101 Years

## Marshall Allen at 101 Years: Coverage of His 5/25/25 Birthday Party at Solar Myth in Philadelphia

Review and photos by Ken Weiss

You only turn 101 once and Marshall Allen did so amongst friends, family, peers and fans at Solar Myth, Ars Nova Workshop's curatorial home, on 5/25, his actual birthday. This marked the second year in a row that Allen's son, Ronnie Boyd and family, lovingly arranged festivities at the club. Celebrators came from all over the country to toast the maestro. Once Allen arrived, he was greeted by a standing ovation while making his way into the venue with plenty of videographers documenting every step. After opening salutations from the eloquent Boyd, the musical part of the night ran for over 2 hours. The band was a one-off collection of star artists with Allen, Dick Griffin (tbn), Carlos Niño (perc), Austin Williamson (d), and the big surprise - singer, rapper, songwriter, record producer, actor and member of OutKast - André 3000 (ft, p). André 3000 (who was actively involved with a very public skirmish with pianist Matthew Shipp at the time) flew in from Atlanta for the event. Allen, always raring to play music, joyfully sat centerstage next to past Sun Ra Arkestra member Griffin who had joined the Arkestra in 1959. Both sported the glittery garb synonymous with the famed troupe as they traded lines and determined celestial music paths together. Much of the music was a joining of two worlds - Ra's space age sounds merged into this generation's interpretation of Free Jazz for a new and beautiful blend of sound. During the night, PA state representatives and musicians took the stage to offer exaltations. Saxophonist Isaiah Collier, who sadly did not bring his horn but did play some piano next to 3000, talked of playing with Allen for the first time on that very stage and how he was struck by Allen's endless energy, and how Allen rejected ending playing that night. Bassist Jamaaladeen Tacuma, who also combined forces later in the night with the band, bestowed verbal flowers upon Allen, saying, "The bravery to do what this young man has done [Pointing to André 3000], you see this prodigy right here, he's a product of this." [Pointing to Allen] Boyd led a champagne toast and later a custom baked red birthday cake with edible photos of a young Allen made its way down the aisle with sparklers blazing. As "Happy Birthday" was sung, Allen stood and fired caustic airings from his alto to the crowd's delight. Towards night's end, other musicians joined in the festivities, including Elliott Levin on flute. When Boyd tried to cap the night and send revelers home happy, his dad stood and started raring up on his EVI, to which Boyd knowingly conceded defeat. He quippingly said, "When you're 101, you get to do whatever you want." Later, Allen would summon a surprised Tara Middleton, the Arkestra's vocalist, to the stage for renditions of "Love in Outer Space" and "Space is the Place." Finally, the birthday boy was satisfied and concluded the party with spirited joy, saying, "I'm waiting for the next one!"

# Marshall Allen at 101 Years



Son Ronnie Boyd celebrates Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Birthday Cake Photo credit © Ken Weiss



# Marshall Allen at 101 Years



Dick Griffin - Marshall Allen Photo credit © Ken Weiss



André 3000 - Austin Williamson - Dick Griffin - Carlos Nino - Marshall Allen at Solar Myth  
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

## Concert Review - Ravi Coltrane

### RAVI COLTRANE QUARTET- JAZZ ALLEY 8/24/25

I'll admit, other than knowing that Ravi Coltrane is the son of John Coltrane and an amazing saxophonist I really don't know much about him. When I saw that he'd be at Jazz Alley in Seattle with Scott Colley on bass I decided I'd check it out. I'm a big fan of Scott's playing. I especially like his work with guitarist Jim Hall and Pat Metheny. So I'm thinking, if Scott's playing with Ravi Coltrane, this is got to be good. And it surely turned out that way. David Gilmore is on guitar and Kush Abadey is on drums, two very gifted musicians that I'm hearing for the first time. I'd imagine being bandmates with Ravi Coltrane and Scott Colley would be quite a daunting assignment. However the two were up for the task and rounded out the quartet like it was meant to be.

We managed to get some great up front seats so we could really feel and see how this group interacts. One of the big takeaways from this whole show was that Ravi and his bandmates really delivered the goods, no holding back. They played a lot of Ravi's originals which had some elaborate arrangements with a multitude of rhythmic feels. Guitarist David Gilmore seemed to be finding his place at first but soon got up to speed and presented some very impressive fusion like solos. Drummer Kush Abadey was very intense. At first he was negotiating with the soundman because he wasn't happy with the monitor sound and when they managed to work that all out it was balls to the walls all night long. I'd say his initial dispute with the sound system showed his perfectionist nature and in the end it was all to the listeners benefit. Ravi's playing on tenor and soprano was powerful to say the least. He seemed to be drawing energy from his bandmates, bobbing and weaving as the intensity grew. The level of commitment to his playing was amazing, giving his all to the point where you would think he'd collapse from exhaustion. Scott Colley and Kush Abadey really brought the playing to the next level. Their relentless pursuit to maintain an extreme level of interaction and rhythmic energy kept my attention throughout the whole evening. Other than Ravi's originals which were all beautifully written and personal we had an array of interesting tunes. Charlie Hayden's "Silence" with all its depth and melancholy splendor gets an exceptional reading. Ornette Coleman's "Happy House" is a roller coaster ride of bebop insanity that shows the group at its humerus and creative best. A bit of commercialism, maybe or maybe not with the Stylistics "People Make The World Go Round" brings some nice progressive funk energy.

I tried to imagine what it must be like to be the son of one of the most iconic jazz figures of all time. I do believe if jazz musicians were the subject of Mount Rushmore, John Coltrane and Miles would be right up there. Part of me thinks it would be a burden being a major Jazz figure like Ravi and yet have to be compared to his dad. Even though Ravi is twenty years or so older than his dad was when he passed, John Coltrane might still be considered his elder in many ways. So here's what impressed me a lot, rather than Ravi shying away from his dad's presence he embraced his father's influence and spoke of him with great affection. He spoke of his dad's later years, suggesting that some listeners had turned away from his music because they thought it had become to far out even though he was at the height of his creativity. Ravi seemed to understand what that must of felt like and then there was a moment when Ravi and the audience were taken over by an overwhelming sadness. Ravi then proceeded to play one of his dad's later recordings "Expressions". For me this turned out to be the highlight of the show. I felt I could hear the voice of John Coltrane speaking through his son and that's not something you experience very often.

All in all I feel a deep respect for Ravi, his music and his bandmates. He goes the extra mile to give it all to his audience

Frank Kohl

# Vision Fest 2025

## Vision Festival 2025: heART to Resist

June 2-7 at Roulette, Brooklyn, New York

*Review and photos by Ken Weiss*

It's open for debate whether this was the 29th or 30th rendition of the Vision Festival, however presenting body Arts for Art is planning to celebrate 30 years of the grand event next year so let's go with 29 years to date. What's not in question is the ongoing brilliance of the annual happening which fuses creative music, dance, visual art and spoken word as a way to foster community, love and compassion, as well as inspiring and empowering confrontation against the evils of the world. In the words of festival founder Patricia Nicholson – "This year more than ever we need the spirit of resistance."

Opening night was a celebration of co-founder of the AACM and the Art Ensemble of Chicago, multi-instrumentalist/sound-sculptor Roscoe Mitchell, this year's awardee of the festival's "Lifetime of Achievement Award." What's unique about this annual honor is that the awardee gets the festival's first night to present different aspects of their career. After an opening invocation featuring William Parker (mult-inst), Hamid Drake (perc) and Patricia Nicholson (dance), the Roscoe Mitchell Quartet (Mitchell, sop, b sax, perc; Dave Burrell, p; William Parker, b; Tani Tabbal, d) offered a short set that was a study in restraint with part of it shaped by the leader's quiet sounds wrought from his homemade percussion stand of wood blocks, small cymbals and toys. With his next act, Mitchell went off-schedule and called up the current rendition of his Space Ensemble (Thomas Buckner, vcl; Scott Robinson, mult-inst); Robert Dick, flt), a group he founded in 1979. This change in the program led to widespread confusion but Mitchell, when questioned, stuck to his own guns in trusting his innate musical design skills. He explained, "No, I've got my own program!" After a very short set, Mitchell announced, "Alright, you guys can leave," and called on a Renaissance quartet and a Jazz quartet (Immanuel Wilkins, as; Micah Thomas, p; Thomas Morgan, b; Kweku Sumbry, d) to premier his new piece "Metropolis Trilogy." The two ensembles played separately and then together while Mitchell sat in the front row taking in his compositions conceived to push the boundaries of Classical and Jazz music. Finally, Mitchell recalled his Space Ensemble back to the stage, to the delight of Scott Robinson who was thinking that he had lugged out his massive contrabass sax for nothing after not having had the chance to play it during the group's earlier short segment. This time, Robinson got to run through the gamut of weird instruments he'd brought from his renowned collection, including a 1920 jazzophone – a sax-shaped double-belled Bb trumpet – as well as contrabass clarinet, tenor sax, slide sax, walking cane flute, service bell, waterphone, and alto tarogato. Robinson's odd assortment of devices fell in step with Mitchell's unique playing and the (very) unusual Buckner vocalizations and Dick's collection of unusual flutes that he devised. What a way to close out the first night and shine a light on the brilliant career of Roscoe

# Vision Fest 2025

Mitchell.

The great thing about the Vision Festival has been its consistency throughout the years in presenting set after set of spectacular music, often by novel artist groupings put together for the night. There's always "Big Name" performers scheduled but often it's been the less glamorous ensembles that impress the most and leave a lasting impression. Some of the outstanding sets this year out of the 28 total included Day 2's violinist gabby fluke-mogul's Thread'; The Children are Always Ours (named after a James Baldwin quote), with Charles Burnham (vin), Ava Mendoza (g), Luke Stewart (b) and Tcheser Holmes (d) attacking the leader's compositions with ferocious intent. Flutist Nicole Mitchell, always a festival favorite, announced, "We're trying to tell a story here tonight," during her Black Earth Ensemble performance with James Brandon Lewis (ts), Caroline Davis (ts), Christopher Williams (tpt), Maia (vcl, harp), Angelica Sanchez (p), Luke Stewart (el b), Val Jeanty (elec), Jovia Armstrong (d)), that delved into waves of Afrofuturism chock full of compelling solos from her consummate band members.

Day 3 led with a presentation from Yoshiko Chuma's performance art group The School of Hard Knocks that combined with musicians including Jason Kao Hwang (vin), Frank London (tpt). Dane Terry (p) and Devin Brahja Waldman (as), who played as Chuma conducted her dancers while a black and white film played featuring the Brooklyn Bridge and then Japanese film clips. Chuma later walked amongst the audience while holding a large silver object that reflected back the image of the viewers. Waldman appeared again later that night on piano, fronting Radical Reversal with Melanie Dyer (via), Brendan Regan (g), Warren Trae Crudup III (d), along with Waldman's aunt – Anne Waldman, the esteemed Second Generation Beat poet whom Allen Ginsberg once called his "spiritual wife." She filled in for another poet who had to cancel due to a death in the family. What a treat to have the famed poet demonstratively delivering her fire and brimstone poems that were in step with the group's mission statement of looking, "To create a world where diversity is the universality." Hamid Drake (d, vcl) led Indigenous Mind with Daniel Carter (reeds, tpt), Cooper-Moore (home-made instr, p), Alfredo Colon (ts, ss), Melanie Dyer (via) and William Parker (b, ngoni) along a path lined with spirituality and some trance jam before giving way to fellow veteran drummer Pheeroan akLaff's Robeson Rise, a heartfelt tribute to the legendary musician and human rights activist Paul Robeson.

Day 4 included Matthew Shipp's String Trio (Mat Maneri, via; William Parker, b) and Ivo Perelman (ts), an interesting conglomerate of groups Shipp has been working with for some time. The intriguing overlapping of sounds they fostered included episodes of Parker slapping the wood of his bass while Shipp played pulsatile piano portions, as well as the powerful Shipp-Perelman duo sections. A touching duet followed with Oliver Lake reciting his poetry along with his son DJ Jahi Sundance Lake on turntables. Oliver Lake is no longer playing his horn due to health issues but his spoken word carries

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Roscoe Mitchell

Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Robert Dick - Roscoe Mitchell

Photo credit © Ken Weiss



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Nicole Mitchell

Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Ava Mendoza - Henry Fraser - Chad Taylor

Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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Alfredo Colon-William Parker-Daniel Carter

Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Matthew Shipp-William Parker-Ivo Perelman-Mat Maneri

Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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John Lockwood- George Garzone- Francisco Mela

Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Mat Maneri-Doyeon Kim

Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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Francesca Cinelli Murray-David Murray-Luke Stewart  
Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Marilyn Crispell  
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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Anne Waldman

Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Izumi Kimura-Earl Howard-Gerry Hemingway

Photo credit © Ken Weiss



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enough electricity to seize the moment. Drummer/pianist Michael Wimberly's Spiritworld featured Oluyemi Thomas (cl, double reeds), JD Parran (cl, flt, perc), William Parker (multi-instr) and Lisa Sokolov (vcl) with a stated aim to, "Channel the courage and resistance our ancestors conjured to survive in this new world." This set was especially inspirational with good vibes emanating particularly from the dashiki-clad, West Coast-based Thomas who sparkled with his ever-present smile, endearing dance moves and triumphant bass clarinet work. Parran, as always, was dominant on his instruments, while Sokolov drew goosebumps with her wordless vocalizations. Guitarist Mary Halvorson capped the night with her quartet deep in charts, premiering all new music sure to win her new awards.

Day 5 began with a mini-conference discussion titled *The Heart to Resist* (Art & Activism) involving a bunch of artists including William Parker and Marc Ribot followed by Boston's legendary group the Fringe with George Garzone (ts), John Lockwood (b) and drummer Francisco Mela who has replaced original drummer Bob Gullotti who passed in 2020. The band continues to showcase a bridge between Free and the Jazz tradition. Garzone conjures up memories of Sonny Rollins by tossing out frequent quotes of standard tunes (including "Softly, as in a Morning Sunrise," "Have You Met Miss Jones?," and "In a Sentimental Mood") and by way of his aggressive blowing. At one point, Garzone just allowed air to pass through his horn while Mela bowed squeaks from his rims for eerie magic. Cuban-bred Mela announced, "I just have 99 words in English so I don't want to say too much, but this festival, for me, is the most important festival." Patricia Nicholson's Shamanic Principle (Nicholson, dance/text; Val Jeanty, perc, sampling; Melanie Dyer, via; Miriam Parker, dance/video art) featured the wonderful mother-daughter dancers dancing, "To keep the world in balance." Sporting a red, white and pink feathered bird-like hat, Nicholson cast her healing spells across the stage with dance moves and vocals. Gayageum player Doyeon Kim's quartet (Mat Maneri, via; John Hebert, b; Tom Rainey, d) mined the fertile ground from Kim's South Korean roots to present "When Democracy Took a Day Off" – a piece rooted in the 1980 Gwangju uprising that resulted in martial law and violence against rebelling university students. Kim's presentation was quite striking to say the least – especially late set when she stood, wearing a loose fitting white dress and black bow tied at her neck (perhaps mirroring a student's outfit?) and shockingly screamed in Korean about the injustice. The night ended with the David Murray Quartet with Marta Sanchez (p), Luke Stewart (b) and Russel Carter (d). The tenor sax champion's set made history by featuring him playing for the first time with his new wife Francesca Cinelli Murray, a former actress in France who had not performed on stage for 25 years. She wrote lyrics for two of the songs and sang them to the bandleader's obvious delight as the quartet churned ahead.

Day 6 found newly named NEA Jazz Master Marilyn Crispell on solo piano delivering a magical set of mostly improvised music. Crispell's program

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notes included - "To be an artist is to seek and play one's own truth, thereby making connections to our common humanity. Music is a universal language that unites us all." Her performance, bare at times, built in delightful intensity and intriguing complexity, again and again, on a darkened stage that sent the plentiful photographers scurrying up to the balcony to try to get a decent shot of her (rarely) raised head. Crispell's longtime partner in the Anthony Braxton Quartet, standout percussionist Gerry Hemingway, led Earl Howard (synth, as) and Izumi Kimura (p) through a set he dedicated, "To all those who are suffering unbearable oppression while seeking peace." With colorful interactive video augmentation by Hemingway's collaborator of over 30 years, Beth Warshafsky, the trio excelled at new music creation by way of Howard's cosmic synth work and unique alto playing, along with Kimura's frequently prepared piano sounds and Hemingway's seemingly unlimited ability to craft sound by way of his mouth, bow, fingers and little percussive toys. After Fay Victor's set that dipped into her island roots by way of Lyndon Achee's steelpan, the Rob Brown Trio (Joe Morris, b; Juan Pablo Carletti, d) delivered a forceful and supremely interactive session before the festival came to an end, as it typically does, with festival co-founder William Parker leading a large group of artists. This year's collection was titled William Parker's Healing Message From Time & Space and included Hamid Drake on percussion, Mixashawn on sax and percussion, Frank London on trumpet and percussion, Amir ElSaffar on trumpet, santor and percussion, Selendis on vibes, Aakash Mittal on sax and percussion, Sula Spirit Janet Evans on percussion, and dancers, all of whom worked with a directive to send the festival's music-saturated listeners home enlightened and spiritually cleansed.

### **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

## Reflections and Recollections

*\* 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.

## Reflections and Recollections

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



## Reflections and Recollections

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.

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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®.

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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 Calendariy (Jazzprezzo, Germany). Photo credit Patrick Hinely, Work/Play®

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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®



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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®

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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®

## An Intentional Loss of Music - a memory from Hector Berlioz (1803-1869)

*Ed. note: From Hector Berlioz's Memoirs -this memory has nothing directly to do with jazz but is without a doubt, a predicament that the creative mind can appreciate. I came across this excerpt in the book "Musicology" by Oliver Saks. I was able to find the original source material at Archive.org. The following passage has been extracted from the entire 600 page document.*



Berlioz by August Prinzhofer, 1845

Two years ago, at a time when my wife's state of health was involving me in a lot of expense, but there was still some hope of its improving, I dreamed one night that I was composing a symphony, and heard it in my dream. On waking next morning I could recall nearly the whole of the first movement, which was an allegro in A minor in two-four time (that is all I now remember about it). I was going to my desk to begin writing it down, when I suddenly thought: "If I do, I shall be led on to compose the rest. My ideas always tend to expand nowadays, this symphony could well be on an enormous scale. I shall spend perhaps three or four months on the work (I took seven to write *Romeo and Juliet*), during which time I shall do no articles, or very few, and my income will diminish accordingly. When the symphony is written I shall be weak enough to let myself be persuaded by my copyist to have it copied, which will immediately put me a thousand or twelve hundred francs in debt. Once the parts exist, I shall be plagued by the temptation to have the work performed. I shall give a concert, the receipts of which will barely cover one half of the costs — that is inevitable these days. I shall lose what I haven't got, and be short of money to provide for the poor invalid, and no longer able to meet my personal expenses or pay my son's allowance on the ship he will shortly be joining." These thoughts made me shudder, and I threw down my pen, thinking: "What of it? I shall have forgotten it by tomorrow!" That night the symphony again appeared and obstinately rang in my head. I heard the allegro in A minor quite distinctly. More, I seemed to see it written. I woke in a state of feverish excitement. I hummed the theme to myself; its form and character pleased me exceedingly. I was on the point of getting up. Then my previous thoughts recurred and held me fast. I lay still, steeling myself against temptation, clinging to the hope that I would forget. At last I fell asleep; and when I next awoke, all recollection of it had vanished for ever.

# Seeking Billie Holiday

## BILLIE HOLIDAY - SEEKING BILLIE

by Mike Gerber

*Among the topics I raised with Artie Shaw, when I interviewed him shortly before he died, was that most influential of all female jazz vocalists – Billie Holiday.*

Artie compared her with the singer that replaced her in his band, Helen Forrest, the only singers he could relate to musically: “If you wanted just to hear the melody, played with some rhythm, with a beat, and with some understanding of the lyrics, do something with it, Helen was very good.”

There was though a fundamental difference, said Artie: “Helen sang the song; Billie made the song hers. It’s a whole different feel.”

A new album, by Washington DC based singer Changamiré, released in April to coincide with what would have been Billie Holiday’s 110th birthday, gives us a fresh chance to reflect on her unsurpassed legacy.

Jazz luminary Benny Carter, witnessing Billie perform at a small Harlem hangout early in her career, was struck by her originality: “She was not the typical blues singer, like Mamie Smith or somebody like that; all I can say is that she was not just another singer,” he told Billie biographer Stuart Nicholson. “Maybe she was great even then; I don’t know if I ever heard anything like that prior to hearing her for the first time. Or indeed, since.”

Billie’s influences included Bessie Smith, Ethel Waters, Sophie Tucker, and most particularly Louis Armstrong whose audacious genius seismically impacted on the entire jazz fraternity,

Her artistry, however, was transcendent. With no musical schooling, Billie intuitively developed a style of singing that chimed with the excursions of the finest jazz players. They dug her unsentimental, supple, behind the beat articulation, her flawless timing, the way she imbued lyrics with her personality. “I don’t feel like I’m singing, I feel I’m playing a horn,” she said.

As pianist Teddy Wilson disclosed, “she was very popular with the musicians. You might call her a musicians’ singer”.

Many commentators have contended that one cannot fully apprehend Billie Holiday’s oeuvre without grasping something about the vicissitudes of her life; that the two are intertwined.

I have some sympathy for that understanding of her work as I generally prefer the vivacious classic 1930s and 1940s recordings to the world-weary delivery I discern from certain fifties sessions.

It is not though as if her peerless output during her peak years was indicative of sunnier life circumstances. Growing up Black, economically underclass, and female in pre-civil rights America presented formidable challenges. Billie was born out of wedlock to teenage parents, her father promptly abandoning mother and child. Her mother’s precarious lifestyle meant Billie spent much of her childhood deposited among relatives or friends, and there was an incidence of rape. Eventually she followed her mother to New York where Billie became

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involved in prostitution leading to a jail sentence. It was in a whorehouse that she heard the seminal Armstrong recording 'West End Blues' and determined on the career in jazz that liberated her from the drudgery of her formative years.

But from the late forties, hard drug use leading to incarceration and prohibition from playing New York clubs, heavy boozing and smoking, and relationship issues all progressively undermined her health. Miles Davis, who briefly worked with her, scorned suggestions that there was a concomitant erosion of her abilities.

He told Nat Hentoff in 1958, the year before her death: "You know, she's not thinking now what she was in 1937, and she's probably learned more about different things. And she still has control, more control now than then." Miles contended that while many singers tried to sing like Billie, "just the act of singing behind the beat doesn't make it sound soulful".

Changamiré, whose 110th anniversary album *Seeking Billie: The Unusual Tribute to Billie Holiday* was released by her Sonnig label on April 7, is not one of those singers that strain to sound like Billie; her sweet, understatedly passionate vocals have an integrity all their own.

And Billie Holiday was just one of the singers that attracted her to jazz – Sarah Vaughan, Dinah Washington, Dakota Staton, Ella Fitzgerald and Nina Simone were others. What changamiré found distinctive, she told me, about Billie's voice was its ethereal timbre: "It's often described as haunting. And her singing style doesn't seek to be dynamic, filled with vocal technique or concentrated on jazz elements. It is quite natural and easy, at times innocent."

Besides covers of songs associated with Billie, such as 'God Save the Child' 'Them There Eyes', a couple of Ellington tunes, most of the 13 tracks on Changamiré's album are originals. 'Gardenia', for instance, written and arranged by Lincoln Ross, references the flowers with which Billie famously adorned her hair, and cites Lester Young, the tenor sax maestro with whom she had an especial creative empathy. Featured on this number are Lyle Link, tenor sax, Clifton Brockington, piano, Ron Carter, bass and Kush Abadey, drums. Changamiré herself wrote the ballad 'Come Soon', a dig at the manipulative, sometimes violent men Billie encountered.

Billie's experiences with racist bigotry prompted tracks on which Changamiré wrestles with the present-day horrors of anti-Black racism. These include two takes on 'Hardened Heart', the first on which she sings acapella live at the DC club Blues Alley, about which her liner notes explain: "I needed help to eliminate or at least lessen my hatred after the killings of Trayvon Martin, Sandra Bland, Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, Philando Castile, Eric Garner." About the second, longer version, co-credited to herself, Malik Yusef and Jabriel Iz Myne, she takes a "deeper look at that hatred, as I seek help to combat it". While in her smouldering 'Where's the Sun', co-written with Clifton Brockington, Changamiré finds comfort in Black pride.

One song covered from Billie's repertoire is Irving Berlin's 'He Ain't Got Rhythm', Changamiré swingingly backed by her regular quintet of Brockington, bassist BT Richardson, drummer Steve Walker, Donvonte McCoy, trumpet, and trombonist and arranger Lincoln Ross. It was included at the behest of



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Rudy Van Gelder, the legendary recording engineer at whose New Jersey studio several Seeking Billie tracks were cut.

Which brings us to the album's fascinating backstory. Van Gelder recorded many of the great icons in jazz, notably much of the classic Blue Note catalogue, recordings that still stand out for the naturalness and technical excellence with which Van Gelder captured the sessions. Yet as Changamiré related to me, she'd never heard of him until Lincoln Ross suggested, "in passing and probably in jest", how great it would be to record at Van Gelder's.

"I asked him what was Van Gelder's. Once he told me, I looked up the number for the studio, called it and Rudy answered the phone, Lincoln was shocked, and I simply continued the conversation, inquiring about studio rates and the possibility of my recording there. The call went well."

A meeting was arranged at the studio, "the holy temple of jazz recordings" as Changamiré now appreciated: "Rudy entered the room in a wheelchair, wheeling himself next to me on the sofa. I couldn't believe it. It's making me emotional just thinking about it; that I was given the gift of that moment. I introduced myself and told him about the Billie album idea and that I would love to record some of it in his studio. He told me that he hadn't recorded her and described a performance he saw of her in a club in New York. He seemed to be seeing the show in his mind and briefly wept. I stayed quiet, saddened, because I understood. Billie's music always hit me deeply."

Van Gelder volunteered to record Changamiré at zero cost provided she included his favourite Billie song, 'He Ain't Got Rhythm': "I probably screamed; I definitely jumped up from the sofa and hugged him."

Two weeks later, Rudy died but the studio honoured his offer with Maureen Sickler, his assistant, handling the three tracks recorded there. These were also the tracks on which the celebrated bassist Ron Carter participated. He'd offered to do so when he learned about the Billie project while guesting on The New Jazz Listener jazz advocacy show that Changamiré co-hosts via the Clubhouse app.

The song most associated with Billie, 'Strange Fruit', the harrowing anti-lynching classic written for her by left-wing Jewish teacher Lewis Allen, Changamiré had no desire to cover. "It is one of those recordings," she told me, "that I think cannot be improved upon. I feel that way about Marvin Gaye's 'What's Going On' and Sam Cooke's 'A Change Is Gonna Come'. To me, those songs are sacredly attached to the artist. In addition, though it has an unfortunate, overarching timeless message, 'Strange Fruit' references a specific period of time. As a Black woman in a different time in history, I personally experience racism in more subtle ways and have more publicly experienced heartache surrounding murders at the hands of authorities. So, I wrote 'Where's the Sun' and 'Hardened Heart' to express those feelings and seek help for relief." *Seeking Billie: The Unusual Tribute to Billie Holiday (Sonnig Records) is available as a digital edition via the various music streaming services. A Collector's Edition vinyl LP can be purchased for \$40 direct from Changamiré's website at [WhenSunnyGetsBlue.com](http://WhenSunnyGetsBlue.com)*

## Seeking Billie Holiday



# Foray to Luray Caverns

## FORAY TO LURAY CAVERNS JULY 14, 2025

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Improvised Music From Luray Caverns - Yael "KAT Modiano" Acher, David Haney from Cadence Media Records, released August 6, 2025

David Haney wasn't looking specifically for something like The Great Stalacpipe Organ (GSO) when, surfing the web, he found a video about it, but it surely piqued his interest, ultimately resulting in his co-creating this rather unusual music.

What follows is not meant to serve as a critical review of that music - it can be heard for free, via Bandcamp (<https://davidhaney1.bandcamp.com/album/improvised-music-from-luray-caverns-yael-kat-modiano-acher-david-haney>) so you can (in)form your own opinion on that.\*

Rather, this is an account of the process of its making, my impressions of hearing and seeing it unfold, in an otherworldly place, deep under the ground, in real time.

In the moment, burdened by the press of time, I took no notes, but absorbed many mental images as well as those gathered via the camera. Dealing with the technology of digital photography pretty much consumed my attention on - or, rather, under - the ground. Some of the results are included herewith.

For an estimated 400 million years, the subterranean sweating of the planet, slow but constant, has been ornamenting these caverns, surpassing, in its own way, even Jackson Pollock as a practitioner of drip art. The stalactites hanging from the heights of the chambers and their counterpart stalagmites rising ever higher from the cavern floors continue to accrete, at a rate more visible to practicing geologists than to the perception of casual visitors such as ourselves. Down there in the chamber known as The Cathedral, some 260 feet below the surface, the humidity is around 87%, yet, on a warm summer morning, it felt more comfortably cool than clammy, even though the poured concrete floors were visibly damp. With the help of the house technician, David began familiarizing himself with the GSO - it's called an organ but sounds more like a marimba - while Yael checked out the acoustics of the chamber by strolling around playing her flute, probing the space, curiously, seeking the beauty therein. They were warming up in the biggest orchestra pit I've ever seen, amidst a space possessed of its own immense reverb.

The GSO is in fact a lithophone, a percussion instrument played by striking stones, in this case the cavern's native stalactites, specifically the ones which have been fine-tuned into proper pitch. They are struck by electronic mallets wired throughout the caverns and connected to the four-manual console.

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When a key is depressed, a tone occurs as the rubber-tipped plunger strikes the stalactite tuned to concert pitch and is amplified. So, while you play the keys and the pedals, what you really play is the room, with notes sprinkled across its ceiling like stars across the night sky, conjuring up Van Gogh, Vincent Price and that Creator Who Has a Master Plan.

They played several pieces, the pre-arrangements consisted at most of an agreed starting point, after which things went freely where they went. Pieces would end organically, inevitably, when one player felt silence was the best next note and the other came to agree. They stretched the limits of structure in service to the music, which emerged with a subtle directness.

Yael and David already had plenty of wide-ranging shared musical experiences going in, and evolved and extended those in the couple of hours we were there that morning. They've both carved their own personal paths in music and life, fellow explorers and companionable adventurers who have nothing to prove but much to share, and can speak with that authority only experience can bring, relishing the prospect and process of discovery.

David's use of the foot pedals produced deeper sounds which balanced, augmented and grounded Yael's flights on flute, her spirit floating free, at once describing the contours of the room and of the universe. As she said a few weeks afterwards: "Being there as a creating artist and as a human felt humbling and peaceful."

As my eyes wandered during the quieter passages, when I dared not cause any camera noise (much less set off the flash), looking around the chamber, I could see forms emerging on the walls and ceiling, rather like seeing shapes in clouds, though these clouds didn't move. I could only marvel at what the artists of Lascaux, Altamira and other such places might have imagined all those millennia ago, under flickering torches yielding far less light.

The Caverns' lighting designers are to be commended for their ingenuity and sense of proportion. The subterranean 64 acres are inconspicuously but creatively, gracefully and dramatically lit by 700+ lights, making for exotic surroundings. Listening to the music and glancing around, taking in colors and textures, Blake's visions came to mind, as did the 'scapes of J.M.W. Turner, while Dali's dental dreamscape dripped from the ceiling as it simultaneously rose from the floor, forming massive molars at the rate of about one inch per 300 years...

The house team looking after us comprised a polite and respectful audience throughout the recording, standing quietly by, ready to help if needed. I wondered what they thought of the music. When the recording was done and we were packing up, one of them said, in so many words, that when he really listened to the music as it was being played, it took him to some interesting places. Mission accomplished.

It wasn't quite euphoria, but I did experience a definite lightness of being on the 20-minute walk back up, as my lifelong claustrophobia finally kicked in - as long as the music was playing, I could keep that fear smoldering on the back

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burner. Fortunately, Yael and David played almost all of the time we were down there, and we were now heading toward open sky.

What came to mind while climbing the longest incline was that scene in one of the Star Wars movies when the protagonists are trapped in a trash compactor on the Death Star and it starts to close in on them. Thankfully, the Caverns' walls and ceiling held, majestically, as we passed through this underground wonderland with several sights that qualify as spectacular. The staffers accompanying us had stories at every turn, told in a way that makes clear their genuine affection for their workplace, which is indeed unique, with a beauty all its own.

We emerged, squinting at the brightness, into mid-July's 9 a.m. sunlit daylight, heading for the exit, passing a queue of about a hundred visitors, already, at opening time, waiting to get in...

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\*Inevitably, while this new music was being created, associations with music I'd heard before came to mind. In the spirit of the 'if you like so-and-so, you'll like this' school of reviewing, let me own that I am of a vintage which cannot hear flute played in unusual places without thinking of the late Paul Horn, who did so most famously in the Taj Mahal, creating, literally overnight, a solo album much used by hippies for everything from meditation to seduction. Horn later also recorded in the Great Pyramid at Giza. I heard him in New York City's Cathedral of Saint John the Divine, in duet with bassist David Friesen, but that's another story. The only other flutist who came to mind was Charlie Mariano, specifically his work with Eberhard Weber's band Colours, in which he was a master at conjuring invitingly lovely and otherworldly sounds. The only other lithophone artist who came to mind was Stephan Micus, specifically his album *The Music of Stones*, on which he plays Elmer Deuchars's tuned stone sculptures in the Great Cathedral of Ulm, Europe's tallest, sometimes adding shakuhachi flute to the emanations in that majestic edifice comprising a huge and multifaceted echo chamber.

*The GSO has only become more widely famed with time, having been featured on NPR, ABC's Good Morning America, the Voice of America and even Mister Rogers' Neighborhood.*

## PHOTOS AND CAPTIONS

I hadn't counted 'em up before, but in 50+ years (so far), I've photographed, in contexts ranging from live performance to the most formal of recording studios, more than 100 recording sessions, a number which might well have been larger had I lived less than 400 miles from Manhattan. In any case, none were at all like this one, and while I am satisfied that I competently documented the proceedings, I also feel the results serve as an excellent example of the limits of what still photography can convey in such a four-dimensional situation.

Unless otherwise noted all photographs are ©Patrick Hinely, Work/Play®.

# Foray to Luray Caverns

For a conventional, i.e., physical CD, this would have been my choice for the front cover shot. It depicts the featured soloist of the moment, flutist Yael Acher (aka “KAT” Modiano) and the other half of this ensemble, David Haney (long-time adventurous pianist, and managing editor of this publication) on ‘deeper background,’ at the Great Stalacpipe Organ (GSO), deep in Luray Caverns, a venerable attraction in the small town of the same name, in the Shenandoah Valley, west of the Skyline Drive but east of the Great Valley of Virginia.



David Haney at the 4-keyboard manual of the GSO. Its voices are harmonic, cathedral, solo and echo), plus, unseen here, the foot pedals he deployed so orchestrally during the recording. Extracting music from the accreted stalactites of the 3 1/2 acres in this chamber of the Caverns is a marvel of mechanical aptitude and ingenuity on the part of the instrument’s creator (see the page on Leland Sprinkle).





## Foray to Luray Caverns



Acher playing her flute, which she has long done ably while based in her native Israel, Denmark and the USA, in as wide an array of musical contexts as her partner in these duets. I am less than pleased with the lighting my flash unit yielded here, and tried converting the image into black and white, but, alas, that did not look quite as nice as this. So it goes.



The players discuss what comes next. This view gives you a sense of the 'room' and its lighting. The lighting designers sure figured out how to show off what nature hath wrought. The down side is that the low level of illumination anywhere beyond the immediate vicinity of the light fixtures makes the use of a flash unfortunately unavoidable.

## Foray to Luray Caverns



Looking up, at the recording site, within the chamber formerly known as The Ballroom and now as The Cathedral. I can see palettes and patterns evoking Van Gogh or Klimt, and visions inspired by the range from William Blake to William S. Burroughs.



A panoramic view of the music being made.

## Foray to Luray Caverns



Post-recording, Haney and Acher chat with Luray Caverns Director of Marketing and Public Relations Bill E. Huffman, who, along with 2 of his colleagues, made sure us visitors felt welcome and had everything we needed at our disposal. They well exemplified the classical concept of Southern hospitality.



Scene seen on our way out: Dream Lake, looking much deeper than its maximum depth of 20 inches, and larger than its spring-fed acre, give or take. It is well named. It's one of those places I want to go back to.

# Foray to Luray Caverns



The manual of the GSO, a marvel of mechanical-age ingenuity. You could do most all of what it does now with a laptop, but that wouldn't do justice to actually hearing it in the room, with notes coming in from all over the 3 1/2-acre chamber.



Commemorative plaque near GSO. Full text: The Great Stalacpipe Organ / Dedicated June 7, 1957 / Inventor / Leland W. Sprinkle, Sr. / Springfield, Virginia / In recognition of distinguished accomplishments in the musical arts and pioneering achievements in science / "Man's genius and the hand of God are in perfect harmony" / 1986 / Luray Caverns Corporation.

The quote is not attributed on the plaque, but on the Caverns' web site it is attributed to 'a visitor', of which there are now more than half a million per year. The light fixture above the plaque has now been there long enough (almost 60 years) to gather beginnings of the accretions which have been adorning the caverns for millions of years.



# Foray to Luray Caverns

LELAND W. SPRINKLE, SR.,  
inventor of the Great Stalacpipe Organ  
1908 - 1990

Because there's only one Great Stalacpipe Organ in all the world, Leland Sprinkle isn't likely to become a name as widely recognized for creating a new musical instrument as prolific as those of Adolphe Sax, Les Paul or Robert Moog. Nevertheless, Sprinkle's design and construction of that lithophone - since recognized by the Guinness Brothers as the world's largest musical instrument - known as the Great Stalacpipe Organ (GSO) is at least as creative, imaginative and impressive. Sprinkle's day job was as a mathematician and electronics scientist at the Pentagon, and he had been involved with the UNIVAC project, which is to computers what Lucy of Olduvai Gorge is to human genetics. Sprinkle had also studied music, specifically, organ, at Baltimore's Peabody Institute, under Virgil Fox, he of "Heavy Organ" fame (or infamy).



Photo credit unknown

Sprinkle wasn't looking specifically for something like this when he found it - or it found him - in 1954, while he was chaperoning his young son's destination birthday party at an attraction some 75 miles from their home. Touring the Caverns for the first time, he heard the guide use a small mallet to 'ping' a stalactite, one close to perfectly tuned on a musical scale. This set off a brainstorm, one which may have been how he dealt with the proverbial mid-life crisis, though I couldn't say whether or not he also acquired a sports car. In any case, inspiration had struck, and, for the next 3 years, armed with 13 English tuning forks and a disc sander, he devoted as much time as possible to realizing his vision of a musical instrument which would play the 'pipes' of Luray Cavern. He spent a lot of time in low light, up on ladders, tapping innumerable stalactites until he found the ones which could be tuned to his liking, i.e., into proper pitches. After grinding each one into tune came the process of wiring the clappers onto them, requiring miles of cables to connect all to the manual. Having maxed out my talents for things electrical on my HO-scale train layout more than 60 years ago, I have to admire the guy for sticking to it, staying on task, and riding the wave all the way to shore. He played it on its dedication day in 1957.

In the late 1950s, Sprinkle recorded several pieces on the GSO for a 7-inch EP which was issued in several variations over the years by the Caverns' gift shop. Copies can still be found. Sprinkle is buried in a nearby cemetery.

### 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.

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

## Interview: Rob Scheps

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 to 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





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 sopranino 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 Barger; 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 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...

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***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 cœur” 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.



# Marshall Allen- I've Never Been A Hundred Before

By Ken Weiss

*Marshall Belford Allen (b. May 25, 1924, Louisville, KY) the legendary, longtime leader of the iconic Sun Ra Arkestra (since 1995) and 2025 NEA Jazz Master turned 100 the month prior to this extensive interview done on June 30, 2025, at his home - the famous "Sun Ra House" on Morton Street - a three-story rowhouse in Philadelphia's Germantown neighborhood which serves as the terrestrial headquarters of the Arkestra. Allen was accompanied by his son, Ronnie Boyd, who added his own occasional insights during the session.*

**Cadence:** *You turned 100 years old last month. What does passing the 100-year mark mean to you?*

Marshall Allen: I don't know, a hundred? That's good. All I know is I've never been a hundred before [Laughs] so I'm starting a new page. I ain't worrying about nothing, I know what I have to do and I do it whether I like it or not. I'm not worrying about those things I used to worry about. There ain't nothing to worry about. I worry about my health but most of the time I feel good. I feel like I've always felt except I don't do as much work.

**Cadence:** *To many who have followed your 80-year career of traveling the world, spreading the joyful music of Sun Ra and your own music, you've long been a national treasure. The fact that you are 100 years old and still performing at such a high level is downright fantastical and inspiring. Would you talk about keeping this going at age 100?*

Allen: My brother Nathan was 103 when he passed.

**Cadence:** *So you're not impressed with your age?*

Allen: No, I feel alright. I still have the energy to play although I don't have all the energy to do all the painting and decorating [around the house that I used to]. That's what I've done on the side – paint, fix and decorate, and other housework like that. I don't do much of that now because when I get on the ladder I get a little [off]. I still do some areas where I don't have to get on the ladder. I've painted all nine of the radiators and I've got to do all of them again.

**Cadence:** *When did you stop doing all the housework?*

Allen: When I almost fell off the ladder.

**Cadence:** *Once you hit 90 and beyond and kept touring, your age became a prominent entry into the articles written about you and the band. Do you think too much has been made of your age?*

Allen: I still have my energy, and when you have your energy, it doesn't matter how old you are. If you still have your spirit, you get up and go. Yeah, it's too



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Marshall Allen- Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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much talk about my age. I don't feel too bad for a hundred. I still do the same things I've always done, just not as much of it.

**Cadence:** *What advice do you have for the rest of us mere mortals regarding the secret of longevity?*

Allen: It's from playing the music for my well-being so I can give something to the people. So when it comes to be that I don't do it for my well-being, then I'll have nothing to give to the people. My idea was to do the music, do the thing that you really feel and give it to the people who really need the music. So if it don't do me no good, why should I give it to you? You see? I had to turn my life around a little bit. I turned it around and said, 'I'm going into the music only' in order for my well-being to keep me happy and strong and working so that I can give something to others when I play. But when it gets to where I don't do nothing, I'll have nothing to give. You see? That must be doing something because I'm still playing, I still want to play. Everybody says don't do this, don't do that, but I can still [claps hands] get down the road yet. [Laughs]

**Cadence:** *When did you turn your life around?*

Allen: I did it when I buried myself into the music and really tried to get the spirit and not do what I knew because what I knew was the condition I was in. So I said, 'I don't know nothing, I'm gonna do things by the spirit because when you "know," you go in the box. Sun Ra used to say that and I didn't quite understand it but he was talking about the mirror and the spirit. So I said, 'Now what I have to do is learn what he's talking about' because you believe it or you don't believe it. I had to convince myself to try it, to do the music for my well-being. I wanted it to keep me strong and don't break down and don't do a lot of things that will take your energy and stuff away. So I stopped doing all these things that I was doing when I was young and turned around to the music for my well-being. That called for some discipline because you have to cast out a lot of stuff you're doing in life and concentrate there, like any profession. When you put your mind into what you do you're gonna get the benefits, and it's got to help you before you can give people anything. So the message I give is the music keeps my well-being so I'll give you some, and if you're really sincere about that, and listen to the music, it can heal many of the different things that bother people.

**Cadence:** *Would you talk about what the listeners should be getting from the music?*

Allen: They're getting my well-being and my interpretation of a better feeling when you hear music and different sounds that you don't usually hear. So, I'll give you my well-being, you see? Otherwise, I wouldn't play music. It keeps me alive and energetic; that's what the music's supposed to do. I had to cast out all the other things that I'd been doing and concentrate just on the music. Sounds, sound body, sound mind, that's what they always told me, so I said, 'I'm gonna use sound,' but I had to be sincere about it, it ain't no joke. So I took

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Marshall Allen and Sun Ra Arkestra - Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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the third floor up there [Points up the steps of the house] and all the activity down here is down [here] and I'm upstairs doing my music, getting my well-being and understanding the music and what it means. It's kept me right on through my nineties with no feeling of being old or tired.

**Cadence:** *Talk about longevity in your family.*

Allen: My father went away in his 90s. My mother went away in her 90s. My brother went away in his 100s.

**Cadence:** *You also had 6 sisters?*

Allen: Yeah, they're all gone except for one who is 89 and she's kind of fragile. At 89, I was rolling because of the music.

**Cadence:** *You have this longevity in your family, have you lived your life with the expectancy of longevity?*

Allen: No, I never thought about it, I didn't look at it that way. I'd say, 'I'm alright, I'm 80,' 'I'm 90, I'm alright,' and 'I'm 100, I'm still alright.' There's been some little bumps along the way. I hope I keep my brain straight and keep the music. I'm always doing the music because it's healing to me. I took the music and all the confusion in life went away, it don't matter. I don't worry about nothing. I used to be a clean freak – everything I'd clean – because my family was like that. If you dropped a dirty sock on the floor you wouldn't see it anymore. They'd wash it or throw it in the trash. Clean freaks – that's what I call it. [Laughs]

**Cadence:** *We're doing this interview at your home – the “Sun Ra House?” – and your son Ronnie is here. Would you talk about your children? How many do you have and what do they do?*

Allen: [Looks at Ronnie and asks him to explain what he does]

Ronnie Boyd: I'm in the pharmaceutical industry. I sell products that treat patients that have head and neck cancer. My product is a pegfilgrastim so patients that are receiving chemotherapy infusions, my drug comes after and increases their white blood cell count. I've been in corporate America for 20 years and married for 30 years with 3 beautiful children. My siblings from my father, there are 5 of us. The oldest is Rodney. The next is, we call him “Strob” but his name is David. The next is Tina and then me and the youngest is little Marshall. They do a variety of different tasks. Little Marshall works for the city of Philadelphia. Rodney is retired but one thing to note, he's a great pianist. He's picked up the skill of playing music similar to our father. He's an incredible pianist who lives in Chicago. I think he has played with bands when he was coming up but he doesn't play anymore like that.

**Cadence:** *Ronnie, you live in Florida but you come to Philadelphia often.*

Ronnie Boyd: I come up each month to take my father to his medical appointments, make sure he's doing okay and spend time with him. I talk to him about our family history, about life, about his well-being, my well-being. So there's a bond we've created over the years that we have. I make sure that if he needs something, that I'm on the front line delivering that. For example, I

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Marshall Allen - Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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just recently bought him another air conditioner for his room.

**Cadence:** *Ronnie, would you say something about being the son of Marshall Allen, having such a famous father?*

Ronnie Boyd: I think I see things differently. Yes, I think it's an honor to be able to have a father who has played music for so long, that has given his life to music, and, like he said earlier, how he is playing for his well-being, so when he plays for his well-being, we all benefit from that. I think it's kind of weird as his son, because I have to share him with the world. Usually when there's a father-son relationship, there's an intimacy but I had to realize that I'm sharing my dad with the world. But one thing is for sure, others can never love him like me as his son. The love that I have goes beyond what others might feel because there's a blood bond, there's a physical bond, an emotional bond, and at the end – that's my father. It's a weird dichotomy because he's my father. He's been doing what he's been doing for all these years, and I respect it, so I want to see to it that he continues to do it and do it in a healthy manner, but I have to share him with others. It's not always easy to do but I get to build my memories and moments with him. When I am around him it's him and I and nobody else interrupts that, which is nice.

**Cadence:** *Marshall, when I interviewed you 10 years ago for Jazz Inside, I asked you to describe yourself and you answered with – “I’m just somebody who likes to play music. I found something that I wanted to do and I found a band that I liked and wanted to be in.” Would you expand on that?*

Allen: You know, if you study and you're ready, if you find the [right place] and you expand yourself by having your own thing, that's the way it is. So you study hard and you get yourself together, but that [applies] to everybody. I stay at my post and I cast out a lot of other stuff that takes you away from it. It takes a lot of discipline to stay with the music. That was a big choice and one day I just said, 'I'm going that way,' and I just shut off half of the house in order to do it. Nobody comes up and bothers me. Do whatever you do downstairs; I'm upstairs with my music. I knew I needed to play more instruments to understand how to write for them. I try to play them; I don't play them too good but I play them to understand how they're played. I've got about 20 instruments up there. I've got oboe, piccolo, flutes, clarinet, contrabass clarinet, E-flat clarinet, and a bunch of keyboards. All of these things help me write what I want, what I feel, and I can give everybody parts. I've got trumpet, trombone, I've got all that stuff. I play on the piano and organ and I've got a little bass. I bought some drums over there. I play a little bit on every instrument so when I write for it, I can hear it. There's also the kora. I've always liked the kora and I have one. When I was in Paris, there were a lot of kora players and I always wanted to play it. I played with [Babatunde] Olatunji and then I learned to play Highlife music and all the African stuff.

**Cadence:** *Your performing status changed during 2023. The grueling international touring schedule you'd done for so many years was halted due*



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*to age considerations. How challenging had those extensive European tours become for you?*

Allen: The thing about world tours, they're wonderful but if you do 25 or 30 performances in a row, hey man, it takes you out. In 2019, we played 30-some-odd days of one-nighters. [Laughs] You see? And, man, you're traveling from one end of the country to another and back and forth and back and forth. [Whew] When I got back here in 2019, I was wiped out. I was so tired, getting no sleep, sleeping on the train, sleeping anywhere I could sleep because it was always traveling from one city to another. So that wore me down and then I slowed down a little bit since then.

*Cadence: When did you cut down your touring?*

Ronnie Boyd: It was in the fall of 2022 that we started slowing it down. We started realizing the fact that someone getting older like Marshall Allen can't be flying overseas and having a grueling schedule. So what I did was to put together an agenda explaining why it's not good for someone Marshall's age to be flying like that.

Allen: There you go again. If you feel like this, I don't care how old you are, you still do your work. If you feel good, there's no pressure, and that's the way it is. If I'm a 100, so? I feel just as good as I did when I was in my 70s and 80s. I get more energy and enthusiasm as I go along and the only thing now is I'm not slowing down, it's the people around me that think that when you get to 90 or 100, that you're out of it. That it's the end of the line but it's not really because you learn how to do work without giving out a lot of energy. When you're younger, you just throw energy in and go, but now I place my energy towards the right things and I don't wear myself out. I don't get bored either.

*Cadence: How difficult has it been emotionally to have the Arkestra go off to perform without you?*

Allen: It did bother me but I thought I better listen to my doctor. He said slow down, which is alright. I have to slow down because I get tired. I've been doing this since I was 18 and never stopped. So now I stopped and I can do something else. I'll write some music. I've got ideas and I put them down. I'm here by myself and I've got all these instruments that I can play and write for. You know, you feel good when you accomplish something, when you write a composition.

*Cadence: You remain the musical director of the Arkestra but longtime Arkestra member Knoel Scott is now conducting the band.*

Allen: Yeah, I passed it to the next person. Like Sun Ra passed and John [Gilmore] took over, and then after John, there was nobody left that wanted to take over. All they wanted to do was take the stuff [some of the ephemera and collected items are missing], take all the stuff we done and distribute it and make money and do their thing. I said, 'No, I'll save everything,' that's why it looks so junky in here. I saved everything. No, I'm gonna carry on the music that Sun Ra spent a lifetime writing and dreaming and talking about. I'm gonna

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try that and see if it helps me, and it did. It kept me out of trouble, it kept me from doing wrong things, from wearing myself out. It made me sincere about whatever I'm doing, do it, and then what I don't know, good. Then I get on the bandstand and follow the director. [Hums a tune] You see? All the vibrations of the day, to where I feel today because tomorrow, the music will be changed. The same song will be there but the parts will change because that's the way I feel today. Now, when the musicians change, that's when the work comes because they're in the square, because they 'know.' I don't want to hear what you know, I want to hear what you don't know. That's the feeling. Now, how you gonna tell a musician that? They're in the square playing good, it's not that they ain't playing, but it ain't creative. The creator gives you some music to create but use it properly by knowing how. So, I get on the bandstand but Knoel takes over. He's going along with the song but then I want to get along on it so I say, 'Listen, this is where I feel today,' which nobody knows if they don't watch the conductor. I'm going to create, it's the same song but different inside and different parts. It's about creating what you feel today. The only way to get a band to do that is to do what Sun Ra did with us with the old band. Every day, seven days a week, for years, in and out. And then all the things I want to do is in between that. So that's what I'm doing now, I don't mind stopping because when I come, I come with me and the spirit of today. It's not what you got in the square. So, you know this, good, play a little what you know and then do the spirit of the day. And then by me being here every day training them about the way I'm thinking, I give them expanded minds instead of being correct. Life ain't correct, not every day it's not. It's there, you adjust yourself and move on. So that's the way with the music. I play the music and I don't have to be nowhere. That's the way it is, that's the vibrations of the day.

***Cadence: How was it decided that Knoel Scott would be the one to step up and take over?***

Allen: He's next in line so he takes over and he goes the way he thinks but I can still come in and go the way I think, too. And then it's not all in the square, it's done with what I know. Some of us don't know nothing – listen, be a part, and put your part in so I don't need to tell you what your part is. I don't need to write it down or nothing. You put your part in because that's the way you feel today. See, that's how you get something that's always a little different on the same song. Sun Ra would write you a part – you got your part, you come back tomorrow, you don't have no part. So you do all that studying, hoping you get your part and then he'd give your part to somebody else and give you another part. It was kind of mind-boggling. I'd say, 'I've been in all week, practicing since the last gig,' and then he gives it away to somebody else. [Laughs] You come today and play the arrangement, come tomorrow, the arrangement changed. You think you've got your part – uh-uh – that part is out, you've got another part. Or it could happen five minutes before you go on the show. He had a thing, five minutes before the show, he'd say, "Play this,

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don't play that, which you know, I'm gonna play this new stuff." And then when it was time to hit, he'd say, "Go out there and play, open the show." He'd send one man out to blow his horn and open the show while we're back there getting a new part on the song. You'd be thinking, 'Goddam, I had my part down good but he don't want me to play it,' and then he changes it." When he did that, you could get a little frustrated so I had to change my thinking to I don't know nothing and that's good, I'll learn. It's easy to say that but when you have a whole bunch of people, they've got to be on the same page.

**Cadence:** *You've been playing music for over 80 years, is there a lot that you don't know about music at this point?*

Allen: Yeah, everything, I don't know nothing. That's what Sun Ra said – "You've got a nice sound and all that but you're not phrasing like I want you to. You can make the music come alive with the right diction and the right punctuations – ups, downs – all of that." He said, "You know this, I don't want to hear that." That means that you're really listening from your heart. He was trying to get you to do that because otherwise it didn't fit into his music. That was a real blow to your ego and everything else. [Laughs] One day I got so mad and so sad, I just played anything and he said, "Oh, that's good." I said, 'I'm gonna do everything wrong.' It wasn't wrong, it was what I felt and it fit. When playing something you know, you're gonna do it by the rules, so it's a square. So that's the way I've been built to dance after Sun Ra's gone. I couldn't do all the things he did but I want to keep his music alive and put some of me in it at the same time because he left room for something else. He played melodies and background and then there's room for creativity in his music. That's what I had to find out – the creativity part in his music

**Cadence:** *Knoel Scott is not only brilliant on saxophone, flute and vocals, he's added an additional mesmerizing aspect to the Arkestra's performances throughout the years with his freakish athletic displays and leaps from hands to feet.*

Allen: He's a good player but like I said, I had to bring him in here and change his thing to help me. Now it's his time, okay, I slowed down, now you take it. So he's doing his thing the way he thinks. When you take over this band, you've got to be creative.

**Cadence:** *I've observed over the years how much music fills your existence. During quiet gaps of time off stage, you're always humming music and tapping your fingers to a beat. How have you balanced your music and your life?*

Allen: I'm humming different parts and you put them together like a jigsaw puzzle. Music is my life, that's all I do. I don't know nothing so I got the whole world to bring in. I don't know nothing. See, once I knew something, I was in the square, I couldn't get out of the square. It was just a spiral moving on down. I came out of the conservatory, I thought I knew everything and then I came to Sun Ra and he said, "No, that's not what I want. It's good, it's alright, but that's in the square. That's not what I want." You're gonna insult me?

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[Laughs] How hard did I study to get that stuff right? And then he said, “No, that’s alright but you’ve got to play from here.” [Taps chest] “You’ve got to play what you don’t know. The spirit of the day. You don’t know when you walk out that door, but the spirit guides you.” [One day] I was walking down the street, a plant fell off a house. I usually walk on the sidewalk everyday but that day I thought to walk in the street. There were no cars coming so I walked in the street and the plant fell on the sidewalk. That was something I didn’t know but the spirit guided me. See? Little things like that and you can see what I’m talking about. So you play music like that too but you have to be listening. You can’t be looking at some nice-looking woman. Keep your attention, you’ve got to be in it.

**Cadence:** *You said there was a plant that fell on the sidewalk?*

Allen: Yeah, something just told me to walk in the street. I said, ‘Oh, that’s something I didn’t see.’ And then I understood what Sun Ra was talking about – you do the right thing without thinking about doing it, you just do it. The spirit guided me off the sidewalk so I said, ‘It does work!’ You don’t think about what you’re doing, you just do what you do and you need to get the whole band thinking that way. When I walk out that door, I don’t know nothing, but if you’re open, the spirit will guide you. I can go out on the street, turn around, and go the other way and then all hell breaks loose where you were supposed to be going. [Laughs] And you say, ‘Damn, I’m glad I came this way!’ Those kinds of things you can’t plan, you just do them when it comes.

**Cadence:** *Anyone who’s seen you play knows that you don’t like performances to end. When it seems like the band is done playing you’ll often start playing something on your own to keep the music going.*

Allen: Yeah, boil and boil and boil!

Ronnie Boyd: Dad was performing with Kash Killion here in Philadelphia recently and Kash had stopped playing and it was pretty much over, but dad kept playing. He had the energy to keep going and the people were loving it. The audience wanted more and he kept playing his saxophone and his Casio. He kept playing because he’s in that energy space to give to the people what’s been given to him.

Allen: It’s hard to find out but you find out and you just do it and you say, ‘Oh, I did the right thing.’

**Cadence:** *You end your performances by reciting “Hit That Jive, Jack!”*

Allen: Yeah, I say ‘Hit that jive, Jack, put it in your pocket till I get back.’ So it’s ‘Hit that jive, Jack.’ Bam! ‘Put it in your pocket till I get back. Now I’m going outer space as fast as I can. Ain’t got time to shake your hand.’ [Claps his hands] Gone! That’s all. [Laughs]

**Cadence:** *Why do you do that?*

Allen: It’s a little thing. ‘Hit that jive, Jack!’ [Laughs] Sun Ra put that in there, he put all that stuff in there. It was like show band. You dance - you don’t sit up there like symphony folks and just play your horn and just sit there. No, you

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have to be a showman. You have to dance, you have to sing, you gotta move, and all of that. He had a band like that. Somebody would get up and dance and if they weren't a dancer, they'd do a dance that they knew or a dance they felt, and the whole band is moving. So it's a show and we have costumes.

**Cadence:** *What's the history behind the colorful costumes the band always wears?*

Allen: The first costumes we got were from the opera house. Eventually, Sun Ra began to make his own and we had dancers in the band that sewed and made costumes and came up with ideas. So, when you're watching, you've got something to look at. You've got people with different costumes and it's a show. We get up, we ain't just sitting there. You're moving constantly, it's a show band. He put all that stuff in there to play the music and it's quite a show. You look around and everybody's playing something different and dancing! [Laughs]

**Cadence:** *I've noticed even at your performances outside of the Arkestra that you always perform in glittery outfits.*

Allen: It's always a show.

**Cadence:** *You're very open to playing in all different types of settings and with all different types of musicians.*

Allen: Yea, I'll play with the amateurs and the professionals, whatever. I was in Scotland playing with kids and they were playing those horns good. I had to take them, make a band, and give a show. I used to do all of that kind of stuff. I tell people to focus and listen to what everybody is doing and put your part in there

**Cadence:** *In your later years, you've turned to playing the Steiner EVI (electronic valve instrument) more often. What's the history behind your playing that instrument? How did you come to start playing it? Were you one of the first to use it?*

Allen: When Steiner first came up with the instrument, they sent it to Italy to the Crumar company, an organ and keyboard company, to produce it. We were in Italy and Sun Ra saw we were gonna pass right by the Crumar company so Sun Ra went into the factory. They had these EVIs and they gave us seven of them. They had just come out. Everybody was enthused for a while and we were all playing them but as time went by, they got cast away except by me. I kept five of them. I liked them and kept on playing but everybody else didn't want to play them. They played their flutes and other stuff. [Laughs] I like it.

**Cadence:** *How do you see the EVI fitting into your music?*

Allen: I don't know anything like that. When the spirit gets you, nobody can ask you how do you know this? You don't. The spirit tells you to do certain things and it comes out. It tells me to keep playing and I like it. I like it because it has seven octaves, like a piano, and I use it like that.

**Cadence:** *For years you kept a red string around the bell of your alto saxophone to represent fire.*



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Allen: Yea to keep the fire burning. I put my banner on, I wrap it around the bell of my horn.

*Cadence: Yes, in the past you told me the red string represented fire. Recently, you've been sporting a blue string on your horn. Why the change and what does the blue string represent?*

Allen: Well, I've got different colors - I've got gold, red and blue.

*Cadence: But it was always red that I saw around your horn for many years and now I see it's blue. Why the change and what does it represent?*

Allen: Well, that was that horn. The red is my better horn. Each horn I give a ribbon around it of different colors. One's red, one's gold and one's blue. The blue doesn't represent something else, it's a different horn, and each one's got a different sound. I've got two altos left. One is a heavier sound and one has a light sound. I don't like the light sound for a band.

*Cadence: You play with a very distinctive style on saxophone that is often explosive. It's been described by some as a "pyrotechnic" playing style. At times, you strum the saxophone keys like a guitar with a clawed hand which releases an explosion of sound. How did you develop that?*

Allen: All these saxophone players I was around (when I was young) were professional. (Zoom, zoom, zoom, zoom) They'd be gone, boy. I mean, there was Don Byas and Coleman Hawkins, all them kind of people. They were SAXOPHONE players and they just scripted through that stuff and I said, 'Dag! How could they do that?' Charlie Parker and all them. I decided I'd play so fast till I could raise myself up like a whirlwind. So, I play until I get that feeling and then I go - [shouts woooooo] - raise up. [Laughs] It's just like putting a whirlwind thing on you and going up - like having air push under an umbrella and you go up with it.

*Cadence: I've never seen anybody else play like you play, How did you come to play like you do?*

Allen: That's what's in my head. It's just a way that you think and then you find a way of doing it. I used to cut up my fingers because they would get in the springs and the springs would cut my fingers. I was always having bleeding fingers. My hand was bloody until I got a better horn where the springs didn't stick up there, and then instead of pulling in, I pulled out, so that my fingers don't hit those springs anymore. Those springs were like needles, so now I pull back and then go across the keys. It's a style like going up in a balloon. I had that kind of thinking.

*Cadence: That's what it feels like to you?*

Allen: Yea, I feel like I'm gonna ease up out of the chair. I thought that if I played fast enough, I'd probably raise up out of my seat. [Laughs] I don't know if I do or not but I feel light.

*Cadence: Have you had out-of-body experiences while playing?*

Allen: Yeah, I float through walls, that kind of stuff. Weird things happen. Once I was in the room in the back of the house and [other band members] were in the front room. They were in there talking and I went through the wall and

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went into the front room and listened to the conversation. But I got scared and I came back out of that and I told them everything they were talking about and they looked at me. And then one time in New York, it went the same way. I went out through the wall and I got scared and I came back. I've had two or three of those experiences and they make you think differently. I was in control but I got scared that I'd get locked in. I got all the way through with my head (through the wall) that first time but I got scared and came back. But the next time, I went through the wall completely and listened to everything they were talking about and they said, "How'd you do that when you were in the back room?" I don't really know what that was.

**Cadence:** *You served in the United States Army's 92nd Infantry Division (also known as the "Buffalo Soldiers") during WWII.*

Allen: Yes, in 1942 they were looking for musicians for their 28-piece band and I could already play the clarinet a little bit so I joined the band as a way to get away from shooting somebody. That was down in Brownsville, Texas, just off the border. And then I had two weeks' trial to learn to play some of the marches. There happened to be a very good clarinet player in the band and he tutored me. I was playing fourth parts and fifth parts and I got into the band. We also formed a dance band and we played at officer clubs. The ("Buffalo Soldier") infantry went to Italy and they transferred the band to Fort Sam Houston headquarters, and from headquarters they sent us to 2nd Cavalry Division for a while, and then they changed us again to the infantry and we went to Mississippi and Kentucky and then from there we finally went overseas with 13 large ships full with troops. It was black at night out there in the sea and you'd see a big, bright light go "boom!" out in the dark and you'd know the submarines got another destroyer or troop ship. They didn't get us though. I was on the back with my life jacket on most of the time, just in case. [Laughs] We went into Le Havre (France) and that was all banged up too. I was in the service for seven years and finished in Germany. When I came out, I was in Austria drinking vodka with the Russian soldiers and acting crazy.

**Cadence:** *How scary was that going over to war on the ship?*

Allen: I tell you; I didn't go down in the hull. I didn't go down there, I wouldn't sleep. I stayed up on deck with my life jacket on most of the time. Yea, I wouldn't go down there and then have a torpedo hit that ship. Shoot, because I'd seen big blazes out there on the ocean when the submarines hit ships.

**Cadence:** *Were you involved in any actual fighting?*

Allen: No, we were a band. We were back with the prisoners of war and with the guys behind the lines, keeping the morale behind the line of fighting. I was over there when Patton got killed. We took care of prisoners of war and other stuff.

**Cadence:** *You played in the 101st Infantry Division's band during the 1945 V-E Day [Victory in Europe Day] parade for President Eisenhower in Reims, France. What do you recall from that day? Did you see Eisenhower?*

Allen: Yes, we were the only band in the parade. I've got a newspaper clipping

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in an album upstairs which shows the band and the generals. It felt good to do that on V-E Day. The war was over, we were in the parade, the only band in it, in front of the generals – yeah, that felt good. [Laughs]

**Cadence:** *After the war, you stayed in Europe for Classical clarinet study on the GI Bill at Paris' National Conservatory. While there, you had exposure to artists such as Don Byas, James Moody and Annie Ross who lived in the same hotel as you. Would you talk about your time spent with them?*

Allen: I was playing in the officer's club and one of the lieutenant generals said, "I like the way you play. When are you getting out of the army?" I said, "I got another year," and he said, "Well, you come to Heidelberg next year and I'll see that you have all your papers straight for the GI Bill." When I got to my last week or two, I went to Heidelberg to the general and he said, "Sit down, have a drink." He got on the phone and said, "I want this man's papers processed before twelve o'clock," because twelve o'clock was lunch. I went through the process (swiftly), it usually took days to do. I had a three-day pass so I traveled around to where other musicians were and I had a go time. After that, I got my papers and I was [gone]. I trained in Paris and all the musicians and bands would come to Paris and play so I was right in the heart of where they all were – Duke Ellington and Count Basie. Eartha Kitt was there, she was running around with us for a while and then the next thing you know – she was over at the Lido with the big folks. [Laughs] I lived around the corner from the Lido where all the dancing girls were. I hung out with all the musicians that lived in the area because they had a hotel on the same street. James Moody was there. Don Byas was there and he was always inviting me to come over. He was going down to the South of France to play and I'd go down there and play too. We'd be there with Sidney Bechet We'd all be on the beach down there and they'd be showing off – "Who's the greatest? Who's in better shape?" I'd listen to Byas and Bechet, two old men, talking about who's the greatest and who's the strongest and all that. [Laughs] We were all laughing. They kind of took me under their wing and they would tell me all of their stories and I would listen. [Laughs]

**Cadence:** *What do you recall of your interaction with Charlie Parker at a jam session in Paris?*

Allen: He came in late with somebody carrying his horn. They didn't have the drummer there so I got on the drums and tried to do my Denzil Best at the jam session. Do you know Denzil Best? I did the brushes, you know, like "Big Sid" Catlett. I was no drummer but I could keep a beat. Charlie Parker came in there late. That place was almost ready to close and here he comes, but he still did hit the jam session.

**Cadence:** *You played drums for Charlie Parker?*

Allen: No, I wasn't no drummer, I was just filling in because the drummer wasn't there. That was just at the jam session. Another jam session was with Don Byas and Coleman Hawkins and a bunch of cats. There I had my horn sitting on my lap listening to them and they said, "Come on Red, play your

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horn!" I couldn't play like they played but I tried. [Laughs]

**Cadence:** *Is it true you played drums for Sidney Bechet one night in Paris?*

Allen: Sidney's drummer didn't show up so I had to do the rehearsal. I played the drums a little bit, + doing the Denzil Best brush sweeps. [Laughs] The drummer finally came and then the concert was on. And then Sidney gave me his ring and his girlfriend and told me to watch them. He said, "Take my ring, take my girlfriend and watch her. Take care of her while I'm on stage." [Laughs] I was his bodyguard for his girlfriend.

**Cadence:** *You returned to the States on a boat to New York with refugees with whom you got grouped in with. What's the story behind that?*

Allen: It was the SS Nassau that made its maiden voyage out of Italy and it had 7,000 people on it. There were refugees on there with me because I came back after the war was over. I came back in the '50s. Yeah, they thought I was one of the refugees because I was playing with an Italian band on the ship after one of the musicians got seasick and I got the gig. They wanted me to go from New York to Nassau and I said, "No, I'm going from New York to Chicago. I'm going home." I turned that gig down and went on home but then they got me mixed up with the refugees and they sent me along with a ticket. And then, the next thing you know, the government said I owed them five hundred dollars. [Laughs] I paid them back but at the time they called me a refugee and they sent me home quick. I said, 'Oh, boy, I don't have to spend no money,' and then the next thing you know, I got a bill. [Laughs]

**Cadence:** *You headed to Chicago where your mother lived and got a job.*

Allen: I was working in a camera company polishing camera lenses. First, they gave me the dirty job of cleaning the pit – the trough that runs around the area where they polished the glass with that old stinky stuff. Yeah, I did that, nobody wanted that job but I took it and I did a good job. I'd put my fingers over my nose, and then they put me over to polishing lenses. That was a good job for a while. I'd come to work with my horn, all dressed up with all the workers looking at me, after being up all night with Sun Ra. [Laughs] I'd be coming in late after I got through with Sun Ra - he'd keep you up all night long. I lost my job fooling around with Sun Ra after coming in late every day. I was out every night with Sun Ra and when the time came to fire someone, they fired me. I had my horn at work and instead of eating lunch, I'd go in the bathroom and practice my flute. At that time, I'd also be going around, buying all the records. That's when I bought Sun Ra's demos, and I heard that and I said, 'Oh!' Around that time, I had been promoted at work to diamond grinding but I wasn't in there long enough to learn anything but that was a good job and my pay went up. I did that a little bit and then I was fired because of coming in late all the time.

**Cadence:** *When did you sleep?*

Allen: When I went home after work and then we had rehearsal in the evening. And then I had to take flute lessons, which I took with the flute player out of

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the Chicago Symphony. He had a shop where he taught kids and he told me if I taught them saxophone, he'd give me flute lessons afterwards. So, I got free flute lessons but no pay for working with the kids.

**Cadence:** *Was your plan to be a professional musician at the time you came back to Chicago after the service?*

Allen: No, I had to get a job and then I also didn't know anybody. I did jam sessions all over the place in different little clubs. Then I got me a little band with vibes and a bass and drums and we played dances and little clubs. I wasn't making no money but I had a band. And then I met Sun Ra and that was it – got hooked with that.

**Cadence:** *Marshall, do you want to take a break?*

Allen: No, are you tired? [Everyone laughs]

**Cadence:** *It's well documented that you heard a Sun Ra recording in Joe Segel's record store in Chicago and met up with Sun Ra at his nearby home shortly afterwards.*

Allen: I heard the record with "Super Blonde" (released 1956) on it. Man, I heard that, boy, and I thought, 'Dag!' I asked Joe Segel about the band and he said they rehearsed in a ballroom during the day right up on the South Side where I lived – about 6 blocks from me. So, I went and found them. I went into the building and Sun Ra was in the ballroom, sitting down, writing stuff, and the band was rehearsing. I came in there with my little saxophone and he looked at me [Laughs] like, "Oh, here comes a rookie." And then he made me late for work the next day. The next thing you know, I got my notice and then I had to go and get another job. I started doing portraits. My sister worked for artists and she offered me to come to work with her because they wanted somebody to (sit for portrait modeling). I made a little money that way and then my mother put me out. [Laughs] "You've got to leave and get a job!" She put my stuff out through the door and I took my stuff and went over to my girlfriend's house but I couldn't stay there long so I was floating for a minute. I went back home eventually when she wasn't mad no more. [Laughs]

**Cadence:** *What was that first meeting with Sun Ra like?*

Allen: He was sitting there writing and then I had to follow him around. He said, "I'm going next door to eat," and then after he ate, he went over to where Jug (Gene Ammons) was playing. By then it was 4 AM and I had to go home and be at work by 8, so I didn't get much sleep.

**Cadence:** *When you met Sun Ra for that first time did you feel anything special about his presence? Did you feel a spiritual connection or anything out of the ordinary?*

Allen: No, I heard the record, that's all I needed to do. I said, "That band, I want to be in it!" Sun Ra was a master of his trade. There are people that seem to know things, that know about everything, and you listen to them. You wonder if you believe it, and then it comes true. He was telling us about the future and you wonder, 'How he know all about that?' You have your doubts,

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and yet, things happened just like he said. He said, "Now, we'll make this band for the 21st century," and it was 29 years that we had to wait for the 21st century! [Laughs] I was in the band 29 years before the 21st century. [Laughs] He was right, and we had to learn, we had to rehearse and rehearse, that's the way it was. He was accurate. I didn't believe half of it. I didn't believe everything but everything came true. Yeah, it's all good stuff. It took discipline, I had to learn about that. It wasn't so easy to learn that unless you really wanted it but I had to learn that if I wanted to survive and if I wanted to carry on his work. I had to remember things, remember the combinations and stuff. I had to remember that stuff. I was always around (him) so I remembered enough to carry on and add little things to it.

**Cadence:** *What do you think is most misunderstood about Sun Ra today?*

Allen: I don't know. He was a person that knew how to deal with people. And you couldn't fool him about nothing, and yet he wasn't an angel, but he was. He'd have some Grand-Dad [Old Grand-Dad bourbon whiskey] that he'd have in his room and we used to go up there and [makes a drinking motion and gulps!] take a sip. [Laughs] Then we'd hear - "Somebody's been in my bottle!" [Laughs] He knew and we'd go, Ugh oh.' But he just had a knack for people. I never met nobody like him. He was always talking about discipline and this and that, and quit wasting your time, and all that stuff. I didn't like it but I had to do it. I didn't like being restricted all the time. I'd try to sneak out and I'd hear, "Wait, come here a minute." I'd think, 'Oh, God,' and he'd say, "I'll play this and you can go on about your business," and then I'd be there all night playing that stuff. I'd be mad - 'There goes my night!' [Laughs] Oh, forget it! But he knew what I needed and I got it. I needed some control and discipline to do my work. I was lacking in that because I had been free all my life, free to go which way I wanted. Yea, he did me some good - I stopped making all that crazy stuff.

**Cadence:** *How do you share that discipline with the current members of the Arkestra?*

Allen: Oh, it's like anything else. You've got to have discipline as a doctor. You live with it and address yourself and keep steppin'. Sometimes you don't want to go to the office, and go through all that stuff, but you do it. It's no different from professional jobs. Whatever you do, you do it, but sometimes you'd like to be doing something else, but you have to stand your ground unless you can't. Like now, this house is all messed up and I am in no physical shape to fix it like before when I'd be up there painting everything. It wouldn't be dirty like this.

**Cadence:** *So who was going into Sun Ra's bottle?*

Allen: Everybody was sneaking to get a drink, who knows? [Laughs] I'd say, 'I didn't bother it, not me.'

**Cadence:** *I've never told you the Sun Ra story I have. As you know, I was the primary care doctor for (Arkestra saxophonist) John Gilmore at the end of his life when he was too weak to leave this house. In order to get his medical*



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*background information, I spoke with his previous doctor who had also been Sun Ra's doctor. That doctor told me the first time he met Sun Ra was at the hospital's intensive care unit. Sun Ra didn't have a doctor there so he got assigned to this doctor who said, "I went to meet him and I saw his name posted as Sun Ra outside the room. I thought that was very odd. Then I met him and he had purple and red facial hair and claimed to be from Saturn. I went outside to order a psychiatric consult when another internist came up to me all excited and said, "Do you know who you are seeing? You have Sun Ra!" And he explained Sun Ra to me and I canceled the consultation." He thought Sun Ra was insane at first.*

Allen: [Laughs] Oh, boy, you'd either believe it or not. You were always on the edge saying, 'What?' Yeah, but you couldn't fool him. Boy, he was sharp, that's just a gift some people have. That imagination, the magic carpet, and he'd be writing all those songs and poems and stuff.

*Cadence: Magic carpet?*

Allen: He'd put music to what he was talking about. All that stuff he'd be talking about is in the music. That was his idea of the world, not my idea of things as they are.

*Cadence: A lot of what he was talking about was really his way of dealing with racism, right?*

Allen: All of it.

*Cadence: This wasn't a fair world so he put himself somewhere else. Was that something he spoke about?*

Allen: He spoke about everything. There is nothing you can think of that he didn't hit. He was just a person that you might run into once in a lifetime. He was just a natural, it was natural for him. He'd read you like a book – know your weakness, know what to do, and know your potential. Because he wouldn't keep a lot of people around but he'd keep (some people around that you couldn't understand why). We'd ask, 'What do you got him here for?' But he had something that Sun Ra could use. Because he had some nutty people around, boy. Some crazy people and some bad people and he had them all under control. Even the bad guys were under control. That's another kind of person that can do that, you know? And he got the best out of everybody. I don't care who you were, he'd get the best out of you and he'd find something that he can use from you. That's why he was always talking about discipline. Nobody had discipline – which was right – everybody was free. [Laughs] At least they thought they were.

*Cadence: Are there any Sun Ra teachings or compositional techniques that you are just starting to understand or those that took years for you to know what he was intending?*

Allen: I've seen a lot of people with techniques of music and playing and you wonder how they do that. It just looks like everything flows right over whatever they do. Sun Ra was like that. He'd hit a chord; you don't know what it is. It's sound. He'd play some stuff and it was boggling. And he'd play a

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rhythm against rhythm, 5 against 3, or against all odd numbers, and boom! – it would come out. I never met nobody like him – that’s why I stayed with him so long. There wasn’t nobody like him that I’ve met in my life.

**Cadence:** *What do you think Sun Ra would have had to say about the COVID-19 pandemic?*

Allen: We already knew something was coming because he said so, like the plagues and all that. We’d already been informed. His thing was informing us of the future – the things that would happen – something would come along and wipe folks out. It was hard to believe until you see it with your own eyes. He talked about things coming along to punish folks and you either believed him or you didn’t.

**Cadence:** *Charles Mingus told his musicians he was looking to create a kind of “organized chaos” on the bandstand when they played his compositions. Is that a similar goal for the Arkestra?*

Allen: Chaos, yeah, because in the future you’re gonna have chaos. Now, you’ll be prepared if you already experienced chaos and move out of it. He didn’t call it that but there’s plenty of chaos now and as you go. He already told us about that, whether you believe it or not. Like I said, you believe some things and then some things come true and some things you wait on and it comes later. See? But he wasn’t crazy but damn, what kind of man is this? He was a teacher if you listened. You’d be better off for knowing what’s happening. You take some of his stuff and you wonder about it and then turn around and it happens. Sun Ra was talking about transmuting himself to another planet and then I’m thinking about me going through the walls. Now, who gonna believe me and who gonna believe him? So I accept that he went to all the planets, maybe he did. I went through the wall and everybody’s looking at me like I’m crazy. There’s some things that I don’t know that happened to people so I wouldn’t say, ‘No, you didn’t go nowhere’ because I don’t know. They don’t believe me when I say I went through the walls but when I went and told them everything they were talking about, then they wondered, “How do you know that?” I said, ‘I was right there looking at it.’ I just quit talking about it because they didn’t believe me but still, they wondered how I knew what happened. I got scared twice when I went through them walls. I was scared, boy – ‘Oh, Lord, I’m gonna be locked out before the hole closed.’

**Cadence:** *The Arkestra is still playing Sun Ra’s compositions. He left a massive amount of work behind. How many of his compositions have yet to be performed?*

Allen: I have never in my life seen one person have so much music that he wrote. Stacks! They haven’t played all them tunes. I’ve got so many tunes up there, you’d be surprised. There may be 500 to a thousand yet to be performed. I’m telling you, man, he’s someone that affected my whole life. That man and the way he thought. He’d tell me to sit down and play something he just wrote and I’d look at it and say, ‘What is that?’

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**Cadence:** *What's going to become with the music that's not been used yet?*

Allen: It's upstairs. The band's never gonna play all his music. He's got some finger-busters up there and mind-wailers. They're something else. And then I forget, as the years go by, the combinations he used. You'd get one song here and he'd put another song in there and it would work.

**Cadence:** *Any idea how many pieces he wrote?*

Allen: He'd write them like he'd write a letter. I'd say, Damn! I had my little 10, 15, 20 tunes, I thought I was doing something until I looked at him and he had a stack like that.

**Cadence:** *What do his original compositions look like? Are they fully notated?*

Allen: They're notated. When people write, they write differently. He liked me because I used to do copy work. If somebody brought me the score, I'd print it up because I had a good hand for note writing. My notes would be nice and clean. I used to do that, I'm a copyist. I copied different scores for different people to make a few dollars. I did that for Count Basie once after Sun Ra wrote music for him. Count Basie had a 15-20-piece band and I had to copy all that stuff for his band. And then his band went out there and Count Basie took the music and didn't even play it after I had worked day and night, handwriting all the parts for his band. That sucker got up there and didn't play it [Laughs] so we took it and played it ourselves.

**Cadence:** *Count Basie paid you to do that?*

Allen: No, I was doing that for Sun Ra.

**Cadence:** *Oh, Sun Ra would pay you for that?*

Allen: No, he wasn't gonna pay you! [Laughs]

**Cadence:** *You've been actively working on Sun Ra's music.*

Allen: I work on his music, there's always spots in his music to create something. He left space in his music.

**Cadence:** *What exactly have you been doing with his pieces?*

Allen: I'm writing out 16 parts for his music. I'll sit up there and do that. I've got Noel trying to do that. I ain't doing nothing right now.

**Cadence:** *How meaningful is it to you that Sun Ra's music continues to live on to the next century?*

Allen: That's right, like I said, in my life I've never met nobody like that, that had so much music and so many ideas. That's why I stayed all this time – without money or nothing.

**Cadence:** *How meaningful is it to you that Marshall Allen's music continues to live on?*

Allen: I've been writing my melodies and ideas for years. [Allen could not be pinned down for an answer]

**Cadence:** *The Jazz Detective label just released previously unreleased Sun Ra music – Sun Ra at the Showcase: Live in Chicago (1976-1977). It's two live sets that include you. What strikes you about that recording when you listen to it today?*

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Allen: I made so many recordings; I don't remember all this stuff. Sunny did this 7 days a week, now how you gonna remember all of that? Seven days a week he had you rehearsing, and had you playing your parts, playing somebody else's because they're not here, and then he'd change it. So he got you working and all that's up in your head, you can't keep up with him. 1976? I don't remember back then. [Laughs] I remember the day we had this big band. He had to start from 4 people and make 25 to 100-piece band and then had to train them, so we were busy all the time.

**Cadence:** *The Arkestra under your leadership has started releasing new recordings. Swirling came out in 2020 as the first new Sun Ra Arkestra album in over 20 years. Why did it take so long to put out new music?*

Allen: "Swirling" is mine, that's from my book. Sun Ra has so much music, why am I gonna put mine out there? He had so much music that needed to be played, I don't need to write nothing. If I do, I just put it in my book. I've got my own book for when I think of melodies, I put them in my book. Sun Ra's got so much music and some of it's never been played. And then the combinations he'd fit with it – it's mind-boggling.

**Cadence:** *How did it feel to have the Arkestra receive its first-ever Grammy nomination with Swirling?*

Allen: That's nice, I'm glad to get some kind of recognition for the recording. The flattery was alright, I'm cool with somebody liking it but, you know, I'm not overboard, I've gotten out of that stuff.

**Cadence:** *Living Sky came out in 2022 and includes a number of your own compositions.*

Allen: I've got two on there. I've got 50-60-70-80 tunes and every now and then I'll put one or two on a record.

**Cadence:** *The Arkestra has lost a number of members over the last few years including Danny Ray Thompson, Charles Davis and Juini Booth. How are new members located?*

Allen: Well, we've got some new people, you've heard 'em. They're good musicians and they want to (be here). I never go out recruiting nobody much, if the creator sends somebody by here that wants to do this. I never go hunting folks, sometimes somebody shows up and they want to be in the band.

**Cadence:** *Are new members given any kind of indoctrination as far as the teachings of Sun Ra?*

Allen: You come in here and the music tells the story – can you play it? If you do – wonderful. And do you want to do this kind of discipline? We rehearse all the time. So that's it, if you want to rehearse, then you'll learn it.

**Cadence:** *The Arkestra's practice schedule was intense back in Sun Ra's day. What is the band's current practice status?*

Allen: Since Sun Ra's been gone, that's all I've been doing. You wear down, you've gotta take a break. The house is so bad, nobody wants to come so we've got another way of doing it – sending the music to each individual and they

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practice it. You have to keep steppin. They don't come here now, that's why all this stuff is dirty, because nobody uses it until I clean it up more.

**Cadence:** *There's a lot of stuff in the house.*

Allen: Everybody who comes, brings something and leaves it. Now what you gonna do? People leave stuff here and then you go year in and year out and the next thing you know, you've got a pile of stuff that people have left. But it ought to be about the music – a place where you can rehearse and play it, and a place where you can study it and nobody's gonna bother you.

**Cadence:** *The good news is that the house got listed as a historical landmark in 2022 so it now has protected status.*

Allen: Yeah, but they take their time. They said they were gonna put out the plaque but we're still waiting. It's a slow process. I know the story -they wait for you to leave the planet before they do something and then what good is it gonna do you? You've gone on to another world and then someone else will reap the harvest. I'll just pass away before they do something. I guess that's what they're waiting on, everybody else is like that. When [people are] gone then there's the great house of whoever died. I ain't worrying about that, I've got the music keeping me alive, and I'm just gonna keep steppin' as long as I've got the energy and the will, and while it's doing me some good, but in the meantime, you've got all these things just nappin at you – breaking you down. You've got all of that. I've got these little things just gnawing me. You think I'm gonna give [up]? No, right on steppin' as long as I can keep on steppin'.

**Cadence:** *This house was one of two that your father originally owned until he "sold" it to Sun Ra for one dollar.*

Allen: Well, of course, nobody else wanted the place and he didn't need it – he had 3 or 4 more houses. I said this is a good place for Sun Ra - he's the one doing all the work – all the writing. He needed to get out of New York and all that crazy life and come down here where you go to bed at night [Laughs] and you can sit up all night and write.

**Cadence:** *What's the legal status of the house today?*

Allen: [The Sun Ra estate] has the deed for the house but they don't want it and I've told them to give it back to me and they're slowing around with that. Ain't nothing to do but just give me the house back and then I'll carry on the work. I ain't worried about it though. They're still collecting the royalties; they get their share of money. I got out of money hungry. I ain't got no money – I'm poor. All the stuff I've done – I still ain't got no money. You see? So what can you do? I'm glad I got my music. I'm glad I stayed with the music, otherwise, forget it. What else is there? I don't have no money, and then if I had some, what am I gonna do with it?

**Cadence:** *When's the last time you took a vacation?*

Allen: Vacation? I haven't heard that in a long time. Vacation? I don't get no vacations. I go all over the world, I run all over all these places. What do I need with a vacation? I'm on vacation when I'm out working. I'm out in different

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places, different languages, different people. A vacation don't mean nothin'. Where am I gonna vacation to?

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

Allen: I like to watch people build things. I used to do that in New York a lot. And then I like to do some of that too – build something, fix something. But now, I'm kind of out of it because I'm not doing nothin'. I watch TV. I've quit watching the movies. I just turn on CNN and leave it. I go to sleep with it on and wake up with it on.

**Cadence:** *You're a political person?*

Allen: No, I don't think about all that stuff. I know what they're doing. The same old thing – ain't nothin' changed – [it's] the same old people. I just have something on to keep my attention. And then I listen to my music. Sometimes I don't have the TV at all.

**Cadence:** *The final questions are from other artists:*

**Miguel Zenon (saxophone) asked:** *"Mr. Allen: How do you stay inspired and challenged after such a long and accomplished career?"*

Allen: I told you – if you have some discipline and use the music it keeps your wellbeing. I'm talking about that. It's not music for money or women or fame – it's music for my wellbeing – and I have to believe that. And then it has to show that the music is healing. It will heal you from many things. It's enlightening, I'm singing about enlightenment. I'm singing the same thing that I'm playing. The lyrics are in the song. I want to keep my wellbeing. I ain't thinking about my age. Do I feel good? Yes. Do I feel old? No. I feel tired, I do like any normal folk but I don't get depressed. Depressed for what? I ain't got nothin', never had nothin'. You live, you eat, you practice, you dream, all of that. No pressure. Pressure is when there's fussin' and hollerin' and shootin' and killing and all that nutty stuff. I don't get none of that. I don't want none of that in my music.

**Odean Pope (saxophone) said:** *"Marshall, you are one of the greatest minds this country has produced. Thank you so much for so many years of moving this incredible art form forward. Where does the inspiration come from to play chord structures like you do? Do you realize the impact that your music and spiritual concepts have on the world?. Grace and gratitude to you."*

Allen: I'm playing the music for my well-being, and when you're playing something for your well-being, you're going in it. You're not skipping around; you're not showing off. You don't care about all of that. You ain't trying to please nobody, you're trying to heal yourself. It's you first and then you can give somebody something. You see? I don't care about who can play better or what they doing. I don't care, I'm trying to play from my [slaps his heart area] and not this [points to his head] because that'll mess me up for years. I'm trying to find the spirit of things – it's simple.

**Bobby Zankel (saxophone) said,** *"I want to tell you how much I've loved your playing, your mastery of the saxophone and of the beautiful traditional language created by such elders as Johnny Hodges and Willie Smith, and the*



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*way you extended that tradition, particularly on your feature of "Prelude to a Kiss." "Around 2003 I had the great fortune of driving you up to New York to rehearse with Cecil Taylor's ensemble for a gig up in Boston. We had a wonderful rehearsal but the gig ended up being cancelled the day before. Unfortunately, it never happened again. I want to know if you enjoyed rehearsing with Cecil and what your impression of that was?"*

Allen: Cecil Taylor, I gotta say, is the consummate, and he got his code. I had to have somebody else help me with the code.

*Cadence: The code?*

Allen: Yeah, if you don't know what his code is you need to get help to follow it so I had someone help to follow along with what he's doing because Cecil was so busy playing so much stuff. He's sitting down at the piano going [Makes sound of pounding keys] and then I'm supposed to come in and I said, 'Where am I supposed to come in?' [Laughs] And then what note? So, I needed the code to his music. Bobby Zankel had it down and he was sittin' by me so he helped me to go with the stuff. It's like when someone played with Sun Ra, they don't know how Sun Ra plays unless somebody is there to help them.

*Cadence: Did you enjoy rehearsing with Cecil Taylor?*

Allen: I enjoy rehearsing with anybody. I'm not no hard to please, if you're playing something and you want to play it - good. I don't mind.

*Bobby Zankel also said, "What was the relationship that you had to Pharoah Sanders when Pharoah played with the Arkestra in the early '60s? Pharoah went into the band around the same time that he made his first recording which came out on ESP where he's playing very beautifully but playing stuff just on the horn. He's not playing what we call 'off the horn' or playing multiphonics or talking in tongues on the horn. I heard a recording that you did in '64 with Paul Bley [Barrage, ESP], especially on the alternate take, where you were playing some really remarkable, really advanced things that implied where you were going with the horn and also where Pharoah went with the horn and I'm wondering if you and Pharoah used to practice together or if you felt that Pharoah was listening to what you were doing. I know you are so unpretentious and such a beautiful person that you wouldn't make yourself bigger than you were but it's my long-distance guess that you really influenced Pharoah."*

Allen: Pharoah had big ears and he practiced with the band. If you were practicing something, he'd get it.

*Cadence: Zankel is implying that you influenced Sander's playing.*

Allen: Maybe, if somebody is using some of your stuff, it's an influence. That's like if you hear some stuff and you want to play it, then you put it in your repertoire. John [Gilmore], me, and Pat [Patrick], and all the others used to play, and you could take even more out of that playing. Everybody does that. You can take something but pop it up in your way.

*Craig Harris (trombone) asked: "The way you use your knuckles on the*

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*saxophone, is it hard on the instrument or is your technique so smooth it rolls off the keys?"*

Allen: That's what I was telling you before. I used to do it one way and I was hittin' them needles and I had to change. If I wanted to get the speed, I had to do it without pressure. So, I'd lighten up instead of putting pressure on 'em. I had been putting a lot of pressure on 'em. I was bending keys and wearing 'em out until I lightened up. And it's a multi-sound sound.

*Cadence: How long did it take to get that technique down?*

Allen: It comes naturally after you get through banging up your fingers the wrong way – you change. I was tired of tearing up my fingers, now I only tear up my fingernails.

*Cadence: You still do?*

Allen: Yeah, I'm always doing that to my fingernails so I'm always trying to get them down so I don't hit them. I lighten up the pressure so they don't break off like they used to.

*Roscoe Mitchell (multi-instrument) asked: "How do you do what you do?"*

Allen: That's the way I think – chaos.

*Cadence: You said chaos?*

Allen: Yeah, I use everything. I use this! I use that! You get a different sound from everything and you can use different angles.

*Andrew Cyrille (drums) said: "Regards Marshall, I hear about you often and I hope we see each other sometime soon. I've played with the Arkestra a few times. Would you talk about the time you and I played together with some of the other horn and drummer Sun Ra musicians in Babatunde Olatunji's Drums of Passion band?"*

Allen: Yeah, I remember Olatunji. I played the bell, my flute and the alto. We played Highlife music from Nigeria which is singing songs and dancing. I did a recording with him. Olatunji was a good cat, beautiful.

*Andrew Cyrille also asked: "What do you recall from the time that the Sun Ra Arkestra played that bar mitzvah at Art D'Lugoff's Village Gate? I sat in and the whole band wore suits!"*

Allen: Whatever, we got through it. [Laughs] He's remembering things that I didn't remember. I've done so many things I can't remember all of them.

*Cadence: Any final words you want to give to the people?*

Allen: Yeah, just keep on listening and you'll see what happens. Just get the spirit and it may do you some good. You live longer, you feel better longer and you go about your life better. Some music makes you feel different and I'm doing it for my well-being and I can give you some for yours.

## Ron Carter Interview Almost is Not Good Enough By Ken Weiss

*Ron Carter [B. May 4, 1937, Ferndale, Michigan] is the most recorded Jazz bassist in history, with more than 2,200 sessions to his credit, over 50 of them as a leader or co-leader. He's been involved with some of the most important developments in Jazz music since the beginning of the '60s. Carter reached iconic status for his mid-'60s work as a member of Miles Davis' 'Second Great Quintet,' while also making influential recordings over the years with Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Eric Dolphy, Andrew Hill, Lee Morgan, Sam Rivers, Freddie Hubbard, McCoy Tyner, Dexter Gordon, Joe Henderson, Bobby Hutcherson and Horace Silver. Famous for his walking quarter-note-lines, improvisational skills, and note choices, as well as for his professionalism and elegance on stage, the conservatory-trained bassist and cellist also excels at composing, teaching, book writing and standing up for societal fairness. This interview took place on April 11, 2021 by way of Zoom, just days prior to Carter's 84th birthday.*

**Cadence Magazine:** *It's a year since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown. What have you been doing creatively during this time?*

Ron Carter: I finished two books for my production company Retrac Productions Inc. in the hope that these books, if they're purchased by bass teachers and bass players, that they'll better understand, not just how I do what I do, but how they can better instruct their students better on how I do what I do. The newest one is called Chartography – Reinvented Transcriptions and it deals with the Miles Davis' "Autumn Leaves" transcriptions. It's a book that is score-sized and it takes my bassline for four courses of "Autumn Leaves" through five different performances [played in Miles Davis' second quartet during 1963-1967] and analyzes how my bassline had evolved over those five different choruses. My view is that a transcription on its own, say of a chorus line for bass players like Ray Brown, Christian McBride, and Oscar Pettiford, it doesn't tell you some very important things. One, how this line got to be so good, as there's only one line you see on the paper. Two, what's the makeup of this line? Was it the second chorus of this tune? Was it the last chorus of the night? Was it the third take? Did the piano play just the right chord to make these notes work? What did the drummer play? You have no idea, only this one transcribed bassline. I've had some of mine done [like that] and [the published basslines] have been the result of a perfect storm, but I want to see the storm. I want to know what made this line work. What led up to these note choices, and how were they resolved or used for the next chorus over the next night. This book takes my first four choruses of "Autumn Leaves" through four other performances of this baseline to see how my bassline, not just how it evolved over these five performances, but how the band responded to my input. That's been a major part of my last five months. I'm hoping that this book sets a standard for using transcriptions as a very necessary tool in how

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music works, in this case – string bass. I'm also learning better how to teach online. Most of my classes are more successful at this time than they were seven months ago. I'm learning how to get the right equipment and learning to be a little more patient when the Internet stops working or freezes [Laughs]. I'm understanding that that's the best the system allows us to do from week to week. They still haven't figured out how to have us play together. I've learned to enjoy not making decisions all the time, when it comes to the bass, because I'm not playing enough. I'm not on gigs. When I'm the bandleader, I'm making decisions the moment I walk in the club door. Is this the right set of tunes? Are they too fast? Too slow? Am I playing good enough for these guys? Are they playing good enough to let them play another chorus or so? What's the audience going to feel when they hear this music for the first time tonight? How's the band look? Are we there on time? Will my car be where I parked it at seven o'clock, at two o'clock in the morning? [Laughs] I haven't worried about those decisions for the past fourteen months, and it feels like a load is off my back, however, I'm looking forward to carrying it again whenever we open up and make more gigs. [Laughs]

***Cadence: You're selling facemasks on your website with your image on them. How did you arrive at that concept and how have sales been?***

Carter: I've had some major help in getting this social media concept in my 84-year-old head, [Laughs] and if you hear the rumor that you can't teach an old bass player new tricks, that's not true. I'm learning from these people every day. I've often seen the logo of the Rock groups, the Kiss group for example, on T-shirts. That's a big part of their identity, and their fans like to walk around with the shirts to remind themselves of the band. Since I'm not visible making gigs all the time, the people who help me with my social media presence thought it would be a good idea, since its mandatory to wear them right now, to have my masks available for my Jazz fans to be a part of a group who doesn't mind saying that they know who I am and that they like my music. Sales have been very good.

***Cadence: You've said repeatedly in the past that your job as a bassist is to make the other musicians around you sound better but does that change at all when you're the leader, doing your own compositions?***

Carter: it's more important then because they're expecting me to show them where I am that day on the bandstand because it's my job to lead them somewhere. A good sideman recognizes that pleasing the leader is their job, like it is mine when I'm a sideman. My job is to have a plan in my head although clearly you can't plan with [great] detail because the crowd changes, or you've got a nice ballad and the bartender is shaking the drink in the background on the wrong beat. [Laughs] You can't get mad at him because he's doing what he's got to do, and he's doing that because I've drawn people there that want that drink. I feel that it's my responsibility to lead the band and they understand that when they're soloing, for example, that I'm expecting them to lead me down their kind of path and we're gonna meet somewhere, so it's an

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Ron Carter

Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Ron Carter

Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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Ron Carter

Photo credit © Ken Weiss



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even exchange of ideas and understanding responsibilities in groups.

**Cadence:** *Guinness World Records officially certified you in 2015 as the most recorded Jazz bassist of all time. How have you decided which jobs to take and which to decline, and when did you have to start being more selective?*

Carter: That selectivity of who does the dates is up to the producer on most of the records that I've done. I'm a bandleader on maybe a hundred of those 2000 dates and counting, and I'm at those producer's mercy. I didn't go out and seek that work that I got the chance to do, my reputation proceeds me. And I've always been pleased and amazed at the calls I get from artists that I don't know, artists whose music I've never heard, but those producers have done some research in what they want for their project and they felt that my approach to the bass, and that my presence on a date, brings a certain level of where they need to make their song more successful. The other day, my friend sent me a record that I had forgotten all about. It's by Kate Taylor [Kate Taylor, 1978, Columbia], who is James Taylor's sister, and I'm on one track on this record, and the bass, man, sounds just gorgeous. For one track, I was worth my weight in platinum, but that was their choice. This is New York and all the good bass players come to New York. They want to be in with all of the guys. All of the famous players are here, and travel is no longer horse and buggy or stagecoach. It's nothing to get a guy from California to come to New York on a five-hour flight, go to the studio to make a date, and go back home. I've done that, come from Paris and go back on the same day. So, given the number of choices, I'm pleased and surprised and honored that these people, who I don't know, feel that my presence adds what they need to make that date successful. Being selective? I'm not there yet. I've never turned down a date that I felt was above my level or below my level of performance or my political beliefs. I haven't done that yet.

**Cadence:** *You've named J.J. Johnson as your most influential musician. It's not common to hear that a bassist's biggest influence is a trombonist. When and how did he impact upon you?*

Carter: I worked with a house band in Rochester, New York when I was an undergraduate at Eastman School of Music and we were the band for the "names" that would come through Rochester at the time, which was one of the main train stops coming from Canada through south from Montreal, for example, going to New York City. They would stop in Rochester or Little Falls or Herkimer or Syracuse, wherever the small Jazz club was, to allow them to get off the train, play a concert, get back on and go to the next stop. I miss those days but they're gone. And at these clubs, I had the chance to play opposite Dizzy Gillespie's quartet with Art Farmer, opposite Carmen McRae with Ike Isaacs, Horace Silver's band with Teddy Kotick playing bass and Louis Hayes on drums, and J.J. Johnson came in with his band with Tommy Flanagan, and Tootie Heath. I watched J.J. play all night for three nights – Friday, Saturday, Sunday, three weeks straight, and I noticed, after having studied Jazz history, and having listened to the tailgate trombones of Jack Teagarden and that

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style of players who had spent a lifetime passing the trombone slide way out, like nine-feet away is what it seemed to me as a bass player. But J.J. found all those Charlie Parker kind of lines no further than inches from the horn, and I wondered how does he know how far to stop the slide for this series of intricate notes he's going to play and not go past his range from his mouth to the end of the bell to play this intricate interval? How did he do that? I had studied trombone at school for six weeks as part of the course and I knew the overtone series is something else, and when I saw this person doing that, it occurred to me that if he's able to do this with the trombone, is that skill level, is that ability to find those notes at the right time available to me as a bass player? And I started to understand that playing up and down on the bass is less advantageous and that I needed to start investigating other ways to play, and I'm still investigating it.

**Cadence:** *You've also pointed towards baritone saxophonist Cecil Payne as a top influence.*

Carter: When I came to New York I worked with Randy Weston in 1960 with his quintet – Ray Copeland on trumpet, Cecil Payne on baritone saxophone, Clifford Jarvis on drums and Randy. And at the time Cecil was playing baritone, there were four other major baritone saxophone players – Serge Chaloff, Leo Parker, Harry Carney, Pepper Adams – and they all had a distinct sound on baritone. And here's this guy in Randy Weston's band, that I just ran into, who sounds like none of those guys. I said, "Wait a minute, [Laughs] how is that possible?" It didn't dawn on me at the time but when I'd see Horace Silver play a set, followed by someone like Tommy Flanagan, man, you would think that the piano had been changed, but it's their touch of the piano, it's their sound and concept to make this instrument sound different for them than the previous piano player. So, I saw Cecil, as good as he played, and as good as the other guys played, and as important as they were on the scene, how is he able to get his own sound that clearly makes him different than those four other major players? I looked at the five major bass players at the time. I could name them, but you know who they are, and I thought what can I do to make me sound different than those five guys? And through trial and error, and hitting and missing, and being lucky and being disappointed, I came up with a sound, a sound that I thought was different from theirs, but my job was could I make this sound mine every night? Whenever this bass comes out of this case can I present that sound from last night? And I'm still working on that.

**Cadence:** *What's your connection to Oscar Pettiford and Ray Brown?*

Carter: Not much. When I got to New York, Oscar Pettiford moved to Stockholm at the time and then subsequently passed away due to a bike accident. And when I got to Europe, he'd been long gone before I got there in 1961 with Cannonball. I met Ray Brown much later on in our careers, and we sat down and talked for a while, but he was working with Oscar [Peterson], and at the time, they were really busy. We never established a real relationship other than saying a comfortable and professional 'Hello how are you' and

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general conversation. I certainly admire his playing and recommend those who want to know how the bass can sound and how effective it can be in that environment of piano, bass and guitar - stop right there. If you don't believe that, go back twenty-five-years and hear Ahmad Jamal, Ray Crawford and Israel Crosby called The Three Strings. So, the idea is not new but Ray sure made a stamp in that kind of ensemble.

**Cadence:** *What's the balance in music between intellect and soul?*

Carter: I'm not sure how you define either one of those. I don't see how different they are.

**Cadence:** *What are your pet peeves on the bandstand?*

Carter: Unfortunately, I have a short time to discuss this so I'll make my list really short. [Laughs] Musicians who drink on the bandstand. That's always annoyed me, it's distracting. It feeds into the public persona that Jazz musicians are drinking all the time, and this is another place where they drink. I think it looks unprofessional. It looks pretty tacky, and it's pretty distracting for me since I don't drink. I treat the bandstand with a different level of respect than this person does who feels he must take a sip of whatever it is – coffee, water or alcoholic beverage. The next thing is that it seems to me when someone else of the ensemble is soloing, the horn players, for example, they disappear and come back when the solo is over. And I think, when they disappear, the audience is really sensitive to the band's presence and they sense that whatever is going on with the solo, that the bandmembers, who are not a part of this process, are disinterested in this process, and if they're not here giving it attention, why would I want to do that? So, when I'm playing my solo bass thing for my quartet, I've told the guys that when I'm playing that, I want them to be as stunned as the audience. To make that work, you've got to be there to be stunned, not back in the room taking notes or booking dates. I don't think that's hard to do but I've gotten occasional pushback by someone who says, "Well, man, I'm not playing." "Yea, so?" [Laughs] "I'm playing and I need your support. When you're playing a solo, I'll stop playing. They'll say, "Well, you can't do that." I'll say, "Why can't I do that?" "Because you're part of the band." "Well, you are too, only you're the visible part of the band." It takes a little sandbox discussion here, you know. Who's got the biggest pail, [Laughs] and right now I think I qualify for the biggest pail.

**Cadence:** *You have an unusual middle name – Levin. Where does that come from?*

Carter: My father, during the Depression of the '30s and early '40s, was unable to get hired because of the bias level at that time for African Americans working in big cities, in this case Detroit, Michigan. He found odds and ends jobs, here and there, putting a pay week together, and one of his clients was a pharmacist who was very sympathetic to the issues that African Americans were facing during that day and my father felt so thankful for this white, Jewish guy, who had given him whatever medicine he needed at a lower price, that my father decided that this person needed an honor so, my middle name

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Levin, is the pharmacist's name who was so kind to my father back in the day when not many white people were kind to African Americans who were in the position of needing assistance.

**Cadence:** *You were shy as a youngster. Would you talk about how the instrument allowed you to express yourself and build confidence?*

Carter: Well, I haven't gotten that far yet. I'm still quiet and shy and reserved. When I do my master classes, I anoint someone to be the "I" person. And I explain to the class that I'm not really comfortable to say that I did this, or I am responsible for this. So, what I'll do is find someone in the audience who is a stranger to me and I will designate them as my "I" person. So, when a phrase comes up that I must answer, 'I did do this,' or 'I am responsible for that,' I'll point to them and they'll say, "I did this." I think it's a terrible idea but I'm working on that level of shyness comfortability, and I think that helps me not worry about being shy anymore.

**Cadence:** *Okay, you've certainly accomplished so much that it's an understatement for you to be able to say "I".*

Carter: [Laughs]

**Cadence:** *You ended up paying for your own cello lessons. How did you raise the money and was that part of your parent's plan for you learning the instrument?*

Carter: I had two paper routes. At twelve, I was getting up at four o'clock in the morning to deliver the Detroit Free Press. Ferndale had some real tough snows back then, so I'd get dressed up in my snow suit and use my sled to pick up and carry the 400 papers and deliver them. Then I'd get ready to go to school for eight o'clock class at the junior elementary school. This money was what I put together to buy my first cello. I knew my parents would give me whatever they had but I'm from a family of 10, and the times were not kind to African Americans as far as earning a living was concerned. While I knew I had my family's emotional support and financial support of whatever they had, I took it upon myself to be responsible and pay for this. And ultimately I did, but it wasn't like opening a pocketbook and finding some money in there. I couldn't make money by shoveling snow because at the time, we shoveled our neighbor's snow and cut their lawns because that's what neighbors did then. That was not an income source, it was a matter of community and neighborhood sharing. I had a paper route for almost three years, and it paid for my cello and my lessons.

**Cadence:** *In high school you started experiencing the harsh reality of racial inequality. You saw the white cello players getting the calls for gigs, so you switched to bass during you senior year when Paul Chambers left, opening the one bass spot in the chamber orchestra.*

Carter: It made a difference to me, seeing these other kids in my high school get the opportunity to play jobs for some small pittance and gaining the reputation from playing at these various locations representing Cass Tech. It

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was not so much important to me, as it was having a chance to play with an ensemble in an important environment. If I thought these kids played better than me, I wouldn't have been so upset. I wouldn't have felt like what's wrong with this picture here? If the talent is equal, and I'm busting my chops to play good, and they don't play better than I do, how come they're getting the jobs? I don't want to say that they were not talented, and I was above their talent level. We were clearly in the same bag and I thought I earned my share of the rewards, and I wasn't getting it.

***Cadence: A year later, after receiving a full scholarship to Eastman School of Music, guest conductor Leopold Stokowski confessed to you that your career would be limited in playing Classical music because of the color of your skin. How did you deal with that setback and why weren't you aware of that reality sooner?***

Carter: I'm not sure that the people who had the opportunity to make that commentary would believe that I'd play good enough ultimately to have people make that choice. It's one thing to go to a minor league baseball team as a scout and scout the players on who's going to have the talent to make it to the big league. That's the scout's job, to find the best person for the job. To follow that analogy through, whoever the people were who were listening to the grapevine of orchestral players, those people looked around and felt that I may have played pretty well but society, the orchestra group, the orchestral environment, the orchestral cabal, may not be ready to have had a little Black kid in their orchestra with the other 105 white people. And those people had not had the opportunity to tell someone that because they thought that no one was worthy of that kind of challenge to their non-open, open orchestra. And perhaps, if I hadn't had walked in at the right moment, physically, to the conductor, who was nearby, who stopped me in the middle of my tracks and told me this, maybe I wouldn't have known this so blatantly at that time. I would have found out later. I might have gone to auditions and said, 'I hear those guys playing, man. How could they get the job?' As it turned out, twenty years later, the philharmonic in New York was called on the carpet for what auditioners felt was an unfair practice of not being able to get a fair audition because they were African Americans, and they never got the call. True or false, that's what happened. So, I was actually ahead of my time, as a senior in college in 1958, in being forced to make a career change because of that commentary. I was fortunate to have been on those weekend gigs at the Ridgcrest Inn, opposite those wonderful bands and musicians. I often heard that, "Hey, man, why don't you just go to New York because they need a good bass player." I graduated from college in June of 1959, I moved to New York in August of that same year, I met Chico Hamilton and he said, "Come down to the club, I think the bass player's gonna leave, so I'll hire you." I went down to the club and it turned out that Wyatt Ruther had decided to return to Seattle, his hometown, and so Chico was now looking for a bass player. That

circumstance was happenstance. I was at the right place at the right time, and I was physically capable of being present, I wasn't working. When I'm asked this kind of question, I'm still [caught up] in it because I still haven't emotionally found the logical way to accept being told that. That's the fact of the matter, but it doesn't mean it's okay. You accept the facts, even if you don't like the facts.

**Cadence:** *If all things were equal and you could go back in time, would you prefer to be a classical cellist or a jazz bassist?*

Carter: I like where I am. I don't even think about what if I had stayed on the classical path. I'm still meeting some lovely people and I'm having the chance to play good music every night. I understand the role of the bass in the Jazz environment, compared to the role of the orchestral bass player. I'm so far ahead of that mindset, I'm not worried about that, man. I'm not one of seven, I'm one of one, and I like that. [Laughs]

**Cadence:** *You mentioned touring with Chico Hamilton for 8 months after moving to New York in 1959. What was it like being on the road for the first time?*

Carter: Eye-opening. On our first job, we were on a bus, driving to a gig in Washington, DC, and the bus pulls up to the back of the Howard Johnson's restaurant. Someone got off the bus and went into the back entrance of the restaurant. This was my first time down south, and I said, 'Man, where's this guy going?' And it was explained to this young guy in the band that this area of the country, where we were going, they weren't interested in having Black people walk into the front of the restaurant. So, the only way we were going to get something to eat at this stop is if someone goes into the back, orders the food and picks it up. And that was astonishing to me to know that this is what I'm walking into. I got disinvited from the Classical scene, and I'm now in the Jazz scene where I seemed to be on my way to being accepted as a part of the community, and this guy has to go in the back of the establishment because they don't allow him in the front. It was just amazing, it just stunned me. That was the first time, but certainly not the last time, that that's happened to me.

As near as four years ago, before this pandemic took over, I was subbing for someone at a society room in New York, and I got there three hours early with my gear. There was no one there but me and the help, and I'm headed for the front door. I get the door open, and a guy says, "Hey, where are you going?" I said, "I'm trying to get to the bandstand to get set up." He said, "You guys got to go in the back." I said, "The back of what?" He said, "The back of the club." I said, "Now wait, I don't know who you are but I'm the only bass player in this band and if the band wants me to show up, they have to find someone who's gonna let me go in the front door because I'm not going in the back door." I don't go in my own back door, man. Why would I go in their back door? I told him, "If you want, you can call someone who has the authority to give you the authority to let me walk into the front of the club. If not, I'm going home." So, the idea of that happening is not new to me, and I'm sure that many African



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Americans have a story that's a lot more horrific and dangerous than that, and I admire them for having whatever it took to go past that. It's an unfortunate way to kind of be forced to grow up in terms in what you can and cannot do based on someone else's whim on your value superficially, when they see you in the street, and say, "You can't come in this door." Years ago, I was at a recording session and the studio was in a hotel. I got there early, and I'm going in the front door, when a guy says, "Oh, you can't come in here with that!" [Laughs] 'What? I've got a bass.' "I know, but you guys got to go in the freight elevator." I said, 'No. I'm not doing that. Call the studio and tell them there's this guy with a thing called the bass and he wants to come in the front door, and he says if he can't get in that door, he's going home.' Those are my words, and if he says something not very nice, I'm gone. He called, and they let me in the front door. So, we're still looking at that. It's not like it's gone, it's just not so publicized anymore because there's things out there that are more immediate and more dreadful and disconcerting, than not wanting to go into the back door of a club. I haven't been faced with some of the things we hear about with discriminatory situations, but they're still available, and unfortunately we have to confront them at some point.

*Cadence: After Hamilton left for the West Coast, you continued to play with fellow Hamilton alumnus Eric Dolphy, who would become more involved with the Avant-Garde side of the music. What's been the extent of your interest and connection to the Jazz Avant-Garde?*

Carter: I was as much a part of it then as anybody else, I just decided that wasn't my primary interest. I'd have liked to have spent more time with Eric, but he got involved with Charlie Mingus and his own projects involving him, Roy Haynes, Booker Little, Mal Waldron and Richard Davis. They had some great groups at the Five Spot back in the day. Meanwhile, I was starting to get settled with Randy Weston and I was working with Bobby Timmons and Herbie Man. I was trying to get into the jazz recording industry through Orrin Keepnews and Milestone Records. I was getting a career going that was outside [the Avant-Garde, but I made records with Jaki Byard and Don Ellis, and I was friendly with Sonny Brown, one of the big drummers at that time, and J.C. Moses. I knew Sirone and the bass player who was working with the Art Ensemble of Chicago, Malachi Favors. So, I knew the people, while I didn't make a living playing with them, and I didn't make many gigs with them, it wasn't because I didn't like the music, I just found another way to play what I heard, and I found an environment that accepted my choice of notes and my presence on the bandstand. I would go hear them play when I could because I was always amazed at the sounds they decided to make that were valid and how the ensembles worked it out and the faith they had that this was the way to express this music. Their confidence was always amazing because the music was so far out from everything else at that time. It was interesting, and I enjoyed those guys.

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**Cadence:** *You famously were part of Miles Davis' "Second Great Quintet" [along with Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter and Tony Williams]. As well as that group played, it's remarkable that it was not a rehearsed band. You've estimated that there were two rehearsals during your 5 years as a member. Is that true?*

Carter: Yes, as near as I can recall. It was one and a half times actually. [Laughs] Probably when we first got together in Miles' basement and the second time may have been the run through of the up-and-coming Filles de Kilimanjaro record, that concept. We were stumbling around at his house, trying to figure out what that stuff meant, and where we could play. Those were the only two that I can recall in all those five and a half years or so.

**Cadence:** *That's pretty remarkable. How do you explain that?*

Carter: We worked all the time. I think we really didn't have the time to rehearse in terms of rehearsal space. We were on the road a lot of the times. Miles had his own personal injuries, so he wasn't always available to do anything but make the gigs. I was getting pretty busy outside the band, so I didn't have that kind of availability anytime during the day or night to come and rehearse. Herbie had his life going, Tony was starting to really get some good playing events taking place, and Wayne was writing unbelievable stuff, so we had our projects going individually that didn't allow that kind of mind idleness to fit a rehearsal in there. I think we expected that we wouldn't be rehearsing, so we took other gigs and we trusted that our other experiences would be enough to bring the band together with a whole new light, as if we'd rehearsed another concept. Tony was a friend of Sam Rivers from Boston and they really were into a lot of stuff. I was learning how to make records every day and that meant hearing back from music, rather than practicing all day at my house. Herbie was really getting curious with harmonic alterations and chords, and he was writing these great melodies with these whole new change orders that he was putting together with a different hat every night that were working pretty good.

**Cadence:** *That quintet was so in synch and reached such a remarkable creative level. Have you ever felt that level of sustained pinnacle of communication again later in your career?*

Carter: That's difficult to answer because the current times have not allowed bands to have that many gigs in a year. That band worked all the time, man, very frequently. I've got a nonet with four cellos, piano, bass, drums, and I can't find enough work for these people. So, there's no chance for me to be able to answer your question about the group interplay that results from a band working together because I don't have a band that's working in those kind of conditions. We do that, as best as we can, given our limited schedule, and I'm pretty confident if we had that kind of work scheduled that the Miles' bands had back in those days, we'd be playing some of that kind of music as well. We just don't have that kind of opportunity to grow in those kind of areas.

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*Cadence: Michelle Mercer wrote in her book **Footprints: The Life and Work of Wayne Shorter** that by 1965, the quintet felt that the music had become too predictable, and that Tony Williams came up with the idea of making “anti-music.” She quotes him to say, “Whatever someone expects us to play, that’s the last thing you play.” How did that concept resonate with you when he first proposed it?*

Carter: I don’t know about him saying that at all. I don’t recall a time that we decided to change the music. Whatever happened, it happened on the bandstand, and we had the memory to remember what worked this night and can it work the next night, but it was never after sitting down with a plan to deliberately not play what we played last night. I don’t know where that source came from, maybe he said that to someone else, but let’s just stop for a moment. [Sighs] You know that idea that Jazz musicians, as a broad description, play something different every night. That’s not true, man. What they do is based on what they learned the night before. They’re not planting new seeds every night, they’re trying to develop the seeds from the last chorus or the last gig, and if you needed proof of that theory that I’m proposing to you right now, if you buy this book of mine *Chartography*, you will see how the band is evolving based on what I’m playing over this song over five different performances. It may seem new to the listener but if you’d followed the band for the length of their tour every night and hear what the band evolved into playing from their first night of the tour to the last night of the tour, as this book is able to do, they would have no question that the band is developing material, not planting new seeds every night. They’re harvesting the results of their work and they’re watering that plant every night. If you look at my book, you’ll see how the band evolves along with me, including Miles. You will hear how they’re responding to my input night in and night out. So, the concept that we wake up in the morning and the lightbulb goes on when we get to the bandstand – that’s bullshit, man – and I hate it when people tell me that we just played off the top of our heads all night and we’re waiting to be kicked in the head by some inspiration. No, we’re inspired by each other’s presence. I haven’t seen a lightbulb except the regular one above my head that stays on all the time.

*Cadence: What do you feel is most misunderstood about Miles Davis?*

Carter: That he ignored the audience and played with his back to them. I never understood that from people who had been to concerts. I never saw a band director who played with the band, who didn’t turn his back to the audience so he could hear the band. I never saw Leonard Bernstein conduct the philharmonic facing the audience. He’d have 106 people playing the score that he maybe had written, and he faced them to help them play his music. Why does it seem that it was not necessary for a Jazz player to turn his back so that he could hear the band better, and you consider him as ignoring the audience? I don’t see how that is. I try to explain to those people who have that myopic view that he heard the band a lot better when he was facing them. Fine,

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whatever it took to help us get to wherever we were going, because we couldn't tell until we had arrived. If it took him turning his back, fine, do that. They'll see a great suit, the guy wearing it was in great shape, and they'd hear some wonderful notes played by the band that he now heard at full force. All those kind of stories [about Miles], I never respond to that stuff.

**Cadence:** *You played on Eddie Harris' **The In Sound** album [1966, Atlantic] which opens with Johnny Mandel's "The Shadow of Your Smile" from **The Sandpiper**. It's a great anecdote that Harris didn't have a lead sheet to it so you sat in a movie theatre and wrote the tune down as it played on the screen.*

Carter: Yes, that was like a find in the dark. He didn't have any music and I didn't know the song at all. I had not been to the movies. I was working, I didn't have time to go to movies. Johnny Mandel? I knew his name from knowing music but that's all I knew. I just wasn't a movie-goer, but I sat in that theater in the dark with a little flashlight trying to write down parts of the melody because it was never a whole chorus. It was a little bit here, and a little bit there, and the orchestration was different down here with the same eight bars up there and I was trying to piece it together as best I could in the theater. I could transcribe pretty good but in the dark, with all the stuff going on, I wasn't sure I did a good enough job. I did the best I could do, and we worked it out.

**Cadence:** *Did you ever did that sort of thing again?*

Carter: How dare you. One time was enough. [Laughs]

**Cadence:** *You've made many recordings as a leader, the first of which was **Where?** [1961, New Jazz]. How was it having the opportunity to play cello along with bassist George Duvivier?*

Carter: It was my choice. I had known George through the years. George had a club called the Bass Fiddle on St. Nicholas Avenue and the 140's in the '60s. I would leave my gig downtown at the Five Spot or the Vanguard and meet him at his club and we would talk. His club had a jukebox with all Jazz records in it – Jimmy Smith, early Miles, early Ahmad [Jamal], side A and side B – and we would just sit down and talk about music. We talked about what bass players did and he wanted to know how I did certain things and I'd say, 'Oh, I don't know, man. So, how do you do it?' That kind of stuff, and I thought that here's a chance to play with this guy for a very important time in my life for a record. I asked him if he was available for the date I was putting together for Prestige and he said, "Of course, just tell me when it is and I'll be there." [He was a] great man.

**Cadence:** *You started releasing more albums under your own name post-Miles Davis. One of your earliest efforts was **Alone Together** [1972, Milestone] with Jim Hall, the first of a number of duet records the two of you made together. That pairing was considered by many to be the gold standard for bass/guitar duets. Talk about your connection with Jim Hall?*

Carter: For the duets, Jim's job was to make sketch arrangements in his house

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and my job was to make them work on the gigs. [Laughs] He wrote these great little pins, small writings, pin sketches. Here's the melody, here's what happens here, now you're on your own, stuff like that, and he trusted my judgement that I'd be able to hear choices that he probably couldn't figure out on his own because he's a guitar player, and he's not playing the bottom, because he's got something else to do up here. He was really aware of how melodies work which made me really attuned to the options that he would play. He didn't mind me saying to him, 'You're a little bit sharp, can you tune the A so we can get together in the pitch.' He never got offended by that. He trusted my sense because he understood that I couldn't keep trying to find his pitch all night when it was getting sharper and sharper. He LOVED to play time, like Freddie Green. He loved that stuff, man, and me not having an opportunity to play with Freddie Green, I began to appreciate him more because Jim was one of those guys who did that really good. I did a couple records with Herbie Ellis who was out of that same [idea], and man, what a pleasure those guys brought to me to be able to play with a guitar player who really knows what notes to play when they play that kind of chording, that kind of time playing. But Jim also had his own sound. He used to pick, and I could never understand how he got that kind of sound with the pick because it sounded like he was using his fingers. I couldn't do that, but I could sure appreciate it every night. [Laughs]

Give me some more of that. He was a writer too, he wrote some nice songs.

**Cadence:** *Another artist you've historically paired well with is saxophonist Houston Person, with whom you've made over a handful of albums with.*

**What's your attraction to bass/saxophone duets and how does Person elevate your work?**

Carter: Houston knows the exact melody and the rhythmic changes and the birth [of the songs from the Great American Songbook]. All of which, I don't know for every song, and to play with a person who has that complete vocabulary of a song is very important for me so that I know how the song was constructed. And since it's just he and I, and I'm kind of the harmonic background that's going to make this song work after the melody, trusting that what he's playing is REALLY the melody, and these changes are really the right changes, it allows me freedom to do what I want to do because I have this whole wealth of information that this guy's bringing to me. Here's the correct melody. None of that 2/5 stuff, this is the melody, this is the verse. And to know that he knows this stuff in their KEYS, it broadens my horizons. 'Okay, I got this, now can I make it sound good with another piano player and still have the song have its integrity?' But that depends on Houston to trust my judgement with the note that may not be what he expects to hear, but it's a good one to replace that one. It's a pleasure to play with him. Anytime we can, I certainly would say yes.

**Cadence:** *Commencing in the early '90s, you led numerous recordings for Blue Note Records. Mr. Bow Tie [1995] is a composition dedicated to your father.*

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***Why name it that way and what were you hoping to express with that work?***

Carter: I thought that would be a nice tipping of my hat to a person who was responsible for a lot of my values and he, in fact, did wear a bowtie. It was a nice reminder of a parental influence that I enjoy to this day.

***Cadence: The Brandenburg Concerto [1995, Blue Note] was your third Classical album. How did Blue Note respond when they heard you planned a classical work as your next project? Were they completely happy with that?***

Carter: Yes, I had done a lot of Jazz projects before this one came up and the producer, Hitoshi Namekata, who was the Blue Note person in Japan, he trusted me implicitly because I delivered on all the projects I had been offered before. I thought that he had such trust in me after all these years of working, not just under my projects but other projects through Blue Note. He trusted my judgement. He trusted my call, so to speak. I told him, 'I want to play this Classical kind of record with the Brandenburg.' He said, "Well, what are you going to do with that?" I said, 'What I want to do is kind of elongate certain parts of the piece that I think a bass solo can fit in and when that's done, go back to the part that the cello player is going to play, according to the score, and just have it feel like another piece. And I'm comfortable that if Bach was alive, he'd say, "Hey man, how'd you do that?"' So, I went in with the sixteen-piece string orchestra, and because I had altered the parts, we read it through to make sure I had done it right, and what your hearing is the first and only take of the pieces. I just thought that we could handle that kind of stuff if I got it right. And interestingly enough, the orchestra did not hear me, only the conductor heard me, because I didn't want the orchestra wondering what I was doing. Don't worry about that now. [Laughs] In this case, play the Xerox. [Laughs] Kermit Moore, who passed away a couple years ago, was the conductor who was a really big Duke Ellington enthusiast, and he trusted my judgement. It was a really incredible record. There were some, I'm avoiding saying dumb, comments from part of the Classical people and my response to those people was that until Bach tells me that it wasn't okay, I'm okay with it. I'm really dedicated to the concept of the album and I won't accept the nasty view of what am I doing playing this music? I already heard that, man, way before they were born, and they're not going to change my view now.

***Cadence: You've written many great compositions, including "Einbahnstrasse," which means one-way traffic in German. What inspired that work?***

Carter: As I started doing my own projects, I was learning how to write. I was learning how to get a concept for a record that I was completely responsible for. I was responsible for everything but the artwork. I was responsible for the personnel, for booking the studio, for spending the budget wisely, for trying to conduct and play at the same time, for trying to plan a program for these people who I hired to make my music become a reality outside of what was between my ears, and along the way, I was learning how to write for this kind



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of concept. And the more I wrote, the better I got. I must admit the copyists, whoever they were, assisted me in letting me know that, “Well, that looks okay but maybe you want to try this.” And while I didn’t try that, I understood what the choices were that I clearly didn’t see, so I got better each project. I got better at writing for what I thought would work for someone else, as well as me, to hear as well as for them to play it. To this day, I credit my experience and my willingness to take yes for an answer [Laughs] as a way to get better and write for what I thought I heard.

**Cadence:** *The Golden Striker Trio is one of the various projects you head. Why did you name that band after a John Lewis tune?*

Carter: I have a great admiration for John because of the great arrangements he wrote for his songs, like “Django,” for example. You’ve got to play that arrangement; you cannot do too much to it without destroying the fabric of that piece. The group’s title was at the behest of one of our European promoters who thought our sound was really unique, and for him, the delicateness of our music reminded him of a John Lewis arrangement for the quartet. At the time, we were called the Ron Carter Trio, and that’s kind of mundane. I thought that if he thought that this title would get us a little more work, while at the same time taking me off the hotplate as the named leader of the trio, well, I was okay with that, and we stuck with that name since then.

**Cadence:** *You first recorded piccolo bass on 1973’s Blues Farm [CTI]. What was your role in the creation of that instrument?*

Carter: When I put the band together I wanted to be the bandleader. At the time, there weren’t many bass players who were leading bands. Mingus was one, and occasionally you’d have a jam session where the bass player was the leader of the jam session, but no one had put much work into that in quite a while. Oscar Pettiford had led a couple groups and also John Kirby, way back in the day, but there was no current bass-led bandleader. I wanted to have the audience walk out and see me as the bandleader, even though the horn player was in front of the band. I thought I needed an instrument that would literally place me in front of the band, and I didn’t have that with the upright bass. I was introduced to a bass maker who lived in New Jersey. He asked me what I was looking for and I told him, ‘I want an instrument that’s in the bass family but configured smaller than what I play.’ I’d have to tune it differently, but it would place me in front of the band because I’d have to sit down to play it. I would be literally in front of the band rather than in the back, preventing the audience from thinking the flute player was the leader. I wanted that kind of physical presentation. So, he made this bass after we talked about measurements and sizes. I had no name for it, so I called it piccolo bass and I kind of let it go at that. I just wanted to play it, and me and Buster [Williams] had a great time playing together on the Piccolo record [1977, Milestone] we made live at Sweet Basil. We had a wonderful evening with that recording. I worked together with a quartet with Ben Riley on drums, Kenny Barron on

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piano for a while until they decided to join a band with Charlie Rouse, so I started another band with the same instrumentation, and the more I played the piccolo bass, the more I got comfortable with it. But I was feeling I was starting to lose my way in terms of really being an upright player with other ensembles. I was kind of happy not to find a whole lot of piccolo bass work to lead me out of that upright playing but I certainly miss playing it now as we have missed playing everything for a while.

**Cadence:** *How do you utilize piccolo bass?*

Carter: I want to be seen only with my band. I've done one or two favors for people with their groups, but my aim is to see this instrument only with my special groups – with the nonet with four cellos rhythm section or with the earlier quartet with two basses, piano and drums. I want it to be specialized for my specific sound with those specific ensembles.

**Cadence:** *One of your more unusual collaborations came in 1991 when you worked on A Tribe Called Quest's second studio album – The Low End Theory [Live]. That was one of the first works to pair hip hop with a jazz touch. What was your first thought when you were contacted for that project?*

Carter: Well, I didn't know who he was at all. I walked in one day from teaching at City College and I got this phone call on my message machine to call this guy named Mr. Q-Tip. I returned his call and he explained to me who he was and what he did and that they were putting together a new record within the near future and they wanted me to be a part of it. I said I'd get back to them and I called up my son, who knew that genre much better than I did. He said, "Oh, yeah, their group is the most musical group out there. Everyone else is scratching records, but these guys, they got a sound, dad. You've got to call that guy back." So, I called him back and explained to him that my son said I should get involved and that I'd have fun playing with them. I told him, "Let's work out the details, and if I'm available to do your project, I'm more than happy to do it. Having said that, Mr. Q-Tip, I think if the language, as I've heard it on the radio, is a little out of the area of my age group's vocabulary, we'll have to find another solution, because I'm not gonna do that. I'll have my car parked outside the doorway and I'll follow that sign E-X-I-T, if that happens." He said we'd be fine, and I got to the studio control room, got hooked up to the control board, and before we recorded, I had him sing me the words so that I could get a sense of the key center of his tone of voice, how fast he was speaking and what kind of punctuation he was using. I need to know that kind of stuff so I can make my bass not get in the way of the words but help them when necessary. I got a rough view of the words and, okay, they were sanitized. We took two or three takes and that was enough. I went home and that was considered to be the record of the decade. Who knew? [Laughs]

**Cadence:** *You've invested in your health by hiring trainers and you even had people observe your movements during performance so that corrections could be made to avoid future injury.*

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Carter: I've always been concerned about our, the bass player's, physical load. We carry this bass and often an amp. Some guys also carry a stool, and we walk four or five blocks, hauling our gear from point A to point B. I wanted my trainer to come see me at work so that he could see what I needed from him. I'm not trying to be Charles Atlas, I just want to know that I can pick up the bass night in and night out. And what I showed him is, that I don't just carry the bass to the gig, I'm lifting up this bass four to five times a night. That's twenty-five to thirty pounds I'm lifting as a deadlift. I put the bass down, I pick it up, through out the night, and I've been doing that since 1959. I understand what it takes to do that, and I want these people, my acupuncturist, my surgeon friends, to come and see me do what I do, so they'll see what kind of physical effort it takes and make adjustments. Unfortunately, jazz clubs have not been structured on having a dressing room to warm up. Your coat ends up on the floor or on the back of a wall in the kitchen because there's no space for us physically. There's no "Green Room." We're kind of on our own, and I want the people [around me] to see that. What can I do to limit the damage from carrying that kind of heavy load, to play the bass as delicately as possible? I've trusted their judgement and I've adhered to them, as best I could, for forty or fifty years.

***Cadence: Are there other specific practices, either physical or spiritual, that help you sustain and improve your creative skills?***

Carter: I try to have some moments of quietness before I go to work, wherever that work is. Whether it's a jazz club or backstage at a concert, I try to clean my head of some of the things that have taken up my interest during the course of the day. I try to have some space left in my head that allows me to just focus on this group, and this music, at this time. Sometimes I can't do it very well. Sometimes the events of the day are so stunning, so overwhelming, that it makes it difficult to focus my attention on the saxophone player's solo or the piano player's comping or the volume of the drums or how the bass sounds. But I do my best to kind of clear my head emotionally to give the band the attention that they expect me to have and give me the opportunity to find the notes that I think I hear. But I don't chant or do the hand exercises that other people do, or other various techniques. I just never got that in my system of physical or emotional approach, other than clearing my head before I go to work and the trainer, who helps me maintain a comfortable and physical presence, night in and night out. The other day, I had my trainer pick up the bass and move it eight feet. He said, "You do this every night? Wow!" [Laughs] So, you're saying wow, and I'm going to work!

***Cadence: Presentation is very important to you. You've been known to buy matching ties for your bandmembers.***

Carter: I think that's a great look, man. What each of my groups do is that we walk out and take a bow to the audience. I want them to see that these guys and gals, that have come to play music FOR THEM at that night club, are

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coming prepared to look like they're going to work. And I think that's a great, elegant look to present. Occasionally the applause will be so warm when we take our bows, I tell the guys, 'Okay, let's stop now and go home!' [Laughs] It's a great presentation and I like that look. Now I've had guys say, "I don't wear suits anymore," and I say, 'Well, this is a band not for you.' We're in New York, people wear suits.

**Cadence:** *You were one of the many Jazz musicians to perform on the South Lawn of the White House for Jimmy Carter in 1978. Would you talk about that day and what it was like to play "Sonnymoon for Two" for the president with Sonny Rollins, McCoy Tyner and Max Roach?*

Carter: I had played with all of them before at some point. Sonny Rollins, McCoy and I did a Milestone Jazz tour around that time. We did a seven or eight concert tour with Al Foster playing drums, very successful, and I was always very curious why no other record label thought to do this kind of presentation for artists on their label. I played with Max Roach much earlier in my career with Randy Weston, along with Candido, the conga player, and Freddie Hubbard in a gymnasium in the Bronx. I thought it was really interesting for the President of the United States to have American Jazz played on the White House lawn. I've been traveling to Europe since 1961 and I've gone through four or five passports. That's a lot of travel, and I've seen only one American ambassador in all that time, and that's embarrassing to me. Here's the President of the United States inviting us to come and play on the White House lawn with all the media interest and I go to these towns in Europe, and I never see the American ambassador. I never understood that, to this day.

**Cadence:** *What was the most unusual playing situation you've encountered?*

Carter: Oh, man. [Laughs] I've been playing that long to not have just one. At some point, you'll find eight or nine of them that you'll find insufferable and intolerable, but you're hired to do a job, and wherever those distractions are, physically or emotionally, you've got to let that stuff go, because you know you've got a job to do for the people who hired you and who are expecting you to do what you do.

**Cadence:** *When was the last time you took a formal music lesson?*

Carter: About three years ago, I called three bass teachers in New York and said I was interested in getting back to a [higher] skill level. I thought I had stepped pretty far apart from that zone because what I was doing for a living didn't need that specific skill to be that sharpened. Two of them told me they weren't taking any students right now and the third one said, "Well, gee, you're playing pretty well, I'm not sure why you need me," so I stopped looking. Right now, my teachers are those people who I hire every night, and my job is to help them sound better. I get a lesson I can experiment with every night.

**Cadence:** *What compelled you to establish the Finding the Right Notes Foundation in 2018, to advocate for arts engagement in schools?*

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Carter: I think if you look around and see what schools have music programs, and which schools don't have programs, you will find the majority of the non-music programs are in the minority communities, and I feel that everyone should have a chance to be a part of the arts. And when budgets get tight, the first thing in schools that gets cut is the arts program, specifically the music program. It's not the athletic programs. I'm hoping that when my days of playing become less, that I will be able to sit down and put together a program with some financial assistance of programs that encourage young people in the schools to, not only play music, but their parents have to come to the lessons. They've got to see what happens. That's my plan.

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

Carter: Is there something left? [Laughs] I'm interested in social issues. I'm interested in nice looking cars. I'm interested in how can I be a better teacher? I have a whole list of things that I want to get better at, and this pandemic has given me a chance to look at them all and see which ones command my most immediate attention.

**Cadence: I've heard you have a fondness for Formula 1 race cars.**

Carter: I'll take it. [Laughs]

**Cadence: What are your guilty pleasures? What do you like to watch on TV?**

Carter: TV is sometimes a wasteland of needless information so I don't tie my life to that but what interests me is unions, like the 802 [musician's union]. I've been following closely the Amazon union situation. I've always thought unions were those people whose job was to help the workers. I'm interested in what unions do and don't do. So, my guilty pleasure may be reading the union paper that comes to my house and seeing what these guys are doing and not doing. And there's areas that if they'd ask me, I would have some commentary, but I'm just a bass player, I mean, what am I supposed to know? [Laughs]

**Cadence: The final questions have been given to me by others to ask you:**

**Ben Williams (bass) asked: "Is there anyone that you would've like to work with that you haven't already?"**

Carter: I've had Ahmad Jamal on my list for the past number of years. He's in semi-retirement and I keep threatening his bass player, whenever they work, that I'm gonna go to his gig, I'm gonna give him the key to a room so he can listen to CNN on the loop, and I'll keep playing [in his spot] until the loop has run over. [Laughs] So, that's my plan to get to play with Ahmad.

**John A. McCluskey Jr. (author, teacher) asked: "I've found you to be a generous and caring individual as well as a master musician. I would welcome you to elaborate on the impressive incubation of musical talent at your high school alma mater, Cass Tech in Detroit. This one school has graduated its good share of "hall of famer's" into (especially) the jazz world."**

Carter: I think that's a good example of what can happen if the school system has a music program. None of those people, including yours truly, would have gotten to somewhere in the professional music scene without a sense of what

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music is, without a sense of playing music, without a sense of if you do this, it's a nice feeling to play trombone and drums when you're six years old. It's nice to go down to the gig with the teacher and hear what this instrument can do, and I can't believe without that kind of early awareness of music in the third and fourth grade, that that couldn't have shaped some of those people who became famous as Cass Tech graduates. I can't believe they wouldn't have gotten to where they are ultimately, without this warm welcome to the world of music at nine or ten-years-old. For me, the lady walked into our room at school in fourth grade and said, "We're gonna start an orchestra. Here's a table of instruments, pick one you're gonna like and we're gonna make this work." That happened in 1950, you're talking about over seventy years ago and there's no school now with a program that allows that kind of musical awareness. One of the things that Cass Tech proves, if you want to do some historical work, is that how many kids went on to a productive musical career because they came from a music program in their elementary school. Uncomplicated.

**Houston Person (saxophone) asked:** *"Taking into account that it's all music, for someone looking for a career as a Jazz artist, which track would you recommend university training in - a Classical or Jazz program?"*

Carter: If they ultimately want to be a Jazz player, they wouldn't go with a Classical bass player to play Jazz, they'd have to find a Jazz player. There's a theory going around that says a Classical teacher can teach a Jazz player Jazz as well as a Jazz player and that's NOT true. You want to know how to play Jazz bass? Get a Jazz bass teacher.

**Akua Dixon (cello) first had a comment:** *"Most cellists study European Classical music and their use in Jazz has been very limited. I have long admired your left hand. The definition of your fingers and your approach to creating sound reminds me of a cellist's hand that has studied Baroque music. The tone and accuracy of intonation that you get reminds me of the articulation in the left hand that cellists develop in that style of music. When recording my last CD [Akua's Dance] I had a few pieces that I wanted to specifically do with you. Your style of creating a bass line in a ballad is very melodic and I needed a bassist that also used his bow, so I needed you. Arco bass is used very little in today's Jazz, as opposed to training on cello, which is all about the bow."*

**Akua Dixon asked:** *"Almost every Jazz band uses a bass, and the lineage of Jazz has many outstanding violinists, yet the cello has not been utilized in this music. There's no legacy and few artists to ask questions to. With your knowledge of the instrument, and being aware of the technical challenges that cellists face, what advice would you give a cello student on how to approach learning to play Jazz?"*

Carter: I'd recommend three things for them to do. First of all, look around and recognize that Oscar Pettiford, Sam Jones, Ray Brown, the three [great] Jazz cellists as we think of them, were playing a small bass, not a cello, and



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that's not what they can look forward to as an example of playing the cello. Secondly, I'd recommend them to sit down with a harmony and theory teacher that shows them harmony and what chords do and how to play them, how to understand what they do. My third choice for them would be to listen to the records I made as a cellist and see if any of those sounds or those intervals interest them, then call me and find out how I reached them.

**Madeleine Crouch (General Manager, International Society of Bassists)**

*asked: "Ron, you are a serious art collector, and you're also the subject of a lot of artwork. When you perform, you and your collaborators always have a memorable, collaborative look on stage. How has your approach to the visual influenced your musical career?"*

Carter: I've always been interested in art. My late wife was an art collector and owned a gallery, and one of my sons [Myles Carter] was a very respected painter. I like the feeling of the canvas being used for various color combinations - not so much the topic, but the colors which are used to make these objects that are being painted have their own life. And I think of the colors that we have as a Jazz group, the tempo, the key, the order of changes, represent the various colors of my sound canvas, and if I can get the audience to hear my sound canvas, and get an image in their mind, that's my aim.

**Marcus Miller (bass) asked: "We talk about the relationship between bass and drums all the time. Besides the recordings you made with Tony Williams, could you give us the names of a couple of recordings where you feel that you and the drummer were extra locked in?"**

Carter: The Great Jazz Trio with me, Tony Williams and Tommy Flannagan. Seven Steps to Heaven with me and the Miles Davis band which was Tony, George Coleman, Miles and Herbie Hancock. Freedom Jazz Dance with me, Cedar Walton, Billy Higgins and Eddie Harris. Those are three off the top of my head, without giving any thought to other choices.

**Gary Karr (Classical bass) asked: "I once played with you the third Bach Suite for an International Society of Bassists' gathering in the late 1960s. I played the piece straight and you added a walking bass line that suited the harmonies. You've obviously kept up your fascination with Bach because just the night before I was asked to give you a question for this interview, you and I spent time on the phone, and you emailed me some interesting harmony that you worked out for the Prelude of the first Bach Suite. You sent me your "changes" and said, "OK, Gary, check out my harmonies and let me know what you think? That's my homework assignment for you!" Would you talk about why Bach still interests you and how your understanding of Bach has grown over the course of your career?"**

Carter: There's a couple of reasons. I've understood how the bassline affects musicians who play with them. I can assure you that if I didn't have an understanding of the importance of the bass, and the basslines, I wouldn't be able to be, what I call, in control of the bands. I've listened to the Bach basslines because they clearly affect what the melody does. The basslines

## Interview: Ron Carter

clearly affect the inside harmony between the alto and tenor. What affect would they have based on this bass note? There are several chorales where Bach has reharmonized the melody two or three times, based on what chords he heard for the same melody but also the underpinnings, and the more I see his examples, the more I'm convinced that my way of using that same kind of option, are available to me, and my job is to find the right choices, only right then, not on paper to be printed out for someone else to play a hundred years from now, that makes the music do something that my note choices wouldn't do without an understanding of the ramifications of that note. And the Bach basslines show me some of the ramifications.

**Ray Drummond (bass) said: "Ron is one of my all-time heroes because of the way he covers all phases of the game. He's like a descendant of Ray Brown. His time is perfect, in a musical sense, as is his intonation, which is a challenge because the bass has no frets. It's a challenge to be of service to the music with your own voice each time you play the bass, and Ron has always done that."**

**Cadence: Would you comment on the challenges you still face on your instrument?**

Carter: Ray nailed it – there are no frets, there are no diamonds. If you look at the basses the junior high schoolers play, they have tape to mark where the intervals are. It's all in your head for us. If you watch me playing, I never watch my left hand. My job is to know how far it is to go from here to here, and my ear will tell me if I nailed it. I never look at my hand. I've got a nice manicure and wedding band, yes, I know that, it was there last night, but that doesn't tell me how far to move. One of the challenges is to be able to nail those notes, night in and night out. You've got a forty-inch string length and the bass is affected by the weather. One of the reasons I don't work certain clubs is that the back of their bandstand faces the street, and in the summertime they have the air on that makes the bass get really cold because the air is blowing on it. I come back to the bandstand, the neck is wet from perspiration, the bass body has gotten a little bigger or smaller because the temperature has dropped or risen. It's difficult to make the instrument sound the same every night, the environment makes that not possible because the air conditioner goes on and off, the temperature of the bass changes, and my body temperature changes. Playing outside is an issue. Playing at Monterey at night when it's really cold and damp, or in New York's Central Park when it's really muggy, all those things affect how the bass sounds. My job is to put my hand on any area of the strings and know what I'm gonna get. And the more I continue to nail these notes, the more I'm comfortable to go for different notes. The question is can you maintain what it takes to make the sound work night in and night out by what you hear and what kind of coordination is needed to make the bass do what you hope it can do by the grace of God. All those factors, and not being willing to accept almost as being good enough has been kind of my background. Almost is not good enough, and I try to live by that credo with what I'm playing and every note I find.

## Interview: Jimmy Bennington

### JIMMY BENNINGTON, DRUMMER, BANDLEADER

Conducted by David Haney

Transcribed by Kenan Herbert

*"Once mentored by Elvin Jones, Chicago-based drummer Jimmy Bennington celebrates over 35 years in the music field... his unique sound and loose drumming, which doesn't follow traditional rhythmic patterns...and leaves quite a bit of room to freedom." - Down Beat Magazine*

**CAD: So we're catching up with Jimmy Bennington (born May 22, 1970) today, and I think we have him in the virtual studio. Let's check it out.**

JB: Hello! Thank you for having me today.

**CAD: First of all, do we have your permission to record you today?**

JB: Absolutely. You have my permission, and my unborn son's permission.

**CAD: A lot of musicians don't ask permission on stuff.**

JB: \*Laughs\*

**CAD: Ok, let's see. If I'm not mistaken, this is 35 years of something that you've been doing.**

JB: That's correct. Not quite yet, but on May 22, I will be celebrating 35 years in the music. I understand that there are artists out there who have said "Thirty-five years, that's nothing! I'm on my sixtieth year!" Look at Marshall Allen. But it is a personal accomplishment for me, and I have so few that this means something.

**CAD: Of course, yeah. Thirty-five years of smashing your head against the wall. That's a long time.**

JB: You and I have talked for a long time about not only having to be an artist, but having to deal with the people that run the arts. The booking agents and the gatekeepers, and it is no joke. I mean, we can try to find the humor in it but...

**CAD: It's the hardest part.**

JB: That's the wall. If it wasn't for them, it would really be a very beautiful life, I must say.

**CAD: If we could just get up and play, just to go to the place and play, and then come back, that would be nice.**

JB: Yeah. Maybe in a fantasy. Like, the gatekeepers at the front keeping everybody out, everybody meaning artists and musicians and whatnot, and we have a private helicopter that drops us in, we have a couple roadies, and we just start playing. They'd say, "How did you get in here?" We went right past the gate. We went right to the people. And in a way, on a positive note, that's what our recordings do. The gatekeepers have nothing to do with that, for the most part.

## Interview: Jimmy Bennington

**CAD:** *Well, somewhere there is a society based on art and culture. I don't know where, but somewhere.*

**JB:** The times I've been in Europe, the musicians that I got to know there, they admitted that they don't get paid a lot of subsidy, but they get some. It's an acknowledgement. Some said that I have the equivalent in the US, when I can get on government assistance like food stamps, Link they call it here. I'm not doing that now, but I have in the past, and I always looked upon it as, yeah, this is my subsidy, of being an artist in this country.

**CAD:** *We take what we can get.*

**JB:** And I must clarify, as you and I know, it's not easy. There are not record labels championing at the bit to get a hold of our music. But I think that in the modern day, things have changed so much that anyone can release their music. For better or for worse. But at least we can't be stopped from doing that, the way things are now. Let's take my relationship with Cadence Jazz Records. I believed in 'Another Friend; the music of Herbie Nichols'...the late label owner Bob Rusch did not. He recommended I destroy it. And I, for all intents and purposes, started my own record label, and said, "Ok", so there was the first roadblock, and I surmounted it and released it myself.

**CAD:** *Yeah, people didn't have this option before. Maybe you're a bit more obscure, but artistically, you have more options.*

**JB:** Exactly.

**CAD:** *I have a question for you, Jimmy, and it has to do with your career as a musician, and if you could share with us, you might have to think about this, because I didn't tell you about this ahead of time, if you could share with us some kind of turning point in your life that let you know that this is the direction to go in.*

**JB:** Ok, well it's not so much that I have to think about it, it's that I have to choose between more than a few turning points. Where you say turning point, I might say a marker in the road. A flag pinned to a tree in the forest, that lets me know, 'You're on the right path. You're going in the right direction'. And these guideposts and angels along the way, even if just for a moment, keep you going on that path. One of those had obviously to do with Elvin Jones. I had a strong, lengthy relationship with him and his wife, and there were too many turning points to mention there. But I can sum it up by saying that just knowing him was a turning point. Knowing someone like that. And then the other one that would be very noteworthy was knowing Bert Wilson, the great, late saxophonist from the Pacific Northwest. The guy was a master, and his entire life was dedicated to music. I got to spend time at his home and live with him for a few days. And I don't know that I'd ever met somebody so committed, because he, for those of you who don't know, was a victim of the polio epidemic, and he was severely crippled. His life was nothing but pain. And yet he managed to become one of the most brilliant saxophonists and composers that this music has known. And quite frankly, you and I just played with Joe Lovano. Joe admired Bert. He shared the stage with this guy if the possibility

## Interview: Jimmy Bennington



Jimmy Bennington Photo credit © David Haney

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[www.jbcolourandsound.com](http://www.jbcolourandsound.com)

## Interview: Jimmy Bennington

arose. And then the final one would be the late Perry Robinson, because I had a chance to do a little tour in New York, somewhat near the end of Perry's life, and I stayed at his home. And in the morning, I woke up and he was in the kitchen making himself a big sardine sandwich with really crazy Russian dark bread, spicy kimchi, and he sweat as he ate the food. And when he was done he said, "Maestro!" And he flexed his wiry arms, and said, "To our instruments!" And he went up to his room, and I went with him. We went up to his little music room, and there was the world's smallest Casio keyboard, a metronome, a stand of sheet music, and his clarinet. It was a miniature sun room, and he spent the day in there composing, practicing, doing etudes, playing scales. And when he first played, just a warm-up, and I heard that, it was a turning point for me. I was already well into my career at that point, and I said, "I want to be a master like that. I want to have that kind of facility on my instrument." I don't know that I will ever attain that, but what a moment! For me, either you can throw your hands up and say, "Well, I'm going to do something else", or you say, "This is a goal I'm going to work towards".

**CAD: How old was he at that point?**

JB: I believe he was in his early 70s. Bob Rusch used to say, "Perry's not as old as you think!"

**CAD: I ask because I'm interested in what musicians do when they're not performing as they get older. When you're younger, you practice and practice and practice, and then I hear some people just don't practice. I go back and forth. I prepare months in advance for maybe a little mini tour or something, but I'm always in awe of older people still working every day on this.**

JB: Years ago, I had the chance to live with a ballerina, she had a husband, and I was a roommate upstairs, and I got to see the life of a ballerina. For those of you who don't know, you only see the show, you know. It is hard work, man. They have an early shelf life. You're not being a ballerina into your late 30's and 40's, for the most part. It's a very finite thing. That kind of dedication to that is not for the weak of heart. For me, I just know that there is the 'use it or lose it' aspect. I have a lot of muscle memory, I have a good backlog from years of playing. But I'm one of the guys who, unless something is wrong with me, I'm practicing. I don't really mean playing. I'm studying. And it's a wonderful opportunity when I get to play. But I mostly am in the learning aspect of my instrument all the time.

**CAD: This is a different genre, but in classical music, I remember Andres Segovia, the guitarist, saying, "When you're young and you make a mistake, they attribute it to lack of experience. But when you're old and you make a mistake, they attribute it to senility". So you gotta keep working. Into his late life, he continued to practice hard, because he wanted to keep up his skill.**

JB: Yeah. Obviously, we could name all kinds of people who have stuck with it. I also admire the other side of the coin. Apparently, Mother Maybelle Carter retired before everyone thought she should. Johnny Cash, who worked with



## Interview: Jimmy Bennington



Jimmy Bennington Photo credit © Robert Sutherland-Cohen



David Haney and Jimmy Bennington Photo credit © Robert Sutherland-Cohen

## Interview: Jimmy Bennington

them a lot, I mean, he was an in-law, asked, "Mother Maybelle, why are you retiring? You sound great!" And she said, "I feel a mistake coming on." And I appreciated that, because we've all seen the artists where they go, "Ladies and gentlemen, Old Sawbones Johnson!" and he's wincing in old age and pain. And you're thinking, 'Let the guy rest! Give the guy a hammock or something!'

**CAD:** *It's hard to stop. Personally, I've had this nice music run at Joe's Pub in New York. Not a lot of shows, but it's been over a ten year period, and when you said that I felt that I've been going through this myself, where I feel the mistake coming on. I always told myself, "I'll do this as long as I love it." And if it gets to be something I don't love, I won't do this anymore. And I've stuck with that. I've been so spoiled with this nice recurring gig I've had, and they've treated me so well, it's hard for me to feel like it's just going to not be a real struggle. And do I want that?*

JB: That's the thing. I've been able to perform when my back has been out, I've been able to play when I was fairly ill, and the playing itself is a joy. It's the getting there. It's the setting up and the breaking down. By the way, I don't know if we've told any listeners out there, I am a drummer.

**CAD:** *Yes, we're talking drums today. He's a bandleader, drummer, and recording artist. So you've been releasing some stuff on Bandcamp in the last little while.*

JB: Yeah, I think really I'm just an old guy from the previous civilization who is trying to come into what's going on today, and frankly, I don't disparage these companies, but I had always been with CD Baby, and I had released my stuff there. Well, it's hard to find them. And when I look for them, or I try to order something, I don't understand... "What happened to the physical? Where's my check, if there is a check?" And so, after a time I thought, these recordings that are already obscure are only going to become more obscure. And where is the forum today where I can put them up, renew them, refresh them, and maybe make it easier to listen to it and buy it. Bandcamp seems to be a good forum for that. And I'm just smart enough to be able to use it. I'm trying to put out the music that I felt was noteworthy without, like in the old days, being able to print out a bunch of CD's and everything. And that brings me to the other point, which is that, you can have the dough to have as many CD's as you want, but who has the player for them? Who has a CD player? It's rarer and rarer.

**CAD:** *You used to have to go out to your car, but cars don't even have CD players anymore.*

JB: No. Somebody out there really hates CD's! \*laughing\* Vinyl is coming back, but I have to get a MacArthur grant in order to afford 300 units of vinyl records. The dream is to have a vinyl record out, one of my albums. We'll see.

**CAD:** *That would be awesome. You know, the opposite end of that is that the cassette is coming back.*

JB: Yes, but for certain genres. Many of the cassettes, because I looked into doing one, it was going to cost an arm and a leg. I couldn't believe it.

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**CAD: It was a big step down in audio.**

JB: Maybe the young kids have a cassette player for the fun of it, and older heads like us may have one, but most people are like, "A cassette player?!" So either way, it's the typical thing of musicians, artists, and composers trying to find the medium for their music. The music is the same, it's coming from the same ancient wellspring, but we've got to keep up with the way we get it to the people.

**CAD: We don't change. The music doesn't change.**

JB: I think it changes. It undulates. Music is an interesting thing, because people are individual. I always like to imagine that if you went to a tavern or a pub somewhere in the middle ages, there were musicians in the corner just playing. I'm certain that you'd hear some of what we call jazz, you'd hear some polyrhythms, you'd hear harmony, atonal, you'd hear everything. That was then, and then a guy like Cecil Taylor comes out and goes, "Check me out!" And I'm like, well, it is great, but let's just say that we don't know what they were doing in Sumeria. I have quite a few more titles coming out, and I would imagine my next conundrum will be how to promote that, how to get it to the people. Bandcamp does not seem to offer a boost option or a marketing option. Artists come across all kinds of people in their career. One guy plays the flute, but he doesn't know anything about graphic design, and he has to find someone, and unless he's loaded with dough, he's gotta do it on the cheap. So he looks around his circle of friends, and someone says, "Oh, I know about that." But the musician is always seeking out those who can help in the production side of things, the promotion side of things.

**CAD: So I'm looking at, I'm sorry...I got distracted, Jimmy. I'm looking at your Bandcamp site. And there's an album with you, Perry Robinson, and Ed Schuller. I'm curious where that was recorded.**

JB: It should say "Live at Jimmy's." It was a club in Manhattan, a long-running club, and the guy just passed away...Dee Pop was his name, and he booked that series, and I think it was called the Dee Pop Music Series. But either way, the opening act for us was one Gerald Cleaver, and his group. And then we came on and played, and you know, that is, by the way, where I got a chance to meet and play with Dave Sewelson.

**CAD: That was going to be my next question, because it says 'Recorded February 4, 2008 by Dave Sewelson', and he appears briefly with the group at the end.**

JB: Exactly. I didn't see or talk to him for many years after that, until I was a guest on his Give The Drummer Radio show, which you and I just appeared on. That was a kind of reunion of sorts. When I first did his radio broadcast, we played via Zoom, so when he played, there was a delay. You know, that's the computer, that's how it goes. But when we all recently played as a trio together (Brooklyn 4.19.2025), I was really impressed by his command of that baritone...I mean, it was really great!

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**CAD:** *Yes. Very specific, and choice, and good ears on it.*

JB: Even the harmonica at the end, I was surprised that it sounded almost organ-like. So 'Live at Jimmy's' was, as musicians do, it was kind of our rehearsal before that group went up to CIMP to record ('Symbols, Strings, and Magic', CIMP#379). So that was a chance for us to meet Ed. It really turned out to be a nice first encounter. I was thrilled because Ed was a hero of mine long before I'd met him. I'd heard him on a lot of records, and to be playing with him was really amazing. And Perry I was in awe of from the start anyway. It so happened that we got along really well, and he was down for coming along with me on some of my things.

**CAD:** *I'm going to put up some links to the Bandcamp site. It's some really good stuff. I got a chance to listen to 'Portraits and Silhouettes', when we did the WFMU show, and I have to tell you, that was it boy...that was...Bam!*

JB: It's really, if we talk about a turning point in my own recording career, that's one of my gems. That recording is unquestionably a classic. The Wire gave it a great review. It's been well-received. All About Jazz, they gave it an Honorable Mention of that year. So that's one notable thing, to celebrate this 35 year anniversary, I'm releasing a physical CD with the rest of the material from the trio that was recorded with Julian back in 2005. So, it's myself, Julian Priester, and Paul Blaney on bass. It's a different thing altogether, so those who like the first one, you're going to like this one.

**CAD:** *So the first one 'Portraits and Silhouettes' (ThatSwan! Records #1005), just to be clear, is a duet album with Julian, the great trombonist Julian Priester. And boy you two, just the way you use silence, and the way you sound together is special.*

JB: Oh man, it's one of my prizes in the stable! And again, something like that helps you to keep going. Because you can say, 'Well, I got ONE! I gotta really try for some others.' And, by the way, I think some of the things you and I have done have a considerable charm, and I love to listen to them ('Our Dialogue; live at the Tugboat' / 'Another Friend; the music of Herbie Nichols'). I hadn't heard it for a while, and when we did that show with Sewelson on WFMU, I felt, "Man, this has held up over time!" So that's coming up... I'm not sure if I'm going to call it the Julian Priester Trio and just give it to him, or call it just our names, or what. I'm a bit confused as to what to do after all these years.

**CAD:** *It's none of my business, but I think you should do just the names, because if you put somebody else's name, it's kind of like they were fronting it...and they weren't. I had a gig with Julian at Catano's Hotel in New York, and it was my gig, Julian was my guest, but they just decided to promote it as The Julian Priester Quartet. And Julian made a very specific point, he got in front of the microphone and said, "Folks, I want you to know, this is not my quartet. This is so-and-so's quartet, he worked very hard, etc., etc..." but it was important to him artistically to let people know, 'you're kind of taking advantage of my name here', folks.*

# Interview: Jimmy Bennington

JB: My little Julian story, and I have a few, as you can imagine, but one of my favorites is that a radio DJ mistakenly announced Julian's death one day many years ago now. I didn't hear the announcement, but a friend of mine did and called me up and said, "I'm sorry that your friend and your colleague has passed away. Julian Priester is dead." And I said, "Oh my God, how do you know that?" And he said, "I heard it on a jazz radio program." So I frantically called around, and I couldn't get anybody, or if I did they didn't know anything about it. So I became very despondent and very sad that Julian had passed away. And for whatever reason, I went to this ancient place in Chicago, I got a big bucket of fried chicken, I got a case of really cheap, rotgut beer, and went home and played the music that we had made together. And I ate the chicken, and I drank the beer, and I wept, I laughed, I did everything. And at the end of the day, the phone rang, and I answered, and he said, "I'm ...OK." It was Julian. And we got the biggest laugh... Oh my lord! He is one of the great examples of how to do it.

**CAD: Great soul. Great human being.**

JB: And why hasn't this trio music that we recorded back in 2005 come out? Because of money...time... circumstances. But at this time, I'm able to release it, so look for it by the end of this month...

(*'Blue Veils and Bright Stars', ThatSwan! Records #1013*)

*Interview taken via Cadence Media Records*

*Podcast 110 - Conversation with Jimmy Bennington (Audio Avail on BandCamp)*

*Portland, Oregon to Chicago, Illinois 5.6.25*

## **RECORDINGS:**

Doc Peters (s) – The Invention of Gospel Jazz the Evolution of Jazz – Kimberly Records-TX (1995)

Seth Paynter (s) –Spice – Synchronized Snake Charming Music – TX (1996)

Jimmy Bennington – Midnight Choir – OA2 Records – OA2 22007 (2003)

Jimmy Bennington/ David Haney – Our Dialogue – ThatSwan! #1003 (2006)

Jimmy Bennington – Jazz Kaleidoscope; live at On the House – Solo Drums- ThatSwan! #1004 (2006)

Jimmy Bennington / Julian Priester – Portraits and Silhouettes – ThatSwan! #1005 (2007)

Jimmy Bennington Trio – Another Friend; the Music of Herbie Nichols – w/ David Haney, Michael Bisio, ThatSwan! #1006 (2007)

Jimmy Bennington/ Perry Robinson Quartet – The Spirits at Belle's – Cadence Jazz Records – CJR1219 (2009)

Jimmy Bennington Trio – Symbols, Strings, and Magic – w/ Perry Robinson, Ed Schuller - CIMP #379 (2010)

Jimmy Bennington/ Steve Cohn – No Lunch in Hackensack – Friends of Unseen Rain – foUR9979 (2010)

Jimmy Bennington Trio w/ Daniel Carter, Ed Schuller – One More Beautiful Ballad – CIMP#398 (2013)

Jimmy Bennington / Demian Richardson Trio – Exotic Coda - w/ Ken Filiano -

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CIMP#403 (2014)

Jimmy Bennington Trio – The Walk to Montreuil – w/ Jobic LeMasson, Benjamin Duboc - Cadence Jazz Records – CJR#1236 (2013)

Jimmy Bennington Colour and Sound – Boom! Live at the Bop Shop – w/ Fred Jackson Jr., Jerome Crosswell, Ed Schuller - CIMPoL #5043 (2017)

Jimmy Bennington Colour and Sound – A Little While in Chicago – w/ Fred Jackson Jr., Jerome Crosswell, Ed Schuller – CIMP#417 (2018)

Jimmy Bennington/ Steve Cohn – Albany Park – Slam – SLAMCD#587 (2018)

Jimmy Bennington/ Steve Cohn/ Ed Schuller – New Jersey Freebie – Slam Records – SLAMCD#596 (2019)

Jimmy Bennington Colour and Sound – Live at the Jazz Estate – w/ Fred Jackson Jr., Dustin Laurenzi, Davi Priest- Spacetonic Records #00003 (2019)

SVOBODNI – Out in the Taiga at Night – w/ Phil Hunger - ThatSwan! Records #1007 (2020)

Jimmy Bennington Colour and Sound – Live at Andy's – w/ Fred Jackson Jr., Artie Black, Dustin Laurenzi, Mike Harmon - ThatSwan! Records #1009 (2020)

Jimmy Bennington Colour and Sound – Everlasting Belle – w/ James Cook, Dustin Laurenzi, Artie Black, Davi Priest - ThatSwan! Records #1010 (2021)

Cook/Priest/Bennington/Cruz/Hunger- Insurrection! – Unknown Garden (2019)

SVOBODNI II – Mercenary Blues – w/ Phil Hunger, Brian Seyler, Davi Priest - ThatSwan! Records #1011 (2021)

Jimmy Bennington Colour and Sound – Churchbells; live at the Green Mill –w/ Fred Jackson Jr., Artie Black, Dustin Laurenzi, Mike Harmon - Cadence Jazz Records – CJR1270 (2022)

SVOBODNI III – The Return to Catalhoyuk – w/ Phil Hunger, Brian Seyler, Dan Thatcher - ThatSwan! Records #1012 (2024)

Jimmy Bennington/ Paul Blaney/ Julian Priester – Blue Veils and Bright Stars – ThatSwan! Records #1013

Jimmy Bennington/ Perry Robinson – WNUR – ThatSwan! #1014 (TBR)

### **SINGLES:**

Jimmy Bennington/ Seth Paynter – Sad Drums/ Bitter Drums; Ballad for Sierra Leone – ThatSwan! sing#001 (2016)

Jimmy Bennington Colour and Sound – Tear It Down, Then Play A Ballad – w/ Daniel Carter, Brian Smith - ThatSwan! sing#002 (2016)

Jimmy Bennington/ Steve Cohn – Hello, I'm Johnny Caesche – ThatSwan! Records sing#003 (2017)

Jimmy Bennington Colour and Sound – Belles de Nuit – w/ Fred Jackson Jr., Ben Boye - ThatSwan! sing#004 (2017)

Jimmy Bennington/ Samuel Hasting – One for Peace – ThatSwan! sing#005 (2018)

Jimmy Bennington/ Perry Robinson – Raga Roni – from the rec. WNUR – ThatSwan! Sing#006 (TBR)



# CHRISTOPH IRNIGER - SAXOPHONE

## Interview by Ludwig vanTrikt

*Cadence: Ken Weiss, MD last interviewed you for our October 2015 issue and of course there have been some major shifts in the world? Please delve into how COVID affected your musical and personal life?*

C.I.: Since 2015 there have been a bunch of shifts in both my musical and personal life, such as birth of my 3rd child or moving to the house where my wife grew up in Zurich, as also heavy touring (including the US) with my band Pilgrim and of course Covid, which was a big game changer in many ways.

What concerns myself as a musician, Covid helped to move forward: Since there was nothing to do for almost half a year, I started researching and to further my education in composition, what I always wanted, but never had time to. My effort resulted in a new repertoire for Pilgrim, as also in a collaboration with the Swiss Jazz Orchestra and my debut as Big Band composer.

On the business side I think it caused many issues, which the scene is still suffering from. In general there is less money for non-commercial culture, which affected many jazz initiatives, media and clubs. The possibilities and money to earn are/is less than before and the liability is worse due to this economic uncertainty. Sometimes concerts are not confirmed until shortly before the tour or got cancelled very short term, so it definitively got tougher on the market.

That said, the scene might have become also more agile and sometimes possibilities show up on different occasions. I don't want to complain. Luckily as bandleader, who is interested in many fields, I am used to be vigilant and try to catch trains when they come.

*Cadence: Jazz has always had a history of musicians returning back to school for further education (I think of Max Roach and Tony Williams); what kinds of musical ideas were expanded by you formally retooling?*

C.I.: I'd say you never leave school as a serious artist. Being able to perform on a high level needs daily training and as a bandleader you have to work on your vision constantly.

One thing I was very extensively working on my instrument in the last year was the phrasing, since I had the feeling it felt kind of sticky and I wanted it to be more fluid. So I was searching for instrumentalists that have the feeling I searched for (like Wayne Shorter or Dayna Stephens), played along and

## Interview: Christoph Irniger



Photo credit © Gian Marco Castelberg

## Interview: Christoph Irrniger

transcribed solos. Imitating is always a good plan to start on something new. Another field I am constantly working on is composition. It's like a muscle, which you can train to get stronger and it was always very important to me, beyond composing itself, but also for developing a personal language on the instrument and of course a vision as artist.

Something I found very interesting is the idea of voice leading. My compositions are built mostly out of single lines, such as a melody and a bass line and harmonies evolve out of these lines (voices) played together. So you have recognizable melodies and harmonical richness at the same time, which gives the improviser or the improvisers (depending on how many are playing at the same time) more options to create worlds between relaxation and tension or openness and density.

Guillermo Klein told me to analyze, study and re-write Bach Chorals, which I still do and helps a lot for understanding, hearing and having new ideas.

***Cadence: I want to double back on the expansion of your orchestral language but in the mean time let's talk about the viability of the cd format. This interview is taking place while you have a 2025 CD on the Intakt label; "HUMAN INTELLIGENCE LIVE" (Intakt CD 434). Please explain why you continue to release your music on disc? Do you see a monetary return by such recordings?***

C.I.: No, I honestly don't see a monetary return. The value of a CD for me as a musician is on one hand emotional and on the other promotional. It is first a documentation of my work, something to hold in my hand, which delivers the music together with a nice artwork and tells a story. The economic value lies more in connection with the promotion, since I think a release on a physical carrier makes a band still more relevant for media and promoters.

***Cadence: Just to clarify for all of the recordings you have done on Intakt even taking in account new digital formats and streaming services; you have never seen any kind of monetary reward from your music? What about also the idea of selling disc at your concerts also. I double down on this because it calls into the whole notion of the value of recording especially in light of your PILGRIM band being one of the most active groups in Europe?***

C.I.: The income of physical and digital outcome on the market goes to the label until break even. The reward after that is peanuts. I do sell CDs on concerts not bad, but this goes back to the production, which is for most of the part supported out of public and private cultural funds and by people who are enthusiasts and work for a low income, such as the musicians, producers, etc. If you do the numbers without that support, there would be never a chance to be economic in terms of money.

The reward you get is the reputation and promotion on the other hand, which can create a momentum and helps to get gigs, where you can see monetary reward in turn.

For me it was never different, since I started. The place I am working in is the

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laboratory. It's where new paths are explored, which lead to new ideas. It's like in science the research department, which needs support and is not primarily economic, but essential for the development of the achievements of its time. Not for nothing it is called "non-commercial culture".

***Cadence: Glancing at your 2025 Tour schedule it appears fairly healthy in summary what are work opportunities like in Europe for Pilgrim and your more expansive work with the Swiss Jazz Orchestra?***

C.I.: We only played 6 concerts around the release, which is on contrary a bit disappointing. Between around ten years, the band was able to play almost a lot. Over the last two years we have been a bit less busy and this year is until now, as said, really hard actually. But I do have other bands and projects, like my Trio and the work with the Swiss Jazz Orchestra. This is not regular work, but continuing this June with two gigs in Geneva and Basel, for which I am currently writing a new suite.

***Cadence: You mentioned that you have some new additions to your family since your last cadence interview. How do artist like yourself (who are fortunate to tour frequently) able to balance and maintain healthy relationships in terms of being a husband and father?***

C.I.: Above all, I am very lucky to have a wonderful wife who has my back so that I can live out my passion. But a lot of it also has to do with planning and prioritizing. On the one hand, we have a joint agenda that we always go through together. By looking for a job as a saxophone teacher early on, I have also opted for a model that allows me to choose the projects and only do what appeals to me artistically. In this way, I have and have always had plenty of time for both, my own bands & projects, as well as my family.

***Cadence: Let's talk more in depth about your recording that is out during the time of this interview "Human Intelligence Live" (Intakt CD 434/ 2025) and why this is so a standout recording in terms of some of the major compositional themes and the challenges of doing a "live" recording?***

C.I.: The album is a complete live concert at Red Horn District in Bad Meinberg (Germany) from November 29, 2023. It is the complete set from beginning to the end. There are no changes in the order of the pieces and only minimalistic edits. The only thing missing is the encore. There was no plan of recording the concert, but since the club gave us the opportunity at the soundcheck we told them to do so. We did not have the intension to do a record, but after being very happy of what we heard, we decided to release it. That said, there were actually no „challenges“ doing that live recording. It came together really organically, thru the lucky coincidence of a great location with great gear and a superb engineer, as well as a great musical performance.

In relation to the music of the band, it makes totally sense to present a live album every now and then. The listener can hear how things evolve, how composition melts into improvisation (and vice versa), how the music

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processes thru different stages of emotions, which is in fact where the power of this band lies. Since the setlist was built on the spot, you even notice sometimes musicians deciding differently, going different ways and finding each other again. There are doubts and questions, leading into resolution and common energy. The path is not always straight and needs rethinking or reflexion sometimes, but because of the trust, common idea and subordination of the ego of everyone, the music can develop always.

So it's more about how we play, then what we play. The main idea is to show how the band works and let the listener be part of the process, independent of the (but of course original) compositional material. So there was no intent in the choice of the content for the set. Of course we always played the 3 new songs on that tour. The rest was a spontaneous compilation out of standard repertoire of the band, mainly of newer compositions from a pool of about 20 pieces. So there are some of the main themes of „Ghost Cat“ (Intakt Records, 2023) and the piece „Back in the Game“, which came out first on „Italian Circus Story“ (Intakt Records, 2014). There were also a lot of pieces from „Crosswinds“ (Intakt Records, 2019) in the pool, but were not played that night.

***Cadence: You have repeated some of the compositions from prior recordings on this disc; with the cost of buying music being so expensive what separates (makes this version of these tunes) this release and this version of this music from their prior renditions and thus necessary to purchase?***

C.I.: I think I answered the question partly already. Besides the main idea of letting the listener be part of the process in evolving a common energy, there was a very different intension when producing especially the „Ghost Cat“ record. There we wanted really to keep the songs as songs, which you can listen at home, even as background. The improvs are not overbearing and the dynamic range is smaller. The stories are told in a straight way, from beginning to the end, with less of the surprising turning points you have at the gig. The choice of the compositional material had much more importance, than on the live recording.

And of course there is a huge tradition in Jazz to record different versions of a song. Monk played only around 70 compositions during his whole life I think?!

***Cadence: Since your last interview with Cadence I imagine that you have been to the USA I wondered what your impressions are of our jazz scene; and some of the artists of note in your view?***

C.I.: Jazz has become a global language over the years but of course, like for many others, the US and above all the New York jazz scene has been the main influence for me as a saxophone player. All of the saxophone players I was checking out probably had their center of life in New York at some point in their lives. So for me it was essential to stay in this city whenever I could when my life was a bit more flexible (without family, etc.). It's where a lot of the music is coming from and where the musicians carry the legacy. Playing with some of these cats, like Nasheet Waits, Loren Stillman or Ohad Talmor, listening

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to legends like Lee Konitz or Bill Frisell, institutions like Ari Hoenig Mondays at Smalls or Wayne Krantz Wednesdays at the 55 bar, were life changing events to me. And of course it's also just the incredible amount of great musicians from all over the world in this place. You can just play sessions every day on a high level. If you ask me about some artists of note, there are so many like Dayna Stephens, Loren Stillman, Steve Lehman, Mark Turner, Chris Speed, Kris Davis, Joel Ross, Walter Smith III, Immanuel Wilkins or Guillermo Klein.

What concerns me as composer, my vision or artist in general I think the influences are much broader and more based on contemporary art, sounds and experiences of life in general, not bound to a certain place.

***Cadence: You are a prolific composer so please give us a glimpse into how you write; both for Pilgrim and the larger Orchestra settings you are able to mount sometimes? Also do you use any of the new technology that some jazz artists have begun to use including AI?***

C.I.: My writing is an ongoing process which starts in being open for anything all the time. I am constantly hunting and gathering and make notes and scratches, even if it seems to be nothing in the first moment - not only on a musical or /and technical level, but also in every aspect of what life in general gives you. This is often not even conscious or needs extra time, which is really important for the next phase, where I dive into these notes and try to organize them, take the time to define or decide which way to go, what should be said and what not. Of course I did study composition and constantly exercising it, like my instrument, since it is a muscle which can be worked on and make constant progress.

When it comes to bring it on paper, the main idea comes mostly from this pool. I guess I mostly start with a melody and later go into harmonies. There are even a lot of compositions, where I wrote only single lines, such as a melody and a bass line and no cords. My compositions are built mostly out of voice leading - inspired by Bach corals for example - where harmonies evolve out of different lines (voices) played together. So you have recognizable melodies and harmonical richness at the same time, which gives the improviser(s) more options to create worlds between relaxation and tension or openness and density.

This leads especially to an idea of Pilgrim for example, which is to have the possibility to create, design and shape within the musical context in any moment. The idea is to play a song or express an common idea, without being in a cage of a sacred form.

Of course this is a bit different in the orchestral context, where the composition is much more defined and detailed. But the process is the same: It all starts with melodies, sometimes several at the same time, which evolve or give ideas for a harmonical world. Of course there is also a lot of knowledge and constant learning involved, such as analyzing scores from both classical and jazz works, which gives the tools for orchestration, instrument theory, etc.



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Regarding tools, I use the saxophone, the piano and notation software. I never used AI so far.

**Cadence:** *How does a viewer who looks at your YouTube video "Back in the Game" directed by Kohei Yamaguchi (which is tied into your new recording) gather a meaning from what appears to be random images with a dancer? This raises the larger question of how does an instrumental music like jazz convey meaning outside of a obvious title or lyrics?*

C.I.: Your question make my mind come up with an thought: I was very much into Bob Dylan, when I was a late teenager. It meant to me a lot and I still have very deep memories about that time, without understanding most of the lyrics. I was not even trying to understand the words, since the music had apparently all I needed. What got to me was the mood and I think I was able to connect with the stories thru that. This is very personal and I think the meaning of music, especially without vocals of course, IS something very personal. It also has a lot to do with experiences, stages of life, where or with who you listen to music, what it triggers in you or with what you connect or assimilate to it. That said. Kohei is a great film maker, with whom I worked in the past. I never met him and just sent him the song with a few notes. It was a deliberate decision to give him complete freedom and to see what he himself associates with the music and come up with. In addition to the fact that he has created something of his own, he also comes from a different culture and thus links the stories with images of foreign places (Japan). I find this combination of different artistic levels incredibly exciting and inspiring and for me it multiplies the emotional value enormously, especially since there is - for me - a perfect match of mood and story in both music and image here.

**Cadence:** *Cadence magazine has interviewed you during a few major shifts in world events from the COVID crisis to now America's second Trump term. Are you starting to detect a new attitude towards America that might affect your music and touring or visiting our country?*

C.I.: It has always been a challenge to tour in the US, since it needs a lot of work and money to get a working visa. I was thinking about renewing my visa, but decided against it lately to wait and see how the music business develops. I love to tour abroad and playing in the US was one of my personal highlights, but it must be sustainable in terms of finances and the environment. That has nothing to do with an attitude and is also not affecting my music or my wishes to go back, especially to New York.

There are many musicians who are explicitly political, which is more than I can say for myself. I'm interested in society and working in a community, bringing people together, regardless of where on the world, their age, nationality, religion, political views, etc. I find it difficult to change the world at large. But in my environment, my neighborhood, my community or wherever I go with my music, with lovers of jazz, good music, culture and art in general, or simply people who are looking for exchange in some form, doing good and connecting people is within the scope of my possibilities by being a musician.

# 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

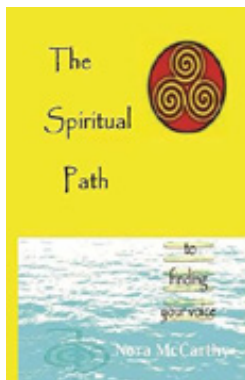
What Nora McCarthy has gathered together here is a monumental achievement. If you use your voice at all – to entertain, to persuade, to teach, or to sing in the shower – this book will help you get the most out of it – it does it all – teaches us techniques and exercises, guides us in our thinking and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



# Book Look

**THE LONG SHADOW OF THE LITTLE GIANT,  
THE LIFE, WORK AND LEGACY OF TUBBY HAYES,**  
SECOND EDITION  
BY SIMON SPILLETT, 395 PAGES, EQUINOX PRESS.

While the first edition of this fine biography came out ten years ago this revised second edition has been out a while in oversized paperback. Both are worth having but this report just deals the the latest. It would be a kick to A/B the two copies but this newest is my sole copy.

Be that as it may, this is an extremely important update from fellow saxman Spillett and the unquestionable authority expert on the British figurehead. In my Hayes collection are several pieces of vinyl and compact discs with his erudite liner annotation on them.

As far as this reader can tell there are no discernible changes or additions to the main text concerning our hero's life story which is well worth a singular scan. If any come to light please notify me through this publication.

The main attractions herein are the additional entries in the discography section toward the back of the book. Since its initial publication in 2017 many new titles have been released on compact disc and vinyl. Here's a partial list in no particular order: No Blues: Complete Hopbine 1965/ Grits, Beans & Greens: Lost Fontana Studio Sessions / What Is This Thing Called Love? / Modes & Blues-Live At Ronnie Scott's / New Edition-Rare Radio Recordings/ Live At Flamingo 1958/ Without A Song- Rare Live 54-73/ Little Workout-Live @ Little Theatre/ Invitation: Live at Top Alex 1973. There are more that I'm unaware of or haven't been able to obtain.

Hopefully this list of titles (mostly on compact disc) will be helpful to those seeking to expand their appreciation of this jazz giant. There are also two video documentaries available on DVD. All lovers of the tenor saxophone and our native art form should avail themselves to this treasure trove. Unequivocally recommended.

Larry Hollis



# Feature New Release

## ROYCE CAMPBELL AND THE VOSBEIN-MAGEE BIG BAND VAGABOND

MAX FRANK MUSIC MFM-10

PEEPERS / GENTLE BREEZE / A SHARP BLUES / BODY & SOUL / MAMBO PUENTE / MOON CYCLE / VAGABOND / MIDDLE GROUND / DANCING WATERFALL / INNER PEACE / VIPER / 54:50

Royce Campbell, guitar, Kelli Birchfield, tenor sax, James Cotton, tenor sax, clarinet, Kyle Greaney, baritone sax, Greg Moody, alto sax, clarinet, percussion, Bill Schnepfer, alto & soprano sax, flute, Chris Magee, co-leader and trumpet, Kerry Moffit, Alec Moser, Brian Quackenbush, trumpet, Tyler Bare, bass trombone, Tom Lundberg, Tom McKenzie, Matt Niess, trombone, Matthew Billings, piano, Bob Bowen, bass, Dewayne Peters, drums, Terry Vosbein, co-leader and director. Recorded September 28, 2024, Lexington, Virginia, USA.

Any jazz guitarist from Indianapolis plays in the shadow of Wes Montgomery, but that really remains a rather large and inviting umbrella. One of Wes' favorite practices was taking the ball and running with it, and that is exactly what Royce Campbell does here. There are no confections - this is all solid music. He digs deep into his solos as he rides atop the juggernaut, relishing in hearing his tunes open up in new ways.

Campbell is featured soloist and composer for this ideal combination of players, tunes and arrangements, offering glowing proof that the big band tradition is alive and well. He's long been a musician's musician and guitarist's guitarist, putting in 20 years on the road with Henry Mancini, more recently in smaller ensemble contexts with many a name you would recognize while managing, no matter how unintentionally, to remain all too much under the radar. He can set the stage on fire, but more often keeps his coals banked and glowing, spinning tales with a groove as wide and deep as the Grand Canyon as though that requires no more effort than falling off a log, and doing so with a sense of shape, form and melody which is often enough pretty but always beautiful.

Campbell's starting point on the plectral spectrum was fortuitous, studying with his uncle, Carroll DeCamp (1922 - 2013), who had already played an essential role in launching the career of Wes Montgomery. DeCamp, a great wit as well as distinguished musician, merits his own career survey, but that's another story. Be that as it may, in the late 1970s, he arranged several of his nephew's original tunes for big band, and those have aged well, harkening back to a day when big bands made jazz the most popular of popular musics. That's what we hear, gloriously, here, along with the standard "Body and Soul". DeCamp's arrangements evince knowledge of a wide variety of big band influences, from Ellington to Kenton, as well as a familiarity with Tadd Dameron, Gil Evans, Oliver Nelson and Gerald Wilson.

Director Terry Vosbein's own big band experience includes some long-ago road stints as bassist for the Glenn Miller Orchestra, long before he became Curator at the Stan Kenton Research Center or began this band, ten years ago\*. Fully a decade in, with several albums under their collective belt, this one is, to my ears, their best yet. Vosbein is an expert sculptor, and with players of this caliber, versatility and flexibility are givens. They don't sound like he has to push them very hard to pull great things out of them, he just has to, as the saying goes, herd the cats...

## Feature New Release

Besides crisp and precise ensemble passages, these folks can also deliver solos of substance. They revel in this relatively larger context which is all too rare for them, enjoying the opportunity to shine in so much good company while delivering the goods to an audience which may not be huge but is certainly appreciative. Such is the lot of those who maintain this music as a living, growing art form out on the land. We should all be grateful for their ongoing efforts.

What didn't I like about this album? It ended so soon...

Between Vagabond and a newer double-CD featuring trio improvisations, Campbell ought to finally be getting more visibility and recognition for the breadth, depth and quality of his career. It is long overdue.

\* My review of the Vosbein-Magee Big Band's debut performance appeared on pages 48 and 49 of the October/November/December 2015 issue of Cadence, Volume 41 #4.

Patrick Hinely



Royce Campbell  
(and bassist  
Bob Bowen),  
soundcheck,  
Vosbein Magee  
Big Band, Wilson  
Hall Auditorium,  
Washington and  
Lee University,  
Lexington,  
Virginia,  
September 28,  
2024, prior to  
the performance  
during which the  
album Vagabond  
was recorded.

Photo by Patrick  
Hinely



# 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 Pisci, 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.

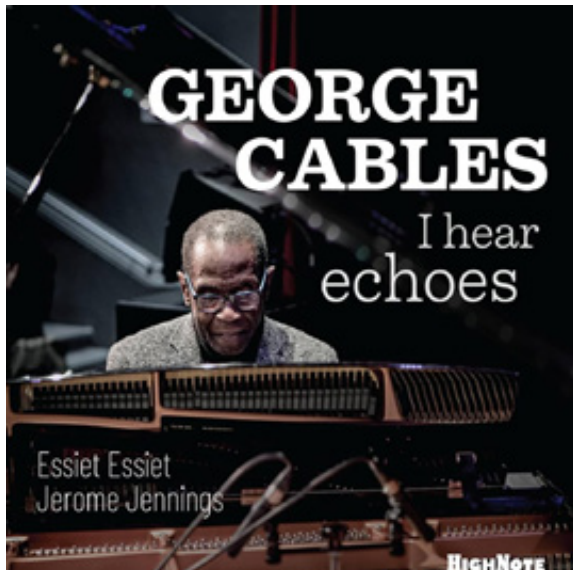
ECHO OF A SCREAM / ECHOES / SO NEAR SO FAR / MORNING SONG / PRELUDE  
TO A KISS / CLOCKWISE / LIKE A LOVER / YOU'D BE SO NICE TO COME HOME  
TO / BLUE NIGHTS / JOURNEY TO AGARTHA / PEACE. 65:39.

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.

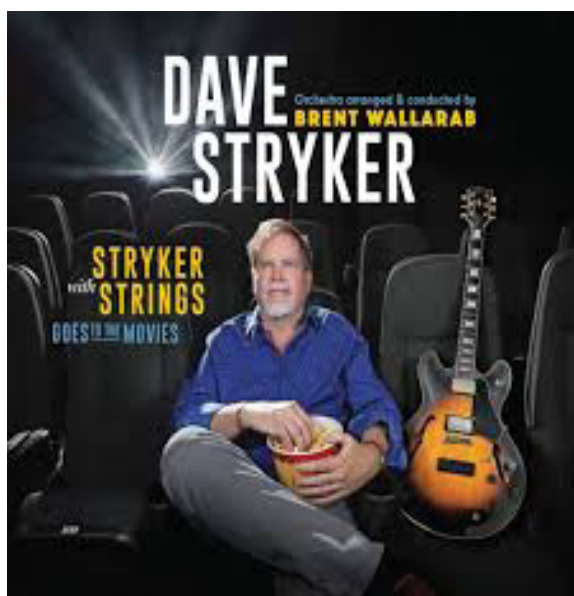
Opening with “In Your Eyes” from the movie “Say Anything”, Brent Wallarab’s colorful horn arrangements introduce this soulfully confident piece as it unfolds into a unison melody statement between violinist Sara Caswell and Dave Stryker. Stryker breaks loose with his signature, in the groove soloing 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/ ARTICULATE 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

# New Issues

## SHAREL CASSITY GRATITUDE

SUNNYSIDE COMMUNICATIONS 1750.

MAGNETISM(\*) / SMILE / STICK UP! / GRATITUDE / SUSPECT(\*) / KENNY'S QUEST / THE PROMISE / IN THE SPIRIT.

Cassity, as, cl; Cyrus Chestnut, p; Christian McBride, b; Lewis Nash, d; Michael Dease, tbn(\*); Terrell Stafford, tpt(\*). 5/8/2023. Brooklyn, NY.

Last night I dreamt of talking to the great Mose Allison. It was in Kansas City in front of the Blues Emporium where his trio was booked. Details of the conversation are hazy after all these years but what stuck in my memory was how humble and down home this musical hero was in his southern manner. Having known Sharel since her early Okie time until now those same attributes are still there. The other main gift is her unwavering dedication to her craft. Like Mose she's into it for love not specifically fame or money. It's unknown exactly when she was bitten by the jazz bug but it's unquestionably obvious it's stinger is still embedded in her psyche. Androids don't dream of electric sheep and AI hasn't solved the mystery of the blues. For the sixth outing solely under her leadership she's gathered an old friends rhythm team along with a pair of top-shelf windmen for an romp through five original scripts (the burning "Magnetism" the complex title tune for the undervalued Jimmy Heath, the heartfelt "Promise" a rare clarinet kiss to her son Richard Jr., along with "Kenny's Quest" & "In The Spirit" dedicated to fellow reed masters Garrett and Redman respectively. Usually a ballad, the Chaplin staple is taken at a medium lope while two charts "Stick Up!(not to be confused with the Bobby Hutcherson tune) and "Suspect" were supplied by Sharel's spouse, Most selections feature statements from all members with plenty of tart, sometimes almost Jackie McLean acidic altoing from the leader. Remember what Longfellow once said "We judge ourselves by what we feel capable of doing, while others judge us by what we have already done. Don't miss this one.

Larry Hollis

# New Issues

RODNEY JORDAN,  
MEMPHIS BLUE,  
BME 1004.

THE STORM WILL PASS/ MINORITY/ ESCAPATORIA/ HARGROVE/ MEMPHIS BLUE/ AUTUMN LEAVES/ SMALL PORTION/ THE ART OF BLAKEY. 50:24.

Jordan, b; Melvin Jones, tpt, flgh; Mark Sterbank, ts; Louis Heriveaux, p; Quentin E. Baxter, d.  
11/15-17/2020. Charleston, SC.

It's sort of amazing how having played music in the home of the blues only once (years ago at the Cotton Carnival) how the places ambiance has stuck with me all these following years. It is apparent listening to this debut disc it dwells deep in Rodney Jordan's soul. He has surrounded himself with four fellow southerners who acquit themselves very well. The opening tune was penned by the other Memphian Jones whose bright and brassy tone made this writer recall the under-appreciated Bobby Bryant. He comes close to stealing the solo show several times here. Tenorist Sterbank burns with a more subdued intensity while the keyboard of Heriveaux atop Baxter's strudy kit holds everything together. Next is one of the three non-originals, "Minority" by the forgotten altoist Gigi Gryce taken up and hot wit spots from all save the traps. His writings (including Nica's Tempo, Social Call, Blue Lights, etc.) warrant further exploration. The other outside originals are "Small Portion" by the much-missed Mulgrew Miller and a barely recognizable "Autumn Leaves". The leaders big bull is heard on the Roy Hargrove salute, the medium Escapatoria". the Bu dedication where Baxter finally gets to shine and the title selection where Jordan takes his most extended solo. With this impressive first time out Rodney Jordan and his associates answer the query posed on Blonde On Blonde by the former Robert Zimmerman. "Oh Mama Could This Really The End?" Hopefully No Way.

Larry Hollis

# New Issues

## FREDDIE HUBBARD, ON FIRE

RESONANCE 2073.

DISC ONE: CRSIS / UP JUMPED SPRING / ECHOES OF BLUE / TRUE COLORS /  
BREAKING POINT. 65:16.

DISC TWO: BYE BYE BLACKBIRD / SUMMERTIME / BREAKING POINT. 47:54.

Hubbard, tpt, flgh; Bennie Maupin, ts; Kenny Barron, p; Herbie Lewis, b; Freddie Waits, d.  
4/10/1967. Bronx, NY.

What more is there left unsaid about the inimitable Freddie Hubbard? This writer can personally attest to fact he was one of the nicest artists he ever met. It's surprising he didn't have a severe case of writer's cramp after signing all of the lps that were laid in his lap. So it went before the second set one snowy December night in OKC. Subtitled Live from the Blue Morocco this late sixties double is appearing for the first time in conjunction with another single disc headlined by fellow trumpeter Kenny Dorham also previously unreleased. The Blue Morocco club was unknown to me before these issues but are thankfully detailed in the over thirty page accompanying booklet. From it one learned that the co-owner Sylvia Robinson (Vanderpool) was none other than the voice heard on the 1957 hit "Love Is Strange" with the semi-forgotten Mickey Baker.

As was the normal with Hubbard-led combos, the band here is superlative filled with future big names and sterling sidemen. All should be recognizable to seasoned Cadence folks. Freddie always fronted super-duper bands but this has to rate as one of his finest. Kenny Barron has a long and distinguished career and multi-instrumentalist Maupin lists an admirable resume. He and traps ace Waits were former roomies and they constantly lock in. Fresh off duties with the late Les McCann you know bassist Lewis can swing his socks off. On page 13 of the inner booklet are separate photos of Maupin & Barron from the mid-sixties that are a real hoot.

There is little need to chronicle the setlists as all are sketched in the aforementioned booklet by John Koenig son of Lester Koenig founder of the Contemporary label. All of the numbers have appeared on previous Hubbard issues and all are lengthy except for the second version of the break song "Breaking Point" which clocks in at a tad over seven minutes. There's some extremely tasteful Harmon mute work on Blackbird and it's an easy call to say he lives up to the album's title. "Up Jumped Spring" is worth an admission fee alone. With printed commentary from Eddie Henderson, Charles Tolliver, Jeremy Pelt, Kenny Barron, Bennie Maupin and others this attractive double disk package should fly off the racks. Highly recommended.

Larry Hollis

# Reissues

## DAVID "FATHEAD" NEWMAN, RETURN TO THE WIDE OPEN SPACES, STEADYBOY 0067.

BUSTER'S TUNE / THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE / THESE FOOLISH  
THINGS / HARD TIMES / 13TH FLOOR / TWO BONES AND A PICK / CITY LIGHTS  
LUSH LIFE / NIGHT IN TUNISIA. 66:17.

Newman, as, flt; James Clay, ts; Leroy Cooper. bars; Dennis Dotson, tpt; Cornell Dupree, g; Ellis Marsalis, p; Chuck Rainey, el b; George Rains, d. No dates given. Fort Worth, TX.

This is something of an anomaly; a reissue of a sequel.. Not that it's not an unwelcome return. From 1990 originally on the small Amazing label this is a live recording from the Caravan of Dreams which shuttered in September of 2001. Although no date is listed it had to be prior to January of 1995 when James Clay passed. Your guess is as good as mine. My guess would be mid-eighties. As a certified two-tenor winner this band was packed with many of my heroes. Fathead's section-mate from the great Atlantic small combo Leroy "Hog" Cooper gets more solo space for his barking baritone than was usually heard. Another Atlantic standby, Cornell Dupree does a yeoman's job breaking up the horn rides with his distinctive Fender phrases. Louisiana legend Ellis Marsalis adds his masterful keyboard touch to the pair of ballad standards. His florid pianistics present an interesting contrast to the more sparse statements of the other soloists. Yet the star of this collective has to be Fathead. He soars on his signature song "Hard Times" and while listed as only being on alto his buttery tone has always signified the Texas tenor" identity. His work in the early Charles band is a must listen (Brother Ray named his second son David).Kudos for including a Buster Smith chart. If you missed it the first time around here's your chance to atone.

Larry Hollis



# New Issues

## RICH PEARE, DON MESSINA BLUES FOR PETER

### NEW ARTISTS

STRIKE UP THE BAND/ DON'T BLAME ME/ IT'S YOU OR NO ONE/ FOOLIN' MYSELF/ YOU  
STEPPED OUT OF A DREAM/ BLUES FOR PETER/ ALL OF ME/ YESTERDAYS 50:10

Rich Peare, Classical g; Don Messina, bass New jersey 2020

Another version of a duet, my favorite combination. But here we have guitar and bass, and they are playing standards. Really looking forward to this. And it sounds to me that the guitar is unamplified, which is a delight to my ears.

The opening tune clearly defines the whole record. It truly strikes up the band. I love Peare's interplay of single notes and chords and Messina really pushes things along. I took out my brushes and played along. And Don't Blame Me should be titled Praise Me. The interplay between the two players is excellent.

The duo varies things nicely with different tempos and textures. A real highlight for me is Foolin' Myself. The interplay between the two is wonderful and Messina's solo here fits in beautifully.

And one must mention the excellent playing by both men on the title track, which I assume is improvised as both get composer credit.

This is the kind of record that you might put on for background music but you will constantly be pulled in to listen carefully. These two players demand to be carefully listened to. Highly recommended.

Bernie Koenig

## KAZZRIE JAXEN, DON MESSINA THE DANCE NEW ARTISTS

CONFIRMATION/ FOLLOW/ KARY'S TRANCE/ MY MELANCHOLY BABY/ THE MIRROR CALLS/  
WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED LOVE/ WILL I FIND MY LOVE TODAY/ YOU'D BE SO NICE TO COME  
HOME TO 48:45

Kazzrie Jaxen, p, voc, Don Messina bass Mahwah New Jersey March 2019

This is the third record I have reviewed with Don Messina. All are different, which shows what a flexible a player he is. This record just confirms this, to make a pun on the opening tune.

Jazen is hard swinging pianist with a nice voice. She mixes vocals with great solos. She includes some nice dissonances with nice melodic lines. I love how she uses the very high notes. Kary's Trance is anything but trancelike, as it is a real up-tempo swinger. And Messina's solo here is also great.

Melancholy baby is anything but, taken at a nice up tempo. If you are feeling melancholy, this will get you out of that mood.

The last tune sums it up. This record would nice to come home to.

Bernie Koenig



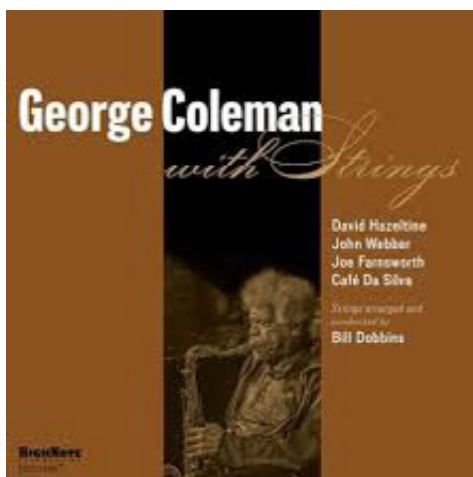
# New Issues

## GEORGE COLEMAN, WITH STRINGS HIGHNOTE 7349.

DEDICATED TO YOU/ MOMENT TO MOMENT/STELLA BY STARLIGHT/A TIME FOR LOVE/ UGLY BEAUTY/ A TIME FOR LOVE(ALT)/ UGLY BEAUTY(ALT)...35;56

Collective personnel: Coleman, ts; David Hazeltine, p; John Webber, b; Joe Farnsworth, d; Cafe Da Silva, perc; unidentified orchestra; Bill Dobbins, cond; Englewood Cliffs, NJ(12/23/2022)/ Rochester, NY(4/2//2023/Paramus, NJ(8/23/2023).

The operative word for this release is "Finally". After many decades as a valued sideman in the jazz trenches starting in the late fifties to present day this 90 year old titan gets to join the ranks of renowned giants (Getz, Bird, Dexter, etc.) with his own "sax with strings" outing. With thoughtful charts from veteran arranger Bill Dobbins conducting a string orchestra consisting of nine violins, two violas and a pair of cellos the saxmaster bolstered by the One For All rhythm section plus occasional percussive sweetening sails through four standard scripts and a Thelonious Monk rare three/four title . The brief playing time is fattened by the inclusion of full orchestra introductions of the final two tunes hence are longer than the master takes. Another thing to listen for is the masterful work of the dependable David Hazeltine (his leadoff on "Moment To Moment") that proves there's no tariff on good taste. The only negative here is the short playing time which makes one longing for more. Maybe next time hopefully. Larry Hollis



# New Issues

## LEO LARRATT - CASA ROXA

BANDSTAND PRESENTS

ECAROH/ DON'T CRY BABY/ FOR MALONE/ NUAGES/ OUT OF THIS WORLD/ THE GOOD LIFE/ PARA MACHUCAR MEU CURAÇAO/ IN THE STILL OF THE NIGHT/ RAHIM'S BLUES/ EASE BACK/ JINGLES/ YOUR LOOKING AT ME/. 63:50

Larratt,g; Emmet Cohen,p; Russell Hall,b; Aaron Kimmel,d. 9/25/24 Brooklyn,NY.

After hearing guitarist Leo Larratt for the first time, I must say he definitely has my full attention. Leo is a young Australian guitarist living in NYC. His new CD "Casa Roxa" is his debut recording that also features pianist Emmet Cohen, another young musician that will soon be a household name in the Jazz world. An equally fine rhythm section consisting of bassist Russell Hall and drummer Aaron Kimmel rounds out this quartet nicely. The amount of music offered is generous, twelve tracks totaling sixty four minutes and every minute is noteworthy, taking us listeners right where we'd like to be. The whole CD has lots of grit and swings hard. Leo's playing is right on the money with clear and precise, well developed phrasing, possessing a rich and elegant tone. Sometimes he delivers long and soulful lines and other times he brings a barrage of precisely placed sixteenth notes that will take your breath away. Some of the material could be considered old school but with the quartets level of excellence it all sounds fresh and progressive.

We open with a seldom heard, tastefully arranged Horace Silver tune "Eqaroh". Killer solos by Emmett and Leo set the tone for what's to come. There's "Don't Cry Baby", a tune recorded by Etta James packing a soulful strut with a warm bass solo by Russell Hall. Django Reinhardt's "Nuages" opens with Leo's clean and tasteful solo chord melody then picks up a ballad tempo bringing forth the spirit of Django. "Out Of This World" is a Harold Arlen composition once recorded by John Coltrane that the quartet does a fine job with, both Leo and Emmet deliver some powerful solos. "The Good Life", you may have heard Tony Bennett or Frank Sinatra perform this one. With a hypnotizing medium swing feel the tune is given a new life for us to enjoy. Cole Porter's "In The Still Of The Night" is up tempo with a clean melody statement followed by a blistering solo from Leo then Emmet's solo that shows the incredible depth of his abilities. Drummer Aaron Kimmel turns in a powerful chorus. The quartet does an outstanding rendition of Wes Montgomery's "Jingles". One can hear how Leo has captured the spirit of his guitar hero's that came before him, like Wes and yet he clearly has his own way of interpreting these classic tunes.

One of Leo's mentors was guitarist Russell Malone, who tragically passed away just recently. "Casa Roxa" features two of Leo's originals, one being a tribute to Russell "For Malone". The tune is medium swing, nicely arranged and very reminiscent of Russell Malone. When I hear this tune it makes me think of him and if he were to listen I'm sure it would bring a smile to his face. Leo turns in a smoking solo on this one that's followed by Emmet's solo which starts out as a slow burn then blossoms into a blazing inferno. I especially like Leo's original "Rahim's Blues". This is a simple twelve bar blues which turns out to be the perfect launching pad for Leo to show what he's capable of. He then delivers some strong in the pocket lyrical lines before he blasts off with his technical wizardry, reminiscent of the drive of guitarists like Pat Martino and George Benson.

There are more tunes on "Casa Roxa" and it's all good. So if your into straight ahead Jazz with a punch then check this one out. In the future I hope we'll be hearing a lot from Leo Larratt.

Frank Kohl

# New Issues

## YUNMI KANG A TIMELESS PLACE

LAURA RECORDS

EAST OF THE SUN/ A TIMELESS PLACE/ SKYLARK/ I THOUGHT ABOUT YOU/ PRELUDE TO A KISS/  
HOW DEEP IS THE OCEAN/ LIKE SOMEONE IN LOVE. 42:55

Kang, vcl; John Stowell, g. May 21, 2023. Seoul, South Korea

Upon listening to Korean vocalist Yunmi Kang and American guitarist John Stowell's new recording "A Timeless Place" I must say I'm quite impressed. Even though Yunmi is an amazingly accomplished pianist, her new CD features her exclusively on vocals. The seven pieces offered on this recording, with the exception of "A Timeless Place", that's written by Norma Winstone, are classic jazz standards that have been around for a long time. The notable difference here is in their performance and the depth of expression attained while interpreting them. When these tunes were originally written I would assume the composer was driven by heartfelt emotion, "How Deep Is The Ocean" for example. When one of these standards is performed by a traditional jazz quartet with or without vocals it can easily lose some of its personal intent, it can become just another Jazz standard hindered by time and notation. With Yunmi and John's performance we enter a whole other realm of expression driven by what the compositions' true aspiration may have been. Bending and twisting, maybe in time, maybe not. If one opens up their imagination we can think more in terms of color, texture and sound. These elements are all qualities that John Stowell has mastered with his unconventional chord voicings and amazing ability to let the performance drive the tempo. Yunmi's skill to color and shape each note and her masterful way of placing them in her phrasing is truly stunning. The end result is a duo that listens and feels the pulse of one another, whether it be a whisper or a scream.

We open with Brook Bowman's classic "East Of The Sun" starting with improvisation outlining the chordal and lyrical essence of this quintessential love song. We then hear the melody out of tempo, Yunmi's voice massaging our imaginations, John bringing color to the vocals. The tempo begins, playful as Yunmi and John engage in conversation. All of this brings more substance to this tune than I've ever experienced. The title track "A Timeless Place" has a delicious melody and accompaniment working perfectly in sync. Yunmi's voice soars flawlessly through this beautifully rich melody. The two of them improvise in waves of conversation. Hoagy Carmichael's "Skylark" gets an outstanding run, bringing depth and intimacy to this alluring classic. Johnny Mercer's "I Thought About You", a playful and sultry, in tempo feel with Yunmi's improvised chorus, dancing through the changes as John is right there with her. The melody comes at the end and what a welcome melody that is. Duke Ellington's "Prelude To A Kiss" - Yunmi's voice shapes and colors the melody with pure elegance, giving the melody all the love it deserves, not in tempo but with a pulsing energy all its own, enriched by John's accompaniment. "How Deep Is The Ocean" in tempo, this gem starts with Yunmi's improvised chorus closely enhanced by John's chordal and single note magic. John's solo is then accompanied by Yunmi's vocal genius. We then get the melody with lyrics and Yunmi shines with a graceful ease. With "Like Someone In Love" Yunmi and John really bring the love to this perfect Johnny Burke, Jimmy Van Heusen tune. Yunmi's voice just soars here with all that love and attention she brings to every note. I can see why Betty Carter was one of her influences.

So there you have it folks. For those of you who can take the time to leave the tempo of bass and drums behind and desire an intimate and introspective journey into musical conversation I highly recommend giving "A Timeless Place" a listen.

Frank Kohl

# New Issues

## NICK HEMPTON/CORY WEEDS HORNS LOCKED

CELLAR MUSIC 060124

LAST TRAIN FROM OVERBROOK / CHANGE FOR A DOLLAR(\*) / SOY CALIFA /  
CONN MEN / POLKADOTS & MOONBEAMS(\*) / THE ONE BEFORE THIS(\*) / WHEN  
YOU'RE SMILING / LOOSE ENDS(\*). 58 minutes

Hempston, Weeds, ts; Nick Peck, org; Jesse Cahill, d.(\*)10/23/2023. Vancouver,BC,Canada.  
All others 6/1/2024.Vancouver, BC,Canada.

Wow! Now this is how your truly digs his jazz (and blues for that matter). Hot and Heavy. Although this was thoroughly covered in the last issue to paraphrase Smokey Robinson "I second that emotion"An present day extension of a long-held two horn tradition that dates back at least to King Oliver/Louis Armstrong times this is hotter than the unholy hubs of hell on every track except for two standard ballads (filled with inner heat in the solo sections) and a rather perfunctory reading of the dusty diamond "When You're Smiling". Both men have a shared mutual history with duty with the NightCrawlers an overlooked soul jazz/funk/blues combo. While Hempton hasn't received near the exposure of Weeds they are a good match stylistically and if you can detect which tenorist is playing on every track you have a better ear than me. For more details about this release please consult the aforementioned review. This one has my hearty endorsement.

Larry Hollis

## MITCH TOWNE REFUGE

CROSS TOWNE RECORDS1001

WOLVERINE / REFUGE / BETTER NOW THAN NEVER AT ALL / ODE TO KENNY /  
STEEPIAN FAITH / SOME WORK OF NOBLE NOTE, MAY YET BE DONE / ACT AS  
IF. 44:00.

Towne, org; Tetsuya Nishlyama, g; Jeffery Johnson, d. 11/2024. Omaha, NE,  
Organist Towne assembled his touring comrade for this introductory album of all self-penned numbers (except for track five from Kenny Kirkland eponymous Verve release).

Don't have much background bio information on him but he's supposedly an experienced side-person having worked with numerous names.Like most major console kickers he provides his own bass line while serviceable are not going to make one forget Richard "Groove" Holmes. He has a penchant for short, choppy Basie-like notation with an overall sound somewhere between Mel Rhyne and less-boppish Don Paterson.There are some instances where he and the guitar interweave unison strands. This is most apparent on the slightly funkified "Ode To Kenny" when they double their lines and swap licks. The six-stringers style is in the classic jazz guitar mold of players like Ray Crawford or Yves Brouqui. The next to last track gets its title from a Tennyson quote, is set in Five and probably owes more to Procol Harum than to Larry Young. Trapster Johnson stretches out on it. It will be interesting where this threesome goes from here otherwise a serviceable debut .

Larry Hollis

# New Issues

## CYRUS CHESTNUT RHYTHM, MELODY AND HARMONY

HIGHNOTE 7359

CURED AND SEASONED / AUTUMN LEAVES / AMI'S DANCE / PRELUDE FOR  
GEORGE / TWINKLE TOES / SONG FOR THE ANDES / BIG FEET / MOONLIGHT  
IN VERMONT / THERE IS A FOUNTAIN. 58:05.

Chestnut, p; Stacy Dillard, ss, ts; Gerald Cannon, b; Chris Beck, d. 6/23/2024. NYC, NY.

Over the course of a long recording career Cyrus Chestnut has amassed enough aura points to light up the skies. In his comprehensive booklet annotation Willard Jenkins sets the total at over thirty not counting probably triple that amount in sideman duties. Most of his self-led dates have been in the trio format with a few sporting an added horn. He seems to have a special affinity for the saxophone appearing on a handful of Criss Cross titles under the leadership of Tim Warfield. His affiliation with the under sung Stacy Dillard goes back at least to a 2012 quartet issue for Atlantic. Doubling on fish horn and tenor Dillard scores MVP rating on most of these tracks. His soprano playing is in tune and supple but mastery of the bigger b-flat instrument shoots forth whenever he picks it up. He recalls Joe Henderson in his ability to go from inside to the outskirts of outsidewithout being abrasive. A good example of this is Henderson solo on the Lee Morgan hit "The Sidewinder".

As for the leader he has many musical gifts. Aside from an almost metronomic sense of time added to his intuitive grasp of rhythmic accompaniment (check out his recent underpinning on altoist Sharel Cassidy's Sunnyside disc) within the soloing of others. I dreaded the thought of having to sit through yet more readings of the worn standards "Autumn Leaves" & "Moonlight In Vermont (solo)" until hearing Cyrus' deft rearrangements of them. The remainder of the program consists of Chestnut scripts save for the final track, an intriguing duet between Stacy the last of his four soprano cuts) and piano. In his early sixties, Chesnut is at the peak of his powers here. Big Sounds from a Big Man.

Larry Hollis



# New Issues

## JORDAN VANHEMERT, SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

ORIGIN 82921.

HERE AND NOW / TREAD LIGHTLY / MOURNING COMES AGAIN / SOFTY AS IN  
A MORNING SUNRISE / SEA OF TRANQUILITY / COME SUNDAY / MILYANG  
AIRANG / MO'S BLUES / SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST. 57:57.

VanHemert, sax; Terell Stafford, tpt. flgh; Michael Dease, tbn; Helen Sung, p; Rodney  
Whitaker, b; Lewis Nash, d. 10/12/2024. East Lansing, MI.

For his newest recorded effort producer Michael Dease has assembled a crack combo that should ring a few bells among regular readers. Joining the two other horns are the same names that graced Sharel Cassity's recent Sunnyside disc reviewed in the last issue of this mag. Also present is the same drummer along with Sung and Whitaker rounding out the solid underpinning. The leader has a handful of discs out and while he's adroit on most reed instruments here he augments his main sax (tenor) with equally compelling alto work. For someone who has spent much of his life's work in a teaching capacity his playing does not reek of the sterility of academia as have a few others. As current head of jazz studies at NorthEastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma his passion remains intact. The playing program is broken up intelligently by the insertion of a triad of duets between the protagonist which follows "Softly..."(with drums), "Sea Of Tranquility(Sung) and Duke's "Come Sunday"(with upright). Many other high points are heard but the title closing track should not be confused with any of the thirty-something numbers of the same name. You get the picture; the future looks shiny and bright for this all-american Seoulman.

Larry Hollis





# New Issues

## DANIEL GARBIN RISING

6X20 RECORDS, TOUFETTE RECORDS  
DOWNLOAD

RISING/ SIMI'S BOSSA/ ROLLING HILLS/ ANOMIOSERICORDO/ DSD/ ALMOST FORGOTTEN/  
INTO THE SUNSET 49:51

Daniel Garbin, g sitar; Camila Cortina , p elec keys; Scott Litroff – as; Eddy Khaimovich electric and acoustic basses Brian Woodruff – d New York 2025

Looking forward to some sitar jazz. The opening track is nice and relaxed with great interplay between the sitar and alto. At first I thought I heard a voice but it was the combination of instruments. Everyone but the drummer gets to solo while Woodruff maintains an interesting rhythmic pattern on the snare. Garbin has a nice flowing style on guitar on Simi's Bossa. On this track the drums should have been a bit more present. Cortina plays some very nice chords and accompanies everyone very nicely. She even makes the electric keyboard sound good, and Khaimovich makes himself felt throughout. His solo on electric bass on Almost Forgotten is very nice. Over all this is a nice relaxed recording. The tunes are interesting, the solos all good and the players all work well together. My only two complaints are that I was hoping for more sitar and that the drums should have been a bit more present in the mix.

Bernie Koenig

## GINETTA'S VENDETTA FUN SIZE

GINETTA/ BLUES FOR POP/ THERE WILL NEVER BE ANOTHER YOU/ BLACK ORPHEUS/ TELL YOUR STORY WALKING/ MOON RIVER/ ALL BLUES/ LITTLE SUNFLOWER/ IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU/ MISTY/ CHRISTMASTIME/ GINETTA/ BLUES FOR POP POP/ THERE WILL NEVER BE ANOTHER YOU 82:31 DOWNLOAD

Ginetta M., Pocket Trp, Vocals;;Jon Davis-P; ; Danny Walsh -ts, ss; Marcello PellitteriD;;Belden Bullock Bass.

The opening track is a standard type tune with a nice bluesy feel. Interesting solos by Ginetta, Jon and Danny. On Blues for Pop there is a nice little left hand drum break with bass accompaniment. Very tasty. And they also have a nice short interplay on There Will Never be Another You. The rest of the recording is a nice mix of standards and originals. One of the things I really like is when the melodies are played, they are not always in unison but the trumpet will state the melody with nice accompaniment by a sax. Great interplay. Both horn players are quite melodic. Every once in awhile Walsh sounds like an early Coltrane. And on All Blues Ginetta sounds a bit like Miles. Davis is also a nice player using chords effectively. I also really like the interplay between Pellitteri and Bullock. They really work well together. Pellitteri has a nice exchange of fours on It Could Happen to You. Overall this is a really nice record with some really good playing. The band works well together. Only one negative note. I could have done without the vocals.

# Feature New Release

## PROSPER JUSTIN CHART

### UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

Justin Chart's latest album PROSPER, is a beautiful connection of mood and melody, ranging from shivery melodious Jazz to hard-bop and swing. This is music of the night. The quintet plays beautifully and fills your ears with great grooves and hot riffs in this modern-day speakeasy. I can imagine the martini's being stirred, men shooting their cuffs, and ladies dressed to the nines. There is a spine-tingling expectation in this scenario where the album Prosper is the soundtrack. All are in the moment, eloquently and elegantly as it evokes all the energy and attitude that the live shows are all about. "Love on Lexington" cuts through like a lighthouse of emotional integrity. "Pale Gold and Faded Green" is a powerful, impressionistic tune, the tension lying between Chart's exotic patterns and the many angles that his saxophone phrases, casting off sparks with "A Groove I Approve". There's heart, nuanced tonality, and the interaction of an intuitive composition.

"Another Apple" is a combination of laid-back charm and pure burn. They would not allow cameras in the speakeasy, hence no video, this music lets your imagination run wild.

Chart is a burning soloist, and seems alive to the possibilities of this freeing format, it is timeless, in that it can't be pinned down to any era, it is evocative and mesmerizing combination of a place you may not know but where you're always welcome.

Like a city at night, "Essence of Eminence" tells a long, lovely story with throaty spits and burly growls. Sauls comps and solos are clean and melodious, they set the stage for Chart to do what he does best. This set is passionate and their music has the ability to make you feel, be it a slow haunting introverted ballad or a 320-bpm frenzied super swing. I love the way that the listeners attention is constantly being enthralled by various degrees of spiraling solos that coat every performance with a glistening form of storytelling, it kept me dialed in all the way through.

Prosper is a vehicle for Chart, with its hidden depths as it reveals something new and rewarding each time you play it, from Charts virtuosic cadenzas to Robbins spacious Bass solos. Chart himself sounds voracious as he roars on "Use it Wisely" Lobato on Drums keeps it right and tight.

Is this the reality of the fusion between soul and sound? Not to mention the courage required to even entertain such a format, and done so with a passion and soul wrenching honesty. If you get a chance to see any of Justin Charts ensembles live, you will see how immersed they are in the moment, they have to be, in each case, drawn from masterful understatement. This album has me right there and makes me want to play it way to loud! PROSPER is a phenomenal live album, outstandingly powerful, in the style of a 1960's Verve record, unique, imaginative, and sensuous with mesmerizing melodies, and powerful rhythmic interplay. It is an adventure into a land where the dynamics and freedom of improvisation can meet the power and intensity of Hard Bop.

Richard Walker

**Reviews from Abe Goldstien from the website [www.papatamusredux.com](http://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 Kawa 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

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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



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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 perform a heartfelt duet on “Like No Other,” a piece dedicated to friend and

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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.

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## **THE EMPRESS: SQUARE ONE**

**PUBLISHED BY ABE GOLDSTIEN ON MARCH 19, 2025**

**CELLAR MUSIC (RELEASED MARCH 21, 2025)**

Fresh on the heels of the third release from Artemis, an all-female quintet, comes Square One, the debut release from The Empress, a sextet led by four women saxophonists. Alto saxophonist Pureum Jin organized the band to honor jazz icons like Charlie Parker and John Coltrane while providing a platform for women instrumentalists. To achieve her first goal, The Empress works through eleven tunes, including classics from Cedar Walton, John Coltrane, Benny Golson and Oliver Nelson. To achieve her second goal, Jin is joined by alto player Erena Terakubo, tenor player Chelsea Baratz and baritone player Lauren Sevia. "Instant Composure," a tune written by Michael Lutzeier, who Jin worked for in the early 2010s, sets the stage for a session of blistering tempi and nimble solos. The four saxophonists, accompanied by Steve Ash on piano, Joey Ranieri on bass and Pete Van Nostrand on drums, achieve a big band sound on this up tempo swinger. The driving tempos continue to dominate the session on tunes such as "Caravan," "But Not For Me" and "Bolivia." Things slow down on Jin's arrangement of "Everything Happens To Me," as she soars over the sax section. On many of the tunes, such as "But Not For Me" their unison playing is reminiscent of the Four Brothers. At other time, like on the opening of Lutzeier's "Reminiscing," they sound like the World Saxophone Quartet. Jin's arrangements give everyone an opportunity to shine, including members of the rhythm section. The Empress may be trying to prove a point about women musicians, as they tend to take most of the tunes, with the exception of "Everything Happens To Me," "Mr. Syms" and "Yearnin'" at breakneck speeds with a succession of energized solos. Considering that Square One was released during Women's History Month, The Empress could have made a stronger statement with an all-female rhythm section and tunes written by women composers. Maybe next time!

**BOTTOM LINE:** You've heard of "The Four Brothers." Square One introduces you to the sound of "The Four Sisters — saxophonists Lauren Sevia, Pureum Jin, Erena Terakubo and Chelsea Baratz — as they work through a set of timeless jazz classics. The torrid tempi and exuberant solos, however, diminish the pure beauty of some of the tunes and their exquisite playing.

## **JON BENTLEY: GO AHEAD!**

**PUBLISHED BY ABE GOLDSTIEN ON MARCH 17, 2025**

**CELLAR MUSIC (RELEASED MARCH 21, 2025)**

Jon Bentley's Go Ahead! took me back in time; a time when the jazz section of record stores and the catalogues of record companies added a new category to their offerings — soul jazz. Although he was born at the tail end



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of that trend, this is the music Vancouver-based tenor saxophonist Jon Bentley embraces on *Go Ahead!* The common denominator between five originals and compositions from Wayne Shorter, Brad Mehldau, Duke Ellington and Paul Simon is the straight ahead and swinging style that defined soul jazz. It's the soulful sound of Bentley's sax, the bluesy guitar of Tristan Paxton, the trills and thrills of organist Chris Gestrin and the strong and steady rhythms of drummer Joe Poole. The set has all the markings of classic soul jazz records. It starts with the Latin-infused boogaloo sound of Bentley's "Balcony Jogger," with "in the soul jazz tradition" solos from all. The quartet gives a pop tune feel to Brad Mehldau's "Don't Be Sad" that showcases Paxton's exuberant playing. Paul Simon's "Still Crazy After All These Years" is delivered as a classic soul jazz ballad, while Duke Ellington's "The Feeling of Jazz" gets the classic slow blues treatment. Bentley's originals, which range from the march like rhythm of "Go Ahead" to the up-tempo swagger of "Trane's Terrain" are pure soul jazz. Like other recent Cellar Jazz label releases, Jon Bentley's *Go Ahead!* will not change the trajectory of jazz, but it will transport you to the soulful, bluesy, funky, straight ahead and swinging sounds of soul jazz. Enjoy the trip!

**BOTTOM LINE:** If *Go Ahead!* came out during the heyday of soul jazz, it would just be one more generic soul jazz release. The fact that Jon Bentley and his quartet have captured that sound in 2025 with a combination of original compositions and works from Wayne Shorter, Brad Mehldau, Paul Simon and Duke Ellington makes *Go Ahead!* special.

## **3 COHENS/WDR BIG BAND: INTERACTION**

**PUBLISHED BY ABE GOLDSTIEN ON MARCH 13, 2025**

**ANZIC (RELEASED MARCH 14, 2025)**

*Interaction* is an appropriate name for the new recording from the 3 Cohens and the WDR Big Band. There is the intuitive interaction between the three Cohen siblings — Anat on clarinet, Avishai on trumpet and Yuval on soprano sax. There is the international interaction between these three Israeli-born jazz musicians and a big band based in Koln, Germany. Then there is interaction between the soloists and big band as they navigate a set of seven varied charts arranged by pianist Oded Lev-Ari. The interactions begin with Avishai's "Shufla de Shufla" (Aramaic for best of the best), a hard-swinging showcase for the individual and collective voices of the Cohens. At one point it captures the exuberance of Charles' Mingus' "Haitian Fight Song." Yuval's "Catch of the Day" is another up-tempo number providing opportunities for Anat, Avishai and Yuval to play with the rhythm section as well as soaring over the cushion provided by the band. Although "Tiger Rag" opens with a bass solo and the

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band playing a melody reminiscent of “Tradition” (from Fiddler on the Roof), it quickly transforms into pure Dixieland fun with Anat’s buttery tone, Avishai’s fiery blasts and Yuval’s swirls and sweeps, a classic old school drum solo and a collective improvisation ending. The swinging takes a back seat on Avishai’s “Naked Truth, Part 2,” an introspective and hypnotic piece in the Miles Davis/Gill Evans vein. The Middle Eastern prayer mood of Lev Ari’s “Trills & Thrills” is overcome when Avishai’s electronic trumpet effects and a heavy beat transform it into something less than prayer-like. Anat’s “Footsteps and Smiles” took me back to the swingin’ big bands of the 1960s. The 3 Cohens truly demonstrate their ability to interact musically on a wonderful trio version of Gerry Mulligan’s “Festive Minor.” Interaction is a showcase for Anat, Avishai and Yuval, but the confusing range of tunes makes it less of a cohesive recording than many of their recent individual efforts or their earlier recordings as a unit.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Interaction is a fun big band session for the 3 Cohens and the WDR Big Band. You can sense it in the exuberance of the soloists and the wide range of musical territory covered in the seven selections. Sadly, that is all that it is — a fun listening experience.

### **CAILI O’DOHERTY: BLUER THAN BLUE**

**PUBLISHED BY ABE GOLDSTIEN ON MARCH 2, 2025**

**OUTSIDE IN MUSIC (RELEASED MARCH 7, 2025)**

Like an archeologist unearthing artifacts from an ancient civilization, pianist Caili O’Doherty has discovered treasures from an earlier era of jazz. O’Doherty, who is on a mission to celebrate, preserve and expand the achievements of the unsung women of jazz, rediscovered the music of Lil Hardin-Armstrong on *Bluer Than Blue*, Celebrating Lil Hardin Armstrong. The second wife of Louis Armstrong, Hardin-Armstrong is usually credited with advancing Louis’ career and musical knowledge. As O’Doherty delved into her life, she quickly realized that this “first woman of jazz” also contributed some amazing compositions to the jazz repertoire, many of which were rarely recorded by folks other than Hardin-Armstrong and her contemporaries. However, rather than simply recreating period pieces, O’Doherty has masterfully recrafted them for the quartet from her 2022 date *Quarantine Dream* — bassist Tamir Shmerling, drummer Cory Cox and saxophonist Nicole Glover — with the addition of vocalists Tahira Clayton and Michael Mayo. *Bluer Than Blue* has it all. Whether they are delivering lyrics with heartfelt meaning on tunes such as “Happy Today, Sad Tomorrow” or scatting with exuberant joy on tunes such as “Call It Love,” Mayo and Clayton breathe life into the vocal selections without unnecessary histrionics. Tunes such as “Clip Joint” are a perfect

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example of how Glover adds an edge to these classic tunes from the past with her more modern approach to improvisation. O'Doherty's soulful and bluesy style shines as an accompanist and soloist throughout the session. She shows her stride chops on one of Hardin-Armstrong's most recognized tunes — "Struttin' with Some Barbecue." Shmerling and Cox are the perfect pair to drive the ensemble through everything from up-tempo swingers like "Two Deuces to slower pieces such as "Just A Thrill." O'Doherty could have simply dusted off these rare finds and presented them as recreations, but she went one step further — invigorating them with modern sensibilities to keep the legacy of Lil Hardin Armstrong as vital in 2025 as it was in her heyday. Like me, you will certainly treasure these treasures!

**BOTTOM LINE:** You might expect a celebration of Lil Hardin Armstrong's music to be filled with old-timey rhythms and musical clichés. Not so. On *Bluer Than Blue, Celebrating Lil Hardin Armstrong*, pianist and arranger Caili O'Doherty treats nine Hardin-Armstrong classics with a sense of reverence and modernism, truly making it a celebration of the past and present of jazz.

### **NICK HEMPTON/CORY WEEDS - HORNS LOCKED**

**PUBLISHED BY ABE GOLDSTIEN ON FEBRUARY 25, 2025**

**CELLAR MUSIC (RELEASED FEBRUARY 28)**

Other than the release date, there is nothing radically new about *Horns Locked*, the latest release from saxophonists Nick Hempton and Cory Weeds. The recording does not break any new jazz ground. It is not a cross-cultural or cross-genre musical experiment. It is not a musical manifesto on politics, gender or human rights. It is a joyous blowing session inspired by the classic tenor battles of Dexter Gordon and Wardell Gray, Gene Ammons and Sonny Stitt and Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and Johnny Griffin. It is pure and simple, soulful and greasy and swinging and honest. That was the only agenda Hempton and Weeds had in mind when they performed with Nick Peck on Hammond B3 and Jesse Cahill on drums at Frankie's, a legendary Vancouver jazz club. *Horns Locked* captures the player's excitement and the enthusiasm of the crowd on eight tunes, some of which were recorded at the club and some at an impromptu studio session. Hempton and Weeds lock horns on many tunes familiar to fans of saxophonists. These include James Moody's "Last Train from Overbrook," Dexter Gordon's "Soy Califa," and Gene Ammons' "The One Before This." Hempton contributes "Change for a Dollar" and Weeds adds an appropriately titled "Conn Men" to the session, both are swinging 12-bar blues. One of the saxophonists (sorry, I can't tell which one), plays "Polkadots and Moonbeams" in true ballad style and both join in on a classic swing

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approach to “When You’re Smiling.” Whether it’s ballads, standards, up-tempo blues, Latin tunes or shuffles, Peck and Cahill keep the fires burning with their solid and soulful playing. Although there is nothing radically new with *Horns Locked*, you are sure to enjoy the hard-swinging soul jazz of Hempton and Weeds. It is obvious they certainly did!

**BOTTOM LINE:** If your jazz diet is craving some “grease,” saxophonists Nick Hempton and Cory Weeds serve it up on *Horns Locked*. This soulful, swinging and sax heavy date is as tasty as the classic tenor sax battles that inspired it. Organist Nick Peck and drummer Jesse Cahill spice up the main ingredients — the exuberance and joy of Hempton and Weeds — with energized support and solos.

## **NUMBQ**

**PUBLISHED BY ABE GOLDSTIEN ON FEBRUARY 23, 2025**

**MAHAKALA MUSIC 086 (RELEASED FEBRUARY 24, 2025)**

Conceived and directed by bassist Michael Bisio, NuMBq features a group of master improvisors that achieve a unique balance between music reminiscent of the Third Stream and New Thing movements in jazz. It’s no mystery that the Third Stream influence comes from violist Melanie Dyer and English horn player Marianne Osiel (both new to me) and the New Thing feel is a result of jazz stalwarts drummer Jay Rosen and bassist Michael Bisio. The mystery for me is what does NuMBq mean? So, let me offer my take. N is for nimble. Members of the ensemble are as nimble as they can be working through eight delicate to complex improvisations. They seamlessly shift emphasis from one player to another, often breaking up into smaller units. Dyer and Osiel are particularly adept at the art of conversing, intertwining and unwinding. U is for unusual. I would be hard pressed to think of another recording that features a quartet of viola, English horn, bass and drums. The unique combination gives the recording a chamber-like feel but with a definite edge. M is for moods. The quartet achieves a variety of moods throughout the session. While “Elegy For MG” and “Medicaid Melancholy” alternate between ensemble and solo sections, tunes such as “Broken Waltz,” “AC 2. ONU,” and “Improv #1091” are pure collective improvisations, some based on Ornette Coleman-sounding motifs. There is also a wonderfully moving bass and viola duo on “Going Home / Amazing Grace.” B is for bass. Whether he is bowing, playing pizzicato or strumming, Bisio’s bass is constantly building a strong foundation that inspires other members of the quartet to shift, sway, swirl and sweep. I would remiss not to mention Jay Rosen’s contributions to this session. His use of the traditional drum kit, shakers, bells and other devices adds color and spark to every tune, much like he did with *Trio-X*. Q is for quintessential. Without a doubt,

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this session represents the most perfect example of a modern-day approach to Third Stream/New Thing music.

**BOTTOM LINE:** The viola sweeps and swoops. The English horn croons and caresses. The bass pushes and pulses. The drums underscore and undulate. It all comes together on NuMBq, a group and recording that combines the delicacies of Third Stream music with the fire and passion of the New Thing.

## **NOAH PREMINGER: BALLADS**

**PUBLISHED BY ABE GOLDSTIEN ON FEBRUARY 18, 2025**

**CHILL TONE RECORDS (RELEASED FEBRUARY 21, 2025)**

Ballads, the newest release from saxophonist Noah Preminger, promises something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue. The old is Preminger's moving rendition of Gershwin's 1926 ballad "Someone To Watch Over Me." The new are four original ballads Preminger wrote for this session. The borrowed is a tune from the folk-rock community. The blue is the heartfelt version of "Stan's Mood," an often-overlooked ballad from the pen of Stan Getz. Supported by pianist Julian Shore, bassist Kim Cass and drummer Allan Mednard, Preminger joins the classic tenor sax balladeers he admires, particularly on the "old" and "blue" selections. Sandwiched between those tunes is a loping take on "Carry Me Ohio," a song from singer-songwriter Mark Kozelek, aka Sun Kil Moon, and four Preminger originals — the slow and mournful "Unfair World," the classic sounding ballad "In Our 20s," the Latin-tinged "Democracy" and the tender and sedate "Pneu." Preminger's sensitive, sophisticated and sinewy tone are perfect for capturing the mood of these ballads. Perhaps his own compositions are a way to expand the ballad tradition into the 21st century but they lack the lyrical and memorable qualities of the classic ballads from the Great American Songbook. The subtle work of Cass and Mednard allow Preminger to luxuriate on the seven ballads as well as providing a cushion for Shore's elegant solos, particularly on "Stan's Mood" and "Democracy." In 1963, John Coltrane captured the beauty of ballads on his Impulse Records date titled Ballads. In 2001, Michael Brecker added his take to ballads with The Nearness of You, The Art of the Ballad. Preminger tosses his hat into the ballad ring with Ballads. Unfortunately, other than "Stan's Mood" and "Someone To Watch Over Me," the remainder of the tunes suffer from a sameness in the tempo and melancholy mood. Fortunately, Preminger and his crew handle them with passion, creativity, elegance and stellar playing.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Coleman Hawkins caressed them. Lester Young "sang" them. Dexter Gordon romanced them. John Coltrane embellished them. Stan Getz soothed them. Archie Shepp stretched

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them. With the release of his newest recording, tenor saxophonist Noah Preminger expands upon them. The “them” to which I am referring are ballads, the true test for generations of tenor saxophonists. On Ballads, Preminger passes the test with mixed results.

## MURMURATION

**PUBLISHED BY ABE GOLDSTIEN ON FEBRUARY 16, 2025**

**MAHAKALA MUSIC 082 (RELEASED FEBRUARY 7, 2025)**

When jazz musicians of any era and style get together, they unknowingly use a concept defined as murmuration to navigate the complexities of collective improvisation. Simply stated, murmuration is the term ornithologist use to describe how a group of starlings can fly together in one of the most dazzling synchronized displays in the natural world. They have no leader and follow no predetermined plan, only observing others in the flock to determine their actions. So, what better name for a recording than Murmuration. The flock on this recording is a coming together of musicians from the East Coast and Midwest including Dave Sewelson on baritone, Gabby Fluke Mogul on violin, George Cartwright on alto and guitar, Anthony Cox on bass and Steve Hirsh on drums. The result is nine tunes that demonstrate how, like starlings, these “birds” can twist and turn into all kinds of different shapes as they soar to musical heights. On the opening track, “Thieving Magpies,” members of this musical flock assemble one by one as they intuitively communicate to create a fluttering assemblage of notes and rhythms. On other tunes, smaller groups emerge to change the direction of the music. On “Mississippi Flyway,” for example, Cartwright on guitar, Fluke-Mogul and Cox take the lead with a modern chamber-like sound of the New York String Trio. Sewelson and Cartwright on alto recall the flights of the World Saxophone Quartet on the opening of “Out of Here,” a tune that also has an inspired duo section featuring Sewelson and Hirsh. Fluke-Mogul and Cox fly high on the opening of “Warbling Universe.” An in-the-moment call and response section between Sewelson and Fluke-Mogul changes the direction of “Murmuration.” The session is full of little surprises along the way as well, like when Fluke-Mogul quotes “Happy Birthday” on “Out of Here!” She is filling the void left by Leroy Jenkins and Billy Bang. Throughout it all, Hirsh’s fluid and flexible drumming captures the fluttering of the wings as the flock slides into their different formations. Mahakala Music assembled this group for one reason — to fly together in a dazzling synchronized display of melodies, rhythms and sounds. And that, quite simply is what Murmuration is all about. BOTTOM LINE: This is not smooth jazz, but this group of modern-thinking musicians moves smoothly through nine freely improvised compositions. This is not bebop, but this group is always full of musical



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surprises. This is not cool jazz, but the sounds are often chamber-like in their approach. So, what is Murmuration? Like the word itself, It is the essence of what makes jazz jazz — a group of musicians gathering to see where their sonic flights may take them.

## **SULLIVAN FORTNER - SOUTHERN NIGHTS**

**PUBLISHED BY ABE GOLDSTIEN ON FEBRUARY 12, 2025**

**ARTWORK RECORDS (RELEASED FEBRUARY 14, 2025)**

Pianist Sullivan Fortner had no idea a weeklong trio residency at The Village Vanguard would lead to his next album, but it did! According to Fortner, The Vanguard sessions were the first time that he, bassist Peter Washington and drummer Marcus Gilmore played together as a trio, and from the first note, it felt as if they had been doing so for years. So, that same week the three went into the studio to record *Southern Nights*. The recording captures the joy and energy of their live performances with an eclectic mix of tunes performed with no edits or retakes, just like they were still at The Vanguard! Fortner's playing throughout the album is enticing, explosive, expansive and expressive. Fortner entices us into his funky, soulful version of Allen Toussaint's "Southern Nights" by introducing the tune with plucked piano strings. He explodes with a flurry of runs and chord clusters as he skirts around the melody of Cole Porter's "I Love You." He expands the romantic bolero theme of Osvaldo Farres' "Tres Palabras" with blues infections, new melodic themes and a call and response section where his right hand answers the patterns he delivers with his left hand (a technique he uses on several other tracks as well). He shows his expressive side on the beautiful ballad "Again Never," written by bassist Bill Lee. The trio is in sync on those tunes as well as Fortner's angular original "9 Bar Tune," Donald Brown's quirky "Waltz for Monk" and the soulful bouncy feel of Consuela Lee's "Discovery." Washington and Gilmore also do their fair share of enticing, exploding, expanding and expressing throughout the nine tunes on *Southern Nights*. Washington's strong bass lines drive the trio's take of Woody Shaw's "Organ Grinder" and his solos on "Tres Palabras" and "Again Never" are sublime. Gilmore adds the ideal rhythmic punctuations throughout the session and kicks off Clifford Brown's "Daahoud" with a well-articulated drum solo. I would imagine that listening to *Southern Nights* is like experiencing the immediacy and interplay of the trio's live performances that inspired Fortner that week at The Village Vanguard.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Known for accompanying singers such as Cecile McLorin Salvant, Samara Joy and Lauren Henderson, *Southern Nights* is Sullivan Fortner's first trio recording, firmly establishing him as an enticing, explosive, expansive and expressive player worthy of the praise he received for his 2024 Solo Games release.

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## **HIPP HIPP HOORAY, CELEBRATING THE CENTENNIAL OF JUTTA HIPPI**

**PUBLISHED BY ABE GOLDSTIEN ON FEBRUARY 11, 2025**

**FUNDAJCA SLUCHAJ (RELEASED FEBRUARY 4, 2025)**

German pianist Jutta Hipp's life was full of twist and turns. Born in Leipzig, Germany in 1925, she had to secretly listen to her favorite jazz recordings during the Nazi regime. After the war, Hipp became a displaced person eking out a living as a jazz pianist in her native country. Leonard Feather, who heard her perform in Germany in 1954, organized Hipp's move to America where she performed at clubs and festivals and became the first woman to record for Bluenote Records in 1956. Shortly after that recording, Hipp, who suffered from depression and stage fright, disappeared from the scene and spent the rest of her working years in a New York City clothing factory. The trio of trumpeter Thomas Heberer, bassist Joe Fonda and drummer Joe Hertenstein, known as Remedy, captures those twists and turns on Hipp Hipp Hooray, Celebrating the Centennial of Jutta Hipp. (Note: Like Hipp, Heberer and Hertenstein are both natives of Germany). According to Heberer, from Hipp's point of view (and many youngsters in 1950s postwar West Germany), the music she loved, and America, were cut from the same cloth — freedom, democracy and promise. Hipp Hipp Hooray captures those ideals in nine originals that allow Heberer, Fonda and Hertenstein to explore all the twists and turns of melodies, harmonies and rhythms. The session begins with the heartfelt "Lionel's Dream," a somber piece written in recognition of a son Jutta had to give up for adoption in the late 1940s. The mood shifts as a strong walking bass line introduces "Detroit Meets Leipzig," a tune that balances bop with free jazz. Heberer explores his full range of trumpet sounds over Fonda's expressive and expansive bass playing on "Das Brot der Fruhen Jahre." Fonda's bowing prowess takes the spotlight on "Bass Bottom," providing a foundation for Heberer and Hertenstein to cover a lot of musical ground. A recitation about Hipp's life adds drama to a driving "Der Gruene Zweig." The final number, "Jutta on Top," comes closest to the music Hipp was attracted to — an upbeat bebop sounding track. The liner notes clearly state that the goal of Hipp Hipp Hooray was not to emulate Hipp's style of playing but to capture the essence of her spirit and story through the twists and turns of the music. That is indeed what Heberer, Fonda and Hertenstein do so well on this recording, but you would expect nothing less from Remedy.

**BOTTOM LINE:** While most jazz musicians celebrate the centennial year of jazz legends by merely recreating the music that made them famous, Remedy, the group of trumpeter Thomas Heberer, bassist Joe

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Fonda and drummer Joe Hertenstein, chose to celebrate the centennial of German pianist Jutta Hipp on Hipp Hipp Hooray by capturing the twists and turns of her life in nine original compositions.

## **TOM TEASLEY/DAVE BALLOU: LUNCH BREAK**

**PUBLISHED BY ABE GOLDSTIEN ON FEBRUARY 10, 2025**

**TEASLEY MUSIC (RELEASED FEBRUARY 14, 2025)**

Percussionist Tom Teasley picked a perfect dance partner in trumpeter Dave Ballou for Lunch Break. The two dance through eleven tunes with the grace and ease of Astaire and Rogers. At times, they embrace each other's melodic or rhythmic cues. The next minute they separate and dance to their own musical impulses only to come together for the final dip. Having performed everywhere from South America to Asia and the Middle East to New Zealand, Teasley brings an arsenal of percussion instruments and rhythms to the dance. Ballou brings his full array of flurries, shouts, smears and flourishes. Ballou's distinctive intervals pirouette over Teasley's Middle Eastern groove on "Tips in Baghdad." The trumpeter lunges and twirls while Teasley creates a web of rhythms on the free sounding "Rush Hour." On "When the Wind Cries," Ballou weaves in and out of the meditative tune that features Teasley on kalimba. There is a well-choreographed call and response section on the straight-ahead "Four on Six." Teasley's tabla rhythms embrace Ballou's long tones on "Mop, Shake and Roll." Ballou's trumpet entwines nicely with Teasley's Indian chant on "Riqq Talk." Teasley dances alone on the boppish "For Max" and the hypnotic "Gratitude." Teasley's use of kalimba, shakers, cymbals, bells and wood blocks, not to mention a traditional drum set, provide the sparks for Ballou's distinctive improvisations on Lunch Break. At the same time, Ballou's use of intervals, shifts from lower to upper registers and his crisp to warm tone inspire Teasley to create layer upon layer of well-developed rhythms. Although this recording lacks the raw energy and freedom of Lester Bowie and Phillip Wilson's classic late 1970 trumpet/percussion duo on Improvising Artists, it is refreshing to hear Teasley and Ballou dance their way through Lunch Break.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Having spent most of his career as a global music ambassador, percussionist Tom Teasley is a new name to me. However, with several outstanding recordings on the Steeplechase and Cleanfeed labels, I am well familiar with the modern sounds of trumpeter Dave Ballou. On Lunch Break, this percussion/trumpet duo explores the unique musical influences in which they specialize and come together to share.

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## **ROB BROWN: WALKABOUT**

**PUBLISHED BY ABE GOLDSTIEN ON FEBRUARY 1, 2025**

**MAHAKALA MUSIC 070 (RELEASED JANUARY 24, 2025)**

Ornette Coleman once said melodies could be improvised infinitely and that musical ideas could flow naturally without a predetermined structure. Saxophonist Rob Brown continues to lead the pack in advancing the musical concepts expressed by Coleman on *Walkabout*. With the creative and sensitive support of bassist Brandon Lopez and drummer Juan P. Carletti, Brown weaves a tapestry of melodies, rhythms and moods through four extended cuts. From his opening notes of “Microcosm,” Brown’s astringent tone on alto quickly brings Coleman to mind. His prayer-like pleading dances around the pulse of Lopez’s bass and the swirling rhythms of Carletti. Following an 11 minute angular solo in which Brown explores the high and low registers of his horn with staccato passages and free flowing runs, Lopez and Carletti take the melody in a different direction until Brown returns to the intensity of his opening statement. From the explosive intensity of “Microcosm,” Brown switches to flute for the more serene “Zephyr,” which showcases Lopez’s bowed bass and Carletti’s use of shakers and shells to add color to the melody. Shifting back to alto, Brown is in full control of the musical adventures on “Natural Pathways,” an Ornette Coleman song-like form that builds naturally as Brown weaves his ripples of melodies around the free-flowing accompaniment of Lopez and Carletti. The set ends with “Tousled and Jostled,” which is a perfect title for a piece on which Brown expands a simple melody into a whirling dervish of melodic fragments, bass drones and rhythmic diversity. The music of *Walkabout* can best be described in two words — exhaustingly exhilarating. At times the energy level generated by the trio can exhaust you, yet you are constantly exhilarated by the ways in which Rob Brown and company weave melodies, rhythms and moods into a tapestry of sound.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Since his first release with Matthew Shipp in 1988, saxophonist Rob Brown has been quietly and ferociously advancing the legacy of Ornette Coleman. *Walkabout* is the latest example of how Brown, working with bassist Brandon Lopez and drummer Juan P. Carletti, succeeds in improvising infinitely with musical ideas flowing naturally without a predetermined structure.

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## **JAMES BRANDON LEWIS: ABSTRACTION IS DELIVERANCE, INTAKT**

It's time for a "compare and contrast" essay, remember those? This time the topic is John Coltrane's 1963 *Ballads* and James Brandon Lewis' 2025 *Abstraction is Deliverance*. The similarities are uncanny. For starters, both recordings were the fifth session for each leader featuring quartets with which they had been working with for several years. By 1963, Coltrane, pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Elvin Jones had established a musical rapport second to none. The same could be said for Lewis, pianist Aruan Ortiz, bassist Brad Jones and drummer Chad Taylor, who celebrate five years as a working quartet. With *Abstraction is Deliverance*. Then there is the mere sound of the leader — muscular, lyrical and expressive. Both players have a way of luring you into their musical journeys and enveloping you in their majestic sound. The major contrast between these recordings (one a classic and one destined to become a classic) is the repertoire. Whereas Coltrane chose eight standards from the *Great American Songbook*, Lewis wrote eight compelling ballads of various styles as well as performing Mal Waldron's "Left Alone." Although Lewis' ballads may lack the familiarity of Coltrane's selections, they are not lacking in emotional impact. You can sense that from the opening Coltrane-inspired vamp of "Ware," a piece Lewis dedicates to saxophonist David Ware, through more hypnotic prayer-like ballads such as "Even the Sparrow," "Per 7" and "Multicellular Beings." The folk like quality of the title track is infectious, especially with its classical sounding rondo at the end. There is a sense of bebop in the Monkish sounding "Mr. Crick," and a feel of chamber music in the delicate melody of "Polaris" which builds in intensity. The bowed bass of Jones and cascading notes of Ortiz add a spiritual element to Waldron's "Left Alone." Throughout the nine tracks, Ortiz, Jones and Taylor provide a cushion upon which Lewis can explore his ballads. At the same time, Lewis provides his bandmates with the freedom to express their own sense of majesty in their interactions and solos. So, in conclusion (because all "compare and contrast" essays have to end that way), like Coltrane's *Ballads*, Lewis' *Abstraction is Deliverance* is a must have for any serious jazz collection.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Every so often, a record grabs my attention from the start and manages to hold my interest with every note, beat and mood. James Brandon Lewis' *Abstraction is Deliverance* is one of them. Featuring eight beautifully written and majestically played ballads plus a moving version of Mal Waldron's "Left Alone," *Abstraction is Deliverance* confirms Lewis' position as one of the top tenor players on the scene and his quartet as one of today's best working groups.

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## **SANDRA-MAE LUX - SEASONS IN JAZZ ECN MUSIC**

Many jazz vocalists take songs from the Great American Songbook and make them their own. Not Sandra-Mae Lux. On her latest release, *Seasons in Jazz*, Lux performs 11 originals in the tradition of the Great American Songbook and owns them! With an uncomplicated, natural vocal style like Chris Connor or Anita O'Day, Lux's delivery is perfect for these tunes that tell a story and are filled with meaning. That is what Lux loves about the golden era of songwriting from the late 1920s to 1950s, and she has captured that feeling on *Seasons in Jazz* not only in style but in the names of the tunes. There are up-tempo swingers such as "Are We Having Fun Yet" and "It's Only Spring," ballads such as "When Autumn Calls" and "Everyone Else Knows," even a bossa nova titled "Perfect Weather." She caresses the heartfelt lyrics written by Alan Marriott with her warm and intimate voice. Lux crafted the mostly ABAA style compositions and arrangements for two separate trios. Many tunes provide pianists Bob Barron or Christian Vaughan with an opportunity to display their crisp and swinging styles. Guitarist Tristan Paxton is added on the medium swing "It's Only Spring." He also provides a sensitive counterpoint on the guitar/vocal duo "There's a Door." Lux adds her luscious tenor sax playing to "Love Me Tonight" and "Perfect Weather" and repeats the ballad "When Autumn Calls" as an instrumental. Take special note of "This December Love," a tune that will become a regular on my annual holiday radio show. While many contemporary vocalists have abandoned the style of the Great American Songbook for tunes reflective of the angst of their personal struggles, it's refreshing to hear a vocalist write and perform a set reflective of the beauty and heartfelt nature of the Great American Songbook. There is a phrase at the end of "It's Only Spring" that summarizes how I feel about Lux — "Am I growing fonder of you?" After listening to *Seasons in Jazz*, you'll grow fonder of Lux as well. **BOTTOM LINE:** With its disco and funk flavor, Sandra Mae Lux's freshman release, *Happily Ever After* was forgettable. She has redeemed herself with *Seasons In Jazz*, an unforgettable session featuring 11 original compositions inspired by the Great American Songbook. That means memorable melodies and heartfelt lyrics all delivered in an uncomplicated and natural style.

## **TYLER HENDERSON: LOVE ENDURES CELLAR MUSIC**

I go to our local farmers' market for fresh, clean, crisp, flavorful and tasty fruits and vegetables. The freshman release from pianist Tyler Henderson has those same qualities. Having workshopped the material



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in New York's finest clubs, Henderson and his trio bring a fresh approach to the tried-and-true piano trio format on *Love Endures*. The sound of trio is crisp and clean. Henderson's playing in the higher registers is crystal clear as is drummer Hank Allen-Barfield's sensitive brush work and Caleb Tobocman's resonant bass playing. Kudos to the recording and engineering team for capturing the pure sound of this wonderful trio. *Love Endures* is packed with various flavors, including Henderson's favorite standards and five originals (which have the qualities to become standards as well). Avoiding the clichés of typical cocktail bar trios, the band's arrangements of the five standards on *Love Endures* keep your interest with their shifting rhythms and captivating solos. Henderson chose five of his favorite standards for this session — "On a Clear Day," "I'll Never Smile Again," "Get Out of Town," "The Good Life" and "In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning" (performed as a piano solo). Henderson's originals are just as tasty. These include: the up tempo "West End Promenade, with its nod to Bud Powell's "Parisian Thoroughfare;" the slightly Latin, Cedar Walton inspired "Hazel and Cedar;" the tender balladry of "Why Are You Not Here;" the conversation of Henderson's right and left hand on the title track, "Love Endures;" and the strong backbeat and walking bass line of "The Architect." The music of the Tyler Henderson Trio is ripe for the picking, so if you're craving fresh, clean, crisp, flavorful and tasty piano jazz, you can't go wrong picking up *Love Endures*.

**BOTTOM:** Pianist Tyler Henderson did his homework before releasing *Love Endures*.

He crafted wonderful arrangements for five of his favorite standards and composed five equally wonderful originals. He chose the perfect bandmates — Caleb Tobocman on bass and Hank Allen-Barfield on drums. He workshopped the material in New York City's finest clubs. Now that his work is done, it's time for your assignment — sit back and enjoy the artistry and beauty of *Love Endures*.

### **RYAN TRUESDELL - SHADES OF SOUND OUTSIDE IN MUSIC 2515**

With the release of *Shades of Sound*, a new word needs to be added to the jazz lexicon — Gilophile. There is no better word to describe multi-Grammy award winning arranger Ryan Truesdell who is on a mission to unearth lost Gil Evans' arrangements as well as recast Evans' classic recordings. *Shades of Sound*, recorded live at the Jazz Standard in 2014, is Truesdell's third release that is rich in Evans' signature sound — the sophisticated brass colorations, the atmospheric compositions, the interplay between the ensemble and soloists and the unique way in which Evans provided soloists with lots of room to roam. *Shades of Sound* opens with "Spoonful," from Evans' 1964 Verve

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recording *The Individualism of Gil Evans*. Pianist Frank Kimbrough sets the mood for this masterpiece which features solos from trumpeter Mat Jordell, tenor saxophonist Donny McCaslin and alto saxophonist Dave Pietro. Trombonist Ryan Keberle delivers the melancholy “The Ballad of the Sad Young Men” over the lush horns of the ensemble and Kimbrough’s sensitive accompaniment. The other two familiar Evans’ tunes on *Shades of Sound* include: “Barbara Song,” with an expressive extended solo from McCaslin; and the up-tempo swinger “Buster’s Last Stand,” from Evans’ days with the Claude Thornhill Band. Vocalist Wendy Giles joins the band for two other tunes dating back to the late 1940s — the swinging “I Had Someone Else Before I Met You” and the danceable ballad “It’s the Sentimental Thing To Do.” Giles also introduces us to “Laughing at Life,” a tune written in 1957 that has never been recorded. “Neetie’s Blues,” another previously unknown Evans tune, features Marcus Rojas’ tuba outlining the changes on which tenor saxophonist Tom Christensen, Kimbrough and drummer Lewis Nash demonstrate their blues’ chops. Although he doesn’t have a solo spotlight on *Shades of Sound*, kudos to guitarist Jame Chirillo for adding just the perfect touch of the Evans sound to the proceedings. In addition to remembering Gil Evans, *Shades of Sound* is a wonderful tribute to Frank Kimbrough who passed away in 2020. Only a true Gilophile can capture the beauty, swing, adventure and sophistication that Gil Evans brought to jazz, and that’s just what Truesdell and his Gil Evans Project do on *Shades of Sound*.

**BOTTOM:** Between the release of *Centennial* in 2012 and *Lines of Color* in 2015, Ryan Truesdell and the Gil Evans project recorded a live set at the Jazz Showcase in 2014. According to Truesdell, “live recordings give the listener a sense of the magic that happens when the notes are lifted off the page by amazing musicians.” Eleven years later you can experience that magic and the amazing musicians on this set of familiar and unfamiliar tunes associated with Gil Evans.

### **GILLIAN MARGOT & GEOFFREY KEEZER MARKEEZ RECORDS**

The directions for this new release from vocalist Gillian Margot and pianist Geoffrey Keezer are hidden in the lyrics of Jimmy Rowles’ “A Timeless Place (The Peacock),” one of ten tunes on this session — “Find a quiet place inside and listen.” Listen to the purity of Margot’s rich and smoky voice. Listen to the wonderfully witty accompaniment and inventive solos from Keezer. Partners in music since 2014 and in life since 2016, the two worked together on five tracks on Keezer’s 2018 release *On My Way to You*, but surprisingly this is their first full session as a duo. They are the perfect match for this set — Margot caressing and manipulating the melodies while Keezer plays with the harmonies

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and rhythms of the tunes. Margot's uncomplicated, yet evocative approach is perfect for standards such as "Blame It on My Youth," "Day In, Day Out," "All My Tomorrows" and "Lush Life." She demonstrates her ability to reach high notes with her vocalese on Hermeto Pascoal's "Joyce (Viva o Rio de Janeiro)," which brings percussionist Rogerio Boccato into the mix. Chick Corea's "Eternal Child" also benefits from Margot's floating vocalese as well as the Latin American punch from Keezer. On "Thou Swell," Keezer's strong left hand bass lines are the perfect accompaniment for Margot's joyful scatting. The couple's take of "A Timeless Place" is simply that — timeless with Margot's lower sultry vocal and Keezer's sublime accompaniment and solo. Keezer admits that the standards hold up because there's a lot more happening harmonically and melodically than in most popular songs. Consequently, the less effective tunes on this session are the more contemporary ones — "The Greatest Story Ever Told," written by Keezer's mentor Donald Brown and Peter Gabriel's "Here Comes the Flood, performed with guitarist Peter Sprague. Despite those two tunes, my advice is to find a quiet place and listen to Gillian Margot and Geoffrey Keezer on their long overdue duo session.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Like a siren song, Gillian Margot's opening swoop on "Blame It on My Youth" lures you into this recording. Unlike a siren song, however, there is nothing dangerous about this session of pure joy and beauty performed by Margot and piano playing husband Geoffrey Keezer. The two are perfect for one another and perfect for this set of ten tunes of familiar and some unfamiliar melodies.

### **ROELOFS, JANSSEN & BENNINK** **RITE OF SPRING** **ICP**

Many musicians play Thelonius Monk compositions, but there are only a handful that have the chutzpah to play around with Monk compositions and get away with it! Bass clarinetist Joris Roelofs, pianist Guus Janssen and drummer Han Bennink do just that on *Rite of Spring*. A case in point is their version of Monk's "Epistrophy" which opens with Janssen quoting the familiar strains of Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring" (hence the name for this release). The deep tones of Roelofs' bass clarinet and the quirky rhythms of Bennink join Janssen who eventually lands on that tune's familiar melody. From that point on, the trio is off and running, exploring the harmonic and melodic charm of this Monk classic. "Rite of Spring" is also used to open Monk's "Jackie-ing." The group plays around with two other Monk tunes on *Rite of Spring*: "Evidence," with an edgy stride solo from Janssen; and "Four In One," with Roelofs and Janssen playing the twists and

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turns of the melody in unison. Even the non-Monk tunes — Janssen's "Telgang" and "Scharrel" sound Monkish. Another link to Monk is the trio's version of Juan Tizol and Duke Ellington's "Caravan," a tune Monk recorded on his 1955 Riverside date. This is the perfect vehicle for Bennink's shifting rhythms and the hypnotic tones of the bass clarinet. Other tunes included on this live performance recorded at De Roode Bioscoop in Amsterdam on March 16, 2025 include Roelofs' classical sounding "Prelude," an "in and out" Latin-infused version of Charles Trenet's "Le Mer" and a soothing relaxed version of Richard Rodgers' "Spring is Here." Roelofs, Janssen and Bennink have distilled the edginess, humor and reverence of the ICP Orchestra into this surprisingly versatile and adventuresome trio.

**BOTTOM LINE:** The cover design of *Rite of Spring* captures the music— it's playful, full of twists and turns and moves in various directions. What else would you expect from drummer Han Bennink (who designed the cover), pianist Guus Janssen and bass clarinetist Joris Roelofs?

### **FRANK AMSALLEM: THE SUMMER KNOWS CONTINUO JAZZ**

The *Summer Knows* is an album as soothing, warm and refreshing as the season it celebrates. For this, his 11th recording, pianist Frank Amsallem enlisted the musical support of bassist David Wong and drummer Kush Abedey. Like his first recording in 1991 with Gary Peacock and Bill Stewart, Amsallem continues to mine the groundbreaking feel of the classic Bill Evans Trio. The title track, which Evans recorded in 1975, is a case in point. Amsallem's impressionist opening piano solo paves the way for the intuitive harmonic and rhythmic interaction of the trio members. "La Chanson d' Helene," another French movie theme, begins with Wong playing the melody over Amsallem's perfectly played countermelody. The roles change before the trio explores the musical contours of this slow and atmospheric ballad. Other familiar tunes on *The Summer Knows* include "Unforgettable" and "Blue Gardenia," both recorded by Nat King Cole, as well as a bossa nova version of "You Won't Forget Me" and "Morning Star" (a song I remember from Hubert Law's 1972 release on CTI Records). Less familiar is a Kurt Weill tune rarely done as an instrumental — "It Never Was You" — which the trio approaches in a serene and rhapsodic style. Amsallem also contributed three originals for the session — the boppish "Cotton Trails," the modal "Agrigento" and the bluesy "Discourse." Whatever Amsallem, Wong and Abedey tackle on *The Summer Knows* they do so collectively, compassionately and with great competence. No doubt about it,

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Amsallem picked the perfect bandmates and compositions for *The Summer Knows*, making it a recording you'll enjoy any season of the year. After all, Henry David Thoreau once said, "One must maintain a little bit of summer, even in the middle of winter."

**BOTTOM LINE:** In 1961, Bill Evans changed the trajectory of the piano trio with his performances at the Village Vanguard. Coincidentally, that was also the year pianist Franck Amsallem was born in French Algeria. Sixty-four years later, Amsallem, along with bassist David Wong and drummer Kush Abedy, captures the unique musical interplay of the Bill Evans Trio with *The Summer Knows*.

## **PETE MCGUINNESS JAZZ ORCHESTRA MIXED BAG SUMMIT RECORDS 834**

Pete McGuinness chose the title *Mixed Bag* to reflect the diverse musical styles represented on the latest outing from his jazz orchestra. True, the 11 selections range from up tempo swingers to bossa novas, ballads to more "outside" compositions. Despite the musical ground covered, there are some commonalities between the tunes — simple yet sophisticated arrangements and compelling and concise solos. What else would you expect from three-time Grammy-nominated bandleader/arranger/vocalist Pete McGuinness fronting a group of musicians whose resumes include stints with the likes of Maria Schneider, Woody Herman and Toshiko Akiyoshi? Things start off with a bang as drummer Scott Neumann kicks off Cole Porter's "From This Moment On," which features McGuinness' singing and scatting as well as a soulful alto solo from Dave Pietro. While tunes such as "Lilac Blues" and "The Sly Fox (in memory of Bill Holman)," both written by McGuinness, demonstrate the band's ability to swing and swing hard, two other McGuinness originals — "The Dark Hours" and "Down the Rabbit Hole" take the band in a more modern direction. Trumpeter Chris Rogers and tenor saxophonist Tom Christensen solo over the Brazilian-inspired rhythms of Rogers' "Rebecca." McGuinness also rearranged three classics for *Mixed Bag*: "Body and Soul," featuring flugelhorn player Hollis "Bud" Burridge; "So in Love," taken as a bossa nova with the addition of Pete McCann on guitar and McGuinness' heartfelt vocals; Thelonius Monk's "Round Midnight," featuring baritone saxophonist Dave Riekenberg; and John Lewis' "Django" that evolves from a serene piano solo from Mike Holoher to a surprising upbeat groove featuring an alto solo from Mark Phaneuf. The session concludes with Johnny Mandel's "Where Do You Start?" This is McGuinness' first foray into writing for a 16-piece string section. Thanks to his arranging skills, sensitive vocals and a piano solo from Bill Charlap, this might very well be the "start" of a new career for

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McGuinness. If you're shopping for wonderfully crafted arrangements, well-played solos and one of the strongest big band releases of the season, Pete McGuinness' *Mixed Bag* might very well be your bag!

**BOTTOM LINE:** UK Jazz News hailed The Pete McGuinness Jazz Orchestra as "a fleet of inspired and virtuosic soloists coupled with exemplary ensemble prowess." *Mixed Bag* proves that statement to be true with a program of 11 tunes featuring various musical styles from up tempo swingers to bossa novas, ballads to more "outside" tunes. There are even some wonderful vocals from McGuinness himself!

### **ROBERTO MAGRIS: LOVELY DAY(S)** **JMOOD 025 (RELEASED SEPTEMBER 1, 2025)**

What kind of pianist is Roberto Magris? This rare solo recording from the Italian jazz master answers that question. Roberto Magris is an investigative pianist. Unencumbered from a rhythm section and free from his outstanding arrangements for larger ensembles, Magris gets the opportunity to investigate the nooks and crannies of some often-overlooked jazz classics as well as one original on *Lovely Day(s)*. "Blues Clues," a Magris original, investigates the colors of the blues with the soulfulness of Abdullah Ibrahim, the explosive power of Don Pullen, the swing of Elmo Hope and the nitty gritty of Les McCann. Magris investigates the beauty of two Andrew Hill compositions on this session — "Reverend Du Bop" (which he recorded on his *Kansas City Outbound* trio session) and "Laverne" (which he recorded with bassist Eric Hochberg on *Shuffling Ivories*). Magris adds his flourishes and flurries to the dark melody of "Reverend Du Bop" while delivering "Laverne" in a classic ballad manner, varying chordal sections with fleet single note runs. Magris' respect for Thelonious Monk's sense of musical humor and harmonic adventure is evident on his investigations of "Bemsha Swing" (another tune he did on *Kansas City Outbound*) and "Let's Cool One." Magris has often investigated under-recorded jazz compositions such as Billy Gault's "The Time of the World is at Hand," a quirky waltz that he embellishes with his Monk like runs in the right hand while maintaining a steady  $\frac{3}{4}$  bass line in his left. Leonard Bernstein's "Lonely Town" and Bill Strayhorn's "A Flower is a Lovesome Thing" (both tunes he has recorded in the past) are treated with the beauty and passion they deserve. Magris breathes new life into Steve Kuhn's "Saga of Harrison Crabfeathers" by investigating the dreamy melody with powerful runs and knotty passages. *Lovely Day(s)* shows a facet of Magris that has yet to be fully explored on his previous recordings as he investigates the melodies, harmonies and rhythms of nine tunes with a deep sense of passion, joy and elan. It's time for you to investigate the solo work of Roberto Magris on *Lovely Day(s)*.



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**BOTTOM LINE:** The cover of Roberto Magris' *Lovely Day(s)* is an analogy to the music you will hear on this rare solo recording from an Italian jazz master. Much like the image of a lone man contemplating the structure of the bridge above him, Magris contemplates all the nooks and crannies of nine tunes include two by Andrew Hill, two by Thelonious Monk as well as some over-looked jazz compositions and an original blues.

## **NEIL MINER: INVISIBILITY**

**CELLAR JAZZ (RELEASED SEPTEMBER 5, 2025)**

There is something very familiar with the music of bassist Neil Miner, saxophonist Chris Byars and drummer Jason Tiemann on *Invisibility*. Many of the tunes bear a striking resemblance to the music of jazz legends such as Charlie Parker, Horace Silver, Kenny Dorham or selections from the *Great American Songbook*. Having spent his career playing those tunes, bassist Miner has perfected the craft of contrafacts on *Invisibility* — creating musical compositions with a new melody written over the existing chord progressions of an earlier work. Don't bother trying to figure out the original tunes on which the majority of eleven tracks are based, just sit back and enjoy the listening experience. Miner's ability to create interesting new melodies is as satisfying as his rock-solid support on bass and his always perfectly placed and played solos. Beyond the familiarity of the tunes, there is the familiar tone of saxophonist Chris Byars. Like the great Warne Marsh, Byars has a knack for balancing a laid-back cool sound with a modern hard bop edge. Whether he is playing a blues such as "Blues for Scout," a ballad such as "Evening Sound" or a bop tune such as "Night Owls," the familiar sound of Byars' tone is comforting, refreshing and invigorating. The quicksilver drumming of Jason Tiemann recalls the great Max Roach as he punctuates the tunes with just the right sparkle and rhythmic surprises. There is also the familiarity of the format of the tunes — whether they begin with a bass opening, or a drum beat, Byars states the melody on which the band improvises, followed by solos from all and often resolving with the classic technique of trading fours. Listening to *Invisibility*, there is no doubt that Miner, Byars and Tiemann enjoyed investigating the twist and turns of the contrafacts as well as four original compositions and two blues tunes. And I have no doubt, listeners will enjoy the original and exciting take on familiar sounding tunes, tempos and tones.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Working without a net (the harmonic grounding of a piano), the trio of bassist Neil Miner, saxophonist Chris Byars and drummer Jason Tiemann will astound you with their flexibility, compatibility and total joy on *Invisibility*. They reshape eleven original tunes (contrafacts) based on the music they have been performing for years — the blues, bebop, hardbop and the *Great American Songbook* — into their own jazz classics.

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## **TIMO VOLLBRECHT: BREMEN/NEW YORK**

**BERTHOLD RECORDS (RELEASED SEPTEMBER 5, 2025)**

Saxophonist, Doctor of Philosophy, Ivy League professor, and scholar Timo Vollbrecht is working on a book about ECM legend Manfred Eicher. So, it is no surprise that his new release, *Bremen/New York*, is a textbook example of what ECM is all about — meticulously recorded atmospheric and noirish music performed with the sensibilities of a small chamber ensemble. Adding to the ECM nature of the release are three members of Vollbrecht's ensemble that have recorded for that label — trumpeter Ralph Alessi, bassist Chris Tordini and drummer Thomas Stronen. The only outlier is pianist Elias Stemeseder who has worked closely with Vollbrecht on some of his more recent recordings. Whether the ensemble is inspired by the Latin American vibe of "Con Tempo," the Middle Eastern groove of "Brighton Blues," the ethereal sound of "Spicy Moon" or the plaintive quality of "New York Love Affair," the tunes are marked with dark twists, reflective refrains and soothing passages. Vollbrecht's seven originals make perfect launching pads for a variety of solos. Alessi weaves line after line over the steady/loose rhythms of "Con Tempo." Vollbrecht's sinewy sax accentuates the Middle Eastern feel of "Brighton Blues." Stronen's resonant bass solo is perfect for the dark mood of "Spicy Moon." Whether comping or soloing, Stemeseder's rolling chords, single note piano runs and chord stabs punctuate the music. Stronen's steady, yet fluid drumming adds interest to even the slowest of tunes such as "Dark." Like Siamese twins, Vollbrecht and Alessi often accompany each other in knotty unison phrases. Alessi's use of the mute against Vollbrecht's bright sax sound is particularly pleasing on "Brighton Blues." About the title, *Bremen/New York* — the music was recorded live in Bremen's Radio Hall with a group of musicians Vollbrecht has enjoyed working with in New York. Based on the results, they enjoyed the opportunity to explore the sonics, moods and perfection associated with ECM records.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Although Timo Vollbrecht's *Bremen/New York* is recorded on Berthold Records, it is steeped in the tradition of ECM Records, a label Vollbrecht is writing a book about. The music is atmospheric. The musicianship of the ensemble is second to none. The recording quality is superb. Fans of ECM Records will want to explore the music of Bremen/New York

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## **MIGUEL ZENÓN: VANGUARDIA SUBTERRÁNEA MIEL MUSIC (RELEASED AUGUST 29, 2025)**

If you need further proof that saxophonist Miguel Zenón is an energetic and exciting player, listen to *Vanguardia Subterránea*. The energy comes from Zenón's compositions which blend his Puerto Rican heritage with contemporary jazz, his note-after-note assaults and the explosive playing of pianist Luis Perdomo, bassist Hans Glawischnig and drummer Henry Cole. The excitement comes from recording live at the pantheon of New York City jazz clubs — The Village Vanguard. Sadly, the energy and excitement quickly overwhelms the beauty of this set of Zenón originals as well as tunes written by salsa innovators Willie Colon/Hector Lavie and Jorge Luis Piloto. The session kicks off with the aggressive Latin beat of "Abre Cuto Güiri Mambo." Zenón's ferocious solo sets the tone for an equally intense solo from Perdomo. Glawischnig lays down a bass line for Zenón's lyrical introduction to Colon and Lavie's "El Dia de Mi Suerte" which evolves into another intense series of solos powered by the bustling rhythms of Cole. The mood slows down for Zenón's tender read of "Vita," a tune he wrote for his grandmother. The complex rhythms of Zenón's "Dale la Vuelta" are perfectly suited for the quartet's energetic playing as well as a fiery and fluent solo from the leader. This spirited mood continues through "Coordenadas" and the title track, "Vanguardia Subterránea." The band seems to take a breather on "Bendición," a tribute to Zenón's mother. The simple melody of Jorge Luis Piloto's "Perdóname" is embraced by Zenon and Perdomo as they lead the band through this tune made famous by superstar Gilberto Santa Rosa. Throughout the recording, Zenón, Perdomo, Glawischnig and Cole impress you with their technical skills, fleet and expressive solos and the respect they have for Zenón's unique musical culture. Next time, I hope they balance their enthusiasm and energy with some reserve and reverence. **BOTTOM LINE:** If *Vanguardia Subterránea* was a movie, it would be titled *The Fast and the Furious*. The quartet of saxophonist Miguel Zenón, pianist Luis Perdomo, bassist Hans Glawischnig and drummer Henry Cole power through nine compositions with intensity, ferocity and bustling rhythms. Fans of energetic Latin American music will enjoy the ride. I'll wait for the next trip!

## **CONRAD HERWIG: REFLECTIONS-FACING SOUTH SAVANT (RELEASED AUGUST 29, 2025)**

I'll admit it, I am not a huge fan of Lartin jazz! Too often the sensuous and lyrical melodies are obliterated by blaring trumpets and overpowered by the incessant beat of congas, timbales and other drums. Thankfully, that is not the case with the music presented

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on Reflections-Facing South. The reason is obvious — there are no trumpets or drummers. The trio of trombonist Conrad Herwig, the late pianist Eddie Palmieri and bassist Luques Curtis manage to capture the intoxicating rhythms and beautiful melodies of Latin jazz without all the fuss. With his fluid and big tone Herwig tends to focus on the lyrical melodies which were written by him, Palmieri or the two together. Palmieri's distinctive percussive style of playing provides the underlying rhythms as well as some exciting solos (despite his boisterous vocalizations). Curtis, when he is not playing marvelous solos, is the pulse of the trio. Together, the three explores a full range of Latin jazz moods. On the opening track, Palmieri and Curtis establish the rhythm for "Bianco's Waltz" as Herwig luxuriates on the melody line. Palmieri's comping for Herwig and Curtis' solos on this tune and throughout the session adds the perfect rhythmic punch. "Que Viva Barry" shows the jazzier side of the trio as they explore its syncopated melody. The prayer-like opening of "Listen Lady" is perfect for Herwig's recitation of the melody line before the tune evolves into a more familiar Latin feel. "Cuando Se Habla De Amor" and "Monica" explore the more tender side of Latin jazz with Herwig gliding over the soft melodies. The sensuous tango, "El Guerrero Solitario" is just that — a gentle and yet propulsive tune powered by the strong bass line of Curtis. These three musicians, who have worked together in various Palmieri bands, have captured the beauty and energy of Latin jazz on Reflections-Facing South. It's simple. It's pure. It's flowing. It's intoxicating. And they did it all without blaring trumpets and percussion!

**BOTTOM LINE:** Think of Reflections-Facing South as Latin jazz unpercussionized! The trio of trombonist Conrad Herwig, pianist Eddie Palmieri and bassist Luques Curtis explore the nine Latin American inspired tunes with grace, simplicity and a sense of purity that is often lacking when many larger ensembles play this genre.

### **ANAT FORT: THE DREAMWORLD OF PAUL MOTIAN**

**SUNNYSIDE RECORDS (RELEASED AUGUST 15, 2025)**

Ever wonder what the DNA double helix might sound like if it were music? The answer is Anat Fort's The Dreamworld of Paul Motian. Pianist Fort and guitarist Steve Cardenas are two linked strands that wind around each other as they explore the music of drummer Paul Motian. Stabilizing the cross links of Fort and Cardenas is the backbone of this musical double helix — bassist Gary Wang and drummer Matt Wilson. Speaking of DNA, Motian's unique musical DNA is ever-present throughout the eleven tunes on The Dreamworld of Paul Motian, five of which were previously unrecorded by the drummer. Tunes such as "Dreamworld" and "It Should've Happened a Long

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Time Ago" show Motian's more introspective side. "Prairie Avenue Cowboy" and "ByaBlue" capture Motian's love for simple, folk-like melodies, while angular tunes such as "Mumbo Jumbo" and "Riff Raff" are perfect for Motian's signature free-flowing rhythms. Fort and Cardenas weave their way through the session, playing melodies in unison, carrying on musical conversations and creating memorable and heartfelt solos. Anat's single note introduction to the hypnotic "Yallah" is a testimony to her impeccable restraint and passion while her knotty solo on "Mumbo Jumbo" accentuates the angularity of Motian's melody. Cardenas' strumming sets the tone for the dreamy "It Should've Happened a Long Time Ago" and "Arabesque," while his solos on the Jarrett-esque "ByaBlue" and boppish "Riff Raff" liven up the proceedings. The intricate bebop nature of "Umh Hum" is the perfect vehicle for Matt Wilson's tasteful drum breaks. Wang's powerful and sympathetic playing proves why he has been a member of Fort's trio for the past several years. Fort even gets a chance to solo as a reader on "Tacho," a story written by Motian. Shades of Paul Bley come to mind as Fort performs the same tune as a solo piano piece later on the recording. Although the record is on the Sunnyside label, it stands to reason that the overall feeling of *The Dreamworld of Paul Motian* is reminiscent of recordings on the ECM label — atmospheric, impressionist and chamber-like. After all, Motian recorded many sessions for ECM and several of Anat's recordings are also on that label. All in all, *The Dreamworld of Paul Motian* is an excellent tribute to drummer, composer, visionary and mentor Paul Motian, who's musical DNA shaped the sound of jazz as well as the careers of several people involved on this session.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Fourteen years after his death, the music of drummer Paul Motian continues to inspire musicians. Pianist Anat Fort and her quartet of guitarist Steve Cardenas, bassist Gary Wang and drummer Matt Wilson explore eleven Motian compositions, capturing the drummer/composers' sense of free-flowing rhythms, folk-like tunes and angular melodies on *The Dreamworld of Paul Motian*. Like its name, the music on this session is often dreamy but always stimulating.

### **BRUCE GERTZ: OCTOPUS DREAMS** **OPEN MIND JAZZ 017 (RELEASED AUGUST 15, 2025)**

The image of an octopus gracefully navigating through shifting currents is an apt description for the music on bassist's Bruce Gertz's *Octopus Dreams*. The quintet gracefully glides through the lyrical melodies, inviting harmonies and shifting rhythms of seven Gertz originals. The music is modern but grounded on hard bop sensibilities. The horns of trumpeter Phil Grenadier and saxophonist Rick DeMuzio open many of the tunes while Gertz's unpretentious arrangements provide launching pads for solos from all band members. The opening track, "Power Walk" is a case in point. Based on the chord structure of

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Sonny Rollins' "Doxy," Gertz starts the solo sequence on bass and then weaves his way through a crisp solo from Grenadier and a bluesy solo from DeMuzio. They demonstrate their controlled restraint on other similar flavored tunes such as "Sea Worthy" and "Dedacted." Pianist Gilson Schachnik gets a chance to shine on "Octopus Dreams," a modal tune reminiscent of Herbie Hancock's "Maiden Voyage" and "Speak Like a Child" days, which also features Grenadier on flugelhorn. Drummer Gary Fieldman moves from timekeeper to equal participant on the modern hard bop sound of "I'm Busy" as he exchanges fours with DeMuzio, Grenadier and Gertz. Whether the band is playing ballads such as "Mr. Z," medium swing numbers such as "Opening," or a jazz waltz titled "Sea Worthy" — they do it with an uncanny ability to deliver hot, upbeat and impassioned performances while remaining cool, calm and collected. Go with the flow as you enjoy the undulating, soothing and fluid music of Octopus Dreams.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Bruce Gertz's Octopus Dreams is packed with dichotomies. The music is accessible yet adventuresome. The solos are refined yet refreshing. The arrangements are intricate yet inviting. It's a perfect example of how modern jazz played can be played passionately without unwarranted pretentiousness.

### **IVAN FARMAKOVSKY: EPIC POWER STEEPLECHASE RECORDS (RELEASED AUGUST 8, 2025)**

A jazz pianist born and raised in Russia dreams of recording with bassist Christian McBride and drummer Jack DeJohnette. That dream came true in 2010, and the results of that encounter are now available on Ivan Farmakovsky's Epic Power. This third release from Farmakovsky confirms why he is considered to be among the most skillful pianists and interesting composers on the current Russian jazz scene. Apart from Lennon and McCartney's "And I Love Her," the remaining eight tunes on Epic Power are Farmakovsky originals, which although inspired in part by Russian music have the feel of classic jazz tunes. Epic Power may very well describe the opening track, "Soul Inside Out," with its aggressive and modal feel, but most of the release is much more reflective, at times reminding me of classic Bill Evans Trio sessions. Like Evans, Farmakovsky begins ballads such as "The Day Before," "My Beloved" and "Orange" ruminating on the melodies and harmonies he has created. There is even an Evan-esque quality to his jazz waltz titled "Conciliation" that features a wonderfully crafted solo from McBride. One can hear the influence of Scott LaFaro and Paul Motian or Eddie Gomez and Marty Morell as McBride and DeJohnette (who recorded with Evans) provide tasteful and captivating support to Farmakovsky's melodies and improvisations. This is especially true on



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the ballads as it is on the soulful and bluesy “Professor” and the Latin groove of “Lazy Lady.” DeJohnette’s drum solo on “Smile Toys” is the perfect bridge between Farmakovsky’s delicate piano introduction and the medium swing rhythm that follows. Like great wine, this session has been aging for more than 15 years, and it is nice to finally savor the intoxicating sounds of Farmakovsky, McBride and DeJohnette on Epic Power.

(Note: Although the pianist’s name is spelled Farmakovskiy on the cover, the real spelling of his name is Farmakovsky.)

**BOTTOM LINE:** Add Ivan Farmakovsky to your list of Russian pianists deserving of wider recognition. Recorded in 2010 with bassist Christian McBride and drummer Jack DeJohnette, Epic Power highlights and music and individualism of Farmakovsky as well as tasteful and dynamic interplay of the trio on eight Farmakovsky originals and a tune from Lennon and McCartney.

## **RON BLAKE: SCRATCH BAND**

**7ten33 PRODUCTIONS 002 (RELEASED AUGUST 8, 2025)**

Keeping music simple and soulful is a characteristic of scratch bands that one can hear in the Virgin Islands. Having grown up in that part of the world, saxophonist Ron Blake is well aware of this musical tradition that makes music enjoyable, engaging and honest. While traditional scratch bands perform folk music, the music on Ron Blake’s Scratch Band is steeped in the jazz tradition. That is quickly evident on the opening track, “Bassman,” a classic calypso penned by Winston Bailly (aka Mighty Shadow). Accompanied by bassist Reuben Rogers and drummer John Hadfield, Blake’s staccato phrases and muscular tone are reminiscent of Sonny Rollins’ style of calypso playing. With Rogers providing a solid foundation, Blake switches to baritone as he breathes new life into the jazz chestnut “Body and Soul.” The musical interaction between Blake and Rogers is uncanny as they weave musical lines through two Blake originals — the ballad “Grace Ann” and the folk-like melody of “Song for Maya.” The angular “Another Level,” written by Roy Hargrove, reaffirms the close musical relationship between Blake and Rogers, who appeared on several of Blake’s earlier recordings. “Lift Every Voice and Sing” is delivered with the passion and pathos it deserves as the Black National Anthem with Rogers stating the melody accompanied with Hadfield’s deft brush work. Blake finally adds his voice to the duo with a heartfelt solo. Other tunes on Scratch Band include The Caribbean feel of Blake’s original “Appointment,” the sensuality of the Cuban “La Conga de Juana” and the slow burning closer “April Fools,” with Hadfield using his full arsenal of percussive devices reminiscent of Airto to accentuate the simple melody. Whether he is playing tenor, baritone or soprano, Scratch Band gives Blake an

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opportunity to do what he does best — keep music simple and soulful much like the scratch bands he heard growing up in the Virgin Islands. **BOTTOM LINE:** There is something honest about the music on Scratch Band. Whether they are playing originals, standards, a calypso or a Roy Hargrove tune, saxophonist Ron Blake, bassist Reuben Rogers and drummer John Hadfield make simple melodies soulful, swinging and sensuous without a lot of fuss. What could be more honest than that?

### **DAVE SEWELSON, STEVE SWELL, MATTHEW SHIPP, WILLIAM PARKER & STEVE HIRSH: MUSCLE MEMORY**

**MAHAKALA MUSIC (RELEASED MARCH 2025)**

Mahakala Music delivers another outstanding session of seamlessly shifting spontaneous sounds. Seamless, because the musicians — Dave Sewelson on baritone sax, Steve Swell on trombone, Matthew Shipp on piano, William Parker on bass and Steve Hirsh on drums — have a knack for effortlessly moving from various ensembles, ranging from the full quintet to quartets and trios of various configurations to captivating duo and solo passages. As Swell explains, this type of playing requires quick thinking, flexibility and an egoless commitment to group dynamics. Shifting, because the soundscapes these musicians create are in constant flux — from the swirling interactions of “Loved Ones” to the dark and foreboding introduction of “Muscle Memory” to a tender ballad lead by Sewelson in the middle of “Melisma.” Spontaneous, because that is what the music is — created in the moment by musicians skilled at listening and reacting to one another more than adhering to melody lines and chord progressions. Sounds, because the music is filled with sounds — from the deep, resonant playing of Parker to the often-other world sounds of Swell to the shimmering cascades of Shipp to the raw emotional power of Sewelson to the rich variety of percussive colors executed by Hirsh. There are passages of silence, joy, passion, meditation, complexity and beauty as Sewelson, Swell, Shipp, Parker and Hirsh do what they do best — explore the sonic possibilities of listening, playing and reacting in the moment. Recorded in 2022 and now seeing the light of day, the music of Muscle Memory may not be everyone’s cup of tea, but like tea it offers a taste of something refreshing, soothing, comforting and exotic all in one sip!

**BOTTOM LINE:** The experience of listening to Muscle Memory is like going on a road trip without a destination in mind, but discovering interesting intersections, landmarks and horizons along the way. Enjoy the ride with saxophonist Dave Sewelson, trombonist Steve Swell, pianist Matthew Shipp, bassist William Parker and drummer Steve Hirsh in the driver’s seat.

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## **JALEEL SHAW: PAINTER OF THE INVISIBLE CHANGU RECORDS (RELEASED JULY 11)**

Recording the 11 tracks on *Painter of the Invisible* must have been a highly emotional experience for saxophonist Jaleel Shaw. For starters, it was his first album in 13 years! Second, each composition serves as a tribute to significant figures in Shaw's life. Accompanied by pianist Lawrence Fields, bassist Ben Street, drummer Joe Dyson, and with special appearances from guitarist Lage Lund and vibraphonist Sarah Berliner, Shaw draws inspiration from family members, literary figures, arts patron Meghan Stabile and Tamir Rice. You can sense the anguish he feels for 12-year-old Rice on "Tamir," a prayer-like piece that reaches its peak as Shaw builds to Coltrane-inspired sweeps and cries. Lund joins the quartet on "Distant Images," a tender ballad written for Shaw's grandmother. Berliner's vibes add a sense of radiance to "Gina's Ascent," a musical celebration of the life of Shaw's cousin, Gina, who he explains was a bright spirit of the family. Despite the highly personal nature of the compositions, many of the tracks are a bit more clinical than emotional. Shaw's solos tend to sound like scalar exercises rather than heartfelt expressions. This is especially true on the closing "Until We Meet," which is a duo for sax and electric piano. Too often, Dyson's bustling rhythm patterns, particularly on "Contemplation" and "Invisible Man" overpower the singular voice of Shaw's plaintive melodies and moods. *Painter of the Invisible* is a nice enough jazz recording for Shaw, but it misses the mark on its real intention — to explore Black life through themes of joy, grief, beauty, social justice and ancestral wisdom. Let's not wait another 13 years for his next effort! **BOTTOM LINE:** Saxophonist Jaleel Shaw paints musical portraits of family members, literary figures and others who have shaped his life on *Painter of the Invisible*. Shaw demonstrates his technical skills as a "musical painter" on 11 original compositions.

Too often, those technical skills overpower the emotional essence of the portraits.

## **JIMMY BENNINGTON: BLUE VEILS AND BRIGHT STARS THATSWANI! RECORDS 1013 (RELEASED MAY 2025)**

Drummer Jimmy Bennington unearthed a treasure with the release of *Blue Veils and Bright Stars*. Recorded in 2005, this session features Bennington with legendary trombonist Julian Priester and Canadian bassist Paul Blaney, truly a talent deserving wider recognition. Bennington and Priester were working with pianist David Haney in Portland at the time. Upon seeing and hearing the chemistry between these two musicians, Haney suggested they record a duo session. He was right. The resulting *Portraits and Silhouettes* was included in *All About Jazz's* Best Records of 2008. At the same time, the duo invited Blaney to join them on a trio session. Had it been released 20 years ago, it most likely would have received

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the same reception as the duo session. Dedicated to Sun Ra, the eight tunes on *Blue Veils* and *Bright Stars* capture the essence of modern jazz (modern at the time of its recording as well as the time of its release)! The tight/loose feel of the recording is timeless as Priester floats in and out of Blaney's strong bass lines and Bennington's signature percussive colors. The pieces are structured in a way that provide opportunities for individual solos such as Priester's heartfelt reading of Duke Ellington's "Mood Indigo," Blaney's resonant bowed bass solo on "Churchbells" and Bennington's brushwork on the title track. The group seamlessly shifts from trio to duo performance such as the drum/bass interchanges that introduce "Another Realm" and "Across the Night Sky" as well as the trombone/bass sections that highlight "Mood Indigo" and "Blount." As the saying goes, "better late than never," and *Blue Veils* and *Bright Stars* is a testament to the timelessness of great jazz when it is performed by masters such as Bennington and Priester and the rarely heard Blaney. It is a long overdue release that fans of modern jazz will treasure.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Trombonist Julian Priester turned 90 in June. What better way to celebrate this milestone than the "better late than never" release of *Blue Veils* and *Bright Stars*, a session he recorded with drummer Jimmy Bennington and bassist Paul Blaney in 2005. The trio works their magic through seven originals and a reverential version of "Mood Indigo." The fact that the music sounds as fresh today as it did the day it was recorded is a testament to power and beauty of improvised music.

# 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

## Passing Glances Warren Benbow

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

## Passing Glances Warren Benbow

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 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

## Passing Glances Roy Haynes

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 Calendiary, Jazzprezzo (Germany)



## Passing Glances

### **LUDWIG VANTRIKT**

**JUNE 11, 1959 - JULY 7, 2025**

Sadly, longtime Cadence Magazine journalist Ludwig vanTrikt passed on July 7, 2025 after suffering a heart attack. van Trikt, a life-long Jazz advocate, was a prominent supporter of Avant-Garde Jazz in the Philadelphia area, hosting a number of programs on WRTI Jazz radio during the mid-1980s through the 1990s as well as programming Jazz performances at The Painted Bride Art Center for many years. In addition to writing for Cadence, van Trikt also contributed to AllAboutJazz.com.



# Passing Glances

## SHEILA JORDAN

**NOVEMBER 18,  
1928 - AUGUST  
11, 2025**

Fall, 1992, duo  
performance with  
bassist Harvie  
Swartz, Old Cabell  
Hall, University of  
Virginia,  
Charlottesville VA  
photograph ©1992,  
Patrick Hinely Work/  
Play®  
previously  
unpublished

Sheila Jordan was a  
force of nature. I've  
never met anyone  
who sounded  
freer within herself  
or happier to be  
singing, even when it  
wasn't a happy song.  
Beyond saying that  
one of my all-time  
favorite albums,  
bassist Steve  
Swallow's *Home*  
(ECM),  
recorded in 1979,

includes sublime vocal contributions by Jordan, in the company of two of her most empathetic co-creators, Swallow and pianist Steve Kuhn, I'm saving further comments for a longer tribute to be submitted for the next issue. A memorial event for Jordan is scheduled for her 97th birthday, November 18, at St. Peter's Church (619 Lexington Avenue, NYC, 212 935 2200), from 5:30 to 8:30 pm. It will be live-streamed via <https://youtube.com/live/-AXeOS-b7t8?feature=share> Barry Singer's comprehensive obituary for the New York Times is well-headlined: "fearless vocal improviser": <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/12/arts/music/sheila-jordan-dead.htm>



## Passing Glances

**NANCY KING**  
**JUNE 15, 1940 -**  
**AUGUST 4, 2025**

May, 1996, rehearsal with bassist Glen Moore's band, for Spoleto Festival USA, Parish Hall, St. John's Lutheran Church, Charleston SC (with the arm of violinist Rob Thomas; the rest of the band comprised guitarist Jerry Hahn and drummer John Riley). photograph ©1996, Patrick Hinely Work/Play® previously published in 2008 Calendary, Jazzprezzo imprint of Nieswand Verlag

King was the only vocalist ever to record with Oregon, on Moore's tune "Chihuahua Dreams" (45th Parallel, Epic, 1989). There and

even more on her duo albums with Glen Moore, *Impending Bloom* (1991) and its successors, *Potato Radio* (1992) and especially *Cliff Dance* (1993, all three on the Justice label), in the company of pianist Art Lande, another undersung giant, she rendered Samantha Moore's poetically idiosyncratic lyrics as though that was the reason she had been born. Her final teaming with Moore was 1999's *King on the Road*, a session led by saxophonist Rob Scheps. Clay Risen's excellent obituary for the New York Times can be found at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/13/arts/music/nancy-king-dead.html?searchResultPosition=1>



# Passing Glances

**MITCHELL JAMES SEIDEL**

**MARCH 12, 1957 - JUNE 2, 2025**

*Remembrance of a fellow photographer of jazz people*

by Patrick Hinely

I first encountered his name in the later 1970s, while we were both contributing work to Tom Stites' wonderful but short-lived JAZZ magazine, out of Long Island. In the next decade and beyond, his work would appear far more widely throughout the jazz world, from local to global. He was a first-call jazz shooter in the music's world capital, New York City.

We didn't meet face to face until 1986, and when we did meet, it wasn't in New York City, it was in Warsaw, Poland, where we were serving on the jury for the Jazz Photo International Competition (JPIC), coinciding with the annual Warsaw Jazz Jamboree.

Though we were formally introduced at the JPIC jurying session, what remains my most memorable impression of Mitchell came later in the week, late in the evening, in front of a western-facing picture window in the hallway of our upper floor in the Hotel Orbis Forum, where most of the festival visitors were headquartered. He was holding a portable short wave radio up to the glass and grimacing. When I said hello, he told me to keep my voice down, because he could barely hear the game.

I'm pretty sure this must have been the third night of Jazz Jamboree - Saturday - which was also the night of the sixth game of Major League Baseball's World Series, that year between the Boston Red Sox and the New York Mets. The Mets never met a bigger fan than Mitchell. The Sox were up 3 games to 2 going in, so the Mets would either win and force the seventh and final game, or they would go home, with no trophy, again, as they had every year since 1969.

The game went into an extra inning, running over four hours from start to finish. The Mets took it, 6 to 5. That game quickly entered the lore as one of the greatest games of the century. Less definitive but more decisive was the Mets' 8 to 5 victory in the seventh game, giving the team its second title. Mitchell was still talking about that World Series well into the next millennium, though, 39 years on, the Mets have yet to win another title...

I'll always owe Mitchell because he was the first to persuasively encourage me to sort the needles out of the haystack and organize my 'greatest hits' collection of negatives into its own separate, more portable binder - one small enough to fit into a safe deposit box. Other useful lessons preceded that one. Mitchell was understandably somewhat proprietary about the web of contacts he developed and maintained. His journalist's instincts kept his photo-op radar on alert at all times. He seldom shared what he was shooting until after the fact, a lasting lesson for me. In that town, once word of just about any potential photo-op gets around,

# Passing Glances

you'll have company on most any shoot, and seldom will it be welcome. It's enough to make one grateful for being booked to shoot a closed session.

Mitchell knew when to be where and when to beware. He had an instinct for quickly making the most of a situation and a sense of when to let it unfold of its own accord, as well as how to coax it along, with a mastery of the art of the schmooze which often eschewed subtlety but pretty consistently got results. He always said to look him up while I was in the City, but we didn't see much of each other as the 80s came to a close, or through the 90s, though we did end up bumping elbows on a couple of shoots.

Seidel was a founding member and advocate of the Jazz Journalists' Association. I last saw him at one of its annual summer awards gatherings, in the oughts, at BB King's in New York City. He was manning the registration table.

A portion of Seidel's oeuvre, by the way, is now held by the Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers University in his native New Jersey, though his alma mater was New York University, where he earned a degree in Journalism. He was long active in the New Jersey Jazz Society.

Over the years, he worked for several news publications, primarily his hometown paper, Newark's Star-Ledger, where he held a variety of positions, all related to photography, its editing and/or management, until the newspaper industry went into decline. I like to think he ended up, de facto, in the role of senior curmudgeon.

To say Mitchell could be contrary is an understatement, but now, and for the ages, his estimable body of work will speak for itself, and speak well of an enterprising and good friend of the music.

\*\*\*\*\*

In the process of creating this piece, I asked our fellow photographer, the author and retired archivist at the Institute of Jazz Studies, Tad Hershorn, to look over what I'd come up with, and he added this: Two of my longtime personal favorites among my contemporaries in the world of jazz photography are the writer of the above story, Patrick Hinely, and Mitchell Seidel, both of whom were regular contributors to JazzTimes in the late 1980s, which was where I became familiar with their work. 1989 was the first year I came up from Texas to photograph the JVC Festival for JazzTimes. At the last moment, I got a call inviting me to the festival's garden party at Gracie Mansion. Of course, I hoped to run into Mitchell. No such luck. One of my favorite pictures from the event showed Milt Jackson and Roy Haynes elegantly dressed, to the nines. When festival coverage was published, there was that same shot, but by Mitchell. We had been standing right next to one another.

## Passing Glances

### Photo captions:

Herewith are a couple of views of the American Jazz Orchestra (AJO) rehearsal with Benny Carter in the Great Hall of Cooper Union, New York City, February 1987:



Benny Carter  
conducting rehearsal  
(Seidel, camera in hand,  
at front of house, on  
left)  
photograph by Ed  
Berger  
Ed Berger Photographic  
Collection, © Oberlin  
Conservatory Library  
posted on Facebook  
by Loren Schoenberg,  
saxophonist seen at  
right



"Benny Carter:  
Finishing Touches"  
photograph by Mitchell  
Seidel  
Grand Prix Award, Jazz  
Photo International,  
1988  
posted on Facebook  
by Pawel Brodowski,  
editor-in-chief, Jazz  
Forum, Warsaw



## Passing Glances



Impromptu portrait of Mitchel Seidel, by Patrick Hinely, October 8, 1987, Greenwich House, New York City, following soundcheck for the George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band.

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