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VOLUME 50 NUMBER 1

JAN FEB MARCH 2024

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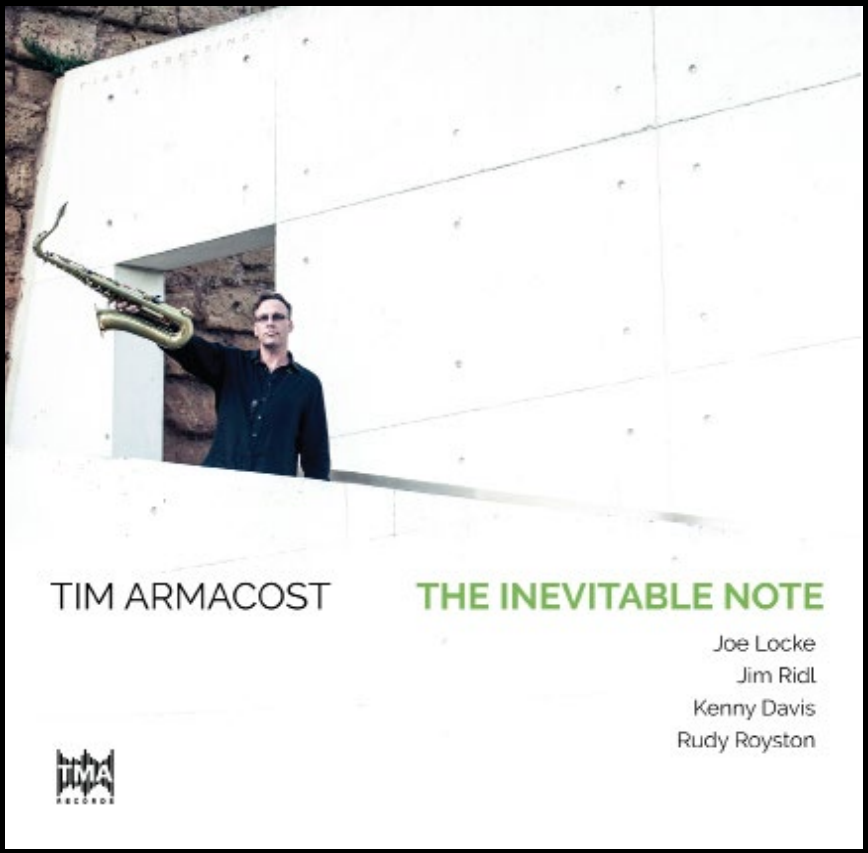
Critic's Pick Top Ten Best Jazz Albums Of The Year 2023



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SAXOPHONIST RICH HALLEY RELEASES FIRE WITHIN

New release, available December 1, 2023 on Pine Eagle Records.

Fire Within is the new recording by Rich Halley, featuring a quartet with innovative pianist Matthew Shipp, standout bassist Michael Bisio and creative drummer Newman Taylor Baker. Halley's third recording with Shipp, Bisio and Baker sees the group building on their intuitive chemistry in a series of powerful improvisations, recorded in Brooklyn in July 2023.

Rich Halley has released 25 recordings as a leader. Fire Within follows Halley's critically acclaimed recordings The Shape of Things and Terra Incognita (with the same group), Boomslang, The Outlier, and Creating Structure.

"One of the major tenor saxophonists of our time."
Tom Hull, tomhull.com
"Heartland American jazz of the very highest order."
Brian Morton, Point of Departure
"Saxophonist Rich Halley has been turning out smart, brawny music for a couple of decades."
James Hale, DownBeat

TOP 10 RECORDINGS FOR 2018
CADENCE MAGAZINE

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BRILLIANT NEW WORK..

from Milton Marsh an artist you might remember from his classic Monism album for the Strata East label in the 70s; still sounding every bit as brilliant, all these many years later! The set has Milton still working in the larger, more ambitious ideas we love from his other records; a blending of spiritual jazz and additional string players, in a way that might be the closest approximation to the "black classical music" promised by Rahsaan Roland Kirk and others in the 70s! Yet Marsh is definitely his own visionary here, too carving out a sound that's as powerful as it is individual, with a unique sound that has us sitting up and taking notice all over again. Musicians on the recordings include David Eure on Violin, Stanton Davis on trumpet, Kevin Harris on piano, Carlos Averhoff on tenor, and Keala Kaumehi-wa 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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WILL SLATER bass
FELIX LECAROS drums

ARTHUR KELL SPECULATION QUARTET
LIVE AT LUNÄTICO
NATE RADLEY guitar
BRAD SHEPIK guitar
ARTHUR KELL bass
ALLAN MEDNARD drums

JOHN BISHOP
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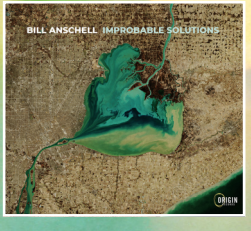
PIET VERBIST bass
JOHN BISHOP drums

PETER ERSKINE
BERNSTEIN IN VIENNA
PETER ERSKINE drums
DANNY GRISSETT piano
ROBERT UNTERKÖFLER sax
ANDREAS VARADY guitar
COZY FRIEDEL violin
BERTL MAYER harm.
DANNY ZIEMANN bass



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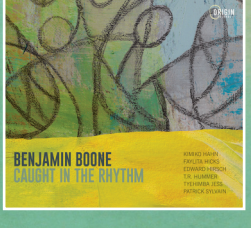
IMPROBABLE SOLUTIONS
CHRIS SYMER bass
JOSE MARTINEZ drums
JEFF BUSCH perc
KJ SAWKA drums
BRIAN MONRONEY guitar
BILL ANSCHELL piano/electronics

JUN IIDA
EVERGREEN
JUN IIDA trumpet
AUBREY JOHNSON vocals
JOSH NELSON piano, rhodes
MASAMI KUROKI guitar
JONATHAN RICHARDS bass
XAVIER LECOUTURIER drums



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GREG OSBY, KENNY WERNER,
BEN MONDER, ARI HOENIG

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103 Bobby Zankel Trio
104 Frank Lowe Trio
105 Gregg Bendian Project
106 Mark Whitecage Trio
107 Chris McCann - Billy Pierce Trio
108 Steve Swell & Chris Kelsey
109 Billy Bang 4tet
110 Herb Robertson/Dominic Duval/Jay Rosen
111 Vinny Golia & Ken Filiano
112 Luther Thomas 4tet
113 Sonny Simmons Trio
114 Paul Lytton 4tet
115 Joe McPhee 4tet
116 Steve Swell 4tet
117 David White 5tet
118 Sonny Simmons 4tet
119 Mark Whitecage 4tet
120 Joe McPhee & David Prentice
121 Kevin Norton Trio
122 Joseph Scianni - Dominic Duval - Jay Rosen
123 Lou Grassi Sextet
124 Odean Pope Trio
125 Lee Shaw Trio
126 Ivo Perelman Trio
127 Mike Bisio & Joe McPhee
128 Marc Edwards Trio
129 Paul Smoker - Vinny Golia 4tet
130 Joseph Scianni
131 Bobby Zankel 5
132 Joe McPhee 4tet
133 Roswell Rudd Trio
134 Ivo Perelman Trio & Rory Stuart
135 Brandon Evans 4tet
136 John Gunther Trio
137 Dominic Duval & Jay Rosen
138 Frank Lowe Trio
139 Chris Kelsey Trio
140 Zusaan Kefateau/Noah Howard/Bobby Few
141 Dominic Duval's String Ensemble
142 Jon Hazilla & Saxabone
143 Khan Jamal
144 Bruce Eisenbeil Trio
145 Luther Thomas Trio
146 Roswell Rudd Trio
147 Claude Lawrence Trio
148 Glenn Spearman - John Heward Group
149 Steve Swell 4tet
150 Kahil El'Zabar's Ritual Trio
151 David Bindman Trio
152 Ahmed Abdullah's Diaspora
153 Elliott Levin 4tet
154 Tyrone Hill 4tet feat. Marshall Allen
155 Joseph Scianni Trio/ Mark Whitecage 4tet
156 Lou Grassi's PoBand
157 Mark Whitecage's Other 4tet
158 Arthur Blythe & David Eyges
159 Frode Gjerstad 4tet
160 Thomas Borgmann Trio plus Peter Brötzmann
161 Rob Brown - Lou Grassi 4tet
162 Joseph Scianni duets
163 John Gunther's Axis Mundi
164 Chris DahIgren/Briggan Krauss/Jay Rosen
165 Andrew Cheshire Trio
166 Ehran Elisha Ensemble
167 Ethnic Heritage Ensemble
168 David White 5tet
169 Bob Magnuson & Lou Grassi
170 Pucci Amanda Jhones
171 Marshall Allen4tet feat. Mark Whitecage
172 Charlie Kohlhase 5tet
173 Kowald, Smoker, McPhee, Whitecage, etc.
174 Kalaparush Maurice McIntyre Trio
175 Yuko Fujiyama's String Ensemble
176 John Gunther 5tet
177 Hugh Ragin & Marc Sabatella
178 Kowald, McPhee, Smoker, Whitecage, etc.
179 Michael Bisio & Joe McPhee
180 Marshall Allen4tet feat. M. Whitecage
181 Glenn Spearman & Dominic Duval
182 Burton Greene - Wilber Morris - Lou Grassi
183 Joe McPhee - Dominic Duval - Jay Rosen
184 Steve Swell Trio
185 Joe Fiedler - Ben Koen - Ed Ware
186 Paul Smoker 4tet
187 Patrick Brennan with Lisle Ellis
188 Th.Borgmann/W.Morris/R.Nicholson
189 John Carlson/Eric Hipp/S.McGloin/S.Neumann
190 Ori Kaplan Trio Plus Geoff Mann, Tom Abbs
191 Odean Pope & Dave Burrell
192 Ahmed Abdullah/A.Harding/M.Kamaguchi/Weinstein: NAM
193 Mark Whitecage's Other Other 4tet
194 Bruce Eisenbeil Crosscurrent Trio
195 Sam Bardfeld's Cabal Fatale
196 Dom Minasi Trio
197 Blaise Siwula Trio
198 Joe Fonda 5tet
199 Joe McPhee's Bluette
200 Elliott Levin - Tyrone Hill 4tet
201 Lou Grassi - Tom Varner - Ron Horton - Tomas Ulrich
202 John Bickerton Trio
203 Steve Swell Trio
204 Bob Magnuson - Tom DeSteno 4tet
205 Kahil El'Zabar's TriFactor
206 Tyrone Hill - Elliott Levin 4tet
207 Marshall Allen w/ Lou Grassi's PoBand
208 Bhob Rainey - Jack Wright - Fred Lonberg-Holm - Bob Marsh
209 Joe McPhee - Joe Giardullo - Michael Bisio - Dominic Duval
210 Ehran Elisha Ensemble
211 Jay Rosen 4tet
212 Konrad Bauer & Nils Wogram
213 Donald Robinson Trio
214 Luther Thomas 5tet
215 Dominic Duval
216 Briggan Krauss - Chris DahIgren - Jay Rosen
217 Ken Simon 4tet
218 Phil Haynes - Herb Robertson 5tet
219 Paul Smoker - Bob Magnuson - Ken Filiano - Lou Grassi
220 Kahil El'Zaber with David Murray One World Family
221 Konrad Bauer/Nils Wogram/Dominic Duval
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225 Anthony Braxton
226 Paul Smoker - Bob Magnuson - Ken Filiano - Lou Grassi
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228 Wilber Morris & Reggie Nicholson
229 Yuko Fujiyama 4tet
230 Dave Burrell & Tyrone Brown
231 Masashi Harada Trio
232 John Gunther 5tet
233 Paul Smoker Trio
234 John Oswald - David Prentice - Dominic Duval
235 Anthony Braxton w/Alex Horwitz
236 Anthony Braxton
237 Avram Fefer 4tet
238 Kevin Norton - Bob Celusak - Andy Eulau
239 Odean Pope - Byard Lancaster - Ed Crockett - J.R. Mitchell
240 Bobby Zankel Trio
241 Bruce Eisenbeil 4tet
242 William Gagliardi 4tet
243 Anthony Braxton 5tet
244 Rosi Hertlein Ensemble
245 Steve Lehman 5tet
246 Alex Harding Trio
247 Kalaparush Maurice McIntyre Trio
248 Ned Rothenberg & Denman Maroney
249 Fred Hess 4tet
250 Charles Eubanks solo piano
251 Burton Greene with Mark Dresser
252 T.J. Graham with Rory Stuart
253 Jay Rosen Trio
254 Tom DeSteno - Bob Magnuson 4tet
255 Steve Lehman 5tet
256 Mary LaRose - Jeff Lederer - Steve Swell - D.Duval
257 Joe McPhee's Bluette
258 Joseph Rosenberg 4tet
259 Jean-Luc Guionnet & Edward Perraud
260 John Heward - Tristan Honsinger - Jean Derome
261 Dominic Duval String & Brass Ens.
262 Lou Grassi's PoBand
263 Adam Lane 4tet
264 Daniel Carter - Steve Swell - Tom Abbs - David Brandt
265 John O'Gallagher's Axiom
266 Matt Lavelle 4tet
267 Khan Jamal 5tet
268 Bob Washington Trio
269 David Taylor Trio
270 Alex Harding - Dominic Duval - Jay Rosen
271 David Wertman-Charlie Kohlhase-Lou Grassi
272 Ursel Schlicht-Steve Swell 4tet
273 Carl Grubbs' 4tet
274 Lucian Ban & Alex Harding
275 Frank Lowe 4tet
276 Elliott Levin-Marshall Allen-Tyrone Hill 5tet
277 Lucian Ban & Alex Harding 5tet
278 John Tchicai - Pierre Dorge - Lou Grassi
279 Dylan Taylor & Kelly Meashey
280 Kevin Norton 4tet
281 Adam Lane/ John Tchicai
282 Andrew Lamb Trio
283 Joe McPhee-Dominic Duval-Jay Rosen: Trio-X
284 Joe Fonda-Barry Altschul-Billy Bang
285 Steve Swell's New York BrassWoodTrio
286 Avram Fefer 4tet
287 Luther Thomas 4tet
288 Tom Abbs 4tet
289 Paul Dunmall - Paul Rogers - Kevin Norton
290 Charles Eubanks
291 William Gagliardi 5tet
292 Steve Swell 8tet
293 Ernie Krivda 5tet
294 Odean Pope & Khan Jamal 4tet
295 Mark Dresser & Ray Anderson
296 Paul Dunmall-Paul Rogers-Kevin Norton
297 William Gagliardi 5tet
298 Jazz Composers Alliance Orchestra
299 Devorah Day & Dominic Duval
300 Harris Eisenstadt 5tet
301 Jimmy Halperin - Dominic Duval - Jay Rosen
302 Ernie Krivda 5tet
303 Odean Pope 4tet
304 John O'Gallagher w/Masa Kamaguchi-Jay Rosen
305 Patrick Brennan 4tet
306 Kalaparush M. McIntyre & The Light
307 David Taylor Trio
308 James Finn Trio
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310 Scott Rosenberg's Red
311 John O'Gallagher w/Masa Kamaguchi-Jay Rosen
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313 Lou Grassi 4tet
314 Mary Anne Driscoll - Paul Murphy
315 Gebhard Ullmann - Steve Swell 4tet
316 Burton Greene & Roy Campbell 4tet
317 Marc Pompe 4tet
318 Ken Wessel - Ken Filiano - Lou Grassi
319 John Gunther Trio
320 Trio-X: Joe McPhee - Dominic Duval - Jay Rosen
321 Dave Taylor-Steve Swell 5tet
322 Khan Jamal 5tet
323 Mike Bisio 4tet
324 Avram Fefer - Mike Bisio
325 Adam Lane Trio
326 Stephen Gauci Trio
327 Jay Rosen
328 Trio-X: JoeMcPhee/ DominicDuval/ JayRosen
329 Chris Kelsey Trio
330 Prince Lasha & Odean Pope Trio
331 Byard Lancaster 4tet
332 William Gagliardi 5tet
333 Bobby Few & Avram Fefer
334 Ernie Krivda 5tet
335 Adam Lane Trio
336 Carl Grubbs Quartet
337 Lucian Ban-Alex Harding
338 David Haney Trio
339 Burton Greene Quintet
340 Byard Lancaster 4tet
341 Sophie Duner 4tet
342 William Gagliardi 5tet
343 Joe Fonda's Bottoms Out
344 Lou Grassi's PoBand
345 Burton Greene Trio
346 Mat Marucci - Doug Webb Trio
347 Dominic Duval's String 4tet
348 Jimmy Halperin & Dominic Duval
349 Michael Bisio & Tomas Ulrich
350 Seth Meicht 4tet
351 Stephen Gauci 4tet
352 Steve Swell - David Taylor 4tet
353 Odean Pope 4tet
354 David Haney Trio
355 Burton Greene solo piano
356 Mat Marucci - Doug Webb Trio
357 David Haney & Julian Priester
358 Chris Kelsey 4tet
359 Stephen Gauci Trio
360 Michael Bisio
361 Stephen Gauci 4tet
362 Kalaparush McIntyre 4tet
363 David Schnitter - Dominic Duval - Newman T.Baker
364 Khan Jamal & Dylan Taylor
365 Bobby Zankel Trio
366 Ernie Krivda Trio
367 David Haney & Andrew Cyrille
368 Chris Kelsey 4tet
369 David Haney-Andrew Cyrille-Dominic Duval
370 Bill Gagliardi-KenFiliano-LouGrassi: ESATrio
371 David Haney Trio
372 Michael Bisio 4tet
373 Ernie Krivda
374 David Arner Trio
375 Tomas Ulrich's Cargo Cult
376 Bill Gagliardi-KenFiliano-LouGrassi: ESATrio
377 David Arner Trio
378 Odean Pope 4tet
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384 Nate Wooley + Taylor Ho Bynum 4tet
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386 David Haney 4tet Avenue of the Americas
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389 Andrew Lamb Trio
390 Jimmy Halperin + Dominic Duval
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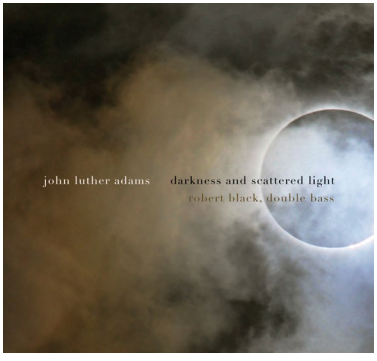


John Luther Adams
Darkness and Scattered Light

Darkness and Scattered Light presents celebrated Pulitzer and Grammy-winning composer **John Luther Adams**'s mesmerizing, elegant, virtuosic music for double bass—two solos and a work for five basses—performed by bassist extraordinaire **Robert Black**.

Black's performance on this album has been nominated for a 2024 Grammy.

"This is one of the most beautiful albums I have heard in years. . . . It is a humbling, devastating kind of beauty. . . . It would be hard to imagine a better match of composer and performer than John Luther Adams and Robert Black."—David Lang

"No one on the planet can make the double bass sing, dance, sound like a drum, spin like a top, like Robert Black. Robert has single-handedly reinvented the technique and repertoire of the double bass."—Michael Gordon

"*Darkness and Scattered Light *mines the depths of five double basses, all played on this recording by Robert Black. Through its somber brilliance, this piece shows the expansive vision that informs Adams's music. . . . Robert Black is a palpable presence here."—Julian Cowley, *The Wire*

"These patient reveries and airy dances, suffused with luminescence and shadow, could only have been created by Adams. The music is ethereal and visceral at once, and Black is responsive to every challenge and nuance."
—Steve Smith, *Night After Night*

"John Luther Adams . . . one of the most original thinkers of the new century."
—Alex Ross, *The New Yorker*

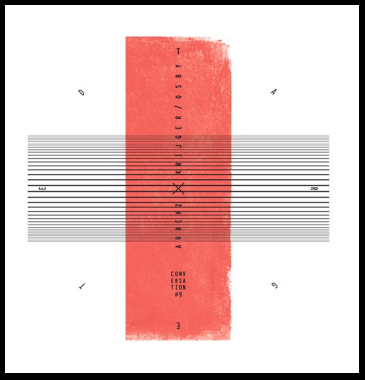
"His [Adams'] music has repeatedly conjured up visions of limitless expanse."
—Julian Cowley, *The Wire*

"His [Adams'] music becomes more than a metaphor for natural forces: it is an elemental experience in its own right.."—Tom Service, *The Guardian*

This album is available at all good record outletss—both online and brick-and-mortar, as well as at Bandcamp and Cold Blue Music's website

www.coldbluemusic.com

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



Florian Arbenz X Greg Osby / Arno Krijger

Conversation #9 Targeted

Continuing a two-decade relationship with American sax great Greg Osby, and igniting a new one with Dutch hammond organist Arno Krijger, Swiss drummer Florian Arbenz presents Conversation #9: Targeted.

The recording is part of an ambitious project to release twelve albums with 12 drastically different ensembles, which will be coming to a close in 2024.

A coming together of three highly skilled improvisers who, in their own ways, strive to continue the jazz tradition, the record showcases a careful selection of three original compositions alongside three jazz standards: Seven Steps to Heaven, Freedom Jazz Dance and I Loves You Porgy.

Discover all albums in the series, available on CD or vinyl, via FlorianArbenz.Bandcamp.com

"You'll want to put the album on repeat!" Jazz Views (UK)

******* Jazz Trail (USA)***

CIMPoL

Creative Improvised Music Projects on Location

latest releases

Creative Improvised Music Projects on Location: adventuresome music in audiophile sound

New CIMPoL releases:

CIMPoL 5032-5036:
CIMPFest 2011: LIVE IN VILLACH, AUSTRIA

DISK 1: Ernie Krivda Quartet **DISK 2:** Avram Fefer Quintet **DISK 3:** Steve Swell Sextet
DISK 4: Ken Filiano Quinet **DISK 5:** Bill Gagliardi Sextet / Adam Lane's Villach Orchestra

CIMPoL 5037:
Trio-X - Live at Kerrytown
Joe McPhee (trumpet) - Dominic Duval (bass) - Jay Rosen (drums)

CIMPoL 5038:
Trio-X - Live at the Sugar Maple
Joe McPhee (trumpet) - Dominic Duval (bass) - Jay Rosen (drums)

CIMPoL 5039:
Trio-X - Live at Craig Kessler & Janet Lessner's
Joe McPhee (trumpet) - Dominic Duval (bass) - Jay Rosen (drums)

CIMPoL 5040:
Trio-X - Live in Green Bay and Buffalo
Joe McPhee (trumpet) - Dominic Duval (bass) - Jay Rosen (drums)

Earlier CIMPoL releases:

5001	Trio-X: Joe McPhee - Dominic Duval - Jay Rosen	AIR: Above and Beyond
5002	Odean Pope	Serenity
5003	Joe McPhee & Dominic Duval	The Open Door
5004	David Bond Quintet	The Early Show (live at Twin's Jazz)
5005	Salim Washington	Live at St. Nick's
5006-5012	Trio-X: Joe McPhee - Dominic Duval - Jay Rosen	Live on Tour 2006
5013	Gebhard Ullmann + Steve Swell 4tet	Live in Montreal
5014	Ernie Krivda	Live Live at the Dirty Dog
5015-5019	Trio-X: Joe McPhee - Dominic Duval - Jay Rosen	Trio-X - Live on Tour 2008
5020-5024	CIMPFest 2009: Live in Villach, Austria	Live in Villach, Austria
5025	Seth Meicht and the Big Sound Ensemble	Live in Philadelphia
5026	Eric Plaks Quintet	Live at Bronx Community College
5027-5030	Trio-X: Joe McPhee - Dominic Duval - Jay Rosen	Trio-X - Live on Tour 2010
5041	Mat Marruci Trio	Live at Jazz Central
5042	Teresa Carroll Quintet	Live at Dazzle

315-287-2852 Cadence Building, Redwood, New York 13679 USA
cimp@cadencebuilding.com www.cimprecords.com

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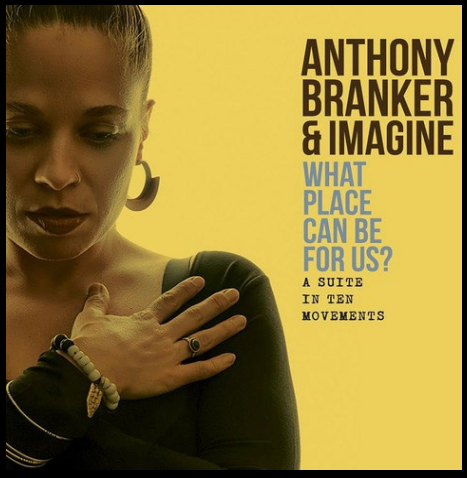


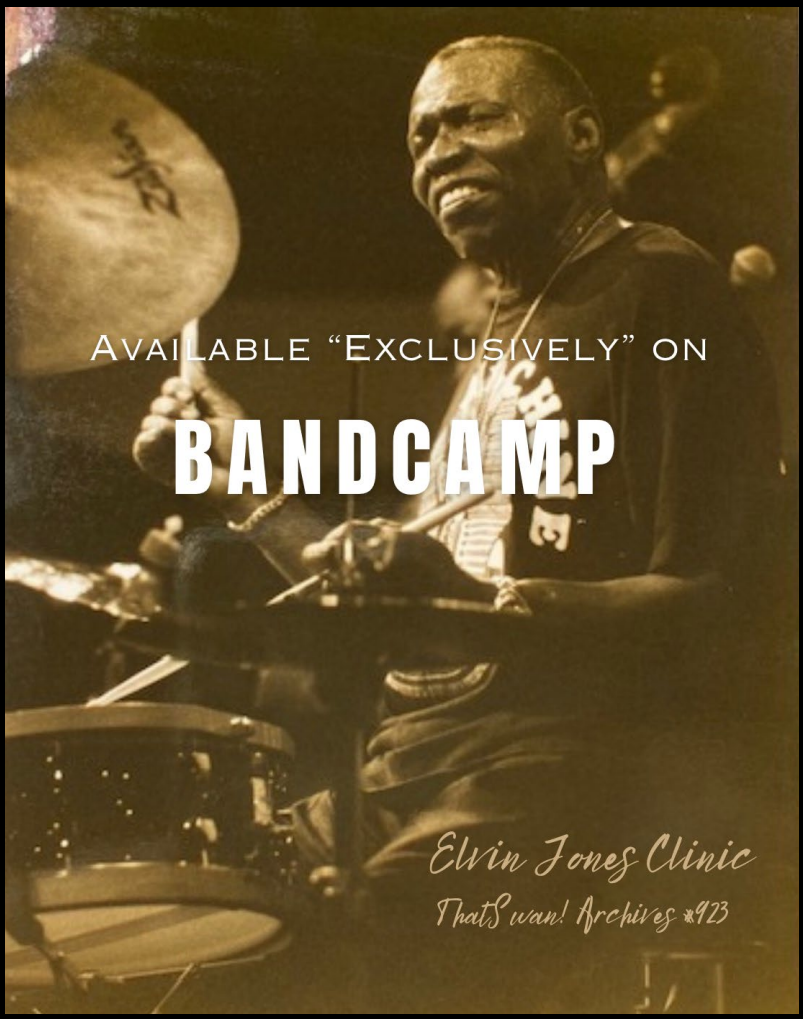
Anthony Branker & Imagine
What Place Can Be For Us? A Suite in Ten Movements
on Origin Records

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

Reviews

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

"Musical beauty in the service of thought, or perhaps the reverse"– ***Paris-Move***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Elvin Jones Clinic
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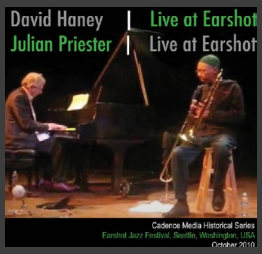
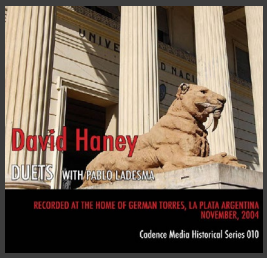
Cadence Media Records
Presents



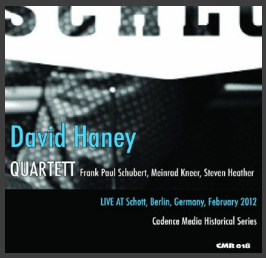
DUETS - Live at Earshot Festival
David Haney, Julian Priester
Recorded in Seattle, USA

LIVE AT - Deep Listening Inst.
D. Haney, J. Priester, M. Bisio, A. Lane, Recorded in Kingston, NY

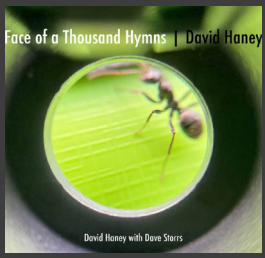
PHANTOM MELODIES
David Haney, Dave Storrs
Recorded in Corvallis, Oregon



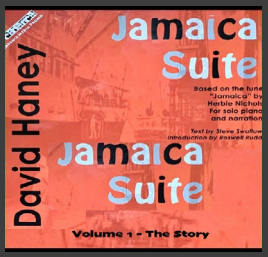
DUETS
David Haney, Pablo Ladesma
Recorded in La Plata, Argentina



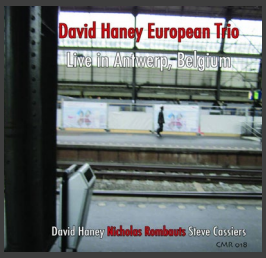
QUARTETT - Live at Schlot
F. Schubert, D. Haney, M. Kneer, S. Heather Recorded in Berlin.



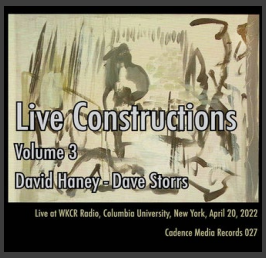
FACE OF A THOUSAND HYMNS
David Haney, Dave Storrs
Recorded in Corvallis, Oregon



JAMAICA SUITE - HANEY TRIO
D. Haney, J. Hernaez, D. Chamy
Recorded in Portland, Oregon



DAVID HANEY EUROPEAN TRIO
D. Haney, N.Rombauts, S. Cassiers
Recorded in Antwerp, Belgium



LIVE CONSTRUCTIONS VOL 3
David Haney, Dave Storrs
Recorded at WKCR, NYC

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PODCASTS

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Presents

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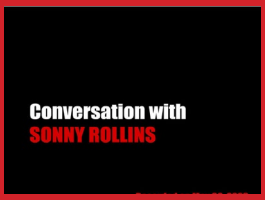
CMR Podcast 087 - Conversation with Ron Carter - Bass



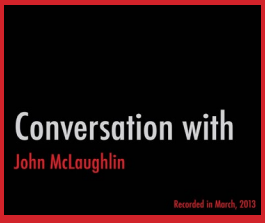
CMR Podcast 086 - Conversation with Sonny Rollins - Saxophone

CMR Podcast 078 - Conversation with Kirk Knuffke - Cornet

CMR Podcast 071 - Conversation with Hollis Taylor - Violin

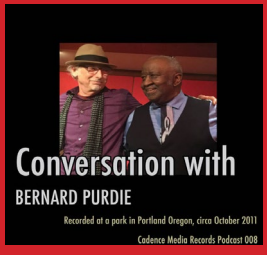
CMR Podcast 013 - Conversation with Lorraine Gordon - Club Owner

CMR Podcast 015 - Conversation with Annie Ross - Vocals



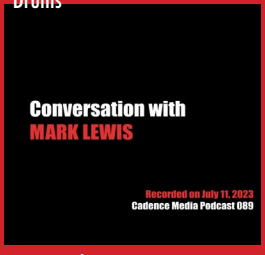
CMR Podcast 005 - Conversation with John McLaughlin - Guitar

CMR Podcast 011 - Conversation with Cindy Blackman Santana - Drums



CMR Podcast 008 - Conversation with Bernard Purdie - Drums

CMR Podcast 004 - Conversation with Jay Clayton - Vocals



CMR Podcast 089 - Conversation with Mark Lewis - Sax, Flute

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This page has been left (almost) blank intentionally.
This page is a symbolic break, what precedes is advertising, (free of editorial influence), what follows is editorial (free of advertising influence).

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 includinig 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

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FRONT COVER

Clockwise from upper left

Herb Robertson
Sara Serpa
Susan Alcorn
Lakecia Benjamin
Brandon Ross

Inside This Issue

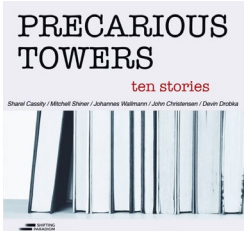
CADENCE MAGAZINE EDITORIAL POLICY

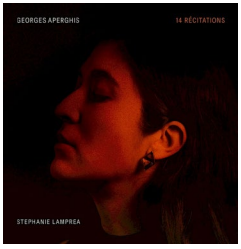
Established in January 1976, Cadence Magazine was a monthly publication through its first 381 issues (until September 2007). Beginning with the October 2007 issue, Cadence increased in number of pages, changed to perfect binding, and became a quarterly publication. On January 1, 2012 Cadence Magazine was transferred to Cadence Media L.L.C. Cadence Magazine continues as an online publication and one print issue per year. Cadence Media, LLC, is proud to continue the policies that have distinguished Cadence as an important independent resource.

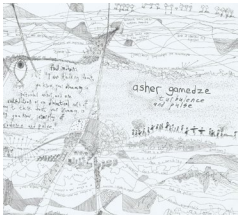
From its very first issue, Cadence has had a very open and inclusive editorial policy. This has allowed Cadence to publish extended feature interviews in which musicians, well known or otherwise, speak frankly about their experiences and perspectives on the music world; and to cover and review all genres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

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

Top Recordings 2023







NEW RELEASES - LARRY HOLLIS

WAYNE ESCOFFERY—LIKE MINDS---SMOKE SESSIONS
THE HEAVY HITTERS---SELF TITLED---CELLAR MUSIC
PRECARIOUS TOWERS---TEN STORIES---SHIFTING PARADIGM
JIM ROTONDI---OVER HERE---CRISS CROSS
LOUIS HAYES---EXACTLY RIGHT!--SAVANT
RON BLAKE—IS THAT SO? MISTAKEN IDENTITY—7TEN33 PRODUCTIONS
CONSTANTINE ALEXANDER—FIRETET--SELF RELEASED
ED CHERRY—ARE WE THERE YET?--CELLAR MUSIC GROUP
ISIAH J. THOMPSON—THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT—BLUE ENGINE
ANTHONY HERVEY—WORDS FROM MY HORN—OUTSIDE IN MUSIC
DAVE STRYKER—PRIME--STRIKEZONE
NICK GREEN—GREEN ON THE SCENE—CELLAR MUSIC
ERIC ALEXANDER—A NEW BEGINNING—HIGH NOTE
TERELL STAFFORD—BETWEEN TWO WORLDS—LECOG RECORDS
JESSE DAVIS—LIVE AT SMALL'S JAZZ CLUB—CELLAR MUSIC
GEORGE COLEMAN—LIVE AT SMALL'S JAZZ CLUB—CELLAR
JOHN PIZZARELLI—STAGE & SCREEN—PALMETTO
IVAN LINS—MY HEART SPEAKS--RESONANCE

REISSUES/HISTORICAL - LARRY HOLLIS

JOHN COLTRANE/ERIC DOLPHY—EVENINGS AT THE VILLAGE GATE—IMPULSE
MILES DAVIS-IN CONCERT AT THE OLYMPIC PARIS –FRESH SOUND
BASIE ALL STARS—LIVE AT FABRIK VOL. 1—NDR KULTUR
TERRI LYNE CARRINGTON—TLC & FRIENDS—CANDID
BACK DOOR—THE IMPULSE SESSIONS—BONFIRE
ART BLAKEY AND THE JAZZ MESSENGERS --IN CONCERT 1962—STEEPLECHASE
FENTON ROBINSON—SOMEBODY LOAN ME A DIME—ALLIGATOR
CANNONBALL ADDERLEY QUINTET—IN CONCERT 1961—STEEPLECHASE
VARIOUS ARTISTS—SOUNDIES:THE ULTIMATE COLLECTION—KINO CLASSICS (DVD)
WES MONTGOMERY/WYNTON KELLY TRIO-MAXIMUM SWING--RESONANCE
CHET BAKER—BLUE ROOM—JAZZ DETECTIVE
JOHNNY GRIFFIN-LIVE AT RONNIE SCOTT'S--GEARBOX

NEW RELEASES - BERNIE KOENIG

DAVID HANEY, JULIAN PRIESTER, ADAM LANE, MICHAEL BISIO LIVE AT THE DEEP LISTENING INSTITUTE CMR 019
THE SOCIETY FOR ELECTRO-ACOUSTIC MUSIC IN THE UNITED STATES MUSIC FROM SEAMUS VOL 21 NEW FOCUS 2012
THE SOCIETY FOR ELECTRO-ACOUSTIC MUSIC VOL 5 NEW FOCUS
STEPHANIE LAMPREA 14 RECITATIONS NEW FOCUS
GUY BARASH KILLDEER NEW FOCUS
CHARLIE APICELLA & IRON CITY - THE GRIOTS SPEAK: DESTINY CALLING, ORIGIN RECORDS
TOMAS JANZON NOMADIC - CHANCES MUSIC
RICHARD BEAUDOIN - DIGITAL MEMORY AND THE ARCHIVE NEW FOCUS

NEW RELEASES - LUDWIG VAN TRIKT

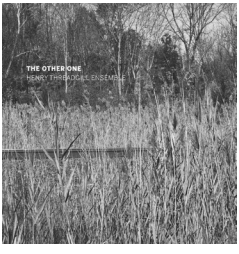
OÙAT PLAYS PER HENRIK WALLIN - THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF JESPER KLINT (DOUBLE LP) UMLAUT RECORDS

Top Recordings 2023

TURBULENCE AND PULSE - ASHER GAMEDZE - INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM
COIN COIN CHAPTER FIVE: IN THE GARDEN... MATANA ROBERTS - CANADA CONSTELLATION
RUDY ROYSTON - DAY - GREENLEAF MUSIC
KAISA'S MACHINE - TAKING SHAPE - GREENLEAF MUSIC
RENDERINGS – CHUCK OWEN AND THE WDR BIG BAND - SUMMIT
WITH BEST INTENTIONS - JOCHEN RUECKERT - COLONEL BEATS
ZACK LOBER - NO FILL3R - ZENNEZ RECORDS
TOMAS FUJIWARA - PITH - FIREHOUSE 12
BUILT IN SYSTEM - CHIEN CHIEN LU - GIANT STEPS ARTS

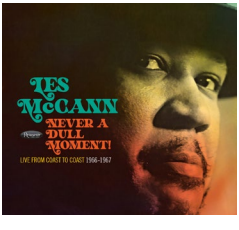
NEW RELEASES - JEROME WILSON

JAIMIE BRANCH, FLY OR DIE FLY OR DIE FLY OR DIE ((WORLD WAR), (INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM)
JAMES BRANDON LEWIS RED LILY QUINTET, FOR MAHALIA, WITH LOVE, (TAO FORMS)
LEAP DAY TRIO, LIVE AT THE CAFE BOHEMIA, (GIANT STEP ARTS)
TYSHAWN SOREY TRIO, CONTINUING, (PI)
INGRID LAUBROCK, THE LAST QUIET PLACE (PYROCLASTIC)
DANIEL HERSOG JAZZ ORCHESTRA, OPEN SPACES - FOLK SONGS REIMAGINED (CELLAR MUSIC)
DAN ROSENBOOM, POLARITY (ORENDA)
ROXANA AMED / FRANK CARLBERG, LOS TRABAJOS Y LAS NOCHES (SONY MUSIC LATIN)
KRIS DAVIS' DIATOM RIBBONS, LIVE AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD (PYROCLASTIC)
ERICA SEGUINE / SHON BAKER ORCHESTRA, THE NEW DAY BENDS LIGHT (SELF-RELEASED)



NEW RELEASES - KEN WEISS

ANNA WEBBER – SHIMMER WINCE – INTAKT
HENRY THREADGILL ENSEMBLE – THE OTHER ONE - PI
JIM & THE SCHRIMPS – AIN'T NO SAINT – INTAKT
SATOKO FUJII PIANO SOLO – TORRENT – LIBRA
INGRID LAUBROCK - THE LAST QUIET PLACE – PYROCLASTIC
MICHAEL FORMANEK ELUSION QUARTET – AS THINGS DO – INTAKT
KRIS DAVIS DIATUM RIBBONS – LIVE AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD – PYROCLASTIC
TYSHAWN SOREY TRIO – CONTINUING – PI
LEAP DAY TRIO – LIVE AT THE CAFÉ BOHEMIA – GIANT STEP ARTS
SUSAN ALCORN SEPTETO DEL SUR – CANTO – RELATIVE PITCH
HAROLD DANKO – TRILLIUM – STEEPLECHASE



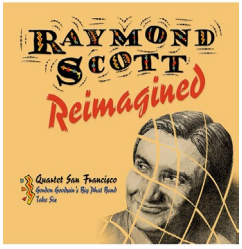
TOP HISTORICAL RECORDINGS - KEN WEISS

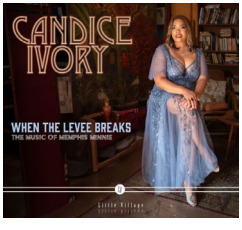
LES MCCANN – NEVER A DULL MOMENT – LIVE FROM COAST TO COAST (1966-1967) - RESONANCE
AHMAD JAMAL – EMERALD CITY NIGHTS-LIVE AT THE PENTHOUSE 1966-1968 – JAZZ DETECTIVE
WES MONTGOMERY WYNTON KELLY TRIO – MAXIMUM SWING-
THE UNISSUED 1965 HALF NOTE RECORDINGS – RESONANCE
CAL TJADER – CATCH THE GROOVE-LIVE AT THE PENTHOUSE 1963-1967 – JAZZ DETECTIVE
CHET BAKER – BLUE ROOM-THE 1979 VARA STUDIO SESSIONS IN HOLLAND – JAZZ DETECTIVE

NEW RELEASES - SCOTT YANNOW

JANE BUNNETT AND MAQUEQUE – PLAYING WITH FIRE – LINUS ENTERTAINMENT

Top Recordings 2023





GUNHILD CARLING – GOOD EVENING CATS! – SELF-RELEASED
KENT ENGELHARDT & STEPHEN ENOS – CENTRAL AVENUE S WING & OUR DELIGHT – MADD FOR TADD
NOAH HAIDU – STANDARDS – SUNNYSIDE
ALINE HOMZY – ECLIPSE - ELASTIC
JON-ERIK KELLSO AND THE EARREGULARS – LIVE AT THE EAR INN – ARBORS
JAMES BRANDON LEWIS – FOR MAHALIA, WITH LOVE – TAO FORMS
QUARTET SAN FRANCISCO & GORDON GOODWIN - RAYMOND SCOTT REIMAGINED – VIOLINJAZZ
OHAD TALMOR – BACK TO THE LAND – INTAKT
SAM TAYLOR – LET GO – CELLAR MUSIC

REISSUES, HISTORICAL - SCOTT YANNOW

TOSHIKO AKIYOSHI – TOSHIKO'S BLUES 1953-1957 – FRESH SOUND
SONNY CLARK – THE COMPLETE BLUE NOTE SESSIONS – MOSAIC
JOHN COLTRANE WITH ERIC DOLPHY – EVENINGS AT THE VILLAGE GATE - IMPULSE
MILES DAVIS – IN CONCERT AT THE OLYMPIA PARIS 1957 – FRESH SOUND
JAZZ AT THE PHILHARMONIC – THE COMPLETE JAM SESSIONS 1950-1957 – MOSAIC
DAN LEVINSON – CELEBRATING BIX – TURTLE BAY
LOREN MCMURRAY – THE MOANINEST MOAN OF THEM ALL – ARCHEOPHONE
MULGREW MILLER – SOLO IN BARCELONA – STORYVILLE
MICHEL PETRUCCIANI – THE MONTREUX YEARS – MONTREUX SOUNDS/BMG
HAZEL SCOTT – COLLECTED RECORDINGS 1939-57 – ACROBAT

NEW RELEASES - FRANK KOHL

JOHN SCOFIELD - YANKEE GO HOME
DAVE STRYKER - PRIME - STRIKEZONE RECORDS
DONNY MCCASLIN - I WANT MORE - EDITIONS RECORDS
SCENES- VARIABLE CLOUDS - ORIGIN RECORDS
FLORIAN ARBENZ - CONVERSATION #9 TARGETED
FRED HERSCH - ESPERANZA SPALDING- ALIVE AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD
HAL GALPER - IVORY FORREST REDUX - ORIGIN RECORDS
TOM KENNEDY - STORIES
ANTOINE BOYER - TANGRAM
BIRELLI LAGRENE - PLAYS LOULOU GASTE

NEW RELEASES - NORA MCCARTHY

HENRY THREADGILL, THE OTHER ONE, PI RECORDINGS
DOM MINASI, ME MYSELF AND I, UNSEEN RAIN RECORDS
TIM ARMACOST, THE INEVITABLE NOTE, TMA RECORDS
MATT VON RODERICK, CELESTIAL HEART, BFD SONY, 2023
DAVID STROTHER, EAR REVERENT, DIGITAL
KUBA CICHOCKI, FLOWING CIRCLES, BJURECORDS (BROOKLYN JAZZ UNDERGROUND)
ANTHONY BRANKER & IMAGINE, WHAT PLACE CAN BE FOR US? A SUITE IN TEN MOVEMENTS
SANTI DEBRIANO & ARKESTRA BEMBE, ASHANTI, JOJO RECORDS
CANDICE IVORY, WHEN THE LEVEE BREAKS, THE MUSIC OF MEMPHIS MINNIE, LITTLE VILLAGE
JACK DESALVO AND CHRIS FORBES, BREAKING THE DRAGON, UNSEEN RAIN RECORDS

Top Ten Philadelphia Gigs 2023
Ken Weiss

1/13 Cyrus Chestnut at Chris' Jazz Café with bassist Eric Wheeler and drummer Chris Beck marked a rare area appearance for the accomplished pianist. His solo on "Nardis" featured striking runs up and down the keys, mirroring breaking glass was memorable.

1/20 Bobby Zankel and the Wonderful Sound Time Travelers - Bobby Zankel (as), Isaiah Collier (ts), Sumi Tonooka (kybd), William Parker (b), Pheeroan akLaff (d) at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) were stunning and numbing with two long sets filled with spiritually charged climaxes.

2/9 Kahil El'Zabar's Ethnic Heritage Ensemble with trumpeter Corey Wilkes and baritone saxophonist Alex Harding at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) was full of Funk, Groove, Jazz and African elements, further establishing Kahil El'Zabar's longstanding Ethnic Heritage Ensemble as a rare and passionate life force.

3/10 Sun Of Goldfinger at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) Tim Berne (as) David Torn (g, elec) and Ches Smith (d, perc) were joined by special guest New Orleans accordionist (also clarinet, electronics and voice) Aurora Nealand for a presentation of (often) raw and evolving music.

4/15 James Blood Ulmer's Black Rock Trio at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) Ulmer's triumphant return to Philadelphia after an absence of 20 years with drummer G. Calvin Weston and electric bassist Mark Peterson found him merging swampy Southern Blues with the sting of Funk and modern Jazz. This performance followed a solo set the night before that was also a stunner.

Top Ten Concerts 2023

6/2 Void Patrol at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) was the third ever performance of the stellar quartet of Elliott Sharp, Billy Martin, Colin Stetson and Payton MacDonald. Fusing elements of Jazz, Drone, and Metal, the music was often in flux yet maintained connectivity and cool headbanger episodes.

6/10 Fieldwork at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) brought together Vijay Iyer (p), Steve Lehman (as) and Tyshawn Sorey (d) for the first time since 2016 for 3 nights. This final set was appropriately compared to "being at a religious event" by a noted local musician.

7/8 Marilyn Crispell (p), Mark Dresser (b) and Gerry Hemingway (d) at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop). Anthony Braxton's dynamic rhythm section from the mid-'80s through mid-'90s ferociously covered the maestro's works with breathtaking unity.

8/22 Shakti – John McLaughlin (g), Zakir Hussain (tabla), Ganesh Rajagopalan (vin), Selvaganesh Vinayakram (perc), Shankar Mahadevan (vcl) at Glenside's Keswick Theatre was a stunning cross-cultural explosion of virtuosity and passion.

9/8 Patrick Zimmerli's Messages at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop). The composer/soprano saxophonist leader led saxophonists Chris Potter, Ron Blake, Román Filiú O'Reilly, pianist Edward Simon, bassist Scott Colley, and drummer Timothy Angulo through a newly adapted suite of music that had Classical roots but felt firmly entrenched in post-modern Jazz. The music frequently surged and Potter's solo was stunning.

Short Takes - Philadelphia

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Short Takes - Philadelphia

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

Ken Weiss

Herb Robertson It's Deeper Than What it Looks Like

By Ken Weiss

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

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

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

Cadence: Is Herb your middle name?

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

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

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

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

Cadence: How much playing are you doing now?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cadence: You were blowing through it?

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

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

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

Cadence: But you played the right one.

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

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

Jersey. You come from a family with no past history of performers. Your dad was a mason/bricklayer of Scottish descent and your mom was a part time seamstress of Italian descent. What was significant about your earliest years?
Robertson: They gave me the freedom to do what I wanted although they didn't understand what I was doing. When I grew up, I have my brother Keith, who also plays clarinet and saxophones, but he never did it totally professionally, although he's retired and playing professionally now. I have 2 sisters Janice and Denise. My oldest sister Jan, older than me, was, and is again a singer in the chorus. My mother's mother loved to sing Italian arias when we were little kids. She used to sing them while making Italian food and we were 4-5 years old, running around. My father's side, the Scottish side, they were just hard workers, builders. My father's family built the Doris Duke estates in New Jersey. They came over from Scotland at the turn of the 20th century. My great-grandfather was hired by the Dukes to come over and build the estates as a bricklayer and ended up building a lot of the towns around that area – which is Somerville, New Jersey, Hillsborough, Raritan, Flemington. Both my mom and dad came from big families, they each had 8 kids in the family. My dad was the baby in his family. His oldest brother could have been his grandfather, that's how big that family was. My paternal grandmother was in a big article in the paper around 1966. They ran a picture of her sitting in the middle with 6 generations sitting around her. It was a gigantic family. She was deaf and she loved when I used to bring the trumpet over when I first started playing because she could hear the trumpet. I put it right on her ear and blew and she'd get excited. When we landed on the moon in 1969, she saw it on TV and said it was fake. She was from the 1800s, she was almost a 100 years old at that point and couldn't believe that someone's on the moon. [Laughs] She was from the horse and buggy era. My dad wanted me to become a bricklayer to keep the tradition going. My younger brother became a bricklayer. I resisted it – 'I want to become a musician.' "Oh, boy, you want to become a musician?" [Laughs] And then when my brother said he wanted to become a musician too, my dad said, "No, only one musician in this family." My sweet brother, but he did it anyway. It took me a while to convince my dad that it was okay to be a musician. When my first album came out, I showed it to him and said, 'I'm on record,' and I first started going to Europe. It took that long [to win him over]. The first time I went to Europe, 1983, I was 32, and that's when my dad started accepting me – "I guess he's okay. He's going to Europe and he's got a record out. I guess it's working for him." It took him 32 years but…[Laughs]
Cadence: In a 2002 interview you credit your father with introducing you to atonal music.
Robertson: Yeah, that was kind of like a joke. [Laughs] That's because he was tone deaf – he couldn't sing a note! [Laughs] I'll tell ya, because he would try to sing a song. I remember, we would be there, he would try to whistle, he was a good whistler but he couldn't whistle in tune. [Laughs] There'd be a song

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

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

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

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

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

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

5th grade. Talk about what happened and how it affected you.
Robertson: It must have been a bad day. I was 9 years old and the "test" to see if I had musical ability in my elementary school was where the 4th grade teacher, who taught everything, played a note on the piano and then played another note. She asked, "Now, was the second note higher or lower than the first note?" I blew it, so I didn't make it that year. They gave me one chance. [Laughs] So, 4th grade was a wash as far as music. Then 5th grade came – same test. This time I guessed it right and they said, "you can play! You have musical ability!" [Laughs] I'm going, 'Great!' Then they asked what instrument I wanted to play. Alright, since I was a pretty shy boy in elementary school, I was a skinny little kid, I didn't know. I was told I could play either the trumpet or the clarinet – they didn't have too many choices. I chose the trumpet because it's loud and it makes me feel like a MAN. Now I can be loud and blow it at people – so I picked up the trumpet. They had a baritone horn available but thank God I didn't get that. What are you gonna do with a baritone horn? There's no gigs for them. Trumpet was a good choice, I think.
Cadence: As you got into your teens, your choice in music and the desire to play the instrument drove you into social isolation because the other kids, and even your parents, wanted to hear Rock, not the Jazz music you were drawn to. You had to listen to the music alone and practice.
Robertson: Yes, I felt I was the only one into playing that type of music. In fact, I was, there was nobody else I could play with - I had to go to New York. There were no players in the area where I was, there were a few, but I had to meet players who were more into what I was into. Originally, I felt that nobody else was doing this. I felt I was a loner, everyone else was into Rock and sports. I remember in high school I used to write my own medical excuses so I could get out of gym class and not have to take gym with the jocks. That way I could go down to the band room. Ha, remember it was the '60s, you could get away with anything. [Laughs] I used to not go to classes, I'd go to the band room. The band director knew I was talented so he gave me a key so I could go to his office and hide out. I'd close the door, pull the shade, and nobody could find me way down at the end of the corridor. That's where the art department was – waaaay down there. "Put them waaaay down there. We don't want 'em. That's where the art people go." Downstairs was the art room - they were nuts. You think the musicians were nuts, the artists were really nuts. [Laughs] I'd get away with not going to English and science and math, which I hated. I had music, I didn't need math. Music is enough math, right? One day I did go to English class, and I thought, 'Yea, I can do this work,' and I wrote a little essay and handed it in. The teacher [was surprised and] said, "Oh, Clarence, thanks for coming to class today." [Laughs] The teacher read my essay to the class, and it was a beautiful essay. Then she goes, "Does anybody know who wrote that?" "No." "Clarence wrote this essay." "Clarence wrote it? We always thought he was like an idiot!" [Laughs] They thought I was autistic or something, and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cadence: Why did you leave school early?

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

Cadence: How did you break your leg?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cadence: How was it to play with Paul Motian?

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

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

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

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

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

Cadence: Would you talk about Roswell Rudd?

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

Cadence: Rashied Ali?

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

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

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

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

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

Cadence: Japanese pianist Satoko Fujii Orchestra New York.

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

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

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

Cadence: Danish guitarist Pierre Dørge's New Jungle Orchestra.

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

Cadence: Germany's Klaus König Orchestra.

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

Cadence: You've also worked with English saxophonist Evan Parker, who, like yourself, has delved deeply into expanding extended techniques on his horn. How is it to play with someone else who has successfully moved past the perceived limitations of their instrument?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cadence: You also played with Paul Bley there.

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

just walked to the stage and messed around and people were saying, "It's an hour late already," and I thought maybe I should go out and do a solo. Then he comes walking down the stairs and he tells me, "Why don't you go up and do a solo first?" I agreed and started, and I see him start walking around the room in the back. This is the best story because I talk to musicians about this and they go, "He did that to you too? [Laughs] You're not the only one, he does it to everybody. He's just putting you on." So, he's walking around the room while I'm playing and he's looking at me, checking me out [from all the angles], and then he comes up and goes, "Okay, cool, cool. Now I'm gonna take a solo." We're supposed to do a duo [Laughs] and so far it's a second solo. I sat down and he takes a solo, and when he finishes, he tells me to take another solo. So I went up and took another solo. [Laughs] By this time, I said screw the coffee, bring me a cognac! I said, 'Forget it! Bring me some cognac, I gotta change my thinking here.' He came up, told me to stop, and he starts another solo! That's when I said, 'Man, screw this!' While he's taking a solo, I just went on stage and started playing and made it a duo. And he went, [Stunned] "Whoa, now we're doing a duo." [Laughs] He just wanted me to jump up on stage. He was into this thing where he wasn't playing a lot, he was just doing New Age stuff. Eventually, he goes, "Okay, man, what ballad do you want to play?" I went, 'A ballad? Okay, "Yesterdays?"' And then we're doing a ballad – "Yesterdays." A frickin ballad! And he takes a little Bebop solo and I'm like, 'My God, what am I gonna play with this?' Finally, it was over with, we got driven back and I don't think we talked the whole time. I was just sleeping on the way back to Amsterdam. When the review came out the next day I had someone translate it. It said "Paul Bley/Herb Robertson Duo: Catastrophe." It said, "It was very obvious that Paul Bley and Herb Robertson did not want to play a duo together." I said, 'Oh boy, I don't want to hear the rest of the review. [Laughs] So, Paul was doing that to everyone. He was in the mindset at that time where he was just going to challenge musicians – ask them about the history of Jazz and then turn duos into solos. That was Paul Bley, and believe me, I have those Paul Bley records with Jimmy Giuffre and Steve Swallow, I love his playing. I even told him that, I said, 'Your playing blew me away.' I swear when I got home, I felt like throwing his records away, but I didn't. You can put that in there if you want – R.I.P. Paul.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

experience trying to teach. [Laughs]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Germany.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cadence: Why were you there by yourself?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cadence: Any other travel stories that come to mind?

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

train to come from Avignon to Paris, but that conductor said he didn't want the responsibility and left it there. Then the third train's conductor said he'd take it. Meanwhile, we had to sit in Paris for 6-7 hours, waiting for my trumpet. Harvey [Sorgen] and I started walking around, looking to find a music store where I could buy a trumpet because we didn't think the trumpet was coming. We found a music store that was open, can you believe it on a Sunday in Paris? They just had student horns and [bad] mouthpieces so I just had to wait. Finally, we got a message that it had come in while we were sitting at the café near the station and Joe [Fonda] and I went back to the train and the conductor comes out with the trumpet. Joe gets it and yells, "I got the trumpet!," and I had a music stand in a gig bag attached to the trumpet which fell out and went underneath the train. I said, "Man, now I lost that beautiful music stand that I brought," because some of these clubs don't have stands. So, Joe decides to go underneath the train, because he's a little guy. [Laughs] None of us could fit under there. He goes under the train, and the train was gonna be leaving soon. I said, "I don't know, Joe," but he goes down and pulls it out. So I got the trumpet but what a day that was. If that was Brooklyn, the trumpet would be gone in a second. This happened around 1996. I remember Harvey left his cymbals once and he got them back. This was all with the Fonda-Stevens Group. Once we were in Germany at some out of the way train station and Joe gets on the train but leaves his beautiful bow at the platform. Someone found it and delivered it to the lost and found and they got it to us. I also lost a Sony Pro cassette recorder on a train in France during my first tour with Tim. We wanted to record all of our gigs for documentation so I bought one. We arrived and I didn't have my recorder so we went into the conductor's office at the train station to report it and the man says, "Oh, you lost it, huh? Really? That's too bad. Well, good luck next time." And all of a sudden, little by little, he opens the drawer and he takes it out. "I was just kidding, here," he says in French. I said, 'Who brought it?' He says, "The person sweeping the floor of the train found it and brought it to us." That's humanity. Do you think someone in New York, sweeping the floor, who found a Sony recorder would bring it to the lost and found? I would hope so but the Europeans are so honest. The humanity over there is so amazing. They have a history of centuries of becoming human. They went through a lot of bombings and wars through the whole continent. They're such nice people. Americans are nice too, most of the ones that I know.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dave Douglas also asked: "As a composer, can you identify a moment when you really felt you were writing music in your own new and unique voice?"
Robertson: When I did Certified because I was adding taped sounds and electronics. I thought my composing had a certain style and I had a certain technique of how to write that was helping me because, say if I was composing, I'd get blocked and I'd have to find a way to get out of that blockage. I had found a technique that I invented, which I'm not gonna give away, [Laughs] which helped me when I got stuck, which happens. I remember when I was doing the Bud Powell record, at one point I said, 'I can't do this.' I had a deadline and all of a sudden I got blocked and I said, 'What am I gonna do?' So, all I did was I stopped, put the pencil down, because I always use a pencil and not a computer, that's how I learned at Berklee. I got away from it all. That's the best thing to do – get away from it – go for a walk, it will come back. For me, it was just laying on the floor. I remember I just laid on the floor in dead man's pose from yoga. It was a hard wooden floor and I just laid there for maybe 25 minutes and then I got up and felt fresh again and I threw some notes down. You know, the thing that scares me the most about composing is when you have the blank score and you see all those staffs looking at you. There's nothing there, just lines, and I go, 'How do I get this thing …' I just stare at that blank score and finally say, 'Fuck it!,' and then just put pencil to the page [Laughs] and just draw a note. That's all it takes, just throwing a note on there, and wherever it goes, blindfolded, just put it there and let it go from there. I think it was Gary Burton who said, "Composing is slowed down improvisation." Sometimes I'd do 2 measures and I'd look at the clock and it had been 3 hours.
Tim Berne (alto sax) asked: "How much of a role do you think magic plays in making music with others?"
Robertson: Magic? Wow, I don't know, magic? Well, it's magic if you have the musicians that you like to play with. When you find musicians that you can hang with, that can be your friends, and they're also great players and improvisers on their instruments - if they're your friends and you can hang with them off the bandstand, that's magic because when you get on the bandstand the music just happens. The first time I played with Mark Helias was in a place called Fat City in New Jersey around the time I left Berklee. We formed a quartet in 1971. We got together, nobody knew anybody, I don't know where we found each other but Mark was living at Fat City, which was like a little commune, in a big house way in the middle of nowhere in Franklin Township, New Jersey. It was a hippie commune, basically, and he had a piano and a drum set there and we went there to play some Jazz. The four of us started playing some tunes from the Real Book, it was alright, nothing special. We were young and a little nervous. I was 20. We took a break, went into the kitchen and started talking. We asked about each other and laughed and joked and had some food and beer, and everybody relaxed. We went back to play and suddenly it was on another level immediately. We said, "Holy shit." We all

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

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

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

Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Herb Robertson
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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Photo credit © Ken Weiss

New Issues

GEORGE NAZOS
WAVES
STREET OF STARS RECORDS
CITY BLUES/ WELCOME HOME/ DESERT WIND/ JAFFA/ SUMMER DREAMS/ SECRET WORLD/ AT LIAM'S/ WAVES 42:59
Nazos, g; Trifon Dimitrov, bass; Joe Abba, d; Tamuz Nissim, vcl 2022 NY,NY

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

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

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

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

Frank Kohl

New Issues

OZ NOY - TRIPLE PLAY

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

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

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

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

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

Frank Kohl

New Issues

MIKE DIRUBBO, INNER LIGHT,

TRUTH REVOLUTION COLLECTIVE 076.

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

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

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

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

Larry Hollis

AHMAD JAMAL
EMERALD CITY NIGHTS

JAZZ DETECTIVE 006

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

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

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Larry Hollis

New Issues

WES MONTGOMERY/WYNTON KELLY TRIO
MAXIMUM SWING: UNISSUED 1965

HALF NOTE RECORDINGS, RESONANCE 2067.

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

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

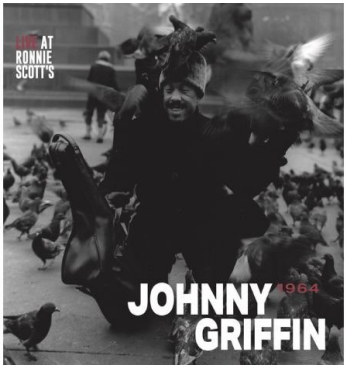
P.S. An earlier import release under the Jazz On Jazz logo with a similar title was heavily flawed containing only eleven tracks with numerous mistakes is apparently out-of-print. Don't be fooled, the Resonance is the one to have. L.H.

New Issues

JOHNNY GRIFFIN,
LIVE AT RONNIE SCOTT'S: 8TH JANUARY 1964,
GEARBOX RSGB1010.2.
THE GIRL NEXT DOOR / (BACK HOME AGAIN IN) INDIANA / BLUES IN TWOS . THE THEME. Total Time: 53:55. Griffin, ts; Stan Tracey, p; Malcolm Cecil, b; Jackie Dougan, d. 1/8/1964. London, UK.

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

Larry Hollis



New Issues

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

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

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

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

DIGITAL DOWNLOAD

AT/ OFF-HANDED INVITATION/ JUMBLES/ FINGERS/ EVEYDAY LANGUAGE/ AC/ GHOST/ SLIPS 51:53 Jeff Cosgrove, d; Noah Preminger as, ts,;Kim Cass, bass Oct 20 2023

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

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

Ivo Perelman ts; Matthew Shipp p; Jeff Cosgrove

(1) The CD opens with some good raucus tenor with great accompanying drums. The energy is maintained throughout the track with solos by all. As a drummer I enjoyed Cosgrove's solo as it really fit the piece. This followed by a nice mellow blues. Lederer's tenor here is nice and warm with some good vibrato. And Lysher is right there with him. As the solo develops, Lederer gets a bit boisterous, but it fits. Great accompaniment from Lysher and Cosgrove, with nice solo by Lysher.

Dewey's Tune is a standout for me. A nice medium tempo bluesy piece with some lyrical tenor playing, great bass support and a nice solo by Cosgrove. And, I think appropriately, Farmer Alfalfa features Lederer's clarinet. Just sounded right to me. A clarinet in field. The tune has a nice Latin feel to it with great work by Lysher and Cosgrove. Interesting to see the inclusion of an oldie in Softly in a Morning Sunrise especially as it was a tune I played in the jazz band in university back in the early 60s.

(2) As this recording opens I want to make immediate comparisons to the previous trio led by Cosgrove. Preminger has a lighter tone and is a bit more lyrical than Lederer and Cass has a heavier sound than Lysher. And the tunes here are more lyrical as well. As the recording goes on I find I am really enjoying Preminger's playing, whether on alto or tenor. Cass provides great support and a great solo on Fingers, and Cosgrove plays appropriately for the tune. I point this because so many drummers in solos just rely on technique and showmanship instead of musicality. The standout track on recording for me is AC. I don't know if it stands for Alternating Current or Air Conditioning, but it really cooks. The melody is lyrical and everyone shines. The recording ends with two mellow pieces.

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

(3) I haven't heard Perelman and Shipp for a long time. This is a very different make up from the previous two recordings, partly because of the length of the pieces and the different instrumentation. So I was very interested in how Cosgrove would function here. I must admit I am not a great fan Perelman. I find his high squeaking a bit tiresome. But he also is capable of some very lyrical playing. He seems to go from a lyrical line which he then builds and builds to his high note squealing and then

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

Bernie Koenig

DAVE STRYKER TRIO WITH BOB MINTZER, GROOVE STREET,

STRIKE ZONE 8826

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

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

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

Larry Hollis