

THE INDEPENDENT JOURNAL OF **CREATIVE** IMPROVISED **MUSIC**



VOLUME 52 **NUMBER 1**

JAN FEB MARCH 2026

SHAWN PURCELL

OBLIVITY

featuring **WALT WEISKOPF**
CHRIS ZIEMBA JEFF REED STEVE FIDYK
DARDEN PURCELL BEN PATTERSON



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

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

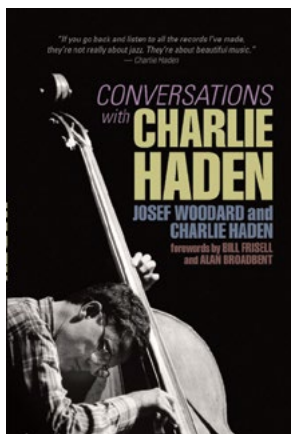


WWW.ORIGINARTS.COM www.shawnpurcell.com



Conversations with Charlie Haden

by Josef Woodard and Charlie Haden



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

— Francis Davis

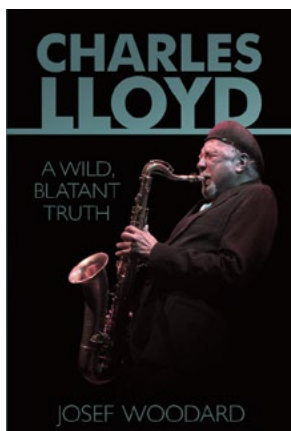
"Woodard's treasure trove of interviews with Charlie Haden gives us such an intimate feeling of the jazz giant that we feel like we're sitting in the room with an old friend. . . . Haden opens up about his iconic musical associates over the years, allowing us rare access into the insular world of jazz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

— Michelle Mercer

\$19.95 256 pages, paper, illustrated

Charles Lloyd: A Wild and Brilliant Truth

by Josef Woodard



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

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

\$18.95 240 pages, paper, illustrated

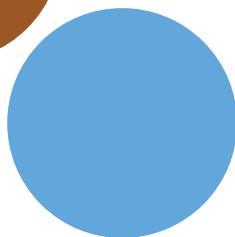
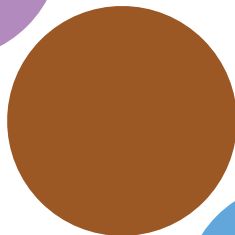
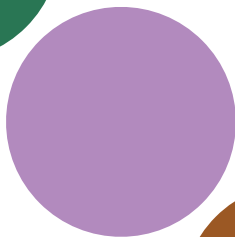
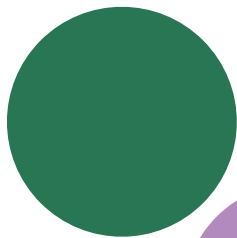
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FRITZ HAUSER
TIZIA ZIMMERMANN
CHRISTY DORAN



VOL.3

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Christy Doran

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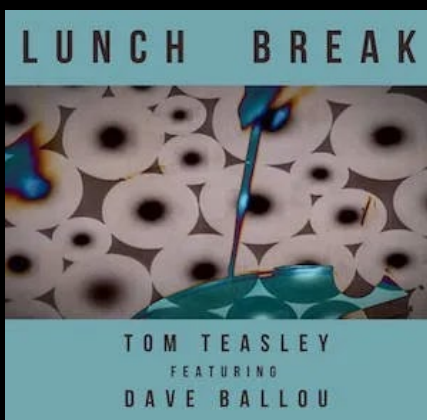
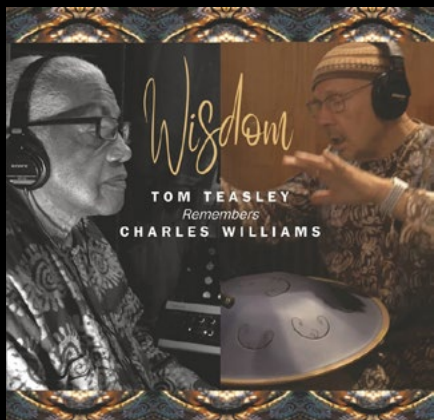
BREMEN 1965

In 1965 it was with Charlie Rouse, Larry Gales and Ben Riley that Monk embarked on his largest tour to date. After two days in Paris, the ensemble performed in **Bremen**, Germany on Monday, March 8th.

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Abe Goldstien, Papatamus Redux, Cadence Magazine

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Alexa Peters - Downbeat

"Ballou's trumpet skirts and dashes around Teasley's crafty rhythm beds with the deftness of a dancer prowling the stage."

Geno Thackara - All About Jazz



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2. There Will Never Be Another You
3. Skylark
4. Whistle While You Work
5. Sweet Georgia Brown
6. Yardbird Blues (with Keb' Mo')
7. What A Wonderful World
8. Put On A
Happy Face
9. These Are Soulful Days
10. Cute

Musicians:

Guitar - Mike Pachelli
Bass - Tony Levin
Drums - Danny Gottlieb
Guitar - Keb' Mo' (Track 6)

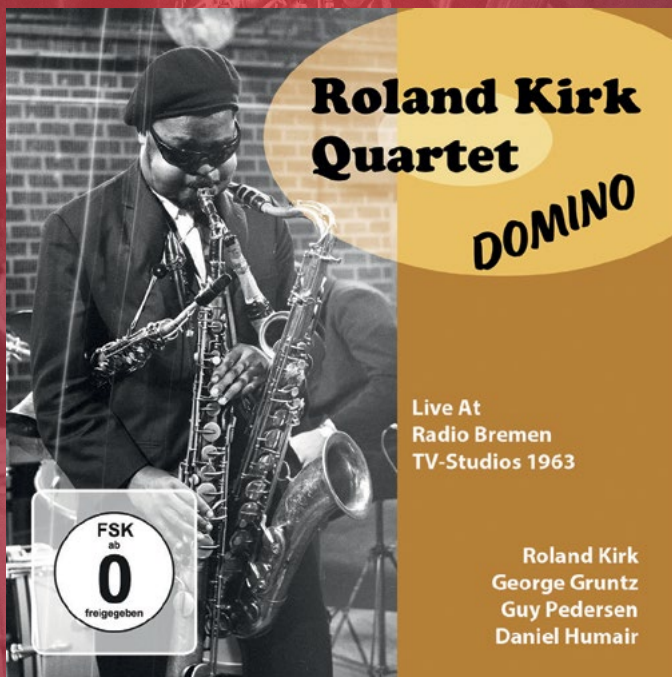
Download "High Standards" at: www.MikePachelli.com

Thanks Cadence!

Top 10 Critics Poll 2025:

Roland Kirk Quartet - Domino

- Invigorating gig from a US legend with a stellar European rhythm section. (Jazzwise)
- This is one of the best Rahsaan Roland Kirk films that is available! (L.A. Jazz Scene)
- Multi-instrumentalist Kirk delivers dynamic performances. (Downbeat)



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Andy Hamilton, Jazz Journal

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Des Cowley, Rhythms Magazine

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NASHEET WAITS ~ SCOTT WALTON ~ DAVID WESSEL ~ NATE WOOLEY**

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brilliant musicians and artists, all of whom great human beings,
for entrusting us with your music.

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Cadence Magazine (USA)

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Rick DiMuzio , Tenor Saxophone; **Gilson Schachnik** , Piano; **Gary Fieldman** , Drums

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

Catch Bruce at Scullers in Boston on January 24, 2026.

Tickets

<https://www.ticketweb.com/event/bruce-gertz-quintet-scullers-jazz-club-tickets/14735793?pl=scullers>



SCAN ME

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

LOUIS ROSEN



AMERICAN SUNSET

Music and Lyrics by Louis Rosen

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

Piano: **Charity Wicks**

Acoustic Bass: **Pete Donovan**

Vibraphone & Drums: **Andy Blanco**

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

Producers: **Louis Rosen & Scott Lehrer**

Recording & Mixing Engineer: **Scott Lehrer**

Studio: **Second Story Sound**

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

Art Design: **Nathan Golub**

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

Available at
<https://louisrosen.com>
and all digital outlets

BRILLIANT NEW WORK..

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

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



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

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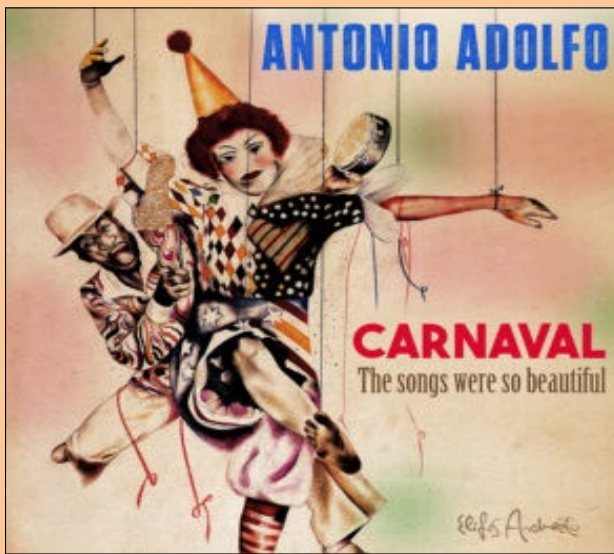


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Idriss Boudria – alto sax
Marcelo Martins – tenor sax and flute
Rafael Rocha – trombone
Andre Siqueira – percussion



**Arranged and produced by
Antonio Adolfo**

www.antonioadolfofmusic.com
www.aammusic.com



DUSK AND DAWN

RICH HALLEY 4

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

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

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Howard Mandel, president - Jazz Journalists Association

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Matthew Ruddick, *Kind of Jazz*

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

Adam Sieff, *Jazz On The Beach* radio show

Additional reviews at
www.mikegerberjournalist.co.uk/reviews

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- Adam Baruch - The Soundtrack of My Life

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FOOD FOR THE MIND'S EAR

Once Upon A Time...



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

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

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

– AllAboutJazz.com



Once Upon A Time
(Strouse/Adams)

By
Laura Ainsworth



@Laura Ainsworth

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

— Scott Yanow

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

— Jack Bowers

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

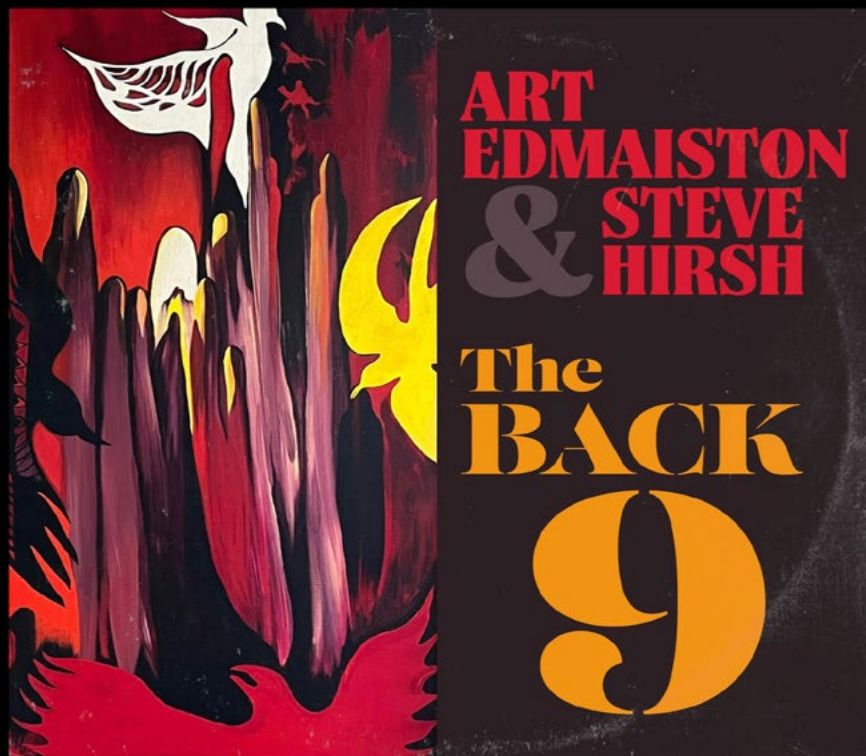


Vagabond serves up 10 original gems by Campbell plus a lush, sensuous take on *Body and Soul*, all brought to life by the powerhouse Vosbein Magee Big Band. With stunning arrangements by jazz legend Carroll DeCamp, this is a must-have for any serious big band collector—modern jazz at its most captivating.

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

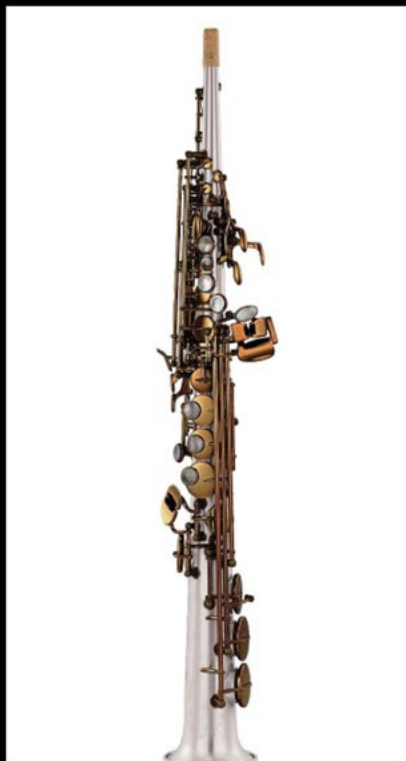


The Back 9 is an ideal introduction to another side of saxophonist Art Edmaiston, who has been a mainstay in Memphis' blues and pop music scene since 1990. It is also an excellent addition to drummer Steve Hirsh's growing catalogue of music. Together, they explore extemporaneous playing in a way that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

Bandcamp link:

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

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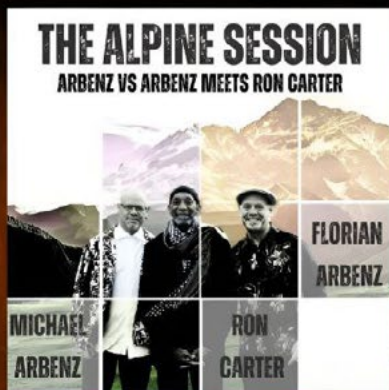


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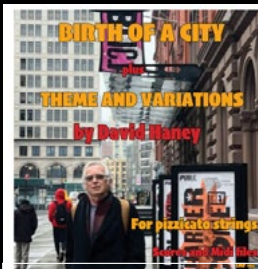


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David Haney Quartet



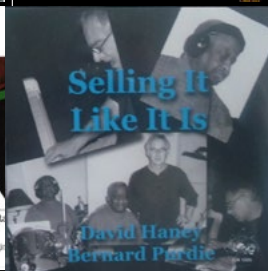
stage of mirage

andrew cyrille dominic duval david haney

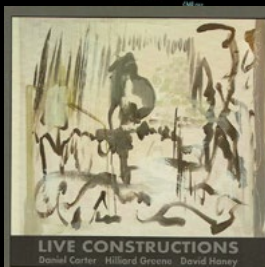


David Haney
Jorge Hernandez
Diego Chamy

Cladstone



David Haney
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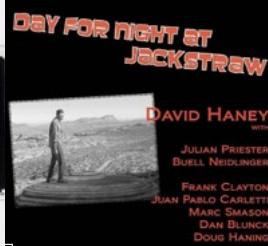


Daniel Carter Hilliard Greene David Haney

david haney andrew cyrille



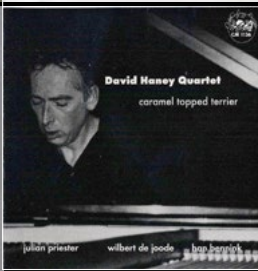
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DAVID HANEY
WITH
JULIAN PRIESTER
BUELL NEIDLINGER
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JUAN PABLO CARLETTI
MARC SHAMON
DAN BLINCK
DOUG HANING

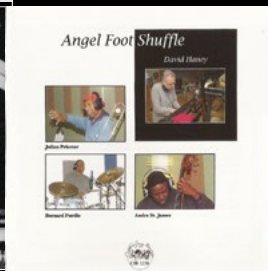


conspiracy a go go



David Haney Quartet
caramel topped barrier

julian priester wilbert de jonde han bennink



Angel Foot Shuffle
David Haney



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New Orleans Magazine

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vocals & jazz flute

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THE VOICE of BRUBECK

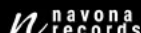
VOL.2
THEMES AND EXPLORATIONS

THE VOICE OF BRUBECK VOL. 2

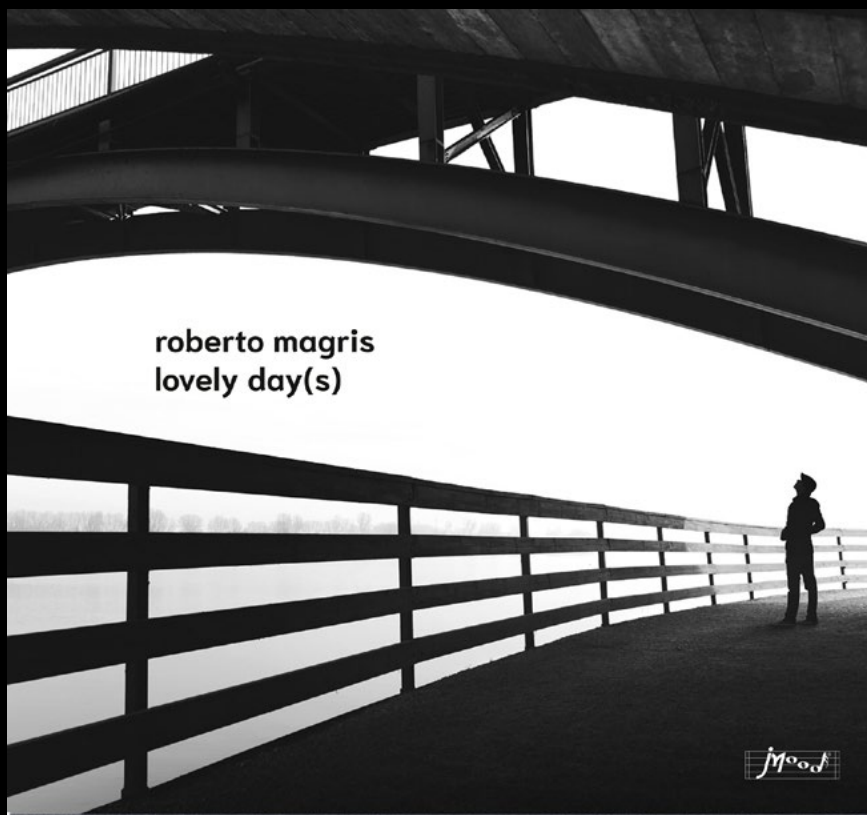
FRANZ ANTON KRAGER, THE MOORES SCHOOL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, CHRIS BRUBECK, THE PAUL ENGLISH QUARTET, THE MOORES SCHOOL OF MUSIC CHAMBER CHOIR

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN CADENCE

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



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FRONT COVER
Clockwise from upper left

Jack DeJohnette
Gary Peacock
Lucian Ban
Mat Maneri
Joe McPhee
Ra Kalem Bob Moses
Cooper-Moore
Steve Holt

Inside This Issue

CADENCE MAGAZINE EDITORIAL POLICY

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

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

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

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

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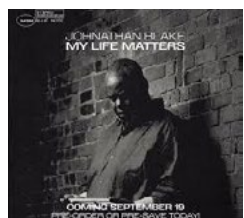
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Top Recordings 2025



2025 TOP NEW RECORDINGS - LARRY HOLLIS

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

REISSUES/HISTORICAL - LARRY HOLLIS

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

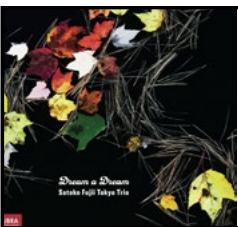
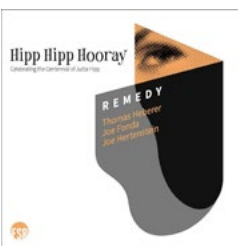
2025 TOP NEW RECORDINGS - FRANK KOHL

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

2025 TOP NEW RECORDINGS - ABE GOLDSTEIN

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

Top Recordings 2025



EHUD ASHERIE – THANK YOU BARRY HARRIS –
ARBORS
MICHAEL BISIO – NUMBQ – MAHAKALA
JOE MCPHEE – WE KNOW WHY THE CAGED BIRD
SINGS – ROGUE ART
THOMAS HEBERER – HIPPI HIPPI HOORAY – FSR
DAVID KIKOSKI – WEEKEND AT SMALLS – CELLAR
JORIS ROELOFS – RITE OF SPRING – ICP
STEVE HIRSH – THE BACK NINE – SELF PRODUCED

REISSUES/HISTORICAL - ABE GOLDSTEIN

DAVE BURRELL – THE LOST SESSION – NO BUSINESS
RASHIED ALI – SIDEWALKS IN MOTION – SURVIVAL
ELLERY ESKELIN – ABOUT (OR ON) FIRST –
EZZTHETICS
KENNY DORHAM – BLUE BOSSA IN THE BRONX
– RESONANCE
IRENE SCHWEIZER – IRENE'S HOT FOUR – INTAKT
GATO BARBIERI – STANDARDS LOST & FOUND
CHARLES MINGUS – IN ARGENTINA – RESONANCE
JIMMY BENNINGTON – BLUE VEILS – THAT SWAN
FRANK KIMBROUGH – THE CALL
HORACE TAPSCOTT – LIVE AT WIDNEY HIGH 1971

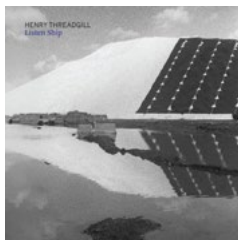
2025 TOP NEW RECORDINGS - JEROME WILSON

ENSEMBLE C – EVERY JOURNEY – ADHYAROPA
AMINA CLAUDINE MYERS – SOLACE OF THE MIND
LINDA MAY HAN OH – STRANGE HEAVENS
FABIA MANTWILL ORCHESTRA – IN - SIGHT
JASON KAO HWANG – MYTHS OF ORIGIN
PATRICIA BRENNAN – OF THE NEAR AND FAR
VAN MORRISON – REMEMBERING NOW – EXILE
JIMMY FARACE – HOURS FLY, FLOWERS DIE
THE HEMPHILL STRINGTET – PLAYS THE MUSIC OF
JULIUS HEMPHILL – OUT OF YOUR HEAD
BRANFORD MARSALIS QUARTET – BELONGING (

2025 TOP NEW RECORDINGS - KEN WEISS

RAPHAEL PANNIER QUARTET/KHADIM NIANG &
SABAR GROUP – LIVE IN SAINT LOUIS, SENEGAL
SYLVIE COURVOISIER/MARY HALVORSON – BONE
BELLS – PYROCLASTIC
SATOKO FUJII TOKYO TRIO – DREAM A DREAM
PATRICIA BRENNAN – OF THE NEAR AND FAR
SYLVIE COURVOISIER /WADADA LEO SMITH – ANGEL
FALLS – INTAKT

Top Recordings 2025



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



REISSUES/HISTORICAL - KEN WEISS

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



KENNY DORHAM – KENNY DORHAM BLUE BOSSA IN
THE BRONX LIVE FROM THE BLUE MOROCCO
RAHSAAN ROLAND KIRK – VIBRATIONS IN THE
VILLAGE: LIVE AT THE VILLAGE GATE



2025 TOP NEW RECORDINGS - SCOTT YANOW

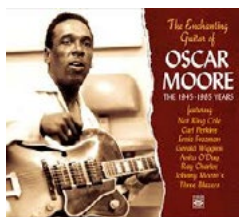
JOE FARNSWORTH – THE BIG ROOM – SMOKE
SESSIONS
IRVING FLORES AFRO-CUBAN SEXTET – ARMANDO MI
CONGA – AMOR DE FLORES PRODUCTIONS
SULLIVAN FORTNER – SOUTHERN NIGHTS – PIAS
NENNA FREELON – BENEATH THE SKIN – ORIGIN
CAITY GYORGY – HELLO! HOW ARE YOU? – SELF-
RELEASED
DAVID KIKOSKI – WEEKEND AT SMALLS – CELLAR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



REISSUES/HISTORICAL – SCOTT YANOW

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

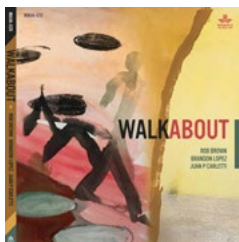
Top Recordings 2025



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



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



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



Top Ten Concerts 2025



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



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



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



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



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



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

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

Top Ten Concerts 2025



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



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



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

Short Takes - Philadelphia

Philadelphia, PA- The last time Joe McPhee played Philadelphia was in 2012 (along with the late Dominic Duval as part of Trio X) so his appearance on 10/1 at 2223 Fish (Fire Museum Presents) was long overdue. McPhee, now 85-years young, was traveling light – just a tenor sax and his poetry in tow for this gig with Michael Foster's The Ghost [Foster (ts, ss, samples, compositions), John Moran (b), Joey Sullivan (d)]. An unannounced treat was the addition of heavyweight didgeridoo player Harold Smith, who McPhee had invited to join the fray. The set was split fairly evenly between McPhee expressively reciting his original pieces in a way that was non-preachy nor angry but rather in a more natural storyteller fashion. Beginning with, "The sound begins in the silence of the morning," and later "No buzzards shall pick their bones tonight. We are not dead. We must not sleep... Sometimes the cauldron bubbles hot and sometimes not." At the same time he was delivering his spoken word messages the other performers forcefully extracted sounds. Foster's relentless and innovative playing included a thin balloon attached from his mouth to his sax mouthpiece, as well as a long tubular insert that he placed into the bell of his horn and a cylindrical cover over the horn's bell. Smith's earthy didgeridoo complimented McPhee's resonant sax work. Post-set, McPhee humbly spoke about his spoken word work – "This is something else I've been dragging around and inflicting on people. I like to read the stuff because the instrument is one voice and this is another." That set was preceded by The Humanosity Project (Matt Lavelle, flgh, bass and piccolo E flat cl; Pete Dennis, b; Julius Masri; d) which authored a rich and shifting array of instrumental textures ranging from somewhat sparse to fierce. When a well-schooled listener mentioned to Lavelle that she heard some quoting from the standard "Don't Misunderstand," he was impressed with the observation but said it wasn't done intentionally. "I'm trying to have a lyrically melodic thing. That's my whole thing, even in the hardcore Free stuff. I'm trying to give the listener something to grab on to. I studied with Ornette Coleman and a lot of my stuff is [based] off of his "Love Life" from his Skies of America recording." ...Fire Museum Presents brought in pianist Lucian Ban and violist Mat Maneri for a third time to present their improvisations on the Béla Bartók Field Recordings of early 20th century Folk songs from Transylvania on. The 10/5 event marked the first Jazz gig at The Large Room of The Perch – a very large concrete-floored space attached to The Perch that until recently was occupied by a recycling business. Ban grew up in Transylvania under the influence of fellow countryman Bartók and got Maneri, his frequent collaborator for years, interested in Bartók's compositions starting in 2018 and leading to a number of award winning releases. The 20th century Hungarian composer Béla Bartók loved the Folk music of Transylvania in western Romania. He famously experienced an epiphany in 1904 when he heard an 18-year-old woman singing songs from her Transylvanian village and was soon on the road in search of more Folk music. Between 1909 – 1917 Bartók became a pioneer of field recordings, lugging around an Edison cylinder recorder and blank wax rolls to capture sound, allowing him to transcribe thousands of melodies after recording hundreds of Folk musicians on the wax cylinders. He later referred to his research into Transylvanian Folk music as, "My life's goal." Ban and Maneri worked through a number of their Bartók improvisations including "Lover Mine of Long Ago," which found Ban dampening the piano strings with his left hand for a percussive hammering effect. They also performed "Transylvania Dance," "Lord

Short Takes - Philadelphia

Make Me," "Dowry Song," "Enchanted Stag," and "Poor is My Heart." Bassist Jair-Rohm Parker Wells opened the set with some sound sculpturing by way of recorded sounds and looping. With a career spanning over four decades, Wells has played with the influential German band Embryo and was a founding member of Machine Gun... John Coltrane's 99th Birthday (9/23) was celebrated by two special events in Philadelphia on 10/10 that included his son, saxophonist Ravi Coltrane, who was 2 at the time of his father's untimely death. The Coltrane Estate, in partnership with the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and in collaboration with Ars Nova Workshop, announced plans for the restoration and revitalization of the Coltrane House Philadelphia at 1511 North 33rd Street in Philadelphia's Strawberry Mansion neighborhood. The rowhouse, which had already been designated a National Historic Landmark, is where John Coltrane settled in 1952 at the age of 25 until 1958. Bought with funds from the GI Bill, he lived there with his mother, his cousin Mary Alexander (immortalized as "Cousin Mary" on the 1960 classic *Giant Steps*, written while Coltrane lived in home), and a childhood friend from North Carolina. After their marriage in 1955, Coltrane's first wife, Juanita "Naima" Austin, also moved in. In this modest home he pursued relentless practice and experienced profound artistic and personal transformation, as well as a place to seek relief after Miles Davis fired him in 1957 from his "First Great Quintet" because of Coltrane's addictions. Coltrane returned home to confront withdrawal and to embrace what he later described as a spiritual awakening. This turning point gave rise to his first great masterpiece, *Blue Train*, recorded that same year. The fate of the house had been in question since Mary Alexander sold the property in 2004 to Norman Gadson, a real estate developer and avid jazz aficionado. Gadson died in 2007, leaving his family to maintain the property, while questions arose over Alexander's right to make the sale. The Coltrane Estate has since worked to conserve the house, rescuing it from the National Trust for Historic Preservation's list of America's Most Endangered Places. The house was named to the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia's own Endangered Properties List in 2011. After years of legal wrangling, the estate has regained ownership of the house and formed a nonprofit that will take ownership, and a working group with Ars Nova Workshop's Mark Christman and Anthony Tidd. A public celebration was held in front of the home at noon with a number of local musicians playing and Ravi Coltrane speaking about the restoration project and his father. More events at the house are being planned. Later that night, Ravi Coltrane performed at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) with a one-off quartet – Coltrane, ts, ss, soprano s; Gadi Lehavi, p; Anthony Tidd, el b and Timothy Angulo, d. Fittingly, the set was totally comprised of John Coltrane compositions commencing with a gritty "Ole," followed by "Wise One" which integrated a wildly thrilling improvised section by the leader. Variations on an exuberant "Miles Mode" preceded "Compassion," which found Coltrane straining on his tippy toes, exhausting all he could out of his soprano. After Coltrane announced the closer "Giant Steps," Tidd said, "Are we good?" To which Coltrane said, "We'll see." A scorching version of the classic tune followed with Lehavi impressing with his keyboard dexterity and marathon stamina. I found this to be a more "out" session than what I had witnessed Ravi Coltrane doing in the past, perhaps he was inspired

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by his time spent at his father's house or because of the venue. Perhaps, it's his current progression – whatever – but hats off to him... Marshall Allen was happily making music two nights later at a record release event at The Large Room of The Perch (Fire Museum Presents). The Marshall Allen Trio (Allen, EVI, as, Casio kybd; Dave Hotep, g, synth; Elliott Levin, ts, flt) with the Ade Ilu Ensemble (Kevin Diehl, bata, Lucumi vcl; Joseph Toledo, lead Lucumi vcl; Sam Poplar, bata, Lucumi vcl; Baba Joe Bryant, bata, Lucumi vcl) first came together on a Halloween night concert in 2023, when Allen's trio joined the Afro Cuban Yoruban percussion ensemble, Ade Ilu, onstage. Two days later they all met up in the studio and the new recording is now available and consists of three extended "oriki" (Yoruba narratives) that explore universal themes. The performance featured an ongoing spiritual bata drone with wafts of Jazz as well as explosive segments from Allen, mostly while manning his sax, pairing well with Levin's tenor and flute. Post-set, The Perch's proprietor, Jeff Carpineta, marveled at the prowess of the 101-year-old Allen and the spiritually cleansing music that filled his space and added, "I spoke with Marshall before the set and all he asked for was a strong cup of coffee. Elliott Levin overheard that and said, 'Make it two.'" ... Ars Nova Workshop has made it a point to celebrate 60 years of the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) this year. Their 10/15 offering at Solar Myth was Katalyst Conversation, a new ensemble of Chicago musicians - Ari Brown (ts, p), Ed Wilkerson Jr (ts, alto cl, cl dig), Vincent Davis (d) and Preyas Roy (vib). Their set began like a mist settling in with a soulful, prayerful-like opening, a common theme for AACM-spawned ensembles. [Brown told me it wasn't a tribute to the ancestors, such as what the Art Ensemble of Chicago does, but rather just as a way to collect their thoughts] Over time the music ramped up into powerfully sustained high-level interplay. Wilkerson was impressive, switching from horn to horn, and late set pulling out a streamlined didgeridoo for extra gravitas. About half way into the night, Brown switched to piano, adding colorful additions until suddenly breaking out into a beautiful, melodic piano solo that triggered an eclectic break in direction. Roy and Davis excelled at providing fertile ground, aggressively pushing the beat ahead for the totally improvised set... Pianist [and Guggenheim Fellow] Elio Villafranca has held a soft spot in his heart for Philadelphia's The Painted Bride Art Center, the presenter of his first performance as a leader in the States [1998] after he moved to the city from Cuba. He lived in town for 8 years before relocating to New York. The Bride has moved operations twice since that first gig of his and was presenting a series of shows at the Fallser Club. Villafranca appeared there on 10/19 with his spirited sextet – Elio Villafranca & The Jass Syncopators [Freddie Hendrix (tpt, flgh), Sam Dillon (ts, flt), Gregg August (b), Joel Mateo (d) and Carlos Maldonado (perc)] which swung and hit hard with Afro-Caribbean rhythms. Presenting original compositions, Villafranca took listeners through a tour of his recordings to date. Beginning with "Assumption," which started with a hefty percussion intro (including the leader teaching the audience to clap the Rumba clave rhythm), followed by "Hemisferios," and then "Habana Blues Chronicle," which Villafranca explained was written to reflect his experience growing up in a small Cuban town and how it felt to travel to the big, wild city of Havana to study music. He slowed things down with "Encantaciones Cubanas," an airy piece that included a standout August bass solo that glowed with dark and woody sustain. For the last tune before the break, Villafranca

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called upon Juan Castellanos, his former roommate from Havana's prestigious Instituto Superior de Arte. The two old friends had not seen each other for 15 years. Castellanos happened to be in town and came on stage to share congas with Maldonado. Hendrix and Dillon formed a front line that often spewed celebration and high drama. Hendrix impressively hit really high notes. At the break, an excited Hendrix loudly pointed to Dillon and said, "Whatever it is – that's it!" The second set followed with more high energy music including "Four Brothers," which was written in dedication to the Neville Brothers. Villafranca was a delight to hear on his electric keyboard and to watch as his joy and love for the music oozed forward. August impressed with his knowledge of Latin beats. It turns out he's been to Cuba 9 times over the past 20 years to imbibe the sounds there and has done fill-in work for Buena Vista Social Club. The night ended with the sole unoriginal piece – Pat Martino's "El Hombre." Villafranca explained at the time he was preparing to record his first album, he saw Pat Martino perform at Chris' Jazz Café and he was intrigued – "Why is this Italian guy playing "El Hombre?" He asked Martino for permission to record his tune and was told to get the chart from the great guitarist at the end of the set. When it came time to collect it, Martino said, "Why don't I play it with you?" Not a bad start for Villafranca's first recording. The tune this night was enriched by the presence once again of Villafranca's former schoolmate, Castellanos. The sextet + 1 threw down a frenzied effort that featured an eye-popping conga section... The Adam Rudolph Sunrise Trio at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) on 10/24 brought a cogency to Rudolph's multicultural vision of soul-enriching music. Rudolph, the master percussionist/ multi-instrumentalist who has performed with Yusef Lateef, Don Cherry, Jon Hassell, Sam Rivers, Pharaoh Sanders, L. Shankar, Fred Anderson, Muhal Richard Abrams, Wadada Leo Smith and Omar Sosa, explained his mindset for this trio's work - "This is the music people would have made 150,000 years ago if they lived in the future." That seemingly grandiose statement was substantiated once the band got busy - linear time seemed to vanish to the point of becoming meaningless. The improvised set with Kaoru Watanabe (taiko, Japanese percussion, noh kan and fue flt, el koto) and Alexis Marcelo (p, kybd, kudu horn, perc) began with Rudolph announcing, "We try to play music soulfully but push into new territories and boundaries," Opening with a gentle stream of sounds that enlarged into an entrance to an enchanted jungle with Rudolph's instrumental bird calls and calming electronics and percussion from his bandmates. Eventually, Rudolph's intricate musical tapestry transitioned from its primal introduction through periods of sound bath into divine, timeless realms of otherness. A late section that featured the mesmerizing Watanabe on taiko and the leader on congas was hypnotic, transformative. Watanabe's periodic primal vocals, combined with intense, martial movements, added a mesmerizing dimension. At times, the music was trippy, especially when Rudolph turned to the mouthbow. This was a vibrational cleansing with the trio synchronistically tapping into a heightened reality. Rudolph's closing words summed it up best, "Thank you for traveling with us."...Bobby Zankel's Wonderful Sound 3 at The Perch (Fire Museum Presents) on 11/13 brought the indefatigable Cooper-Moore back to town along with Chad Taylor filling the drum chair held by Pheeroan akLaff in the recent past. Zankel was in a creative mood as always with special angst fueled by an active family illness issue. He started things off in dramatic fashion, blowing searing alto sax from the rear of

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the audience while making his way to the stage. Cooper-Moore played on a Mason & Hamlin refurbished piano, a similar instrument to what he played during his schooling years. He noted that this brand of piano offers limited depth to compression of the keys and care needed to be taken when playing aggressively. He claimed prior to the set, "I will have to take it easy, I will not be abusing this piano." Once the music started, he immediately started abusing the piano with crashing fingers and the occasional forearm and elbow attack. The threesome of kindred spirits played seamlessly together with Taylor's shifting infectious beats, adding a new element to Zankel's emotive outpouring. Taylor splits his time between Philly and Pittsburgh and has played plenty of times with Zankel so there is a comfort zone built up between them. Mid-set, Cooper-Moore took over after a pause in the fiery music to lay out a tranquil, South African-esque melody that turned the music as Zankel and Taylor immediately followed suit. Zankel took the mic at the end to say, "The forces of evil and negativity can poison the air, take the people's food and medicine, but cannot control or steal our SPIRITS, our LOVE, our UNITY and KNOWLEDGE of the inevitability of GOOD'S TRIUMPH!" The improvised set was recorded so be on the lookout for this gem performance. A second group followed that night – Tropos, a collective ensemble of improviser-composers featuring four young artists out of the New England Conservatory who are active on Brooklyn's creative music scene: Phillip Golub (p), Ledah Finck (vin), Yuma Uesaka (cl, b cl), and Aaron Edgcomb (d / perc). The members of Tropos have progressed under the mentorship of saxophonist Darius Jones and call their aesthetic "outer-space chamber music" because of the way their compositions push the boundaries between New music, Jazz, Noise, and beyond. Golub announced that the ensemble's music is based on switches, which was also the name of the first composition they played. Their music concept is based on high-powered energy, sudden radical rhythmic and harmonic shifts, and a kinetic range of dynamics. The pieces covered were composed by each band member so there was significant variability in the music – ranging from modern Classical Chamber music to Free Jazz. The music transported from spiky to hectic to melodic to demonstrations of virtuosity including the impressive Finck violin solo mid-set. Highlight compositions included Edgcomb's irresistible "Aerator Debris," and Finck's fun, "The Best Donuts in Philadelphia" finale that showcased Uesaka's rich Klezmer clarinet effort. Of course, Finck was queried about where the best donuts existed in Philadelphia and she revealed that the piece was written in Kutztown, a borough outside of Philadelphia...New York City's The Jazz Gallery developed its Mentorship Program over 10 years ago with the plan of matching a seasoned Jazz professional with a rising young talent to provide aspiring musicians with the opportunity to learn the music business of Jazz under the guidance of their contemporary heroes. Pianist Tyler Bullock had his mentor saxophonist Tim Berne in tow on 11/23 at The Black Squirrel Club along with drummer Tim Angulo for the final stop on his 4-gig mentorship tour. Bullock said he had been meeting with Berne for the past 2 months – learning his music, checking out his recordings, playing with him at Berne's home. The second set featured Berne casting his maze-like structures out of his alto, allowing Bullock to comp or grab hold and respond, while Angulo, a frequent player in town with an ever changing cast of leaders, created turbulence. A highlight piece was "No White Out," which led to a stirring crescendo, and the finale of "Doge Eat Doge,"

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[named as a jab against Elon Musk] which included an adventurous piano segment (with drums) that established Bullock's chops. Bullock said his interest was not necessarily in the Avant-Garde – "I'm interested in Bebop, Funk, Gospel music, I'm into a fusion [of everything]. My goal is to create beauty." Berne had some interesting lines from the stage – "I like tepid applause – I'll take anything," and "The titles of the songs are not interesting so I'm just gonna play like there are no titles." ... Norwegian/Swedish powerhouse quintet Friends & Neighbors had a US tour set up for November-December but a few days prior to the start, saxophonist André Roligheten fell on an icy Stockholm road and was not able to perform so emergent calls were made to find American replacements. Dave Rempis filled in for their Chicago gig and Isaiah Collier agreed to do the last two shows in Philadelphia and New York. Collier got the call two days before the 12/3 Philadelphia show at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) but thought it was to happen in one month. To his surprise, an email came the morning of the show asking him to meet up with the group at 4 PM that day for soundcheck. The problem was that he was in Chicago at the time. He quickly booked a flight to Philadelphia and made the meetup with Thomas Johansson (tpt), Oscar Grönberg (p), Jon Rune Strøm (b) and Tollef Østvang (d). The group, named after an Ornette Coleman album, obviously dig the Sixties and Seventies Free Jazz sound as their set dove deep into energetic and melodic Free Jazz with complex, multi-layered, improvised extensions with a contemporary feel. The first tune "Joseph," in honor of Joe McPhee, featured an absolute scorched earth tenor sax solo by Collier that had his new band partners smiling. "Untitled" followed as a piano dominated piece that found Grönberg flying up and down the ivories while the others supplied a jumpy beat. "Sun," a new piece, finished out the night on a high. Sax and muted trumpet began in duo with buzzing, long-held notes into squeaks of conversation that built into intense squeals before giving way to the rhythm section simmering down into a dirge-like atmosphere. I was looking forward to hearing the uniquely Norwegian/Swedish flavored music but the sound explosion out of the 27-year-old leading saxophonist of his generation, so powerful and spiritually charged, didn't allow for any complaints... For some reason, 44-year-old Peter Evans hasn't gotten his due on magazine covers as much as he should but he's been a leading voice on trumpet for over 20 years. He formed his Being & Becoming group in 2017, drawing the name from the writing of Sufi writer and musician Inyat Khan, reflecting the band's commitment to the challenge of spontaneous creativity. The band's 2 night Philadelphia residency starting 12/6 (covered here) at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) followed 2 nights in New York and featured Joel Ross (vib), Nick Jozwiak (b) and a new addition, drummer Tyshawn Sorey making his third appearance as a band member. With music influenced by Western and non-Western sounds, they read off charts but it wasn't possible to tell what was transcribed and what was improvised. Rhythms and tones changed, sounds spiraled, but the constant factor was Evans' uncanny mastery of his instrument. His bull trumpet talent on standard trumpet, piccolo and slide trumpet showcased astonishing articulation and accuracy - even when circular breathing. Although I have to say that his frequent use of delay and reverb seemed unnecessary and at times cloaked the self-made magic he summoned. The band as a unit drove forward with intensity and the newly added Sorey was

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a remarkable powerhouse. As good a musician as Evans is, he's as bad at self-promotion. When it came time to offer his merch pitch at the end of the gig, he stumbled. "I'm not a good salesman, that's why I went into music!" He did promote his next night's gig - "Come back tomorrow, it will be even crazier, or not. If you liked it tonight, it will be exactly the same!"... The Jazz Gallery's Mentoring Series continued at The Black Squirrel Club on 12/9 with guitarist Charles Altura schooling pianist Jonathan Paik along with bassist Harish Raghavan and drummer Jeremy Dutton. Altura earned his Jazz cred by touring with Stanley Clarke as a young musician. His rapid fingering guitar style was welcomed in this town – home of the late Pat Martino – and his connection with Raghavan and Dutton was spot on. The two sets of music featured primarily Altura originals with a few Paik compositions and late covers of Sonny Rollins' "Solid" and Monk's "We See." Paik was low in the mix and mainly comped but he did have a number of nice featured segments and seemed very comfortable when rendering Monk. I spoke with Rio Sakairi, Artistic Director of The Jazz Gallery, who was present for both mentorship presentations at the club. She reported that The Jazz Gallery has long been committed to teaching future generations of artists and that the choice of who gets mentoring is earned by not only the most talented youths but also those who have demonstrated the willingness to learn and accept direction. She mentioned that in the case of someone like Tim Berne, she felt that he had a lot of experience to share and that the hope was that this mentoring opportunity would encourage him to do further mentoring. In other words, "Letting him know he has so much to share."...Percussionist Shakoor Hakeem grew up in the local Yoruba tradition and exudes that experience through his playing – especially on conga. Some of the artists that have hired him include Kassa Overall, Maria Grand, Idris Ackamoore, Antione Roney, Graham Haynes, Immanuel Wilkins, Joel Ross, Adam Rudolph, Bobby Zankel and Wallace Roney. His duet on 12/12 at The Perch (Fire Museum Presents) with 27-year-old sonic-attacking Swedish tenor saxophonist Isak Ingvarsson was an unexpected joy to experience. Ingvarsson, a graduate of Jazz Institut Berlin with a Bachelor of Music, is currently completing his Master's Degree in Jazz Performance at the City College of New York where he's being mentored by Tim Berne. Hakeem met him in New York, things clicked musically, and they've done a number of performances since. They played in the venue's intimate space – a living room setting – and Hakeem shook the walls each time he pummeled his conga. His shockwave blasts combined nicely with the young Swede's tenor blasts. When Hakeem rattled his row of bells, Ingvarsson shook his horn with the metal mouthpiece guard attached, making his own bell-like rattles, mirroring Hakeem's sound. Ingvarsson later played a number of small wood flutes from around the world. Hakeem announced the mission of the duo was to create a new vocabulary between the Swedish and African-American cultures.

Ken Weiss

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Joe McPhee at 2223 Fish - 10/1
Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Lucian Ban and Mat Maneri at The Perch on 10/5

Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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Ravi Coltrane with Gadi Lehavi (p); Anthony Tidd (el b) and Timothy Angulo (d) at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) on 10/10 Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Marshall Allen at The Perch (Fire Museum Presents) on 10/12
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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Elio Villafranca at the Fallser Club (The Painted Bride Art Center) on 10/19
Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Adam Rudolph (perc) and Kaoru Watanabe (flt) at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) on
10/24 Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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Katalyst Conversation- Ari Brown (ts, p), Ed Wilkerson Jr (ts, alto cl, d dig), Vincent Davis (d) and Preyas Roy (vibs) at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) on 10/15 Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Cooper-Moore at The Perch (Fire Museum Presents) on 11/13 Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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Tyler Bullock (p), Tim Berne (ts), Tim Angulo (d) at The Black Squirrel Club on 11/23

Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Peter Evans (tp) with Joel Ross (vib) and Nick Jozwiak (b) at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) on 12/6

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Charles Altura with Harish Raghavan (b) at The Black Squirrel Club on 12/9

Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Isak Ingvarsson at The Perch (Fire Museum Presents) on 12/12

Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Steve Holt Interview

by Ludwig Vantrikt

Cadence: Before we delve into the beginnings and later stages of your career. Why the 20-year gap in releasing a recording?

Holt: I migrated from jazz to adult contemporary music for some time. I wanted to bring my jazz background into that genre and I put out an album in 2002 of AC music. One of the tracks from that album, entitled "Soon", won Honorable Mention at the USA Songwriting Competition for Best Latin Song, which resulted in a US tour. For some time after that I focused on producing and recording with almost no live playing. I became a bit of a session player. Not much jazz really for that period.

In 2014 I moved from Toronto to the country and started to play duo with Howard Baer, a local upright bass player out there, and gradually returned to my jazz roots. My first jazz gig in Toronto was a trio gig at The Old Mill in 2015 with Brendan Davis and Kevin Dempsey, and I concentrated solely on jazz from then on. I opened a health food store with a cafe in 2017 in the little town of Warkworth Ontario. I played jazz there every Friday night in what was then called The Jazz Café, with great players like Dave Young, Kieran Overs, and Mike Allen, as well as players in from New York and Japan. All of that ended with the pandemic.

So... from 2001 to 2014, other non-jazz music, and music production.

Cadence: Did your change of direction from Jazz into Adult Contemporary music reflect any issues you had surviving just playing Jazz? Also, your comeback "IMPACT" (IMD108 - 2025) on CD comes at a time when the longevity of that format is seriously being questioned. Please comment?

Holt: No I wouldn't say so. I was genuinely interested in trying to enrich the Adult Contemporary musical genre and bring my background in jazz to the whole musical equation.

Regarding the CD format, I released IMPACT on direct digital download as well on CD, and it's also available on all streaming platforms so it's not as if you have to buy the physical CD if you want to have the album. You can go to my Bandcamp page at <https://steveholtmusic.bandcamp.com/album/the-steve-holt-jazz-impact-quintet-impact> and download the album in high quality digital format. But I decided to also release it on CD for radio and journalists who prefer CD, as well as listeners who enjoy having the physical item. I still find that people will buy them when we're playing live.

Cadence: Your background is so intriguing from self taught piano at age 4 to working musician gigging in Montreal clubs. You must have a lot of interesting and amusing stories to tell.

Holt: Well, growing up in my house was interesting. My mom played some classical piano and I do have clear memories of her playing Rustle of Spring right after she would put me to bed. I would fall asleep to the sound of her playing. My older brother and I were both born with perfect pitch and we could play whatever we heard, so sibling rivalry was the motivator to practice in those early days. He would play something, and then a few minutes after he finished I would go to the piano and play the same thing, just to bug him.

I was born and raised in Montreal which had an incredibly rich jazz scene with

many great local players like Paul Bley, Oscar Peterson, Claude Ranger, and many others, and venues that brought in all the great players of that time. Sayyid Abdul Al-Khabyr had a club called Café Mojo. The Montreal Jazz Festival was just getting going. There was a place called the Rainbow Bar & Grill where jazz was played and I was there listening constantly, and eventually playing there myself.

My playing path was essentially: 1. As a kid, pop music and crooners of the 1950s. 2. As a teen, rock music of the 1960s. 3. Jazz Fusion 4. Bebop 5. Post Bop 6. Sixties modal blended with bebop. 7. Exploring straight-ahead jazz and beyond. As a teenager I initially started playing folk and folk-rock in clubs. By the mid 1970s I had migrated to what you might call jazz fusion. This was the time of Herbie Hancock's Head Hunters album and this was an iconic album for me. It changed my ears and felicitated my entry into straight ahead jazz.

When I was 22 years old I met Armas Maiste, a pianist who offered jazz studies courses at McGill University. My initial meeting with him was life-altering. I will never forget going to his studio at McGill. He asked me to play something. I sat down at the piano and proceeded to dazzle him (I thought) with all my fusion licks and chops. When I had finished, he said "Very nice." Then he played. He played like Bud Powell and Bill Evans. He played bebop. He played voicings I had never heard before. In fact, I had never heard anything like any of it before. Armas was like an encyclopedia. It blew my mind. When He was finished, I responded like any sane person would. I asked him to teach me.

In terms of stories to tell, a couple come to mind.

In my fusion days I had been a huge fan of Larry Coryell. When I was in my mid 20s I had become one of the first calls in Montreal for playing with touring US jazz musicians who needed a local rhythm section. Larry was one of those. One of his originals we played was a ballad called Tender Tears. Well, last year I was cleaning out a file cabinet and I came across that chart. I must have saved it from that gig. It was written in Larry's own hand. So I took it out and played through it, and of course the memories of that gig from so long ago came back. The tune sounded just as beautiful as it did back then, and so I decided to record it with my quintet. It's on the new album, IMPACT.

Playing with James Moody was incredible. We had a strong rhythm section with the great Michel Donato on bass and a wonderful drummer Paul Leger. Moody was at the top of his form, playing blistering tempos and beautiful ballads. He also had a whole stand-up routine that had us laughing so hard it hurt. Off stage he was totally easy going. I remember going out to dinner one night with him and my mom joined us. When she arrived, Moody became smitten. The energy during dinner was electric!

Then there were times I'd be asked to sit in with truly great players. That was always so exciting. Nothing prepared. Incredible from the moment I put my foot on the bandstand. There was one time I was asked to come up and play with a band that included John Handy and Eddie Henderson. I don't remember what we played, but I do remember the intensity. It was amazing.

Cadence: Surely there must be an interesting (and dare I say sordid) chapter just on playing with Archie Shepp? I would imagine that his music brought you the closest you have been to the avant garde?

Holt: I played a few times with Archie. The first time was a bit of trial by fire. I

was the only local musician in that group. The rest of them were all from New York.

So being the only new guy, there was a kind of a hazing thing going on. Like stopping in weird places, changing keys or changing tempos unexpectedly, that sort of thing.

The next time Archie came to Montreal he specifically asked for me and wouldn't play with anyone else. I thought maybe I would be in for more "fun". But this time was totally different, super friendly and great music. We played really well together. I guess I had passed the test!

And of course his music and musical approach was so totally cool. Lots of free stuff but also very unique things like speaking original poetry over very open musical sections. Like a predecessor to rap music in a way. But more musical, obviously.

Cadence: Please embrace this question with some long-winded humor but I figure that with you being a working musician at such a young age you would have some war stories.....? Otherwise, you have lived an exceptionally mundane musical life.....

Holt: Well...

I'm not a good sight reader and never have been. But I can memorize.

By the time I reached high school I was a pretty decent piano player. I signed up for band, but was told there were no piano parts and I had to "pick a different instrument." So I picked bassoon! I liked the sound. During the year I memorized all the music I had to play so in rehearsals I was flawless. One day the teacher called out for me to play bar such and such, and of course I had no idea what was in those bars. After some embarrassing honks, he yelled out "Not like that, like this." And he sang out the line which I immediately played back to him. He had I idea I couldn't read it!

Another example was playing with Larry Coryell in the seventies. Larry had written an up tempo blues and the line was eighth notes played at breakneck speed. I was to play the line in unison with him. It was a sold out performance. Needless to say it did not go well. Larry never mentioned it but I felt incredibly embarrassed. So I went home, woodshedded and memorized the line. The next night he called the tune again and I played the line flawlessly. Larry must have known I was not reading it; he walked over in the middle of the tune and with big grin on his face yelled out "You memorized it!"

Cadence: Your career marks the early beginning of Jazz Education and a unique era in Jazz when a musician could be "self-taught" craft a career from the bandstand then completes a formal education in the artform. Please complete and add any details that you might not have talked about before?

Holt: Great question. I guess that was a transitional period in jazz where jazz education was still in its infancy, especially in Canada. That's not to say there were not some great fully functional jazz studies programs at some US universities and colleges, but there were not many, and there was nothing like that in Canada at the time. So for many of us, it was a perfectly natural progression to learn jazz on your own from listening to records and working stuff out on your instrument. I didn't learn basic reading skills until the summer prior to starting courses at McGill. Because I couldn't read yet, I couldn't transcribe solos yet. Instead I would bypass the transcription process and just

copy licks and phrases directly to piano. When I began playing jazz gigs, I learned a ton right there on the bandstand. Learning like that, in real time, is totally different than in the comfort of your living room. It's high pressure, intense listening. You just can't duplicate that level of intensity at home, or in a classroom. And I always purposely hired musicians who were better than me. These people were my teachers.

Cadence: *While we are discussing Jazz education one of the controversies that has arisen is the high tuition for a degree in the music matched against the low paying performance opportunities that many artists face? Is this also the reality for musicians in Canada?*

Holt: Absolutely. And it's very difficult to start a new jazz studies program at any post secondary institution here, for that very reason. Schools are now much more focussed on turning out graduates who can make a living and not learning art for art's sake. I have mixed feelings about that. On the one hand, you can't fault it. It makes sense. It's a pragmatic approach to the arts. But it also greatly diminishes and dilutes the former richness of simply deepening your artistic soul. And that dilemma opens a whole Pandora's box regarding jazz's place in modern society, not unlike music in the time of Mozart. Patrons of the arts helped to create great music and great masters. In modern times, patrons have become governments and other organizations that provide grants and funding for artists. Unfortunately those avenues have dwindled, and the result is a different kind of musician that comes off what is essentially an assembly line at colleges.

Cadence: *There is a very indirect Philadelphia connection to your early life that I would love for you to capture; you studied with Philly born pianist Kenny Barron. At one point you traveled to New York City for private lessons. Please talk in depth about the man and his teaching?*

Holt: My connection to Kenny came by way of Bob Mover. Bob would play in Montreal from time to time and I was part of his local rhythm section. One day we were rehearsing Bob's material and I found myself reading a chart written in Kenny's own hand. Kenny was one of my favorite piano players and I was in awe that I was reading his chart! Bob offered to speak to Kenny about lessons for me and pretty soon I found myself driving down to New York once a month to have a lesson at Kenny's house. Thus began what I would have to call a master-disciple relationship. Kenny would frequently take an inordinate amount of time for our lessons. After some time at the piano, we would sit down in his living room to listen to records over a glass of cognac. If he was playing in town I would of course go and hear him. I remember one time where he was playing a gig with Dexter Gordon, Rufus Reid and Eddie Gladden. I got to hear several of the things from our previous lesson in concert. Now that's what I call a piano lesson! It was also just hanging out with him that influenced my playing. There's no substitute for something like this. Truly a master-disciple relationship. Kenny continues to influence me even today, decades later.

Cadence: *Is it fair to say that this is your second attempt at a comeback performing Jazz? Also have you now found that there are more performance opportunities both in Canada and internationally. The last part of this question is if the Steve Holt Jazz Impact Quintet performing?*

Holt: I wouldn't say that there were attempted comebacks. I followed the musical directions that were inside of me at the time, and in 2014 found myself

fully back into performing jazz again. It wasn't a conscious decision. It just happened. The beginnings of what eventually became the Steve Holt Jazz Impact Quintet occurred in 2015 with a quintet concert in Toronto. After that I was hooked. I found I loved writing for and performing with quintet, specifically with trumpet and tenor saxophone up front. I had always loved that format, like the Miles Davis Quintet with Wayne, Herbie, Ron, and Tony. For me that quintet was the pinnacle.

To answer the second part of your question, there seems to be more gigs out there. The Steve Holt Jazz Impact Quintet is really just beginning to perform more regularly, now that the album has come out. We'll be in Toronto for two nights at The Rex, and later in the year at The Jazz Bistro. There is also a concert booked for February at Victoria Hall in Cobourg, and we've also been invited to perform in western Canada, so I'm hoping there will a tour next summer.

*Cadence: Several years ago, the alto saxophonist Bobby Watson remarked to me that the language of Bebop pioneered by Charlie Parker still was fertile soil for innovation. I mention this because in listening to "The Lion's Eyes" (LP on PLUG Records PLUG-3 * 1983) this record is firmly in the pocket of the Jazz Mainstream even using the traditional AABA form. My question is how to do keep your music sounding fresh in an art form that is so firmly rooted in the past?*

Holt: Once again, this is not by conscious choice but rather a natural progression. I find that there still are unlimited possibilities to mine the richness of mainstream jazz with fresh compositions and improvisations. I do not want to fall prey to the temptations of creating music based on what I think people will like in 2025. I believe that I can be true to my musical self with fresh ideas in the traditional genre.

One thing I like to do is compose a melody which sounds very natural and musical while utilizing surprising harmonic twists. Lalita's Waltz is a good example. The result is a tune that sounds different yet familiar and you're not sure why.

Second Voyage is different than anything else on the album. It is built on a simple motif in the opening section, kind of dreamy and modern, with a brief "Maiden Voyage" interlude. Then comes a harmonically totally different section, followed by a return to the original motif that you don't see coming. This tune is one of my favorites on the album.

Impact is a joyful romp with lots of harmonic openness punctuated with descending minor chords. It's very clean and fresh.

All of these are in the tradition of mainstream but with fresh approaches.

Cadence: Do you still play standards from the American Songbook? Also are there new composers in the pop genre whose work you might like to use?

Holt: I play tons of standards. These are great tunes that offer the opportunity for new improvisations and substitutions in a familiar setting.

I am definitely open to pop music. Any music actually, if I find two key qualities: 1. Honesty. I dislike like pretension and what I would call hokeyness. The music has to be sincere. 2. Musicality. You can have honest and sincere stuff that just doesn't cut it as music.

My take on our national anthem...not a jazz tune! I play a solo version with some added chord changes and embellishments, maintaining the solemnity and emotional power of the piece. Anything is possible if it is sincere.



Ra Kalam Bob Moses Play What You Don't Know

By Ken Weiss

Drummer, composer, artist, poet, dancer, visionary, nature mystic: Ra Kalam Bob Moses's life has been a continuous quest for vision, spirit, compassion, growth and mastery in a multiplicity of art forms. A partial list of musicians he has recorded or worked with includes: Charles Mingus, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Jim Pepper, Larry Coryell, Dave Liebman, Gary Burton, Keith Jarrett, Steve Swallow, Pat Metheny, Lyle Mays, Paul Bley, Herbie Hancock, Jack DeJohnette, Jaco Pastorius, Hal Galper, Michael Brecker, Randy Brecker, Steve Kuhn, Sheila Jordan, Bobby McFerrin, Dave Sanborn, Bill Frisell, Eddie Gomez, Don Alias, John Scofield, Terumasa Hino, Dave Holland, Charlie Haden, Hermeto Pascoal, Jovinos Santos Neto, Danilo Perez, David Sanchez, Chucho Valdes, Jimmy Slyde, Savion Glover, Gregory Hines, Stan Strickland, Tiger Okoshi, Nana Vasconcelos, Obo Addy, John Medeski, Vernon Reid, DJ Logic, Badal Roy, Robert Pinsky, Sam Rivers, Pharoah Sanders, his spiritual mentor Tisziji Muñoz, and many others. This interview took place from his home in Memphis, Tennessee via a number of lengthy Facetime sessions starting August 2024 through March 2025.

Cadence: *Your given name is Robert Laurence Moses. Why and when did you become Ra Kalam?*

Ra Kalam Bob Moses: Your parents give you a name and that's what we all start with, and then we find our own names over time from various sources. I've had many names in the course of my life. Nobody has ever called me Robert Laurence Moses! [Laughs] It's just for my birth certificate and passport. At one point I couldn't figure out Robert because I didn't relate to it. I felt no resonance with it, I thought they just misspelled it. It should have been Rahboat, which is the meditation chamber, the land boat, or the sky boat, which allows you to travel without moving physically. That made more sense to me, so for a while I was Rahboat. I had a friend who came to me in a vision and gave me a drum name Ntumba, so I was using that for a while – Rahboat Ntumba. Just like Billy Hart is known as Jabali. Yeah, there's been a lot. I also have the powerful name of Moses but I often prefer the Hispanic version which is Moises because it sounds better to me. Now, Ra Kalam, that came to me from my spiritual teacher Tisziji Muñoz, a true living spiritual master, the only one I've ever met. I've met a lot of musical masters, they're fairly common, but spiritual master is a much harder thing to achieve. It was during a particularly hard time of my life when I came to him for some guidance. For me, he's also the greatest guitar player I've ever heard, and I've played with some great guitar players, which he'll never admit to. He'll say, "I'm not a guitar player. I don't know anything about the guitar, I'm a drummer," because he started as a conguero prodigy when he was a kid. He says the guitar is just a six-string drum. In the beginning, the music was enough for me – playing with him was

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like medicine. And then at a certain period of life where things were not going well on pretty much every level of life – music, relationships, career, finances – finally, and it took me a long time until I was ready, but I went to him and I said, ‘I’d really like to just sit with you. I won’t bring the drums. I know you have something that can help me and I’m ready, I need it.’ And he was very gracious. The first time we sat together, it was like 18 hours straight and I was falling over while he was sitting perfectly upright and absolutely alert. He saw I was crashing and said, “I think you need to lay down for a while,” so I laid down for a couple hours and then he came over with a little bell and goes, [BING!] “Time to wake up!” [Laughs] The guy never sleeps. It was shortly after that, as I acknowledged him as my teacher, as my guru, that he gave me the name Ra Kalam which means ‘The Inaudible Sound of the Invisible Sun.’ It’s a very powerful name and one that I’m still trying to live up to. Every once in a while I’m playing something on the drums and I say, ‘Yeah, I think I’m getting there. I think I’m being that.’ The name really represents one’s higher self or the selfless self, what one really is in the spirit beyond the body, and Tisziji has a way of seeing the higher self in all beings, including my dad who was the last person I thought had any kind of spiritual leanings.

Cadence: *It’s ironic that you’re a musician and your name translates to inaudible sound.*

Moses: Right, well that’s the thing, my evolution, thanks to Tisziji, has been towards silence as a source. For most musicians, other music is their source, and that was part of my development. I used to listen to everything from all over the world. Anything that was great and soulful, I’d listen to it, but these days I don’t listen to much at all. I like to bring the music from the silence, from the zero, and not be influenced by anything except spirit. ‘The Inaudible Sound of the Invisible Sun’ is my higher aspect. The inaudible sound is the strongest sound, in a way, and the invisible sun is the one that’s always there even if you can’t see it. But it’s a good point, in Tisziji’s teachings, and he’s written over a hundred spiritual books, there’s always a lot of paradox in there and part of it is to record the mind off of the rational path.

Cadence: *How did you become familiar with Tisziji Muñoz?*

Moses: A piano player friend of mine, John Weiss, knew that I loved Coltrane and told me one time, “Well, if you love Coltrane, you’ve got to meet this guitar player Tisziji, he’s kind of a guru too.” And I’m forever thankful to John Weiss for that intro. I went to see Tisziji, we played, and I knew from the first time I met him that he was something different. Just how he lived and how he played. It took me probably twenty years after that before I was ready to go to him for spiritual practice, and during that time, never once did he say, “You should come to me, I can help you.” He waited patiently until I was ready, and that’s how you know a true spiritual master. When I finally came to him it was during a really bad time in my life. I thought I had the worst luck and then I realized later that it was all self-created and Tisziji helped me to realize it. Now I don’t have bad luck at all, everything is like a blessing. I told Tisziji something

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early on that I have never told any other musician - 'If you need or want me to play with you, I will be there. I don't need money.' Tisziji hardly ever plays but each time he does, he gives so much nourishment.

Cadence: *How do you stay connected with Tisziji Muñoz?*

Moses: We talk almost every day. He already called me today and he called me late last night. I never know when he's gonna call because the cat never sleeps. I don't think he realizes he's an hour later than me, but I'm always glad to hear from him. He always has something to say that is exactly relevant to whatever I'm going through. I don't tell that many people, not that I'm trying to hide it, but I have stage 4 prostate cancer, which ironically seems to be the least of my problems to deal with at this point. People who know about it, I've been getting a lot of messages of love from people who I haven't heard from for years which brings back some beautiful memories. I'm hearing from students that I was their most important teacher and getting that kind of love is very nourishing. Anyway, I do go to visit Tisziji whenever possible. He lives in Virginia now and I live in the southwest corner of Tennessee so it's about a 15-hour drive which I have to do in 2 days because I'm getting too old to do it in one shot. I've done it a few times for recordings. We did one last year with Danish drummer Kresten Osgood that just came out and it's one of the most powerful records I've ever done.

Cadence: *I'm sorry to hear about the cancer diagnosis.*

Moses: It doesn't seem to be growing, it's holding, And I talk to it, too. I say, 'Hey cancer, I'm not going anywhere so anytime you want to take me, I'm here, but there's no hurry. I'm gonna be here,' and the cancer says, "Alright, I have other business to take care of, I'll let you go for a while." Right now, I can say that's the least of my problems. I've had major car problems and I have major dental work going on with a dentist who is three and a half hours away that my friend Jeff Coffin, the great saxophone player, hooked me up with. I feel like I'm gonna be around for a while, but any way you look at it, I'm in the fourth quarter and I'm hoping the game goes into overtime.

Cadence: *I hope so. So why are you living in Memphis, Tennessee?*

Moses: [Laughs] Because I'm poor! I don't have any money, and that's my fault. I don't blame anybody but me. I'm a Jew that has no aptitude for money business at all. I have no hustle chops whatsoever. Where I was living in Quincy, Mass, a guy bought the building and the rent was gonna go up. I had lost my job at NEC [New England Conservatory], my unemployment had run out, I almost never gigged in Boston, so I really had no income except Social Security. I had some savings but not that much, and at that rate, I was losing so much money each month that I would have gone through my savings really quick and I had to do something quick. I wanted to go to some place that was warmer and cheaper. I heard through a friend about a really cheap house in Memphis so I came down but the place needed so much work that I had to stay for the first month and a half with a woman friend named Kat who rescues animals. I told her, 'Man, I'm one of your rescue animals.' Now I'm living

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in this old house, it's funky and I'm living in the hood. I'm the only white person for miles in every direction, but it's cheap and I like it, and the house is okay now. I can play drums here pretty much any time and I can afford it. I'm beginning to enjoy it out here although it's like the wild, wild West out here. It's funky, I'm telling you, it's like the closest thing in America I've ever experienced to Trinidad or Jamaica. I've been to Jamaica and I've been to Trinidad, I did okay there and I stayed in places that no white people ever went to and I always got along fine. And so far down here I haven't had any trouble.

Cadence: *How well have you fit into the Memphis community?*

Moses: It's worked out really well. It's very cheap to live here and the people are very nice. People are speaking English here but you can barely understand a word. I was in the post office the other day and there were two older Black ladies in front of me in line and I was listening to their conversation which was hilarious. I heard this phrase 'hello Jello.' I thought, 'Wow, did I hear that correctly?' And then I heard it again so I said to her, 'Hello Jello,' I like that, that's kind of cool. Do you mind if I use that?' And she said [he uses a Southern slang], "Sure, honey, but you gotta have the right body type," and she turned around, bent over and she started shaking and it was like 'hello Jello!' [Laughs] I said, 'I get it.!' It was such a Memphis moment, it would never happen in Boston or New York. These sorts of things are happening almost every day. It's kind of a magical place, I'm coming to love it and I get along great with the people here. No problems, and they know I'm different just by the way I look with my baggy African pants and my Elvin Jones T-shirt. They know I'm not one of them but they're totally friendly and beautiful. I have a lot of respect for the people because they have a lot of skills that I don't have. They know how to survive in the woods and how to grow their own food.

Cadence: *Have you found kindred musicians in Memphis?*

Moses: It took me a while to find anybody to play with here because I want to play free and open and Memphis is not a hotbed of Avant-Garde, but I'm finding people here now. It took a year and a half and one of them is a beautiful saxophone player named Art Edmaiston. He just did a recording with Little Feat but he loves to come over to my house and play free and he's gotten into Tisziji's music and his teachings bigtime. It's not a big scene down here but there is somewhat of a Free Jazz scene in the South. I've noticed that the Free Jazz players in the South have a different vibe than the players in the North and I like it. It's a Bluesy quality, Country quality, kind of raw.

Cadence: *Do you miss not living or visiting New York City?*

Moses: I don't intend to go back to New York. The last time I was around there, I was in New Jersey and I didn't go into New York. And you know what struck me? At this point in my life, it reminded me of Darth Vader and the evil empire. [Laughs] I had no desire to go in there. I did tell my son I'm gonna be cremated and he could dump my ashes in the park across from 415 Central Park West where I grew up. The other choice would be to go to Hawaii and dump it there but that's more expensive and I don't want to give him any hardships.

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Cadence: *Have you always been a very spiritual person?*

Moses: That's a good question, I think I probably was without realizing it. The first time I heard Coltrane I was 13-years old. It was around 1961 at Town Hall in New York. It was a great concert. It was Thelonius Monk's group with Charlie Rouse and Frankie Dunlap, as well as Sonny Rollins' group with Paul Bley, Henry Grimes and Roy McCurdy. And Sonny had a mohawk haircut with a white tuxedo, and it looked like he had been in the gym pumping iron. And then the last group was Coltrane, who had just recorded *My Favorite Things*. He had McCoy Tyner, Elvin Jones and Steve Davis. The point is, I love Monk, he's my favorite of the Bebop era musicians – a lot of humor and quirky melodies. Sonny Rollins, obviously a master, but when I heard Trane, it was something different. I didn't even know the word spiritual at that age but I felt this was something beyond music. I recognized it right away that it was something different and it changed my life forever. For one thing, they were playing this one chord and it was like a trance and I went out of the body when I heard it. McCoy's playing seemed so egoless to me. He was a great piano player but he wasn't trying to prove it. The rhythm section just played for a really long time, laying it down, and when Trane finally came in on the soprano it was like the dam burst open and I've never been the same since that moment. I think my spirituality has always been there and my response to music has been more from a psychic point of view than a musical point of view. I've always looked to be moved by music. It's never been about Jazz particularly, it could be some Appalachian Country music or some guy singing from the Koran in Arabic or some Flamenco - anything soulful. It could have been Marvin Gaye or Willie Nelson or Ray Charles or Pavarotti, that's what I responded to. And it could be very primitive. It's not the music, it's where it's coming from, and a lot of musicians don't understand that. I would never play Miles Davis' music in my house, even though I know it's some of the greatest music, and I used to listen to him a lot and really dig it, but the vibe is too dark, man. I hear all that stuff – the materialism, the misogyny, the ego. I can hear it in the playing. Well, I don't listen hard to any music but if I'm listening now, I have to have that feeling of love and spirituality. Miles made *Bitches Brew* and "So What" whereas Coltrane said *A Love Supreme*, selflessness, and he meant it. So, I can listen to Coltrane music because I feel the light. I do hear the psychic reality of where the music's coming from and it's always been the most important thing to me. When I was younger I was darker so I was able to listen to a lot of music that was coming from a darker place, or more ego place, but now I just don't want to hear it. I draw a line in the music between what I call "the cute" and "the deep," and at this point, I can't really listen to "the cute," even though some of the stuff I'm calling "cute" is some of the greatest music you'll ever hear, and by musicians who are far greater than I am, but I can only listen to "the deep."

Cadence: *What's going on in your personal life?*

Moses: Well, Ra Kalam's in love. Did you know about that? It's crazy, man.

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I first met this woman in 1980 in Molden, Norway. She's a beautiful, young Norwegian girl. She was 23 and I was 32 in 1980 and I was there with Steve Kuhn, Sheila Jordan and Harvie Swartz, or as we sometimes called it – "Sheila and the Christ Killers." [Laughs] I'm sorry, I can't help it. Anyway, it was very intense. We fell in love, although I would describe it as rising in love. We spent 3 very intense days together. After that, I didn't see her but we kept in touch for a few years, sending letters back and forth, and I sent her some music. I even wrote a song for her called "Elma," that's her name. But you know, life goes on and other things happen. Recently, a friend of hers found me on Facebook and wrote me if it was okay to give her my contact info. After a while she contacted me and I realized right away that she was a deep person and I wasn't wrong to have fallen in love with her 43 years ago. Then it turned out I had a number of gigs in Denmark which were two flights from her home and she offered to come for one day or the whole week that I would be in the country. I thought about it for 3 deep breaths and I said, 'Yeah, come for the whole week' - jump off the cliff. I was not expecting anything but maybe a hug, but by the first day, it got deep, man. I said to her, and I don't remember ever saying this to any other woman, not so soon at least, but I said to her, 'I want to be your man and I want you to be my woman.' And then we spent a beautiful week in Denmark. The thing you need to know about me is that I haven't been with a woman that way in over 30 years. I've been living as a monk and not missing it but I recognized right away that she was offering me an incredible gift and I couldn't say no. She had that thing of knowing right away intuitively that it was right and surrendering and going all the way. We met up again a few months later in Portugal when I was there with a trio I'm in called Alma Tree with the visionary percussionists Vasco Trilla and Pedro Melo Alves. We had 3 gigs in Portugal and I told them not to book the return flight for 2 weeks after the last gig in Porto so Elma and I could hang out. We had such a beautiful time that on Valentine's Day I got down on one knee and I asked her to marry me. She was completely shocked, she wasn't expecting that at all, [Laughs] and she eventually said yes. My thought was to get married in Spain but that's not working out and it turns out that it's REALLY difficult to try to marry this person – the immigration stuff is just a killer. We've been working hard at it and we're not even at step one... She's one in a billion, that's all I can say. It's seven hours later there and she wants me to wake her up at 4 in the morning her time and play drums for her. She's sound asleep and I wake her up. Usually she wants me to play congas for her, which is what I play more of than drums these days anyway because they sound so much better and I really like playing with my hands. Going through this process with her has made me love her even more. And she's a great artist, she's a great painter, and we've been doing collaborations – paintings. You know that's my thing, my first art form before music. I had a bunch that were half finished and when we were in Portugal I brought them with me. She let me sleep and she finished four or five of these paintings for me and took them to a completely other level. They're really

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beautiful because she's really got some chops as a painter. She's got a different style but when you blend her style and my style, it's really beautiful. And she's already done some future album covers for my projects that I need to finish. These days I'm writing melodies with no bar lines, no key signatures, no chord changes, just a melody and a title. I was encouraged years ago by Steve Swallow, the great composer/bass player, who said, "You're a great composer, you should write more." So now I've got over 500 of these tunes and 499 have never been played, probably never will be played. He said something like, "Yeah, it doesn't matter, do it anyway. Promise me you'll write a tune every Christmas." Why he asked this atheist Jew to write a tune on Christmas I don't really know but I said okay. I like Jesus. So for over 30 years I've written one every Christmas. One of the songs I wrote that I particularly like is called "Peace Universal" and I had the idea that people all over the world should do versions of it as a demonstration of the infinity of creativity so it's a double CD of people from all over the world playing the same song. It's not boring, trust me, I've got people on it like Bill Frisell, Dave Liebman and Swallow who did a version which made me cry it was so beautiful. Elma did the cover for that, she painted me as a monk.

Cadence: *I met Elma, she's really lovely.*

Moses: Yes, I've never been loved like this.

Cadence: *You grew up in New York City right off of Central Park. Did that early exposure to nature have an impact on you?*

Moses: When I was really young, I grew up in Queens and sports was my thing. I used to play baseball and football, I was actually quite good. I went to a summer camp where I won the all-around best athlete in the camp, out of 800 children. Of course, there weren't any Black kids there so we can put an asterisk on that. [Laughs] I got into nature more when I moved to West Kill in upstate New York with my first and only wife, Theresa del Pozo, who's still around and a force of nature. We made a little money when [the band I was in] Compost signed a record deal with Columbia. We got an advance of like fifty grand but the manager took half of it right off the bat. The lawyer took five, but we still had twenty grand to split between five people so I think I got four grand in one shot – the most money I ever got at one time - and Theresa convinced me to put it as a down payment on a house with some land in upstate New York where we were surrounded by 73 thousand acres on a state forest preserve. Once I got more into nature I really appreciated it, but when I was living in New York I was more of a city kid.

Cadence: *You also had a nature experience with Eric Dolphy playing flute in Central Park?*

Moses: I remember looking into the park from my window on the fourth floor of 415 Central Park West and seeing him playing his flute, sitting on a rock, playing with the birds. I could barely hear his flute with the New York traffic. His flute was floating over the air. Eric was one of my mentors and dear friends and when he passed, it broke my heart. You know, Before I lived at Central

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Park, when I was five or six, my parents took me out to the country and I sat in a field and listened to the sound of the wind blowing through the [tall] grass. It sounded like a symphony to me and I sat there for an hour, just listening to the wind. I heard all these melodies. Also, when I was living in Quincy, I'd go out on my porch and sit, and when the wind was high, that tree would start vibrating and sounding like a hundred Rashied Ali's. I'd hear that and think, 'Man, I would really like my drumming to sound like that.' As I've gone more into the spiritual path, my music has become less personal and more like nature. Nature really isn't personal – when a tsunami comes, it hits everybody. It doesn't care if you're a nice or bad person, and when the sun comes out, it shines on everybody. And I think my music has become more like that – like the sun coming out or like the forest or the ocean or the wind. Most people's art is personal – where they've been, what they've heard – it's about their life. At this point, I think it's more like getting me out of the way and being more of an open channel for spirit to speak through.

Cadence: What do you hear when you listen to your drumming these days?

Moses: When I listen to my drumming now, I absolutely don't know what I'm playing. I don't understand it, and I think that's a really good place to be. Sometimes I'm not even sure that it's good, although these days I think it is because the intention is good and I've been playing over sixty years, so it should be fairly good by now. [Laughs] But there's no way to really judge it. You can't judge it based on mastery within a particular language. So much of music is people showing that they're masters of the Jazz or Latin language and I'm not trying to do that. At this point, I try not to think at all, I just let the hands go and generally, when I hear it back, I'm very happy with it. I told Tisziji recently, 'After all these years, I'm finally starting to get to the Elvin/Rashied level.' They are in my top three list. They're obviously more talented but if you stick at it long enough, maybe you start to reach a comparable level. Not that I'm playing like them, but I'm starting to hear my drumming as being maybe in that realm. And Tisziji said to me, although I never would have said it or thought it, he said, "No, you've gone beyond that." I said, 'Whoa, really?' He said, 'Yeah, because their music is still cultural and you have gone beyond culture.' I think it's true I've gone past culture in my music. There's no Black or African music, but I don't sound like a white guy either. We can say it's purple. One of the things that I'm looking forward to that my friend Clifford Koufman has set up for me is that I am going to New Orleans for a week to do some gigs with some great, luminary people and we're in the middle of an Indiegogo fundraising thing to get a film crew there. He put a trailer together to raise money for the trip and, man, I never think of myself as special, I think of myself as an old guy that's not too bright, that's pretty clumsy, always tripping over shit, but when I saw that trailer, I was watching it like it was somebody else, like it wasn't me. I thought, 'Wow, this is an interesting cat. This is a pretty deep guy this Ra Kalam!' I saw what people were saying about me on the trailer and I'm starting to like myself more. I'm starting to see how I'm reflected and how

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other people are seeing me. Maybe I am a special cat. Also, remembering early days when people like Mingus and Rahsaan took me into their world. They didn't have to do that and I realize they must have seen something special in me. I did a couple gigs with Rahsaan when I was seventeen or eighteen, and the bass player, I think it was Sirone, he didn't like that I was on the gig. He said to Rahsaan, and he wasn't Rahsaan then, he was just Roland, he said, "Why do you have this white kid playing drums? Come on, hire one of the brothers." And really, I don't think he was wrong, I was way in over my head. I remember Rahsaan saying to him, "This is my boy on drums and if you don't like it, I'll get a different bass player," and that was like 'WHOA!' When you think about him defending me like that, that's kind of extraordinary, really. These are great memories to have. Yeah, it's been a very blessed life and I've gotten to meet so many powerful people, powerful, great spirits who have been very nice and open to me and allowed me to play with them and learn from them. I'm supremely blessed.

Cadence: *Would you briefly talk about working on a path to serve the needs of Spirit and not the Self?*

Moses: I talk to Spirit like it's a being and I said, 'I'm going to give my life to you,' and the message I got back was, "Okay, then I will take care of you, but no luxury, but you'll always get by," and man, it's been that way for forty years. The water has been to this level [Points to chin] but it's never been to this level [Points to his eyes] where you drown. For a lot of people, that would be scary because the water's this high, and I don't take it for granted. I think it's important that I stay true to the mission. There have been people along the way like Kat and the dental work for free that is just Spirit taking care of me. I'm basically an out-of-work musician and yet I'm okay. I'm comfortable and able to do what I want to do. My son said something to me not too long ago that really made me laugh but also it was very moving. He said, "Dad, you're the most successful person I know." And I said, 'Whoa, surely you don't mean on a material level?' He said, 'No, but you've been able to play the music that you want to do, the art you want to do with no compromise. You say what you want to say without having to hold anything back, being totally honest. There's very few people who get to live that life.' That's Spirit taking care of me so I must be, in my own cockeyed kind of way, true to the path.

Cadence: *How does that translate when making music with other performers?*

Moses: My mission these days when I play with other musicians is very clear to me. I don't play very often, I don't complain about it. I don't complain about people not calling me for gigs but I'm grateful whenever I do get to play and I give my all every time. My mission is, and it's Tisziji's mission as well, but I'm a bit more out in the world than he is. He's really a recluse in a way to the music world. My mission is to take people who are great at various cultural music, it could be Jazz, Latin or Flamenco music, and get them to play free, to liberate. That's what spiritual is about, it's about liberation – being free of the Self, being free of what Tisziji calls the 'Five Fingers of Darkness' – greed, lust,

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anger, vanity and attachment. I used to have a lot of lust and a lot of anger but I do feel largely free of all of that now. I did some gigs in Spain with Javier Vercher, one of my favorite saxophone players, he reminds me of Jim Pepper in terms of being moved by his playing. He lives in Valencia and organized gigs with some virtuoso Flamenco guys and when I first met them they were apprehensive. They said, "Well, we don't play Free. I don't know if I can do that." I told them not to worry, they were going to be great and to just follow me. And within fifteen minutes, man, they were flying and they looked so happy. They looked like children that had been let out of school. There's no money in playing this kind of music but I don't care. There's no turning back for me, I'm on the path and there's no turning back. I don't get normal gigs. The last normal gig I did was a 2022 New Year's Eve gig with Art Edmaiston at a casino in Mississippi. I made five hundred bucks. They wheeled me around in a wheelchair because the place was huge. I played standards and Blues and Soul tunes. I didn't know if I could play that stuff anymore but apparently I did okay. I've played a couple gigs in Memphis where hardly anybody came but that's okay. If I play Free, I feel that I'm giving the people, however many listen, they're getting the best of me. I'm not compromising - some may get it, some may not, but generally, the people who hear it seem to be very moved by what I'm doing. And they do appreciate the fearlessness because I go on the thing with nothing prepared - no rehearsal or count off. We go from zero but we have spiritual intention. My only advice to the players these days is - no Jazz, please - I don't want to hear no eighth notes shit - and be in prayer mode - whatever that means to you.

Cadence: How have you integrated your deep spirituality into the music you play?

Moses: Everything in life should be a stepping stone. We never finish, we're always moving forward and developing. Billy Martin gave me a cassette of solo drumming by Pete Zeldman. The great Billy Martin, the great drummer, a great cat, a great friend. He's my 'broheem supreme.' I listened to it, I had never heard anything like it, and there were no overdubs. It was such an experience for me that it made me realize how lazy I had been in terms of being creative with my drum set, and how I played, compared to this guy. The simplest stuff he did was way over my head and I was determined at that point to be less lazy. I wanted to thank him for the inspiration. I didn't know anything about him or where he lived, but just from the way he played, I guessed that he probably lived in New York. So I called the New York directory and asked for a listing of Pete Zeldman. Of course, they had like five hundred Zeldman's but they had only one Pete. I called him and I said, 'I'm Bob Moses, I gotta tell you that I heard your drumming and it's so great and so beautiful that I just want to thank you for doing that work to inspire me to go deeper and to find my true way of playing.' He actually started crying on the phone. He said nobody had ever called him about that, no other drummer had reacted to him that way. We became friends and when I would play in New York at Sweet Basil's, he

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would always come. He loved my playing and we became buddies. He was a big influence. He had a drum set that was completely different and he made me realize that the standard drum set that I was playing was only there because everyone else played it. Many things of how I play now came out of him. What I call 'harmonic drumming' – playing two to four things at once – whereas most drummers play everything melodically end-to-end. I realized that I was playing the cymbal one hundred percent and my left hand and snare drum maybe ten percent and I asked myself if I really liked the cymbal that much more than the snare? No, so then I started playing the snare almost equal to the ride. That's what I call the 'full body ride.' Basically, when I heard Zeldman, I said, 'I'm going back to the beginning,' and I was already forty years old and I'm going back to square one. So that was the beginning. When it came to the tone of the drums, I really liked the sound that I would associate more with World music because it's more melodic. Thanks to Remo, who I'm associated with, they make a lot of things that I utilize such as tombeks, which are like dumbbells on a stand. That's a Remo invention, and I use a djembe as my left bass drum. I do that because I like the tones. I wasn't necessarily trying to play World music but I like the sounds. When I first came to Europe around '67-'68 with Gary Burton, I used to go to these alternative festivals and I saw a lot of the Avant-Garde of Europe and a lot of the drummers had these completely weird drum sets. I saw sets of all gongs and tiny hi-hats and also one with a giant snare drum to the left and three bass drums to his right – just completely original stuff. I don't know that I even liked their drumming that much but looking back on it – wow – they were like thirty years ahead of me in terms of reinventing the drum set. Today, a lot of my favorite percussionists are Europeans. I just put out a record with one of my favorite percussionists Vasco Trilla, who lives in Barcelona, called Singing Icons. When I was a kid, most of the drummers I listened to were African American guys, now I'm finding my favorite drummers are these Danish guys. They're visionaries, completely unique, not trying to copy anybody, and I'm finding inspiration from all these places. Everything is tied in with the spirituality, everything is a stepping stone to the next step. A lot of musicians learn something that they get really proficient at and then they spend the rest of their life showing the world what they are proficient at. My saying, which is based on what I got from Tisziji, is 'learn it to burn it.' I interviewed Rashied Ali for Modern Drummer Magazine in 2004. He's one of my heroes and he'd never been in a drum magazine, which I thought was criminal, so I said, 'Let me fix that.' He told me he loved Bebop growing up – he loved Max Roach, Art Blakey, Charlie Parker. He said, "But I knew if I had to play 'ding-ding-ding-a-ding' my whole life, I'd kill myself!" I said, 'Rashied, I'm with you one hundred percent!' I love all that traditional, fundamental music. I tried not to skip any of them, and I've played almost all kinds of music at one point or the other. I have great respect for all cultural music. It's great but I realize that I'm here to do something else which is to always play what you don't know. That's related to the spiritual. Rashied was Tisziji's drummer, some of Rashied's

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greatest drumming was with Tisziji. By the way, I was at the gig where Elvin and Rashied played together with the band that recorded “Meditations.” I think they played one live gig at the Village Gate in New York and I was there. It was a combination of the old band with McCoy, Jimmy, Elvin and Trane with the addition of Rashied and Pharoah Sanders. Man, that was powerful and the two drummers together was the best double drum stuff I’ve ever heard, and I’m into double drums and triple drums and tribal drumming. They were great together. I don’t think Elvin was too happy about it, yeah, ego got in the way. The guys were alpha dogs, they wanted to be the only guy. Elvin played the time and Rashied played the Free shit, and when you put them together, it was like hearing the ocean with a groove. It was beautiful and I’m trying to do that myself. There’s something I use to try to approximate that, I put the hands in time and I just let the feet go to create a waterfall or a rockslide to suggest what I heard Elvin and Rashied doing years ago. Yeah, it’s been a path towards liberation. It was always in me but it took a while.

Cadence: *You’ve also integrated your spirituality into your drum sticks by using sticks cut directly from trees.*

Moses: I had a friend Arnaldo who had been to Africa to play with Senegalese players and he had these long sticks that were made of some kind of a branch that you find in the bushes there. They were very long and whippy and thin but very strong. They were difficult to get because they have thorns and they tear your skin up trying to get them. After I played them a lot they got shorter. They sounded really good on the cymbal but not so good on the drum so I knew I needed a thicker one on the drum. This is another thing that grew out of Peter Zeldman blowing my mind wide open. I thought, ‘Why do I want my sticks to be the same?’ My left and right hands were not equal, I wish they were but they’re not. My right hand is stronger, although they’re getting closer. Also, they have different functions in the music. The drum companies push drum stick pairs that are exactly the same made off the computer but why would you want that? If you had a band and you had two alto players would you want them to have the same exact sound? Generally, I use different designs on my sticks. I cut the sticks from the tree at an angle and bevel them for the right hand sticks, and for the left hand sticks, I let them be pretty much the whole shape so they’re thicker. I put little designs on them so I know which is which. This one is dry, this one is louder, so depending on whom I’m playing with, I’ll use the ones that I want. They’re all very personal, very unique, so there’s something spiritual about that and when one of them breaks or dies it’s like, ‘Oh, my favorite ride stick.’ It’s like when somebody you really love passes. Sometimes they don’t quite die, they just get really broken and bent and weaker, which is like how I feel now. I feel like an old, broken, weaker guy at this point. And those I only use a little bit to try to keep them alive because I have a feeling about them that you would never have from a pair of mass-produced sticks. I dip them in polyurethane to strengthen them and keep them alive a little longer. I used to do this myself and it would take three

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weeks to make one pair, and it was dangerous too because I was cutting with a saw, but I've found a woodworker to do that. The newer batches are no longer from trees, I buy oak dowels from Home Depot but they remain all individual and it suits me. They are a lot shorter than the mass-produced drum sticks. Sometimes drummers ask me how I play with the short sticks but they don't feel short to me because even when I'm playing with sticks, I play like a hand drummer. So, when I have this wood stick coming out it's like having a long wooden finger to me.

Cadence: *In one of your emails to me you included a quote – “the evolution is towards freedom. The seeds were there from the beginning.” Would you explain that?*

Moses: The Spirit path is definitely about liberation and in music as well. If you're a musician, it would reflect in your music. I think it's been there all along [in me] or else I would not have been drawn to that path.

Cadence: *You sing on a number of your recordings. How would you characterize your singing?*

Moses: [Laughs] The less, the better!

Cadence: *You sign off your messages with ‘Hu’ – such as Hu Ra Kalam and Hu Ken. What does Hu mean?*

Moses: It's said like “shoe” and that's a sound I learned from my teacher Tisziji. It's the sacred sound of exhaling. It's the kind of sound you might make if you have a narrow escape but it's also a meditational breathing practice to do a very slow inhale and a very slow exhale. It's to bring your mind down, if possible, to no thought except the sound of the exhalation and it's a letting loose of things. It's a very useful sound and we also use it as a salutation, particularly among people in the circle. It's kind of a recognition of practice but I use it with everybody. I've even got my landlord, who's a Tennessee trucker, saying Hu now and also ‘love always,’ which is beautiful. I guess he feels something positive about it. Some people like to chant the sound “Om,” that's a very powerful, sacred sound. I feel that Om is more of a grounding sound and Hu is more of an air letting go sound, and I feel like an air or sky person.

Cadence: *You have some other very interesting views on music such as not putting limits on music and that composition is limiting because one can become too attached to it.*

Moses: When I was younger I used to write a lot more extensively and now I don't feel the need. With the right people you don't need much, if anything, of a composition. I think the composition can be spontaneous but to make it work and be cohesive it does need a certain surrender. My philosophy is that whatever the first thing that comes out, that's the composition, and who knows what that's gonna be? That's Spirit sending you an idea – God, Spirit, whatever you want to call it - force, divinity, sends you an idea. We don't know why. It's a thousand years of our ancestors that have all gone into that. When I lived in Quincy, I'd have people ask if they could come over and play Free. What I noticed with a lot of them was that they would play something and then they

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would immediately leave it as if it didn't matter. I think you have to be grateful for the idea that comes to you from God and not just toss it away like it's a tissue. I'm trained to jump on whatever the first idea is. Sometimes it's not what I would choose to play on but it's coming from the other musician and I've gotta honor it.

Cadence: *In a 1994 interview, you said, "I'm a believer in the spirit world -- in the sense that all of the spirits of the music world from past to present are all in the same psychic jet stream." Are you channeling that stream when you are playing or composing?*

Moses: I think the [psychic jet stream is] always present, it's a question of when we are able to or are open to tap into it, and I'm one of those people who, from time to time, tap into it. Sometimes when I'm playing the drums I feel like the very first caveman who ever hit a drum. Sometimes voices will come through me that don't sound like me at all, they sound like some old Mississippi Blues guy, and I'm always grateful when these spirits come through me. Since I've been in the South, here in Memphis, I've been hearing different kinds of grooves than I heard when I was up in the North and I can only conclude that these are things that are in the air. And when I sang those grooves to some of the people in Memphis they said, "Oh no, that's not a Memphis groove, that's New Orleans." New Orleans is a six-seven-hour drive away but these spirit jets do travel. They are not stuck in the same place, so maybe that's what I'm hearing. Yea, I pick up on those vibes. Things come to me that are universal, they're not personal, they're in the air.

Cadence: *You played with many of Jazz' most influential players, especially early in your career. As time went on, at what point did you not view yourself as a Jazz drummer?*

Moses: I never thought of myself as a Jazz drummer. I don't even think of myself as a drummer or as a musician, that's too small for me. [Laughs] I'm sorry to those people who consider themselves Jazz musicians, that might be enough for them, that's not enough for me, man. No, I'm just someone who has discovered, and many people have discovered, but for myself, I discovered that there's a certain healing in being creative and it could be with sound or with visual. I'm as much of a painter as a musician. It could be with cooking or dancing or architecture. It's how you walk down the street. It could be how you talk. You could be a poet. Within being creative there's a healing and it's a useful process being creative because the people who create in a way, they get to see their own souls very clearly. Like when you look in the mirror you can see your body but can you see your soul or spirit? But when you hear a piece of music you wrote or eat a meal you cooked, you see your spirit. It's like having a spirit mirror.

Cadence: *It's interesting that you don't think of yourself as a drummer. That's borne out by the fact that you do play a number of other instruments on your recordings.*

Moses: I'll play any instrument. That's me playing bass on my Mother Sky

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record, some 'caveman' bass on three tunes, and I don't know how to play bass but I played it anyway. I wasn't afraid. It's primitive playing but it's strong.

Cadence: *What is your connection to Jazz today?*

Moses: Almost nothing, I don't have any connection to Jazz. I don't think about Jazz and I never really did. As far as music goes, I listen to Tiszi's music because it's the most powerful healing music. I listen to my own stuff, not because I'm an egomaniac but because I'm trying to learn how to make it better.

Cadence: *Would you talk about your early childhood and family? What did your parents stress? How did they raise you?*

Moses: Oh, my God, [Laughs] they were hardcore atheists! Not only did they not believe in God or religion but their thing was also anybody who believed in those things was an idiot. [Laughs] I think what I inherited from them, particularly from my mom's side, was a certain kind of a rebel spirit. I was definitely a rebellious kid, a very contrary kid. When I went to school, thirty kids said this and I said the opposite. I remember being really young, perhaps third grade, and refusing to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance because of the treatment of Native American people. Everyone looked at me like I was crazy but I wasn't afraid to say no. My mom defended me at all times. My dad and I battled a lot. He wanted me to get an education and go to school and I think that was a certain insecurity on his part. He thought I would be better treated if I had degrees and that I would make more money. That was fear-based and I didn't like that, I wasn't afraid. I'm a high school dropout, I never got a degree. I said, 'There's no way I'm going to college. I hate school, man, I ain't going!' And I would cut school most of the time and [Laughs] they would call my mom to the principal's office. That was hilarious. She would come in wearing her cape that she made, a reversible cape with sunglasses shaped like sixteenth notes, and the principal would start to say, "You know your son..." and before he'd get further she'd say, "Don't tell me about my son, you don't know anything about him. You think he doesn't respect you? You're right, and it's not his fault. You don't give him anything worthy to respect so don't expect him to respect you." And I saw these principals, these authority figures, just cowering and stuttering before my mom. She'd turn them into nothing. That was my mom, she was my defender. My favorite movie as a kid, and still one of my favorites, is the original Dumbo, the Disney movie about the elephant with the big ears. In the movie, the other elephants make fun of Dumbo but his mother defends him because he was different, and that was my story. My mom's side was Russian Polish and my dad's side were English Jews. In the early days, I got along with my dad well because we were into sports. He was a pretty good athlete and I was a very good athlete so we used to play ball together, but when school started getting serious that's when I started getting into conflict with him. I wouldn't go to school, I would only pretend that I went. I would leave the house in the morning and just walk the streets of New York. That's how I got flat feet, by the way, by walking hundreds of blocks on concrete. I learned a lot more outside than I ever did in school just by walking New York.

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I'd go have a piece of pie and a glass of milk in the Horn & Hardart, and near my school was the Jazz Record Center which had Jazz LP's and they'd actually play them for you before you bought them. They'd cost two dollars apiece and I'd go in there and spend my lunch money, and at one point I had thousands of LP's. In the early days I was drawn to Jazz because the Jazz I was hearing was so vital and so strong and powerful. I used to go hear Horace Silver and Art Blakey and Cannonball Adderley's bands and Coltrane. Miles was like outer space to me. It was great but it was way over my head. I was also into Rock and Country and Ravi Shankar, Youssou N'Dour, and King Sunny Ade. I was attracted to stuff that was great and had a lot of soul.

Cadence: *Would you talk more about your relationship with your father?*

Moses: My dad was known as Richard but when I saw his birth certificate his actual name was Isaac. He changed it to be less Jewish, which to me seems silly because his last name was Moses. Who are you fooling? [Laughs] We had an adversarial relationship to the max until Tisziji came and healed that. Of all the gifts that Tisziji bestowed on me, that's one of the most profound because he healed my relationship with my dad and that enabled me to see the greatness of my father. He gave my dad a spiritual name too. My dad became Shompa Lodro, and he loved that. It means 'Ageless Wit.' Tisziji loved my dad. The last six or seven years of my dad's life was very loving between us so he was able to go out with a lot more grace and peace. He said to Tisziji, "You've given me back the greatest gift, you've given me back my son, the love of my son." I was his only child. I had been at war with him for thirty to forty years. I had loved him but I didn't like him until Tisziji showed me what a great person actually my dad was. I told Tisziji, 'This guy pushes all my buttons,' and Tisziji said, "Get rid of your buttons. From this day on, you have no buttons, you're button-less, okay?" Bam! He snapped his fingers and from that day on... It was that simple. When my dad would say stuff that would've upset me in the past, I would just laugh, give him a hug, and say, 'Shompa, I love you, you're the best.' That was Tisziji's advice – "Don't critique him, don't argue with him, praise him, give him love" – and I did that and everything got really beautiful between me and my dad. My dad loved Tisziji which is saying something for someone who was an atheist.

Cadence: *How about your mom?*

Moses: My mom was my best friend. She was super cool and also super talented. She was an incredible visual artist. She started painting without ever taking a lesson, just like my approach to painting to drumming to composing, I never took a lesson. My mom was really good from the first painting, she just had it. She and my father were very smart. Again, she helped me get through school, which I hated. I was way over weight in school. I was like two hundred and ten pounds because I was so unhappy and as soon as I got out of school, within six months, I was down to one hundred thirty five pounds. I just wasn't a school person so it's ironic that I ended up teaching at a school for years. [Laughs] I never really felt at one with teaching, I definitely felt out of place,

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and eventually I lost my job there. Looking back, I probably should have lost my job many years before that because I was so different from all the other teachers.

Cadence: *Did you have other family members with a connection to Jazz artists?*

Moses: My beloved uncle on my mom's side worked in a dry cleaning shop the next block over from where we lived and Horace Silver had a sweating disorder, he sweated a lot and he played really hard, too. In those days, you'd play six nights in a club, three sets a night, and he would literally go through three suits a night. His suit would be drenched so he'd have to change it for the next set. In a week, he'd go through eighteen suits, that's a big dry cleaning bill. And my uncle Norman would say, "Hey, Horace, just poke your head in and see if the boss is not around, I'll do your suits for free." That was my uncle Norman, he was an outlaw. He used to sell reefer when he was fifteen to the cats in Duke Ellington's band. He was a street fighter too, he'd take on people twice his size and lay them out if necessary. He was a sweet cat, a war hero, and he loved Jazz. One of his sons wound up being a TV and movie sound guy and he did the sound for The Sopranos.

Cadence: *You had an important early connection to the drums as a youngster.*

Moses: The first drum I got was from my godfather, the great drummer Ed Shaughnessy. He was a big, strong Irishman who eventually moved to L.A. and became the drummer for The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson with Doc Severinsen. I was ten years old and I was playing on a hybrid set. It had a tiny drum that was like a tambourine with a bass drum pedal and I think that planted a seed into how my drum set evolved to today. Shaughnessy was a studio drummer so I used to go to studio dates and I'd see great musicians play like Mundell Lowe.

Cadence: *How did your father become connected to the music business?*

Moses: He was a press agent so he used to work for all kinds of people in the entertainment industry including musicians. He was a promoter, although I don't know exactly what he did. One of his early clients was Stan Kenton. Both my dad and my mom were really like New York characters. They were hanging out on 52nd Street, which was filled with all the Jazz clubs, and they were part of that scene. When my dad realized that I was into music, he made it a point to open the house to all these great musicians and he helped them. My dad wasn't a lawyer but he understood how to read contracts. He would go and help Mingus negotiate. [Laughs] One time Mingus went to Columbia Records with my dad to negotiate and Mingus was wearing a hunter's outfit and a shotgun. [Laughs] I guess that was a negotiating tactic. Yeah, I had all these great people coming through the house. Also, my parents were really hardcore liberals when that wasn't something to apologize for. So, our house was open to Black Jazz musicians and other people. We had a young Black girl who lived with us for three or four years and when we first met her she was on heroin and hooking on the street at age fourteen. We took her in, got her straight off of drugs, and

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got her in school. My parents did that a lot, they were very giving. They were also great characters and that's why people loved them. I'd bring my friends over and they'd say, "Man! Your mom is so hip," and after a while I'd say, 'Mom, would you shut up for a minute, they're MY friends.' They'd all want to hang out with my mom because she was so hip. She was very close with Abbey Lincoln. They used to hang out together and laugh and laugh. I did one record that was kind of dedicated to my mom called Nishoma, which means 'beautiful soul' in Yiddish and Abbey wrote the liner notes to that. Everybody loved my mom. She was very open and she'd know your life story within fifteen minutes and you'd know hers. And she'd dress to kill. My dad wasn't like that but he had his own charm. Mingus and Rahsaan Roland Kirk, although he was just Roland then, were over at my house all the time.

Cadence: *Your dad helped a few musicians gets housing.*

Moses: Right, the people running my building didn't want to give Roland Kirk a lease there because he looked so strange. It wasn't that he was Black, there were plenty of Black people in the building, but he looked like a Black guy from outer space walking down the street with his sirens and all these things hanging off his neck. [Laughs] Being blind, he was choosing outfits and I don't think he realized exactly what he looked like. He would have the weirdest outfits and he had all these whistles and sirens and bells hanging off his neck at all times and this cane with bells on it. Everything he had made sounds when he was walking down the street, he was already making music. Yea, he looked like a really strange cat from another planet and the superintendent in my building thought he was cuckoo. Well, he was cuckoo, and they were worried that he couldn't pay the rent so my dad actually ended up signing the lease for him. In other words, vouching for him as a successful musician. My dad did something similar for Mingus. For Mingus, it was very important that he live on 5th Avenue because that's where the rich [white] people lived and he felt like "Why can't Black people have nice stuff?" Mingus had a thing about being materially successful and he wasn't sure that they would rent him a place on 5th Avenue so my dad actually went and pretended to be Mingus and signed the lease for him. Those were my teachers in an unofficial sense. They were so different from the vibe at school, it's no wonder I hated school. [Laughs] School was lame compared to the peeps that were coming through my house. All kinds of people – Edgar Bateman, Ken McIntyre, Elmo Hope. People would come and we would feed them, help them out. Our house was like an oasis and we had a piano and a set of drums.

Cadence: *Talk about growing up in New York City at 415 Central Park West in the same building with Max Roach, Abbey Lincoln, Elvin Jones, Art Blakey and Rahsaan Roland Kirk.*

Moses: It was great, I never knew who I would see in the elevator. I'd take the elevator and I'd see Eric Dolphy and Booker Little or Clifford Jordan and Jimmy Garrison and Lee Morgan, they were all my heroes. They were all coming in to hang. It was a rent-controlled building, that's how my parents

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band was Abbey Lincoln, trumpeter Richard Williams, tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan, trombonist Julian Priester, pianist Mal Waldron and bassist Art Davis, joined by a sixteen-piece choir of all Classical Black singers conducted by Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson and they did a live gig at the garden of the Museum of Modern Art in the summertime. I went to that and then they all came back to 415 Central Park West. All those musicians went to Max's place on the fourteenth floor, ours was on the fourth floor, and I went up to the fourteenth floor and was there for that hang. I saw how they were all high from doing that concert and how they talked about the music and how they felt about it. This was a great experience to be able to watch firsthand how the music got created and to see how the people felt about it and to get to know some of these musicians. The building to my left, 418, saxophonist Harold Vick lived, and the building to my right, 410, Herbie Hancock and Johnny Griffin lived there. There were a lot of musicians around and it was nice living by the park. It was also sociologically very interesting because the complex was kind of nice, we had a doorman. It wasn't rich but it was comfortable with nice apartments overlooking the park, but if you went right down the side street you were in some tough territory. You could easily get mugged and there were drug deals going on and gangs. The fact that I wound up in that building, what are the odds of that? We all have our fate, we all have our path, but my path and fate have been pretty intense.

Cadence: You spent a lot of time with Rahsaan Roland Kirk as a youngster. Talk about your special relationship with him.

Moses: We were like family. Roland lived on the other side of the building and I probably spent more time at his house than my house. I mean, that was my hang. With Roland, it was music 24/7 because that's all he really had as a blind man. That was it – music was his life – one hundred percent. I'd watch him practice and rehearse and he'd let me join in on the rehearsal, even when I could barely play. I remember sitting in with vibes when I was fourteen with Roland and the band was Andrew Hill on piano, Richard Davis on bass, I think Walter Perkins, one of my all-time favorite drummers, and Roland, and here I am playing the vibes and I'm completely faking it. I don't know anything, man, we didn't have Real books, I was completely faking it. That was some Free Bop, for real because I didn't know what I was doing, but what I did was I matched the energy. I would watch the drummer and watch his ride and I put my melodies right in the rides so I was sort of swinging because they were swinging. I took the swing from them and as I played three or four choruses, I'd be hitting a lot of clinkers the first chorus, but by the third chorus, not many at all, but it was very unscientific. I learned a few tricks like if I hit a really bad note, sometimes I'd hit it again, like two or three times, so it didn't sound like a mistake. So it be like, 'No, I meant that shit. Don't you like a little dissonance?' Or I would chromatic it down to a better note. I would observe and try things. They knew I couldn't play and I kept waiting for one of them to say, "Hey, put the mallets down and come back in ten years when you know

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something about music,” but they never said that. “Yea, Bobby, you sound good!” They were generous and forgiving with me. Yea, I spent a lot of time with Roland, and his music is so strong to this day. Talk about magic, that dude was on fire, and an extraordinary person in every way. I used to walk him all around New York. We’d go into record stores together and I’d read the liner notes to him and go everywhere with him. He’d teach my friends. I remember bringing saxophonists Dave Liebman and Joel Peskin over. When I took over Edgar Bateman’s loft when I was sixteen, Roland came down and played with us. We were just white kids and one of the greatest Black Jazz musicians of all time would come down and play like five hours with us and blow the roof off. That’s kind of extraordinary, I think. These were my teachers and heroes and friends. Eric Dolphy was somebody else I was very close to. I loved Eric Dolphy, not just his music but as a person. He was very humble and very polite, which I can’t say was the norm for most of these guys. [Laughs] I was there when Roland met Mingus for the first time. Roland was relatively new to New York and my dad drove him from Central Park to 5th Avenue to meet Mingus to audition for Mingus’ band. And that was an incredible day – that was a meeting of the titans. Roland pulled out his two horns and did a huge [blow] on them together and Mingus LOVED it! He fell off the piano stool, and Mingus weighed about three hundred pounds at that time. I mean the paintings shook on the wall. He liked it but he challenged him, that’s what they used to do then. Mingus picked up the bass and played the fastest walking bass I’ve ever heard. I think the tune was “Get Happy” but it was [rapid fire], and Roland was right there with him, note-for-note. Roland got the gig and he played in Mingus’ band for a couple of years. What a cat, I’ve got so many memories. One day he decided he was gonna learn circular breathing and he said, “I’m going in this room and I’m not coming out until I can do it. He came out of that room after four days and he was circular breathing. Talk about ear training and memory training, he would take his flute and turn on the radio, and back in those days they had the Top 40 radio where they would rotate the hits, which were three minutes long at the time, and he would memorize the tunes in one hearing. He’d play along with it, memorize it, turn the radio off and play it back, and then he would go onto the next one. He would do forty in a row, one hearing each, and he would know all forty. That’s when I learned something as a teacher which the kids really didn’t like when I did this at NEC but I felt it was good practice. It was teaching people the music without paper. I realized that with the paper you never really learn it, you’re just looking at the paper.

Cadence: *That’s pretty extraordinary that Kirk could pick up all those songs so easily.*

Moses: These cats were like supermen in a way, and also with physical strength too. I saw Mingus bend a metal bar in his hands. They had strong spirits. These were the people I was hanging with during my childhood. It was kind of a great childhood. I should say that I’m talking about them now

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because you asked me about them but the truth is, I've said my thank-yous and my goodbyes to these people a long time ago. It was almost like an internal ceremony. I talked to their spirits. I said, 'Mingus, Rahsaan, thank you for initiating me and allowing me into your world but I'm not gonna be listening to your music hardly anymore. I'm not gonna be talking about you much anymore. It's time for me to go on and do my own thing like you did, and stand on my own two feet and find my own contribution.' I'm kind of breaking that right now but remembering these cats recently, I've been moved by it. An important part of my development is letting go. See, spiritual practice is not about adding on stuff, it's about letting go of things, which is why most people don't want to do it. It's too difficult or too painful, but it's very liberating to do that. Not just to not lean on other people's creations but also not even lean on my own innovations, let it all go.

Cadence: You went on to perform with Kirk.

Moses: One of the gigs I did with him was in Washington, D.C. at the Bohemian Caverns. This club was great, it was in the Black neighborhood and it looked like caverns with stalagmites inside. It had these beautiful, sexy Black women wearing lingerie and I was a virgin and these women teased me mercilessly, but I loved it. He had a tune called "Here Comes the Whistleman" that he played flute on. It was a little funky tune, a Boogaloo kind of tune. We played that at this club and he had a box of toy flutes that he bought really cheap and he handed them out to the people in the audience and he got like a hundred people blowing these flutes and then he had a transistor radio that he carried and he turned it on to whatever station and put it up to the mic and at one point it was Frank Sinatra singing "Strangers in the Night," and he had a hundred people blowing [distorted whistles] and us playing this Funk tune. I mean it was a psychedelic moment, like some Charles Ives from another planet. Roland was really something, he was down-home and he loved Dixieland and the Blues and R&B and all that stuff, but he was also way, way out there. He was into Stockhausen and really all sound as music. He had that mix of being both super old school and yet ultra-modern.

Cadence: At age 13, you were playing duets with Mingus. What was that like?

Moses: That was a trip, and he didn't go easy on me at that age. But he was sweet to me, although he could be scary [to others]. He could be a very intimidating cat. Roland Kirk was also very sweet to me and when I think back, how they were to me, it moves me to tears to think how beautiful these people were to me. They must have seen something in me and I'm starting to think, as an old guy, and I wouldn't have said this until recently, but I'm starting to see myself as, yea, I am great, and that's not from an ego point, it's more of a recognition. It's a recognition of how these other great people saw me. They gave me a lot, so to recognize my own greatness, it's in a way honoring them and to not recognize it would be kind of dishonoring them. We were like family.

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Cadence: By 14, you were composing music. What's the extent of your formal musical training? You reportedly rebelled against conventional training except for some lessons under Classical music teacher Morris Goldenberg.

Moses: That's right. One of my other early mentors was Stanley Free, who is featured on Bittersuite in the Ozone, my first record, really as a composer and conceptualizer, which I still think is one of the best things I've ever done. Stanley knew Morris, who taught at the Julliard School, which was the best Classical music school. I was a high school dropout basically but Stanley asked Mo to take me in as a student and he was nice enough to do that. He was a great teacher for the Classical [setting] and I did get to play a little bit in some orchestras. I actually really enjoyed it to an extent because it's just beautiful to be in the middle of an orchestra. That's the best place to hear it – right in the middle of it – but I also knew that it wasn't for me because there wasn't that much for drums or percussion. That is not drum-centric music. I remember playing pieces where you had to count 472 bars and then you get to go 'bing' on the triangle, and if you missed it, you might as well commit harikari because you're not gonna get another chance to redeem yourself. That was too much pressure for me and not enough to do. Elvin was my guy and every year there was a thing called Gretsch Drum Night at Birdland and I'd be there every year. There'd be five sets of drums and all the heavy hitters. At first there'd be the A team with Elvin, Art Blakey, Philly Joe, Max Roach and Mel Lewis. They would trade and kind of battle each other and then the second string would come and they would be great too, they just weren't as famous. I told Morris Goldenberg about it and I went to a lesson shortly afterwards and he said, "I went to that thing Gretsch Drum Night that you told me about but I left early, it really wasn't my cup of tea." I asked him what he thought of Elvin and he said – I'm paraphrasing – "Oh, I thought he was disgusting. He was grunting and sweating like an animal, like a pig," and then he said, "But don't get me wrong, I like Jazz. I like the Modern Jazz Quartet," which I do too but I thought in my mind, 'Why? Because they wear tuxedos and they don't sweat?' I remember when he said that something snapped for me and I said, 'Well that guy who you thought was disgusting, that's what I want to do and I don't think you can help me to get there so I'm gonna say thank you for taking me as a student but I'm gonna say goodbye now,' and I walked out on him and these Julliard students couldn't believe that this punk ass, high school dropout, white kid walked out on the great Morris Goldenberg. He had a waiting list of people wanting to study with him. He wrote a drum book that I think the Classical percussionists are still using. He was a great man and I took three to five lessons with him. I enjoyed playing Bach transcriptions of violin stuff for the marimba. [I made my recording debut] on a record of Rahsaan's called I Talk With the Spirits where I played vibes. It includes a 41 second spontaneous jam that came at the end of the session. I improvised on that Bach stuff that I had been practicing and Rahsaan joined in on the flute. Walter Perkins said, "Ooh, that's fugue'n and alluding! That's nice," and that became the title of the tune. I was fourteen or fifteen.

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Cadence: Also at 14, you started playing vibes.

Moses: I got a very cheap set of vibes, Jenco vibes, and the first gigs I ever did were on vibes. My first vibes teacher was Teddy Charles, who was a great vibes player, in fact, he was Mingus' favorite vibes player and one of the first people to play four mallet vibes. He wasn't a virtuoso, like Gary Burton, but still, he was a very soulful cat and also a great composer. He was a Jewish cat from Chicopee, Massachusetts. For a little while I had a trumpet. For a little while I had a bass. I went to a summer camp where I played bass but I didn't own the bass so I only played it at the camp. I couldn't take it home so that's when my bass playing ended. A few years later I got a bass from one of my students. In the early days it was drums, piano, vibes and whatever else came through. If an instrument came to me, I would do my best to get something out of it.

Cadence: How did you come to start playing around town in a Latin Jazz band?

Moses: I played in a Latin band called Al Santiago y Suy Combo which played mostly in the Bronx in church basements. They made a deal with the church to share the revenue. These gigs weren't advertised, they were word of mouth in the neighborhood. We'd play eight sets a night, starting at 8 o'clock – 15 minutes on/10 minutes off – and the last set would end at ten to five in the morning. This was a great experience to play for dance. I wasn't good enough to play drums with that band but I could play vibes for them. I think I made fifteen dollars for eight sets. [Laughs] That's less than two dollars an hour but I had a lot of fun and I think they liked the novelty of this little gringo kid going crazy on the vibes – I was the only non-Puerto Rican in the joint. The trumpet players needed to rest their chops because they were hitting double high Cs for eight sets in a row so I got to solo a lot. In those days, I played everything in octaves because that was the only way you could be heard over the band and my aim was pretty accurate. I watched the drummers, there was always four or five percussionists going, and I noticed that they were improvising much in the way that Jazz musicians improvise but it was still very danceable. That was a mystery to me – how they could be that free and creative and still keep it grooving. I asked them how they did that and one of the few guys who spoke English said, "Oh, it's the clave! Man, don't you know about the clave?," and he sang me the rhythmic pattern. I listened to it and learned how to play on resolution points, having a rhythmic structure to play it from. I realized you could reduce the five hits down to one, the most important hit, and I began to realize which clave it was at the time and that became the basis for my teaching because I realized that I'd better master improvising to all the points of the bar. I took a two bar phrase and I worked on all the resolution points and I've been doing that since I was a teenager and still do that. That's also one of the reasons I was an unpopular teacher at New England Conservatory because I tried to get the students to do this and they couldn't do it, which is okay because they were only eighteen or nineteen but nobody was working on it, and they didn't want to work on it because it exposed them. No wonder some of them hated

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me because I told them they weren't ready to play standards yet. They couldn't even improvise to one in the first bar of a two-bar phrase. I'd say, 'That's as simple a form as you'll ever get so you're not ready for these more complex thirty-two bar forms which may have twenty-five hits in them.' Playing with those crazy Puerto Ricans in the Bronx when I was just a teenager became a lot of my teaching of what I call Resolution Point Meditations. I think learning to play the clave was very important training and it was my path to Free playing.

Cadence: *With the Latin bands you were playing 8 sets per night and finishing at 5 AM. How did you get away with doing that? Weren't your parents concerned?*

Moses: [Laughs] My parents couldn't control me. They tried but they couldn't control me. When they lived in Queens and I wanted to get into music, I knew Manhattan was the place for that so I told them, 'You better move to Manhattan or I'm running away from home,' and they believed me, man, and they moved to Manhattan.

Cadence: *Why did you move away from playing vibes?*

Moses: I don't know, I think I eventually sold them because I needed the money. On one of those gigs with the Latin band, we were up on a high stage and I was playing so hard that the wheel lock became undone and the vibes went off the stage upside down. The people below who were dancing scattered and the vibes hit the floor and they never worked quite right after that. Then I got a Deagan set which sounded a little bit better but it was very unportable. I find that the piano is easier to play and you can get more going on it. I only played single lines on vibes and it was limiting. I had vibes when I lived in Westkill, New York and I remember taking them out on the porch one time. I started playing and a deer came all the way from the woods and came right up to twenty feet away from me and sat down and listened to me play for about forty minutes. I used to play for the cows too because a farmer would graze his cows in our backyard. When I would take the vibes outdoors in the summer, the cows would come up to the fence and listen to me. That was nice but vibes were never my number one choice of instrument. I'm actually more drawn to the marimba but marimba is very expensive to get a good one. At some point, I just really needed money badly, which could have been almost at any point [Laughs] in my life, so I sold them. I still love the instrument. Especially the playing of my favorite vibes player, Bryan Carrott.

Cadence: *In 1965, at the age of 17, you formed The Free Spirits with Larry Coryell [guitar, sitar, lead vocals], Jim Pepper [tenor sax, flute, vocals], Columbus "Chip" Baker [rhythm guitar, vocals], and Chris Hills [electric bass] which is widely considered to be the first Jazz-Rock band. What's the backstory to that group?*

Moses: We didn't become successful and it eventually broke up and splintered. Gary Burton stole Larry from us. Larry was very ambivalent about being a Rock star, we all were, actually. The best thing that we did was a record that only recently came out called Live At The Scene that was found on a reel-to-

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reel tape from 1967. The playing was great and you hear the band as we really were. Coryell talked about the music biz on mic and how these people were sharks and how we were not gonna let them hold us back. We were already very disillusioned with the Rock n' Roll business. That night Bill Graham, the great producer, came to see us and the first set we played for him. We did our super-tight set, going from one tune to the another, and quick segways. We really wanted to have him put us on and make us famous. He left and we did a massive amount of psychedelics and the second set was more of the Free Jazz stuff. A young Dave Liebman, Randy Brecker and Joe Beck sat in and we did a version of "I'm Gonna Be Free," which was kind of like Rock n' Roll meets Ascension, and to this day, I've never heard anything like that. That's on that record. We also did a version of "Night in Tunisia" which is pretty wild. All kinds of people used to sit in with us. We were the house band at a club called The Scene, which was on 48th Street. Tiny Tim used to play his ukulele every night there. I remember going into the bathroom one night and Allen Ginsberg was teaching Tiny Tim how to sing "Hare Krishna." [Laughs] Ginsberg had a very deep voice and Tiny had a very high-pitched voice and the two of them together [was something else]. I thought, 'Man, am I trippin' or what? This is a scene from a movie. Is this really happening?' We played there every night. Our band car was a hearse, and that was before the Grateful Dead. We'd go to the gig in a hearse and the windows were blacked out so we could get high in there. We bought this old, used hearse for five hundred bucks. Yea, the Free Spirits was great. Coryell got me into loving Rock and Pepper got me into loving Free Jazz more. And Chris Hills was a genius, he was a better drummer than I was. He inherited Gary Peacock's old bass when Gary gave up playing the bass for quite a few years to be part of the macrobiotic movement. I don't know why that meant he had to give up playing but he decided he was just going to do the macrobiotic thing and be a spokesman for that world. The band did two weeks opposite the Velvet Underground and all of Andy Warhol's people were there every night. What a freak show that was. Man, those peeps were wow. They had a lead singer Nico who looked like a vampire, like these people had never seen the sun. They were the whitest people you could imagine and they were almost all junkies too. They could hardly play. We thought they were terrible but now people think they're an important band. Maybe they were, I don't know. Famous bands would play at Madison Square Garden and finish and then come to The Scene and hang out and sit in with us. Jimi Hendrix sat in once. Hendrix was intimidated by Coryell, that's how good Coryell was. He was so good that Jimi Hendrix came down and got scared. He didn't want to play guitar, he played bass. Buddy Miles came down and played organ one time. We had a lot of the great Rockers sit in with us. I think we made fifty dollars a night, so for a five-piece band we got ten dollars each but we were living very cheap in those days. Those were crazy days.

Cadence: *Coryell and Pepper were such dynamic players. Did they influence you?*

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Moses: Jim Pepper was the guy who really opened me up to Free playing and Coryell was the guy that opened me up to Rock n' Roll because as a kid, I have to shamefully admit, I was kind of a Jazz snob. I felt that if you couldn't play time and changes, you weren't a real musician. I thought that the Rock guys could only play three chords and the Free guys were just screaming on their horns, they didn't really know how to play. I had a little bit of an attitude looking back on it. What an idiot, but I was a kid. The first time I heard Coryell he was playing Jazz guitar at a level like Wes Montgomery, so I knew he was great, and the next time I heard him playing he was playing Bob Dylan and the Stones' tunes and I said, 'Fine, let me start listening to Dylan and the Stones and The Band,' which became one of my favorite groups. I started listening to all that kind of music and I opened up to Rock as being potentially great music. The same with Jim Pepper, the first time I heard him play he was playing a Jazz ballad and sounded like '50s era Trane almost, like that great, and I thought, 'Oh, this guy is great.' The next time I heard him he was just screaming into the corner, I think the sound was coming back to him, and he was screaming like a banshee, and I thought, 'Wow, the same guy who could play those beautiful standards and just kill them can do this? Maybe I better listen a little bit more carefully.' When I listened, I started hearing all the music in the Free playing. I listened to Trane and Pharoah and all the guys who just screamed on the horn, but they were great musicians and there was great music in the screaming.

Cadence: *You were very close with Jim Pepper.*

Moses: Yes, I remember during the 1977 blackout in New York City, me and Pepper went and bought some candles and took a bunch of LSD [Laughs] and we played in the dark with the candles. That's where the concept of where [his song] "Custer Gets It" came out of. That was Pepper's thing where he started screaming on the horn, he would call it, "Custer gets it." That was from the Native American point of view. He was a hilarious cat, man. We had a good time during that blackout. He was one of the most important people in my life. Later, when Dave Liebman had a loft on 19th Street, we used to get together and play Free. We'd often take some psychedelics – mescaline or LSD – and just get together and blow. Sometimes with two or three drummers or with a bunch of horns. It was us trying to do Ascension our way.

Cadence: *In the liner notes to your album Love Animal, you wrote, "The Free Spirits, as precociously demented young visionaries, were into everything. The most powerful drugs, including massive amounts of psychedelics (well before Timothy Leary and others became media stars), lots of sex with some wild young women and all kinds of music." Would you talk about what was going on then?*

Moses: [Laughs] Well, that's pretty much it. That was the time and I feel pretty lucky to have been that free. When I was living on the Bowery, my rent was 52 dollars a month and I had a roommate so my share was half that. My diet was brown rice, which was 22 cents/pound, and a lot of LSD. And it was strong stuff then. not what comes through now, which feels like a little speed. Back

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then, you could really get high. [Laughs] It was life changing, life altering, something to really learn from. At that time, all we really did was play music, get high and fuck hippie girls, a lot of them. That was a good life. Brown rice and every once in a while I'd get a can of tuna for protein, mix it in with a little tamari sauce and I was good to go. I took a lot of acid, and when you take acid you don't eat much. I later lived in a building on Eldridge Street that was filled with musicians including Mike Nock, Billy Elgart who is another great drummer who lives in Germany now. He used to scare me to death, this cat. He'd practice eleven hours straight with such energy. We also had Charles and Joanne Brackeen, Arthur Harper, Chris Hills, Larry Coryell, Jim Pepper, Bruce Horiuchi, and when you stepped back from the building you'd hear music from all five floors. That was like some Charles Ives stuff. Also lot of people came and played there like Eddie Blackwell and Pharoah Saunders because we had room and a piano and a drum set. Since the statute of limitations has probably run out I can say that there were underage, naked girls running up and down the stairs from one bed to another there. Those were the days that that was happening. One of my girlfriends was Jack Kerouac's daughter, Jan. At fourteen, this girl could outdrink Elvin and she had probably had sex with 50-60 different people by that time. The girls there were almost interchangeable. I was never a guy who was great with women, I wasn't a player. If I got women it was because they saw me play drums and they were attracted to me by how I played. They'd see me play and we'd wind up in bed sometimes. Sometimes I'd wind up in bed with three young ladies and not even know their names, and also not wearing condominiums. That was a very free time.

Cadence: Although all that free love was going on, you got married while still a teenager in 1967.

Moses: The woman that I wound up marrying, Theresa Del Pozzo, that's a whole book in itself. She was important in the Civil Rights Movement. She's a powerhouse woman. For our first date we planned to go to Slug's to hear Albert Ayler but we never made it, we wound up in bed for three days. Eventually, we did get to Slug's and we did hear Albert Ayler. I ran into here about five years ago at the Berklee Performance Center when they were honoring my dear friend Mike Gibbs. I was in the lobby there and I see this grey haired, old lady and I'm looking at her and I said, 'You look familiar to me. I think I know you,' and she's looking at me like she knows me and she said, "Who are you?" I said, 'I'm Bob Moses,' I knew she wouldn't know Ra Kalam. And we both started laughing because it was Theresa Del Pozzo and we were married for about 18 years and we didn't recognize each other! That's when you know you're old. We both laughed our asses off and we hung out together. She had good things to say about me and our marriage, and I thanked her for teaching me so much because she was six years older than me. I got married at nineteen and she was much smarter and stronger than me in every way. She taught me about politics and women's issues. She was way ahead of her time in those things. She was a fearless, bold person.

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Cadence: Why did you and Coryell leave The Free Spirits after only 2-3 years to join Gary Burton's quartet?

Moses: When Coryell left the Free Spirits I felt it wasn't the same. He was the lead singer and really the star of the band. After he left, the Free Spirits kept on for quite a few years in different forms with Jim Pepper and Chris Hills but I wound up joining Gary Burton as well. I remember auditioning on Roy Haynes' drums. That was scary. Gary wanted to hear me play so he asked Roy if I could sit in and Roy said, "Sure." I said, 'Roy, I don't want to sit in on your drums. You're the master.' And Roy said, "No, man, play, have a good time, have fun," because he was leaving Gary Burton. I got the gig, which was quite a drop in level from Roy Haynes to me. One of my first gigs with Gary was at the Fillmore West where Bill Graham was presenting certain Jazz bands opening for the Rock bands to try to introduce people to Jazz, which he loved. Gary Burton was one of the Jazz bands he booked because we had long hair, we looked like Rockers, we were playing some tunes that had that Rock/Country flavor, and we had Coryell, who could definitely Rock out. We opened for the Electric Flag which had Buddy Miles on drums and David Sanborn in the horn section, and then Cream was the third band. Cream was just breaking big in America in '68. The Fillmore held 3,000 people and it was packed every night for the week we played. The Cream was so loud, I never heard music that loud, that I couldn't hear it. It didn't translate as music to me, it sounded like hearing a jet plane take off. On the second or third night, I went across the street to smoke a doobie and I heard them playing clearly and I thought, 'Oh, they're just playing the Blues. They're a Blues band and they sound good. They're jammin',' and from that day on I became a big Cream fan. Later, when I was in England for the first time with Compost, I went to a studio with Jack DeJohnette and recorded as a trio with Jack Bruce, the bass player of Cream. Yeah, we did a week at the Fillmore West with Cream and that was during the whole San Francisco hippie thing at its peak. About a year later, that scene started changing, but for a year or two it was really very nice. It was easy to get laid, it was easy to get high, and everybody was into music. You could hitchhike anywhere.

Cadence: Why are you listed under the name of "Lonesome Dragon" on Burton's 1968 classic A Genuine Tong Funeral?

Moses: Carla Bley gave that name because I told her I didn't want my name on the record because I felt like I played so badly. I felt we had failed her music, me particularly. Her music was great but I was too young, I wasn't ready for it. I also felt that Gary Burton didn't do it justice. She wanted that music to be like Rock n' Roll, and I agreed with that, but the music was too hard. Most of the Rock n' Rollers couldn't have played her music in those days. Now there's plenty of Rockers who can read anything and play in weird time signatures, but back then, they played in three or four chords, so she wound up with Gary Burton and I thought that that was a very tame version of something that should have been much stronger. I thought my drumming was just terrible. You

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know, there's a couple of records that I did that I tried to get out of, unlike the recent generation of students that are making records before they can hardly play and they really have nothing to say. I was the exact opposite. I tried to get out of records because I didn't feel ready. I said, 'No, wait till I can play a little bit.' That was one of them but I didn't want to quit the band because I was learning a lot by being in it. There's a record they did use my name but I tried to get out of it called Gary Burton Quartet in Concert. I tried to get sick so I'd have a legitimate reason for missing it but I wound up on it.

Cadence: Around the time of The Free Spirits [67-'68], you recorded Love Animal which was to be your first album as a leader but it never came out until 2003. It documents an eclectic mix of musical styles – Psychedelic Rock, Blues and Free Jazz music - with an incredible collection of artists – Larry Coryell, Jim Pepper, Steve Swallow and Keith Jarrett on three pieces playing wild soprano sax, as well as piano. Talk about that recording and why it took 35 years to be released.

Moses: I don't remember, there was some business shit that got in the way of that coming out but I'm glad in a way because now I own it. That was recorded by David Baker at Apostolic Studios. The studio owner loved that band and he used to give us a lot of studio time so that record was made over a period of a couple of years. Also, we were able to do something that was kind of radical for that time which was to overdub a bunch. Love Animal was kind of me showing all the things that we were into. It was a lot of different styles. There's a song called "Ntumba's Raindance" and that's me overdubbed four or five times. We did this thing where we sped the tape up like double-speed and when we put it back to normal speed, the drums sounded lower. We also did the opposite where we recorded at a slower speed and we put it back to normal and you can hear it going up and down in pitch. There's a tune on there called "Rock Fantasy Duet" which is a duo with me and Coryell and Coryell overdubbed some guitar parts and a bass part. He also played backwards guitar and messed with the speeds. It's very eclectic because we were into all kinds of music at that point. The last tune on that record is called "Dancing Bears" and that's some of the freest shit I ever played. Even now I listen to that and it's beautiful with Coryell and Pepper. That was years before I heard Sonny Sharrock or any of the guitar players. So, even as a kid, I was doing it. There's some funky Blues on there and also some Rock. There's a beautiful Jazz ballad, a version of "Smoke Gets in Your Eye" that's some of Keith Jarrett's best playing. Even he thought so too, and that's saying a lot. I listen to that stuff and I hear seeds of what I'm doing now, and I was eighteen or nineteen at the time. I didn't trust the record company then but I owned it so eventually I put it out on Billy Martin's label Amulet. I put it out finally because it's from an interesting time and we were into all that kind of music. I put it out because it's a historic record, it's Jim Pepper. It's an eclectic mess of a record with us pushing the boundaries. It's not like most people who have their Straight Ahead Jazz period and then their Funk Fusion period and then their Free Jazz period. We were

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doing it all in the same day. We were into all of that at the same time and that was unusual, it probably still is. Unfortunately, the recording studio shut down. A lot of people recorded at Apostolic and what was really sad was when that company went under, they dumped all the reel-to-reel recordings they had made on the street. The studio was evicted and the artists weren't warned so many of the recordings were lost. We were bad with business and stoned out all the time so we weren't paying attention.

Cadence: That first recording of yours had elements of Free Jazz in it but reportedly you were not an early admirer of Avant-Garde Jazz. Is that true?

Moses: Yeah, that's true. Jim Pepper opened me up to that. For a brief period of time, and I'm not proud to say it, but I was just a kid and we think all kinds of stupid shit when we're young. I thought a lot of these Avant-Garde guys were just faking it, like they didn't really know how to play. I thought they were just screaming on their horn. And by the way, there were some like that who took advantage of the Free Jazz movement and didn't really play well, but Jim Pepper convinced me to listen closer.

Cadence: Jim Pepper had a large influence on you and he remains one of the most underappreciated musicians. Would you share some more memories of him?

Moses: Man, he was so great. He was a character, yea, he was a crazy cat, a very powerful spirit. He was my favorite ballads player, my favorite Funk R'n'B player, and he was my favorite Free player. He had an instantly recognizable sound and he played with a silver horn. His Indian name meant "Flying Eagle" and that's a perfect description of his playing. His parents were incredible people. His people were Cree and Kaw. His grandfather led the peyote chants. They would get together for three or four days and take peyote and chant, and because Pepper was the grandson, he was allowed to go to these things. It was just bloods, no white people. He was allowed to record with a tape machine, which was also not done, but he could because he was the grandson of the shaman. A lot of the songs that he wrote were taken from these chants. [Moses starts chanting "Witchi Tai To"] He had his own tune where he sang, "I don't care if you're married, I'll get you yet!" [Laughs] He was a ladies' man. If he set out to get a lady, he would get her, even the most beautiful women in the world. I never saw him miss with a lady. He was so gifted in so many ways. He was a great dancer, he was a tap dancer. He did the Native dancing at competitions and he would win. He was a great natural composer. By the way, he got credit for "Witchi Tai To," which he deserved, but Coryell helped him write it. "Witchi Tai To" was originally an eight-bar tune and it was Chris Hills' idea to cut two bars off it and make it a six bar tune and it became kind of a classic thing. I've made it a thing to turn on young saxophone players to Jim Pepper. Pepper's music to this day I can always listen to it and it makes me feel good. To me, he was the genius of the Free Spirits and the heart and soul of it. Here's a memory. When we did live gigs, we would start with a ten-minute unaccompanied Free Jazz saxophone solo, and you have to

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remember we weren't playing Jazz clubs, we were playing in Rock clubs, and the people would be completely confused. Like, "What the hell is this? This guy is screaming on his horn," and just about they were gonna maybe leave, then the full band would come in with some Chuck Berry playing and the place would go crazy, but we let Pepper open. This is a very inadequate, really bad description of the Free Spirits, but for people who haven't heard the band, it might be the best way I can describe it - the Free Spirits was like The Beatles level song writing with R'n'B Junior Walker style and with Jimi Hendrix level guitar with Albert Ayler-John Coltrane-Pharoah Sanders level saxophone. To this day I've never heard a band like that. Pepper was special. He had trouble with alcohol, and also later with harder drugs like heroin. I think he was straight the last period of his life but cancer took him out. I was at his funeral in Portland along with Don Cherry and Obo Addy. It was a beautiful event. In one of his songs he sang, "It's good where we've been and where we're going," and I feel that's very true of my life. It's good where I've been and it's good where I'm going too, including death. I'm not afraid of it, I know that'll be good too but hopefully not too soon because I got a lot of work I'm trying to finish while I still have a body.

Cadence: The CD's liner notes include a striking photo of you playing drums shirtless and with a huge Afro hairstyle.

Moses: That photo is from the Compost days but it was the closest photo of what I looked like during the Love Animal days. Yea, I had a lot of hair in those days. We called it a Jewfro.

Cadence: So you played shirtless in those days?

Moses: Oh, sure, it was hot playing in the basement where Compost often played and we played hard. One thing I can say about myself is that even when I wasn't very good or I didn't know very much, I never held back. I always gave it up and that's one of the things I found very sad about the school musicians. They know so much and they're still afraid to play and I didn't know anything but I wasn't afraid to play. I gave up everything that I had. No matter the level of talent, the one thing we can control is giving it up when we play. Music should be life or death, it should be that strong, and if it's not I'd really rather hear silence at this point.

Cadence: Another early band for you was Compost which included Harold Vick, Jumma Santos, Jack Gregg and Jack DeJohnette. Talk about that Compost and how it was to play along with DeJohnette.

Moses: And various guitar players, they kept changing. Compost came about because Jack and I heard Nina Simone's band with Don Alias on drum set and Jumma on congas and those two cats together were so funky. We heard that and we wanted to do a band like that, a drum centered band. Don was too busy for the band although originally he was a part of it. Harold Vick was Jack's choice and when I heard him, I just fell in love with his playing and with him as a human being. He's one of my favorite people that I ever met, I love that cat. In Compost we used to play hard. We were playing like Funk-Rock stuff but we

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stretched out like Coltrane. It didn't come off on the record because they didn't let us do that, but when we played live we'd play one tune for forty minutes. It had that Trane stretch out energy. Jack was playing keyboards mostly, which he was great at because he was a piano player before he was a drummer. He could sing his ass off too and write songs. Sometimes we'd switch it up and Jack would play drums and I would play keyboards. On the records it's very easy for me to tell which ones Jack is playing drums on – the drumming sounds better! [Laughs] I can tell that's Jack on drums! I could play keyboard, I didn't solo on it but I could play rhythm grooves. I also had a clarinet with a wah-wah. When we played a live gig we'd end with a double drum solo and we'd send the other cats home. You know how often with a band you have the drum solo as the finale and then the band comes back and plays the out head? We thought that it was corny. We just sent the guys to go hit on the girls or to get something to eat. So we'd play an hour and a half set and then go do a forty-minute drum duet at super high energy because we were really young and strong then. I used to say to Jack, 'Man, you're an animal, I was ready to quit like twenty minutes ago. You never stop!,' and he'd say, "Me? It was you, you're the one who kept it going." The way we started those duets was that we didn't start together. Jack would play a few minutes and turn it over to me and I would play and eventually we would meld together. Jack has this stuff on tape because he used to record it. I went to his house years later and he played one of those live gigs and when it got to the double drum solo, it came on and I said, 'Jack, that sounds like five guys, that's just the two of us?' And he said, "No, no, that's just me, you haven't come in yet." [Laughs] Eventually when we hit our peak together it sounded like twenty drummers. It was very fuckin' intense. I have to say the most fun I ever had in music was playing with those guys in Compost. We used to do something we called a "People's Sandwich." Both me and Jack would play with no shirt and we looked good, we were young. Now I wouldn't do that, it would be a horror show. We'd come out in the audience and have a group hug with people who wanted to do that with us. I remember there was this one lady in Chicago named Aldona who worked for the radio station that I was really digging but she had a boyfriend. We were playing in town for one week and at one gig we got in the sandwich, and when it was crowded you couldn't really see what was going on in there, and we had a deep, deep kiss that just blew my mind, and to this day just thinking about it gets me high. In the sandwich, anything goes. I wrote a piece about her on Bittersuite in the Ozone and that was part of the vibe of that record because she had a boyfriend and I was married but I really fell in love with her. We weren't destined to be but the feeling was there so that's why I titled the record that way. That was a wild time and Jack is a genius drummer and a beautiful cat. We both lived in the country, that's partly why we called the group Compost, because we both had compost for our gardens. You know with compost you put your leftover fruit and vegetables in a pile for fertilizer and it gets really stank. When you smell it your nose squinches, and when we listened to our

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music we'd make that same nose - what I call the "squinchable effect" - and so we called the group Compost. It changed a bit over the years. We were trying to be famous but it never happened and I think in retrospect it was a good thing. The Free Spirits and Compost were the two times we were trying to be famous and popular and both times it didn't work, and I'm very grateful it didn't work because there's more freedom when you're not famous and I treasure the freedom more than any material fame. The fame locks you down and puts so much pressure on you.

Cadence: Compost had a record deal with Columbia Records.

Moses: We got signed by Columbia Records and the guy who was our manager was really a crook and a con man. He managed the group called Yes, the very famous Rock band with Bill Bruford, and Columbia wanted them. He leveraged them by telling them he'd give them Yes but they had to also hire Compost. They didn't want us at all but we made two records for Columbia and then I think he screwed Columbia because I don't think he gave them Yes in the end. Columbia gave us a fifty thousand dollar advance and twenty thousand went to the manager, five thousand went to the lawyer, and then the rest went to the band so each of us got like five thousand in one shot which, to this day is the most money I ever received in one lump sum, and that's when Theresa Del Pozzo convinced me to buy the house in Westkill. That was the downpayment on our house. It was beautiful up there and we had about five and a half acres and it was surrounded by seventy-three thousand acres of state forest preserves.

Cadence: Talk about the collective Free Life Communication which you and Dave Liebman founded in 1970. It eventually included 25 artists and organized 300 concerts of Free Jazz in its first year?

Moses: Whoa, you're making me work. Yikes. That was inspired by Chicago's AACM because we wanted to play more Free, Avant-Garde stuff, more experimental stuff, but there were no venues for it. To get a gig at a club, you had to play Straight Ahead Jazz. We thought that if we had an organization where we pooled everybody's resources it would work. Maybe somebody had a copying machine to make flyers to promote gigs, and somebody else could find a space we could use, and someone else who might be good at working on grants. In fact, we had Leroy Jenkins, who was part of the AACM, come and talk to us. We had an integrated group of people and he came in and said, "You can't have an integrated group. You can't have white people and Black people playing together." I said, 'Hey, man, F-you. You're a violin player, you're playing a white man's instrument. I'm playing the drums, I'm playing an African instrument. Get out of here with that shit!' We were inspired by the AACM's point of view and how they created a scene where they could get some work and notoriety which was very difficult for Free music. Eventually, we were able to get space in a large building that was funded by an arts grant and we did a lot of concerts there. Also in that building were the kings of the Avant-Garde dance world - the Nikolais Dance Theatre and the Murray Louis

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Dance Company. We ended up being commissioned by Murray Louis to record some stuff that they could choreograph to.

Cadence: *What became of the collective?*

Moses: We had it for a couple of years until it came apart. The thing about that was we didn't really have a system for how to let people in or keep people out. We were so kind of open that a lot of people came in that, to me, weren't of the same level as players or as people, so it got watered down and it wasn't as strong. The original Free Life Communication was, man, Dave Liebman, Dave Holland, Randy and Mike Brecker, Armen Halburian, Badal Roy, Jumma, me and Jack DeJohnette. Everybody was a heavyweight. It didn't last but it was a good idea and it did help us because we got a chance to play a little bit.

Cadence: *Many people first became aware of you in 1976 as the drummer on Pat Metheny's debut album, the popular Bright Size Life. Talk about making that well-regarded recording with Metheny and how he wanted you to play at the recording session.*

Moses: That was a working group so we already played the way we played when we got to that studio. We played a whole summer of gigs. I did my best to support the music. The truth is, Jaco and Pat, they're both geniuses but they're both very different kinds of geniuses and they weren't always simpatico. A lot of times I felt like the referee between the two of them. Honestly, I gravitated more to the Jaco thing because he was coming more from the Funk, from the African, and Pat was a lot more chords in his music, a lot more harmony and more complicated writing. Pat is great but they would beef a bit. At first, Jaco played Pat's music better than anybody. Pat would have a tune four pages long of nothing but chords and Jaco would look at it twice and memorize it. He'd play it and make it fun, make it funky and lift it to a whole different level. But after a while, Pat got a little frustrated because Jaco would start bogarting. Jaco was coming up on the Greyhound bus from Florida to Boston, sleeping on somebody's couch, playing fifty dollar a night gigs and Jaco didn't think that he was fully doing his thing so he would start taking these tunes over a little bit. I remember Pat at one point saying, "Jaco, it's not a Reggae, it's a Waltz!" [Laughs] He was right, he wrote it and he was the leader. And then Jaco, who was like the 'King of Hyperbole,' everything was "est," like, "I'm the greatest bass player in the world!," and "Bob Moses, you're the most melodic-est drummer in the world!" And he would say about Pat Metheny, "Pat Metheny, he's the whitest motherfucker I ever played with!" And when Jaco would go into the Funk, the crowd would go crazy, and I don't think Pat liked that too much. The crowd would start chanting, "Jaco, Jaco!" I think there was a little bit of ego, alpha male stuff. There was definitely a little tension between them but they played so beautifully together and nobody played Pat's music better than Jaco. That's a good record but it didn't really represent how we played when we played live so I was always a little disappointed when I heard that record. It took me many years before I could even go back and listen to it and then when I listened to it with a fresh mind,

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without any attachment to what I thought it should have been, I thought it was a good record, certainly one of the few that I did in the '70s that I think is memorable and one that I would go back to listen to again.

Cadence: That Metheny album marked the recording debut of Jaco Pastorius. Would you share some memories of him?

Moses: Jaco was very out of place in that studio in Germany. I was already there with Pat because we were on tour with Gary Burton for about a month and most of it was in Germany so we weren't jetlagged anymore. You could tell Jaco came straight from the beach in Florida. He was wearing the beachcomber paints, those three-quarter pants that are between shorts and long pants. They were white with holes in them, and he had white canvas shoes with holes in them and no socks. He had on a white t-shirt and his bass. That's how he came to Germany. No suitcase, no toothbrush, nothing, man. I mean like a caveman. He didn't have a case for his bass, that guy was a wild man. He got on a plane and you could tell he'd been at the beach. He probably looked at the sky and said, "Oh, I think it's time to catch the plane." He had so much energy, that was how he was. He was manic, people now describe him as bipolar. He came in the night before the recording and knocked on my door and said, "Hey man, I want to go dancing, I want to get laid!" We were in a hotel in Stuttgart and the studio was in Ludwigsburg, which is a suburb of Stuttgart, and I said, 'Man, we're gonna record at ten in the morning, I don't want to go out. I don't think so but have a great time.' And so he went off and twenty minutes later he came knocking on my door again and said, "I found a disco but they won't let me in with these shoes. They say I need real shoes. Can I borrow your shoes?" I said, 'You want to borrow my shoes? Are you kidding?' And in those days I had flat feet so my shoes were heavy, clunky orthopedic shoes, and Jaco was tall with long feet. I said, 'Well, sure you can borrow my shoes, just leave them in front of the door so they're there in the morning.' And he went clomping off in these shoes that didn't fit. I never asked him what happened, if he got laid, but sure enough, he was there the next morning and we recorded that record. That was one day to play it, one day to mix it, that's the ECM way. There's a track on there ["Midwestern Nights Dream"] that was a pretty one and it had a very beautiful, kind of legato melody that Jaco played. I remember he said, "That would sound great if I doubled it on the bass," and Manfred [Eicher], the producer, didn't want that. He said, "Overdub? We don't do that, this is not a Pop record! This is real music!" And they were arguing back and forth, and after a while I said, 'Man, you've been arguing for half an hour. He could have already done it by now, let him try it.' And Manfred begrudgingly said, "Well, okay but you've got one take," and Jaco said, "Okay, let me listen back to it one time," and he listened to what he played the first time, and his ears and memory were so sharp that he nailed it on one take. It sounds like one gigantic bass. He was in complete unison with himself. Manfred also didn't even want Jaco on the date, and I'm really glad Metheny held his ground on that. Metheny wasn't famous, he didn't have any real power in the music business then, he

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could have easily caved to Manfred but he didn't and I respect him for that. We actually rehearsed all the music from that record with Dave Holland on bass. Dave Holland is a great bass player but after Jaco? No, it wasn't even close. I told Metheny, after we did all the music with Dave, I said, 'Okay, two things. If you use Dave instead of Jaco, you're crazy. That's one, and second, if you use Dave instead of Jaco, get a different drummer because I'm out. I don't even want to do it after playing with Jaco,' and Pat, to his credit, said, "No, you're right, it's got to be Jaco." So he insisted. We had been playing as a group so Jaco knew all the music. We had played a bunch of gigs with that trio playing Pat's music and sometimes standards and that became Bright Size Life. And that record and Steve Swallow's Home record, are the two records that I did on ECM that I actually really like. Ring, the Gary Burton record, is also pretty good.

Cadence: *You're satisfied with your drumming on Bright Size Life?*

Moses: My drumming on that was more raw and ragged and imperfect than both Jaco and Pat, and that was good for the record. Honestly, it probably would've been a better record if he had DeJohnette on drums or Peter Erskine, because they play perfect. They're just that talented that they play perfect. I've never been that talented, I never played anything perfect. There's a looseness, a certain rawness to what I do, and I think in a way, because Pat and Jaco were so technically sound, I mean they're both practice fanatics. Pat never took the guitar off his neck. That cat, we'd play a gig and he'd write six tunes that night in his hotel room. He'd come down for breakfast and he'd have the guitar around his neck, he never took it off. And Jaco was like that too. He used to take his bass to the beach and play all day long – practice, practice, practice. I was never like that, I was never that kind of fanatic to be a virtuoso like that. I think I was a good balance for them on that record. Someone online posted that I served a similar roll to Paul Motian in the Bill Evans group, in regards to my playing on that record.

Cadence: *You've worked for many different artists but one recording that sticks out as a bit unusual in your discography is Todd Rundgren's 1970 Runt album. You're listed as Bobby Moses doing drums on "I'm in the Clique." How did you end up on that?*

Moses: Yeah, just one track but he turned me loose, man. He said, "Go, go Bobby, go for it." I'm honored to be on that record. There's two other drummers on that recording and one of them is Levon Helm, who is in my hall of fame of drummers, so for me it's a great honor to be on the same record as him. And also Hunt Sales, who is the son of Soupy Sales, who had the great children's show. Todd Rundgren, by the way, is pretty much a genius. That guy is an INCREDIBLE musician and he writes shit for orchestra now. "I'm in the Clique" is kind of a cool track. It's about being accepted or not being accepted. I'm very grateful to be on that somehow. I don't know how he got a hold of me. I think if came out good but I was really just a kid, a beginner, but he turned me loose. Man, you did your homework, you bring back stuff I haven't thought about. I

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did a duo record with the great saxophone player Allan Chase and he said that was the first record he ever heard me play on. You never know when you play something who will hear it or what effect it might have years later.

Cadence: *I'd like to ask you questions about some of the large body of work you've produced, much of it issued on your own Ra Kalam Records label.*

Moses: Great, it be nice to promote them a little bit. Most people don't even know about them and that's my own fault. I take full responsibility because I have no hustle chops at all. In fact, I would say I have minus, if I had zero, that would be an upgrade. Almost none of them have ever been reviewed. I have thirty records on Ra Kalam Records and I think these records are really kind of extraordinary and the best stuff I've ever done is not out yet. I have about twenty that are not even finished yet, including one with Edgar Bateman that was recorded in 2006 and it has some of the greatest drumming I've ever heard. It's the holy grail of Edgar Bateman. These things take money and time and I got slowed down when I had to move from Boston.

Cadence: *Bittersuite in the Ozone was recorded in 1973 and issued in 1975, becoming your actual first release as a leader. A number of Jazz critics have referred to it as a Free Jazz classic. You used 13 performers on it including Dave Liebman, Randy Brecker, Howard Johnson, Jeanne Lee, Eddie Gomez, Daniel Carter, and Billy Hart. What do you recall from making that recording?*

Moses: With no false modesty, I'd say that recording is a masterpiece, It really is. I decided to not play drums. I do play a little piano on there, I play vibes on one piece. I play a little hand drum on one thing but I felt I needed to conduct it. I wrote a piece for Stanley Free who was one of my mentors. He was from a different generation – a brilliant musician, a brilliant person. He was more from the Art Tatum, Teddy Wilson school and at the time, the hip piano style was Bill Evans, McCoy Tyner, Chick Corea, so he wasn't in fashion but I thought this guy is great so I wrote a piece for him ["Stanley Free"] and put all these modern cats around him and that piece I think is absolutely brilliant. And there's one section where it's bassists Jack Gregg and Eddie Gomez overdubbed five times at different speeds, so it's like a ten bass choir with young Randy Brecker soloing on top of it so there is a lot of magic on that. I had to conduct it because I wrote it with sections but there weren't exact number of bars so I had to cue people on when it felt right to move from section A to B. Billy Hart did the drums and I knew he would be great. He didn't make any of the rehearsals but it didn't matter, and to this day he still apologizes for missing the rehearsals but I tell him he was perfect. He was like a cat that's knocked off a table and it lands on its feet. It was much better that he played drums than me at that point. Yeah, the compositions were beautiful and it was my first record as a conceptualizer. The whole record was a statement like a movie

Cadence: *Your recordings are filled with an unusual assortment of who became or who were top musicians. How have you gone about choosing band members for your projects?*

Moses: That's a good question. I always try to get the best people. I always

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try to play with the best people, people who are above me. I've noticed that all my old playing buddies were five to ten years older than me. I was always the youngest one and I think looking back, it was because I always wanted to play with people who were better and more experienced and knew more. Most of them are now dead or seriously old geezers. They were also people I was lucky enough to know. It was important for me then and now to play with people who were not just great musicians but who were really beautiful people. Also, almost all these people played for free or almost for free, so that was another thing. People had to really want to be part of it. They respected what I was doing. They felt this is something important and special and they worked for much less bread. I remember Dave Sanborn was getting five thousand dollars to play an eight-bar solo on James Taylor's record. He played on my Visit with the Great Spirit and I said, 'Dave, all I can afford is two hundred dollars,' and he said it was cool and then he said, "Keep the two hundred." It's also important to know the nature of the player you have. You need to know what they can do and what you don't want to ask them to do. Some players always play themselves while others are more like chameleons.

Cadence: *How did you finance such a large project as your first stab at being a leader?*

Moses: I spent my life savings on it at the time. I think the whole thing cost six thousand dollars, which was a lot of money in '73. And I put it out on Mozown Records, which was like Motown with a Z! [Laughs] I even had an advertising slogan which I never used because I didn't have the money to do ads but if I had the money I was gonna say, 'God bless the child that's got Mozown.'

Cadence: *Bittersuite in the Ozone's "Glitteragbas Solo" finds you playing vibes to reportedly simulate the sound of the glitteragbas, a Castaluquingan animal instrument. I could not find that instrument listed on the internet. What's the story behind that?*

Moses: [Laughs] I made it up, that's a fantasy. That was one of my dream destinations. There's an art, to an extent, to controlling your dreams and I used to dream of this place Castaluquinga and the intelligence of their animals was so high that they could pass for humans on Earth. In this other reality I was just a dog and the other [living forms] were above me. I'd go to this place in my dreams and it became very real to me. The vibes sounded like the glitteragbas to me, which was the instrument the animals played in Castaluquinga. That was overdubbed a few times at different speeds.

Cadence: *Another song on that album is "Little Brother" which was written for fellow drummer Edgar Bateman. Talk about your relationship with him and his influence on you.*

Moses: Wow, Edgar Bateman, that's a book in itself. He used to call me "Little Brother." I first heard Bateman in the mid-60s when he was playing with [Makanda] Ken McIntyre. Ken used to come to our house along with many other musicians and he told me his new band was playing the matinee spot at the Five Spot. I went to hear him and I typically stand in the back when I

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go to hear music to get an overview of the whole band because I never know who in a band is going to draw my attention. So I was in the back and I heard Edgar play and I went right up to the front, sitting there watching this guy because I couldn't believe what I was hearing. And after the set I went up to him and said, 'You are the greatest drummer I've ever heard.' I said, 'I live in a building with Max Roach, Art Blakey, and Elvin Jones, and I've heard all the great drummers, you're the greatest drummer I've ever heard.' I told him, 'My name's Bob Moses and I'm giving you my telephone number and I want you to call me anytime you're playing and I will be there. I'll help you carry your drums, set them up, and bring you a towel. Whatever you need, I will help you, and if I find out you did a gig and you didn't call me, I'm gonna be really pissed!' He was looking at me like, "This little white boy is crazy!" That's how our relationship started. He'd call me and, for whatever karmic reason, he didn't gig that often, but there were some memorable ones that I saw. I remember one gig he did at the old Half Note with Lee Morgan, Bobby Hutcherson, Reggie Workman. It was beautiful and without a piano it was more open for the drums. And then Edgar had his own band with young Joe Henderson, who had just come from Ohio to New York and he wasn't famous yet, and Alan Shorter, Wayne Shorter's completely cuckoo brother who played trumpet, and Lonnie Liston Smith. They played one of my tunes, I think it was the very first tune I wrote. It was called "Weirdo Waltz." I was like 14 and it was kind of a rip-off of "All Blues" because it had that bassline. They played it for twenty minutes, they really got into it. Here I am, a 14-year-old white boy and I'm hearing Edgar Bateman with Joe Henderson playing my tune. And they liked it! That was such a validation for me, like, okay, maybe I should keep doing this music thing, because I wasn't so sure. I didn't know if I had the talent to be a musician and make any kind of contribution. I heard all these great people and I thought, 'Gee, who am I?' But then I saw all these people playing my tune happily and that was big for me as a composer. Edgar was like family to me. He had a loft on 28th Street that I used to spend a lot of time at and he used to come to my parent's house. My parents loved him and he loved my parents. When I did that record with him in 2006 he came to Quincy [Massachusetts] in August and it was hot. We were in a tiny room with the windows closed. It was like a sauna in there but he didn't mind because he was a boxer. He was in his late '70s then and still doing 400 pushups every morning. He was a super athlete who never smoked or drank or cursed. He was a very disciplined cat, a funny and sweet guy, but very serious. I used to go to the gym with him and watch him work out. Talk about rhythm – that was him on a speedbag. I am working right now on finishing and releasing that recording. The title is going to be Creative Infinity and Love Eternal – Edgar Bateman and Ra Kalam Bob Moses. The first day we recorded we did duets and solos. I wound up taking all my solos out because they suffered in comparison so much to his solos. I'm thinking I'm still alive to play more solos and that I might actually like one eventually. His stuff there was nothing to edit, it was

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all brilliant, and we don't have much of Edgar Bateman out there to listen to so it's really precious material. I had never played together with Edgar before, he was so far above me. He didn't get to play much and I told him this was his date so he was really banging. He was like Godzilla on steroids after drinking a case of Red Bull but relaxed at the same time. That's one project that I have to finish and put out. The second day we recorded I had some horn players come in. Edgar moved so beautifully on the drums, no one did that like him. I asked him one time, 'Edgar, what are you working on these days? What are you practicing?' He said, "Well, I take a drum stick and I raise it up to here, and here's the practice pad or the snare drum, and I take 30 minutes to go from here to here." And if you try to do that, which I did, what you end up doing was these little jerky, tiny movements, like a clock ticking. He would do it in one continuous motion. It was so slow you couldn't see it but after a half an hour, the stick would be there. And when it got there, it wouldn't even make a sound because it had been moving so slow. [Laughs] I asked him what he was hoping to accomplish with this? By the way, that's like tai chi times 10. His answer was beautiful. He said, "I have no idea, [Laughs!] but I intuitively feel it will be something worthwhile." I thought, wow, to work on something that difficult and to not even know why. I was never much of a practitioner and when I did, it was very pragmatic practicing. I remember when the Bossa Nova came in I thought, 'Oh, I may have to play that, I better practice it.' Or if fast tempos were kicking my ass, I'd practice that because I might need it on the gig. I had so much love for Edgar. Like I said, he called me "Little Brother" and in 2006 at the recording he told me I was the only person in his life that he ever called brother. That was very moving. He was a special cat, and to this day, still the greatest drummer I ever heard. He astounded me. The latest cat I heard play who astounded me was Chris Corsano.

Cadence: *I recall seeing you at Edgar Bateman's memorial tribute at the Philadelphia Clef Club after his death in 2010. I was impressed that you traveled from Boston to Philadelphia to attend the event although you did not perform.*

Moses: That's right. I didn't play, I just had to be there, be there for the family. I ended up telling a lot of people in his family stories about him because they didn't realize who their grandfather or uncle was, how great he was. By the way, I'm not the only one who said he was the greatest drummer. Elvin and Art Blakey and Paul Bley and, I think Chick Corea, who was a great drummer in his own right, said that about Edgar.

Cadence: *"Message to the Music Bizness" also appears on your first release. What was the message you were delivering?*

Moses: Kind of like fuck you! [Laughs] But in a sweet way. The message was that the music business was promoting all the wrong stuff and I'm not gonna be part of that. And I haven't been part of it at all. You see there's a conscious program in the music business of dumbing down stuff. That's why you hear Nicki Minaj on the radio and not Coltrane. You hear some really dumb shit on

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the Grammys and not Tisziji or something deep. The business is shark infested waters that's all about the money – whatever little money there is. So the message was, 'I'm going outside of you. I'm not working with you. Consider me a rebel.'

Cadence: *Another early documentation of your work from the '70s is Vintage Visionary Vignettes, a series of duos and trios including Jeanne Lee and Sheila Jordan vocalizing together on seven of the tracks for what is thought to be the first and only time. Talk about that collaboration.*

Moses: Someone corrected me on that. Apparently those two had done something on one other recording so that wasn't the first one but it was the only one I knew of at the time. It was the three of us doing free vocals. I don't call myself a vocalist but I can do stuff. I may be misremembering this but there were some Japanese people that were opening a studio and they needed to test their equipment so they offered some free studio time and I just brought in whoever I could bring in over the course of a day or two. Also, I played bass clarinet on that record and I'd only had the thing for six months. You could call that chutzpah. I had John Clark, the brilliant French horn player, and Bob Stewart on tuba and they made me sound good because they accompanied me. I never wanted to play scales on the bass clarinet or become Eric Dolphy, I just wanted to play melodies because I love melodies and as a drummer I don't get to play melodies. The horn was a loaner from the great Paul McCandless. In the beginning I had to look at the fingering chart and I had to think of what I could play that was slow enough so that I could look at the fingering chart. What I came up with was "Mood Indigo." I'll tell you though, right away I had a sound and I had a concept and vibrato. No delusions of grandeur but I was trying to sound like Ben Webster on the bass clarinet. By the time I recorded, I didn't need the fingering chart anymore.

Cadence: *That album includes 14 of your original songs along with 2 by Monk and 1 by Ellington. You've rarely covered other composer's music, especially if they're not done by artists in your bands. Were Monk and Ellington very influential for you?*

Moses: Monk and Ellington were great. Yeah, well, it's not an either/or. When I was playing with some of my live bands I had arrangements of Peter Gabriel's "Don't Give Up." I've done some Bob Marley pieces. When I had Mozamba I had an arrangement of Prince's "1999." I'm not against it, I love great compositions. "Mood Indigo" was the first tune I played on bass clarinet and Monk, of the Bebop era people, I think Monk was my favorite of the composers. Elmo Hope was also a favorite but his stuff was too hard.

Cadence: *Devotion, recorded in 1979, uses Dave Liebman and commences with one of the great pun titles of all time – "Autumn Liebs" – a takeoff on the standard "Autumn Leaves" and Liebman's nickname. You often include humor in your work, especially in your song titles. You're very crafty.*

Moses: That's something that Elma also says about my music and a reason why she likes my stuff. There's a lot of humor in the records that I have. Yeah, I

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guess I'm kind of a funny guy. Me and Elma have nicknames for each other. I'm "Sir Laughalot" and she's "Lady Gladandweird."

Cadence: *Wheels of Colored Lights, also recorded in 1979, includes a spoken word piece by Jeanne Lee. Were you writing a lot of poetry at the time?*

Moses: Yes, some. By the way, I'm working on a book of poetry now. Some of the pieces are collaborations with Siri, the intelligence in the phone. I'm terrible with the new technology. I never had a cellphone until I moved to Memphis. I don't even know how to take a selfie. That's where I'm at, but my son showed me because I'm terrible with the typing. It takes me like ten minutes to write two sentences. He showed me the microphone icon at the bottom to transcribe but I almost never use it for that. What I do instead is I hit the microphone icon and then I go, [Sings a rhythmic scat] and Siri does its best to translate it into English and it's hilarious. You get some incredible abstract poetry so I'm working on that now. The book's gonna be called Highkoo – The Mindfree Poetry of Ra Kalam Bob Moses. Here's an example of one of them – "Porcupine humps a cactus just to keep in practice." [Laughs] That sets the tone for the whole book. This poetry has the effect of taking your head off your neck, emptying it out of everything, and putting it back on backwards. My friend Jeff Coffin, the saxophone player who lives in Nashville, he's very tech savvy and he said you can make books cheaply now and he's gonna help me make books. I'm gonna have a preface that says if any reader expects any of these poems to make sense, you've got the wrong book. [Laughs]

Cadence: *Some critics consider 1983's When Elephants Dream of Music to be your definitive recording. It's a spectacular album with 26 musicians listed [including Marion Cowings, Michael Formanek, David Friedman, Bill Frisell, Terumasa Hino, Howard Johnson, Sheila Jordan, Jeanne Lee, Lyle Mays, Jim Pepper, Steve Swallow, Jeremy Steig, and Nana Vasconcelos]. Talk about making that recording. What was your vision/inspiration for making such a large work?*

Moses: It's not always 26 musicians playing at the same time. Different people came in for different pieces, it's not like I had a big band with 20 horns. The concept came about from two different concerts that I saw. One was the Art Ensemble of Chicago. They played for about two hours and it seemed like they did a lot of searching, looking for stuff, and maybe there was fifteen or twenty minutes that were really like goal – like that's it! And the rest was just looking for stuff – try this, try that – meandering around. And I thought, 'No, I don't want to put the audience through that. I want every minute to be bang! Shortly after that, I went to see one of Chick Corea's groups with Steve Gadd on drums and they were super tight and very arranged. It was like an Israeli SWAT team on Operation Kill the Audience, and they did. Every note was planned and they were super rehearsed, kicking ass, and I thought, 'Well that's great but there's no freedom in there, there's no room for exploring.' I decided to combine both concepts in a way. A lot of Jazz then was a head melody and then a bunch of solos and then a head melody out. I decided to make the whole tune

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the melody and write it all out and rehearse it. I added some musicians who I called “the drones” or “the worker bees” and they had to make rehearsals every week for almost a year. If they couldn’t make it they would send a sub so that way I could work on all the written stuff because, with me, I can’t write it quite as close enough as I really want to hear it so I would sing to them how I wanted it and they would work on it. When I heard it back I thought it was too tight but I didn’t want to throw it away because it was beautiful so I decided to keep them and add what I called “the spirit voices.” They didn’t have to make any rehearsals or read any music. They would just come in and react to the composition. So you would have music that was all head and people blowing over it improvising. I picked people I totally trusted to do it like Bill Frisell, Terumasa Hino and Jim Pepper. Lyle Mays was both, he was part of “the drones” and part of “the spirit voices.” It was like having some architecture and inviting some kids to come and play in it. That was the concept and I think it worked. I combined the tight, written [state] of the Chick Corea with the openness of the Art Ensemble and then we really had something.

Cadence: *“Everybody Knows You When You’re Up and In” on that album has an unusual sound quality to it.*

Moses: Yeah, it’s kind of a Dixieland vibe and I told Terumasa Hino to imagine that it was 1920 and that he had never heard Charlie Parker or Dizzy before. Imagine Bebop had not been invented yet and he played it exactly like that.

Cadence: *You came up with some great names for your compositions on that recording, as you often do. Some of the titles being “Embraceable Jew,” “Bugs Bunny,” and “Ripped Van Twinkle.” How significant are song titles for you and how relatable to the composition do they tend to be?*

Moses: Oh, I think totally. Sometimes I do the composition first and then I see what it represents to me, and other times I already have the idea. I think titles are very important and sometimes it’s very hard for me to describe music but I do try to be accurate. I’m not fielding cute titles that mean nothing. On When Elephants Dream of Music there was a lot of humor and there was a reason. “Embraceable Jew” is based on the chords of “Embraceable You” and “Everybody Knows You When You’re Up and In” is a takeoff on “Nobody Knows You When You’re Down and Out,” but this was a happy tune. “Lava Flow” is much like the feeling I had when I was in Hawaii and I saw the lava coming slowly down the hill, burning everything in its path.

Cadence: *When Elephants Dream of Music was produced by you and Pat Metheny. What was the extent of Metheny’s involvement?*

Moses: I don’t remember exactly but he was very helpful. He was all in, he was in the studio with me, helping. He has a great ear, he’s a real composer conceptualist and obviously a genius guitar player. I think his main gift is composition and seeing the whole picture.

Cadence: *Love Everlasting, recorded in 1987 on John Coltrane’s “b’earthday” (as you list it on the album cover) is a tribute to Coltrane co-lead by guitarist/spiritual mentor Tisziji Muñoz. It’s a double quartet plus guitar including John*

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Medeski, George Garzone, Jerry Bergonzi and John Lockwood. Would you talk about that project and performing with Muñoz?

Moses: That's a powerful record, man. That's a joyous record, it's full of life and spiritual light. It's a very wake up kind of record. Whenever I'm playing with Tisziji, it's never a plan, it's natural and he becomes the leader because he just has that vibe. He's like Coltrane in that way. Coltrane played with other great musicians but he was the leader [based on his presence]. You can feel the spirit of Coltrane in that recording. We all loved Coltrane and were inspired by him so that was our way of saying thank you to John for setting the tone for so many musicians. That's another great record if I say so myself.

Cadence: One of your compositions on that recording is "Elephant Song." Elephants have been a recurring theme in your work. What significance do elephants have for you?

Moses: Oh, I just love them, they were always my favorite animal. I remember at my first birthday I got this little stuffed elephant. I called it Ellybell. I had that thing until I was four or five. My mom kept sewing it up because it kept falling apart and all the stuffing would come out but I wouldn't part with it. It was like my baby. I used to wheel it around in a baby carriage. I don't know what it is about elephants but when I look at them now, they're extremely powerful animals, extremely strong but graceful in their own way and wise. I can just feel the wisdom and the love and the heart of the elephants. For that recording I had the image of an elephant lighter than air, like floating up into the sky. [I imagined that] when they listen to music they become light. Also, one of my favorite movies as a kid and probably still one of my favorites if I saw it again, was Dumbo. That movie had significance to me. It almost felt like my story in a way because here was this elephant that was kind of a freak. He was shunned and that was me. In school I had no friends because I was such a freak. They were into who's going to the prom kind of shit and I was into Coltrane and Ornette Coleman. So I was shunned by the people who were my age group but my mom was my defender, just like in the movie. Also, Dumbo makes friends with the black crows, which obviously represents Black people by the way they depicted them acting and talking – all very cool. The crows help Dumbo get out of a tree by teaching him to fly and by giving him the magic feather and that was also my history with the Black folks like Edgar Bateman, Mingus, Eric Dolphy, Elvin, and Max. They taught me how to fly. They rescued me from the situation that I was in and gave me the strength to go my way and not worry about it. So, I've always loved elephants but unfortunately, they're having a hard time now because people are killing them for their tusks. It's terrible, what a world.

Cadence: Time Stood Still, recorded in 1993, is another remarkable work incorporating 29 artists including your son Rafael Moses who raps and plays alto sax on it at the age of 8. How did you come to use your son on that?

Moses: I thought he sounded good, I wouldn't have used him if I didn't think he sounded good. You know he's primitive on the horn but he ain't holding

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back. He's blowing really strong. That's something that I noticed when I was teaching at New England Conservatory, that the kids know a lot, they have a lot of technique and yet they're afraid to play. They're very reticent, holding back, and here's Rafael, he didn't know anything but he's blowing like his life depended on it. I thought his rap sounded good. Yeah, I like that piece. The guy from Gramavision, he didn't care for it too much but the record did get 5 stars. Those days, in '93, I was listening to Hip-Hop. I don't listen to it anymore, I hardly listen to any culture music anymore, but in '93 I still was and my son was deep into it, so I let him have a rap piece on there. He also had a quote which I used in the liner notes – "Now that will blow the saints out of the wall."

Cadence: *How has your son's career progressed?*

Moses: He's 39 now and he does video editing on the computer. He always was more of a visual cat than a musical cat. He's very good at it. It's creative but it's commercial too, he has to please the people who are paying him. He does very well.

Cadence: *You used master tapper Jimmy Slyde for a haunting effect on "Elegant Blue Ghosts." Why did you think to use tap dancing on that project and how common was that in Jazz in the early '90s?*

Moses: I don't know how common it was but I think I can safely say I've never done what's common. [Laughs] Can we agree on that? Oh, I love the tappers and Jimmy was my personal favorite and also a really dear friend. He's also on my recording Nishoma. I got hip to the tap dancers through Mingus. I used to see Mingus when I was 13 and he had this tap dancer Baby Laurence. Not only that but I also loved the movies with Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly and those cats. And in New York, there was a place on 7th Street where every week they would have the tappers and I would go down and sit in with the them. I'd give them more of a Funk beat than a Jazz beat because that gave them more space and they really appreciated that. I did one gig in Boston that was very memorable. It came about under somewhat sad circumstances but still I was very happy that it fell into my lap. Dance Umbrella in Boston presented an event with all these great tappers including Savion Glover, Gregory Hines, Jimmy Slyde and Dianne Walker. It was supposed to be with the great Alan Dawson but he had gotten cancer and was too ill to do the gig so they called me last minute, maybe two days before. I don't know what number choice I was for them but I wasn't working, which is not untypical. I've never had many gigs so pretty much anytime you call me I'll be free. For most of my life, if I did five gigs a year that would be a good year. So I made the gig and got to play with all those guys and with each one I got to do a duet. I would ask them what kind of groove they wanted and I remember Gregory wanted some Funk. Savion had his two brothers who were playing on the bucket drums, they frequently played out on the street. These cats were sweet, they saw the drum sticks I use, which are cut from trees, and they thought I was too poor to afford drum sticks so they said, "You want some sticks, man?" I've always had a deep

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love for the tappers, they're drumming with their feet. I used to bring a tapper named Rocky Mendes up to the NEC to sit in with my ensemble students when we did the student concert at the end of the year. These kids otherwise would never have played with a tapper. I don't know if they appreciated what an honor it was but I thought that would be a good experience for them.

Cadence: *Time Stood Still introduced "Simul-Circular Loopology" which is described in the liner notes to be a new way of making music that you developed that leads to a different sounding music. Would you explain this?*

Moses: Yeah, I've had a few that I've invented. Groove Cannon was another one I invented and Divisionary Mellotivity is another one. The only thing holding us back from being absolutely creative is ourselves, and from a spiritual point of view, the self doesn't even exist, so basically nothing is holding you back. Anyway, Simul-Circular Loopology is the idea of all these different repetitions rubbing up against each other. We won't even call them bars, let's say you have an 8 second repetition, and I have a 10 second repetition, and somebody else has a 12 second repetition, we can start together but the next time you're repeating, you're gonna be at a different spot in my repetition. So what you have is constant repetition and constant change at the same time. So it's very mysterious. It's kind of James Brown on Mars. It's incredible grooves that sound like nothing I've ever heard. It's really a rhythm bed but there's all these polyrhythms and there's so many ways you can do it. The other thing about the looping is that it's completely democratic, everybody's equally important. Also, it's almost the opposite of what most music requires because most music requires you to listen very carefully to what the other person is doing, this one almost requires you to ignore what the other person is doing in order to hold your loop.

Cadence: *You mentioned creating Groove Cannon. Would you describe that?*

Moses: It's just that you have a groove, a baseline, a repetitive figure, and you start it at different points - like a beat or two later. The reason I came up with it was because groove stuff, like repetition, is good, it creates a trance in a way or is good for dance but it also gets very predictable after a while. You know what's coming, but if you do them in several different places and they overlap, I found that the groove gets even stronger. It gets a lot more mysterious because people can't figure out where 1 is because there is no absolute 1. There are several 1s. Of course, each part has to be done well to make it work. Many times I've done it overdubbed on myself to make it work.

Cadence: *You also created Divisionary Mellotivity.*

Moses: I don't know that I invented that, let's say that was a concept that might have been in the air from some other people but I took the ball and ran with it. In this case, you have a certain number of beats and you may have two going in different directions but they meet again on 1. It's a beautiful effect and it creates a lot more mystery. There's a lot of things like this that I was doing that I don't hear anybody else doing. Also writing things in different tempos. When people play, they're all in the same tempo and I always say, 'Why?' I

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didn't get a vote on that. I did that like 40, 50 years ago. The first one was with Open Sky with Liebman and I had the drum and the bass playing super-fast and the melody was slow. I've been doing that for years and that's an incredible effect. I don't hear anybody doing any of this stuff.

Cadence: *Mother Sky is a 2006 duet with fellow percussionist Túpac Mantilla Gómez. This documents your first musical date together and it was done totally improvised with no discussion or planning ahead of time. Do you prefer to play in an unplanned setting?*

Moses: On a lot of my more recent records there's no composition at all and they sound, when we're on point, very composed. And when I do compose, I still write a little bit, they're very minimal, and generally these days there's no bar lines, so they're already rubato [played with expressive and rhythmic freedom]. Without bar lines there's no time signature, there's usually no key signature as well, so I write in each sharp or flat as necessary. So one song could be in many keys or no key, and no chord changes. I take all of that away so there's just the melody and a title, which gives you something to play from. The reason that I'm writing so minimally is to encourage maximum freedom and creativity from the people. So, when I do write, it's generally like that – a couple of lines of simple melodies – they're prayer mode - which is also to remind the players to play from gratitude, from love. You know we all have that, we all come from Spirit, we all come from God, we all have love in us, but I think sometimes the musicians forget and they just go into music mode or intellectual mode or some kind of conceptual idea mode. And they're welcome to do that, but that's not what I'm looking for. I go up to the horn players and say, 'Everything prayer mode,' and that's the composition. With the right people you can make music that sounds very composed.

Cadence: *The title Mother Sky has significant meaning to you.*

Moses: So many people like to make records from the "mother land," from wherever they were born. I feel like where I come from is the sky, as much as I love all the land, all of it has beauty, and all cultures have beauty, but I don't feel an allegiance to any of that. I feel like the sky is my source, and I feel that's where I'm returning to when I have no more body left. That's a beautiful percussion record, by the way. He was a super talented student of mine and we made the recording before he left to go back to Columbia.

Cadence: *Father's Day B'Hash was recorded on Father's Day 2006, shortly before the passing of your father. The music is dense and powerful with 5 saxophonists along with violin and trumpet. What were you expressing in that project?*

Moses: That was kind of like an elder passing it on to the young ones. Everyone on that date, except for Stan Strickland, who's around my age, they're all kids. They were the most talented kids that came out of NEC that particular year. There were some very talented kids in that 2006 graduating class and what usually happens is that they scatter – most of them don't stay in Boston. What happened was that my son was going to a tech school and one of his

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courses was recording engineering. One of his projects was to bring in some live musicians to do a recording. I helped him out by bringing in these really good students and we recorded there. They gave me a free day to record any project I wanted and they used it as a teaching thing for the students to record it. At that particular time I didn't have any project that I wanted to do so I used the studio to record the band with the students before they left and it just happened to be on Father's Day.

Cadence: *You play piano on "Pollack Springs" in a very expressionistic manner.*

Moses: Expressionistic? Ha, I'd call it crazy cuckoo. [Laughs]

Cadence: *The title appears to be an obvious nod to painter Jackson Pollack, who lived in Springs, New York. What was your association with him?*

Moses: He lived in Springs? I didn't even know that. This is beautiful, it's a natural synchronicity that I didn't even know about.

Cadence: *I thought you named it because of his last name and because he lived in Springs.*

Moses: I didn't know that, it's just the melody and how he played and how his paintings were sprung. To me, they were completely sprung and I feted him because he seemed, at least in his art, I don't know about his life, but he was definitely sprung and fearless because to paint like that, nobody was painting like that. And I do think that my piano playing and how the band played on that track kind of captures his vibe sonically. If you could translate his painting into music, I think I got pretty close. He's one of my heroes. By the way, that melody, which is a wild melody, I wrote that when I was like 14 or 15. It's one of my earliest compositions. It was meant to be super-fast. Yeah, the kids did good on that, they got sprung. That's a good record, recorded well because we had that nice studio.

Cadence: *Did you have relationships with other prominent painters or the Beat Poets?*

Moses: Not any real relationships although I did run across Allen Ginsberg a couple of times. He was a wild cat and I admired his writing a lot. I already talked about running into him and Tiny Tim in the bathroom at The Scene in the mid-'60s and Allen was teaching Tiny to play "Hare Krishna." I ran into him again in Texas when we played at Caravan of Dreams where Ornette played at times. I can't say I had a relationship with him. I admired the painters but not by any particular era or style, it's just if somebody moved me, that would be it, and Pollack moved me in one way. My favorite painter is Gaughan, and he's not one of the modernists. This may sound egotistical but when I went to MOMA [Museum of Modern Art] recently there was all these great, famous guys, and I understood the greatness of them and why they're there, but honestly, I like my art better than 95% of them. One reason is because I think my paintings are full of joy and light and a lot of these painters were really dark.

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Cadence: You brought up MOMA, you had a historic playing date there.

Moses: Right, as far as I know, it was the first all-synthesizer concert. It was in the late '60s or early '70s. I was associated with Robert Moog who was one of the inventors of the synthesizer. That concert was a big deal because it had never been done before, it was on the 11 o'clock news with Walter Cronkite. In that group, everybody was playing a keyboard – Reggie Workman had bass sounds programed and I had drum sounds programed. John McLaughlin was there along with Chris Swanson, Moog's musical director. It was the four of us and I remember this, it was open sky because it was summer and we were in the garden and you could see the stars. When the music got to its most burning, highest point, all of a sudden [He makes a screeching high-pitched sound and then stops] complete silence. Somebody had tripped on a wire and pulled the plug. [Laughs] And that was it, by time they figured out where the plug was it was past the time. That was a great way to end.

Cadence: Getting back to Father's Day B'Hash, it also includes "Duet for Violin and Squeaky Door" for which you utilized a squeaky door for sound. How did that come to be?

Moses: [Laughs] It was in the men's room which had a very resonant, kind of echo chamber effect, and every time I had to use the can, I'd open the door and it would go [Wahhhh-ruhrrrrrrr-ooohrrrrrrrrrr]. And if you opened it in different speeds, you'd get different sounds. I thought it was amazing. This was the last day that I had available at that school and I had them run a mic wire down the hallway to the bathroom and then I invited Andrei Matorin, a Brazilian violinist, he was the only student I could reach at the last minute, to come down right away. So he came and we went into the bathroom and I'm playing the door and he's playing the violin, and it's actually one of my favorite pieces on the record. It's a wild piece. Yeah, the door play was fantastic. I always make a joke about it – sometimes we have to play for the door!

Cadence: The Illuminated Heart, recorded in 2007, followed the passing of your father and the song titles point to death and passage. As a spiritual man, how do you deal with death and loss?

Moses: [Laughs] Wow, you hit me with some deep questions. Well, there's been a lot of it and as we get older, there's more and more of it. More of our family and friends are passing on and people that we care about. When I was a youngster coming up, I was always the youngest one in every group so everybody who I came up with and who I was close to in music, are either dead or they're really old now. It's part of life. I'm not afraid of it and I'm sure when the time comes I'll enjoy it, but at the same time, I'm trying to hang in there because I'm enjoying life and I'm trying to get as much done as possible with all these projects I'm trying to finish. I don't fear death. I don't think consciously I was thinking about those themes when I did that record. That recording was done to accommodate this young lady harpist, Virginia Rogers, who's really gifted but who had never played free before. She was great, she asked if I could tell her anything or help her with her rhythm and I said, 'Nope,

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I'm not gonna tell you anything because you're doing it.' The interesting thing about her was that there were people that would come and want to play free with me but I could tell they weren't really hearing what I was playing. They were playing some Jazz stuff that they had learned from whoever they were studying and I wasn't playing that. She didn't know any of that stuff. She didn't know Charlie Parker or Coltrane, but what she did was listen to the tonality of my drums and tuned in perfectly on her harp - always in the same key, the same melodic space as my drums, which is something that these people who were Jazz students couldn't do. She was brilliant and the other thing about that date was that she came with a pickup and the pickup broke. It didn't work and so we had to do that completely acoustic. When I was trying to mix it, no matter what we did with the drums, it was too loud. And I was trying to play soft enough so you could hear the harp. What happened was we just took all the drum mics out and what you're hearing on that record is nothing but leakage. It was a small room and you had a little bit of me in every one of the mics so it was a beautiful stereo spread of the drums. It was perfect, that was the easiest drum mix ever. We took all the mics out and just used the leakage.

Cadence: Spacehips Over Africa, recorded in 2012, is a collaboration with UK Afrobeat star Bukky Leo. What's the significance of the title? Have you had experience with UFOs?

Moses: [Laughs] I am a UFO, man. Well, this cat brought an African vibe, he's African, and very drum-centric. He's a sax player but he's also a drummer. My whole mission, and something I've inherited from Tisziji, but I think I've always had it in me, was to leave the culture music behind, to not be stuck in the culture of music with any of the boundaries or without too much past or history. My music may remind you of Africa, not from the ground but from a view from a spaceship passing over. Sometimes it might remind you of Jazz, a New York vibe, but not in the vibe of New York, just passing over. Or sometimes I feel it could be spacehips over Puerto Rico because it might have that Latin music vibe because I came up with that. It's in me but I'm trying not to actually play that but it might have that flavor. That's been my mission - to take people that are great at whatever style or culture that they're in and get them to leave it for the day that they play with Ra Kalam, to let the culture stuff go and play from zero. Almost invariably, they're great at it because of all the beauty and soul that they got from playing the culture music. That's still there but to play from zero is a whole other vibe. They really enjoy it and it makes for some really unique music. The music is not stuck on the ground. Bukky really enjoyed playing that way.

Cadence: Medicine for the Spirit, recorded in 2019 with The Heart Breath Ensemble, includes your song "Christmas on Venus." This is at least your second song referencing Christmas. How are you relating to Christmas as someone of the Jewish persuasion and how do you envision Christmas on Venus?

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Moses: [Laughs] These are good questions, Ken, you're putting me through a test here, I love it. As I wrote in the liner notes to my new release *Peace Universal*, many, many years ago, the great bass player and composer Steve Swallow said to me, "Mubu," he called me Mubu, "You're a great composer," and he asked me to write a song every Christmas. Now why he did that I don't really know because I was an atheist Jew, but because it was Swallow, who I love and respect so much, I've written a song every Christmas. This Christmas I wrote two, they're short but very good. I've been doing that for over 30 years now. I don't claim to know anything about Jesus, but my intuitive feeling was that he was a great man who was trying to bring enlightenment to people and, if nothing else, he was another crazy Jew, right? So, I can relate to him from that level, and I have nothing but good feeling about Jesus. And here I'm living in the Bible Belt, Jesus is literally on every street - within half a mile there's 20 different churches. So, I have a good feeling and some of the best music I've ever heard comes from the Black church. Every year I write a Christmas song and some years I really don't feel like it but because Swallow gave me that task, I do it. Some years I don't feel like I have any ideas so they come out a little weird and that one came out a little weird so that's why I called it "Christmas on Venus."

Cadence: *You end that album with "Love is When You Let it Be," which is a Tisziji Muñoz composition. How does it feel to play works by your spiritual mentor?*

Moses: Whenever we play any of his melodies it takes everybody right to the spiritual. People start crying, the emotion that's in those melodies is so deep. I love his melodies. There's one song called "Fatherhood" that has particular significance because I had a very rocky, adversarial relationship with my dad for most of our lives - buttin' heads. Tisziji helped heal that. When I play gigs with Tisziji I ask him if we can play that and it's just a great healing song. I'm an only child so that was big, and my father was able to go out with more grace and peace knowing that his son really loved and respected him, and that was all due to Tisziji.

Cadence: *The Skies of Copenhagen, recorded in Copenhagen in 2012, is a double CD utilizing mostly young Danish musicians performing music that tends towards the Free Jazz elements of your earlier career. Is there a reason for that?*

Moses: I've been playing Free since "Love Animal" in 1963. I hope I'm doing a little better now.

Cadence: *I thought this recording was more out than your recent work.*

Moses: Oh, I feel it's very spiritual, especially the first tune. There were a few compositions but, yeah, we played mostly from zero. Listen to the second CD, there's some really sweet playing on there and those musicians were impeccable, they never got in each other's way. There's a great piano player on that recording and there's about 15 minutes where he doesn't play at all. I've never heard a record where a guy doesn't play and then there was a lull where the energy went down and then he jumps in [Boom!] strong and you

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really want to hear piano then because you haven't heard it for 15 minutes. If anything, there's a little more of a Classical vibe sometimes but high energy. I just think it's a Free music masterpiece, they just knew when to play and when not to play. It's perfectly orchestrated without any conversation or plan. It was all done in a day and an afternoon. I was very lucky to get all of my favorite musicians in Denmark together into the studio. That's a magical recording.

Cadence: *That recording came 40 years after Ornette Coleman's similarly titled classic Skies Over America. Was there any intended connection to Coleman's release?*

Moses: Not really but I do remember loving that record when it came out. What happened was that I got a gig in Denmark as an artist-in-residence so I spent two months there playing as many gigs as I could and recording with a bunch of people. They put me up in an apartment on the fifth floor and every day my view was of the sky. That summer the sun barely came out, but it had its own beauty, these rainy, dark, cloudy days. Sometimes it's hard to come up with titles so I'm sorry if I kind of borrowed Ornette's title a little bit.

Cadence: *The recent CDs you've made available include reissues of material as well as new works. Visit with the Great Spirit was initially released in 1983 and includes 30 artists – many of whom are quite prominent. The album is dedicated to Hermeto Pascoal whom you describe to be "The living God of music on Earth." Talk about your connection with Pascoal.*

Moses: He's a genius beyond genius and he just lives for music. I got to meet him around 1980 when I went to Brazil and Peru on one of my spiritual sojourns. I was staying with a saxophone player named Cacau, who used to play with Hermeto, and he brought me to his house. Hermeto spoke very little English and I spoke little Portuguese so we started immediately talking in tongues. We just started making up this language. He had never met me but people who know me well know that I do that. We did that for about 5 minutes and the people in the band were just scratching their heads. [Laughs] "What the hell are they talking about?" I spent a whole day there and it was very inspiring. I got to meet Jovino, his pianist, Itiberê, the bass player, and Pernambuco, the percussionist. I was aware this guy was special and the one who hipped me to Hermeto, which is why I knew I had to meet him, was Gil Evans. I used to hang with the great Gil Evans

Cadence: *You hung with Gil Evans?*

Moses: Yes, I guess it's safe to say now, since he's passed away, he liked the Hawaiian herb that I was able to procure at the time. I'd come over and we'd smoke some Hawaiian herb and he said, "Are you hip to Hermeto's music?" I said, 'Maybe I've heard him' and he said, "No, if you'd heard him, you'd remember him." When Gil played me some Hermeto stuff at his house, I said, 'Whoa, oh my God!' And he's a genius on every instrument. One of his records is called Eu E Eles which means me and them, and it's all him on every instrument and it's an incredible record. As a piano player, I'd put him equal or above to Chick Corea, Keith Jarrett or any of those guys, as a piano player. And

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then on flute, he's the best I've ever heard. And then he's playing percussion and trumpet and guitar and accordion, and his writing is insanely beautiful. Every time I've been in his presence it's been magical. Once when he was playing in Boston, between sets, we were sitting in his room and he said, "So next set you're going to play with us." I said, 'No, no, no, I just want to listen. I'm not ready.' [Laughs] and he said to me, "You can't come to church and not pray." Okay, one of his compositions would take me 5 years to learn but he understood that and he went into some Jazz standard like "Autumn Leaves" which I could handle. Of course, it was the most free and beautiful out, modern version of "Autumn Leaves" you've ever heard. He's really special and unique. He did a piece for swimming pool where he got all his cats in a swimming pool and none of these guys go to the gym, so they didn't have like gym bodies. [Laughs] There were some chunky dudes in the swimming pool, and they had microphones over the pool. I saw that concert in Sardinia and then he had bottles that were filled with different levels of water, and he was blowing into them. And at times [the musicians] would duck under the water and they'd drum under water and go around in a circle like that. It was incredible. And then Hermeto was complaining at the end - "I asked for a tenor pool and they gave me an alto pool!" [Laughs] In other words, it wasn't deep enough to get the sound he was looking for. That's how critical his ear is. He's a trip and a half. I hope he's okay, we're all getting older. When I went to his house, he had pigs running around and birds flying in the house. [Laughs] Parrots and stuff, they weren't in cages, they were just flying around the house. He's a wild guy and they did music every day, all day long. It was like going to church, the Church of Hermeto.

Cadence: *You brought up Gil Evans, is there more you can say about him?*

Moses: He was one of my inspirations as a writer and also a good friend. I gave a drum lesson to his son Noah when he was 5 years old. His other son Miles is a trumpet player who played on my record Time Stood Still. Noah was super talented - even at 5 years old he sounded great on the drums. I'd hang with Gil and he showed me stuff that I still use when I'm writing - especially to write with clusters and close voicings for when you're writing for a large band and you want to voice the chords in an interesting way, you can use all the notes of the scale, not just the first, third, fifth and seventh, which is kind of corny sounding and boring. Gil was great, he didn't say much but whatever he said was profound.

Cadence: *You also just reissued *The Story of Moses* which came out in 1987 which is your retelling of the Biblical Moses story. Have you, to any degree, felt your life was in parallel with the Biblical Moses?*

Moses: [Laughs] Yeah, all this stuff was unavailable so I figured it's time to put it out but, no, my life's been a lot easier than his but I think it's a universal story in a way. We need these people who rebel and take on the powers that be of oppression. It doesn't matter if it's a Jewish story or an African story or whatever. The story appealed to me. I hadn't listened to this stuff for years

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and I went back and listened to it and I knew I had to re-release it because it's epic. Have you listened to that? It's epic and the amount of composition and the amount of work that went into it - jeez. I spent years on that record so it's a shame to waste it. That's an incredible record and the people that I have playing on it - wow. I had a friend who was an actor and I asked him to give somebody who could play God and as soon as I said that he said, "Oh, you want someone to play God? That's Ed." [Laughs] His name was Ed Lawrence and my friend said he played God all the time. And sure enough, he was like a 6'4" Black guy with a deep voice like James Earl Jones and as soon as I heard him I said, 'Yeah, that's God.' [Laughs]

Cadence: The Story of Moses recording is quite a tightly themed production. Had you planned for it to be performed in the theater?

Moses: No, we had some idea of doing that but it took too much work to try to recreate that. We did play some of the songs from that on the few times that I took a small band out on the road after the recording but I never staged the whole thing like a theater piece.

Cadence: Cozmic Soul Gumbo is a brand-new recording that includes Jeff Coffin, Bill Summers and Johnny Vidacovich. It's more of a serious Jazz jam than most of your other work.

Moses: Okay, it's good to hear your impressions of it but I'm trying to be free of Jazz. I was in New Orleans, man, and New Orleans is the birthplace of Jazz and you can't help but be affected by the flavor of the place that you're in. But for me, that record has a very celebratory, happy vibe. It's like a lot of New Orleans' music, which is party music. Anything I've ever heard from New Orleans is soulful and that record, to me, is very soulful. Some of the people on that date had been used to playing free and some not so much and it was great to take them out of their usual bag but it still had a New Orleans flavor. When Bill Summers heard we weren't playing with any charts, that there was no reading anything, he was so happy. Man, this big smile came and he was right there. It was like he was waiting his whole life to do that. I told him he earned the right to play free and that's what we're gonna do today. Some of that record reminds me of Dixieland music from another dimension. The last piece there is a piece I wrote called "Blues in the Face" that I played piano on. It was just an upright piano that had a really good sound and they told me that Fats Domino and Dr. John had both recorded on it - two of my musical heroes. I said, 'Whoa, I better up my game!' That's probably the best piano playing I've ever done. I didn't really want to do any traditional New Orleans music, I just wanted to play Free but at one point, Johnny Vidacovich, the great New Orleans drummer, hit this second line kind of groove and I had to jump in on that. I'm very happy with that record, it's a very happy recording. Every one of my recordings is very different.

Cadence: Peace Universe is another new work you recently released that has a really unique concept.

Moses: I think it's one of the best things coming out. Peace Universal is people

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from all over the world playing the same song. It's an album of the same song, and trust me, it's not boring at all because I've got these great visionary people from many countries who submitted stuff. It's a wide-open melody that I wrote on Christmas of 2017. It's about the infinity of creativity because you have people playing the same melody completely differently. These days I'm writing with no chords or bar lines or key signatures - nothing but a melody and a title. I'm writing that way to give maximum freedom to other people.

Cadence: You've been an influential educator over the years – you began teaching at the NEC in 1983. What have you emphasized as a teacher?

Moses: What I recommend as a teacher, with very few exceptions, is that young kids shouldn't try to play Free. I get them working on very specific forms. I think they need to become masters of form, really simple form, and then more complicated forms. Then learn to get Free on the form and, in my case, spend twenty years doing that, and then eventually you get to the point where you don't need the form at all and you just go. Everything is a steppingstone. There were about ten years when I didn't allow myself to play anything faster than eighth notes. With the students I do a very simple form I call 'Resolution Point,' it's in my book. It's where you take a two-bar phrase, which is basically your smallest phrase of music, and you pick a point in the two bars and you learn to improvise at that point. So, you have an element of repetition but not complete repetition so you can be creative within a repetition. What got me into that were my very first gigs playing vibes with Latin bands. I was watching the drummers, there was always four or five percussionists going, and we played for dancers. People would dance all night long. We used to play eight sets a night in some church basement until five in the morning. I noticed the drummers were improvising much in the way that I associated with Jazz drummers but it was danceable. I asked the drummers how they did that, how could they play danceable but still be so creative and that's when they told me about the clave. They showed me five beats and I asked if there was any one hit that was most important and they said sure, but not being music school people they couldn't tell me but they sang it and I knew what it was. From that, I realized you didn't need all five hits, you could reduce it down to one hit, the most important hit – the boss of bosses. I knew I didn't want to just play Latin music or one type of music my whole life so I realized I'd better master every point of the bar. Start with one and work on all the points and that was a way to play dance music but not be doing it one hundred percent repetition. You would create within but have enough repetition so that the dancers felt the groove. I base a lot of my teaching on that. Now, most of the students don't want to work on that. First of all, they don't even want to play dance music, which is a mistake. If you start with Jazz, that's like starting with trigonometry before you can do simple addition. They're improvising on longer, complex forms yet they can't improvise on the most simple form. Man, I've been playing the drums now for sixty-five years and I still work on the one. I do that shit for hours. I do that for every point in the bar since I was fourteen and I still

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feel like I'm not done with it yet. It's very hard to get the students to work on anything that simple because they're already doing this complex shit and getting applause for it and almost all of them are giggling more than me. They didn't like me too much because I'd say, 'Yeah, but if you can't improvise to one in the first bar of a two-bar phrase, you're not ready to play standards,' which could be thirty-two bar form with maybe twenty-five hits rhythmically and they weren't aware of that at all. I always recommended the simple shit first, the great drummers could do that. Rashied could play some Funk that would knock your socks off, they never skipped the simple. There are exceptions to the rule. There's a young lady named Zoh Amba who skipped the Straight-Ahead shit all together and went right to the Free, and she's strong at it. I got to play with her a few times and I support her completely but most people don't sound good when they're doing it.

Cadence: You've promoted the concept that if one can't sing and dance, you can't excel at playing music. How has that gone over with students?

Moses: Sure, why would it be so strange or out of your zone to not sing or dance if you're into music. When I tried to get students to do it, a lot of times they would act like I was trying to get them to levitate or something. I never studied African drumming, I don't want to know, I want to come zero. If I'm playing with some people from there, I want to hear exactly what they're doing right now in this moment and not have some preconceived idea that I got because I went to some African drum class. I'm not saying that's bad, that's just not my approach. I met guys in Boston who studied West African drumming and they knew the right name of all the beats but what happened if they met players from East Africa? They wouldn't have a clue. Now me, on the other hand, I don't have a clue about any of it. I don't want to know but I want to hear what you're doing and if I don't hear what you're doing I'm not gonna play a note because I have too much respect for anybody's sacred Folkloric music to take a dump on it. I was in Denmark for two months in 2012 and one of the gigs was with a Danish trio and six drummers from Ghana. I did what I always do at soundcheck, I said to the drummers, 'Before I play I'd like to hear what you guys are doing.' They started playing and I started dancing to it. I've done that since I was twelve years old. Nobody told me to do it, it's just an obvious way in. To understand what people are doing, you understand it through the body, not through the mind or through a paper. In about thirty seconds I knew exactly what they were doing, and I still remember it because when you listen to music that way, it's almost like you are eating the music, it's inside you. Again, it took me about thirty seconds and I was right with them and they turned around smiling, they were so happy. I took it from them and it was so easy because it was so strong what they were doing. It's like getting into a car that's already driving. I call that part of 'Living Music' which is what I share as a teacher. I call it 'contouring,' which is to take the shape of the music that you hear. That's how I learned that Jazz music is mostly in 2, not in 4/4. I learned this from dancing to it. As far as the singing is concerned, that's

part of it as well. I think a lot of the drum students are working on the wrong stuff, they're working on their drumming but what they should be working on is singing because if you can sing it well, you can play it. There are no other instruments like the drums, if you sing it you can play it immediately. If you don't like your playing, you're probably not singing anything that good. Sometimes I have students and I ask them to sing something and it's terrible – there's no groove, there's no color. This also applies to other instruments – how you sing it is how you'll play it. The brain is like the greatest computer.

Cadence: Do you still play groove on the drums?

Moses: I'm not adverse to going into groove but I don't do it to show that I can do it or to please an audience. I go into a groove when spirit tells me that's what's needed at that time. Spirit says, "You gotta play something simple right now" and I can and I will but with no attachments so I can just as easily go out of it again. I'm not stuck there. Tisziji told me something that was very profound. He said, "You play time to create space," and I knew what he meant. You know, a lot of times with Free music and drumming it becomes very busy – a lot of fast shit – and there's not much space in that but if you [play a simple groove] there's a lot more space for the horns and I'm not getting up in their way. I'm giving them more space to be organic. I gravitate to being more of a danceable Free player. I love to dance and I love playing for dancers. I had the band Mozamba in the late '80s which was tight and funky with great players. I still feel good about that, I'm glad that I didn't skip that. I was young then and more macho. When you're playing for dancers, it's very sexy. As the night goes on, the clothes start coming off and a lot of romances came off the dance floor. That band was like one big drum.

Cadence: Do you find it ironic that you taught at the college level although you admittedly hated school as a student?

Moses: [Laughs] Yeah, that's very ironic. I kind of swore to myself after I managed to escape high school that I would never step foot in a school again and then I wound up being in a school for over 30 years. But I have to say, if you're gonna be in a school, it's better to be the teacher [Laughs] because you get paid for it. Also, that school didn't have a strict curriculum so each teacher could set their own tone. So, when I had an ensemble there was never any music. That drove the kids crazy because they were all used to music stands. I said, 'No, we're gonna learn it by ear.' I'd go to the piano and play simple stuff for them. The kind of stuff I taught was way simpler than what they were working on but they couldn't do it, so I thought, 'Hey, you've got to learn the simple stuff first.' It was good to be there for the time I was there. It was getting less good and then some people got me fired, or I would have been, so at that point I just resigned. It was time to go, and I feel so much better since I've been there even though it's created a definite financial hardship that I'm dealing with. I'm dealing with how to make it through just on Social Security. I'm just glad to be out of that environment, actually. It seemed to be getting worse with this new kind of 'woke' stuff. I was way too gritty. I used to joke that If they had

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a tape machine in the room, I'd have been fired years ago because one of the things I said to the students was that learning music is easy - you don't need to go to school. All you need to do is sit at your instrument and keep playing it until it sounds good. That's what I did. [Laughs] And the school definitely doesn't want you saying that to the students. That's been my approach, if you study, you're on the outside looking in. If you live the music, which is what I was trying to impart to the students. Some of them were receptive to it, most of them not so much. I was one of the least popular teachers there. If you're only studying the music without living it, and living it means you're singing it, you're dancing it. You are it - there's no separation. You and music are one, and that's been my approach. Whenever I heard music that interested me, I'd dance to it. That was my way in, I didn't need to see it on a page. If I could dance to it, I could play it or play something that would work. I met a bunch of great people there like John Medeski, who became a great friend for life. I'm glad I went through it and I'm glad to be out of it. Yeah, it was odd that I wound up there being that I don't have a college degree and I hated school very much. Also, I was a very different kind of teacher. I didn't punish anybody if they weren't into my stuff. I didn't give them a failing grade, I gave everybody an A. I didn't look at talent, that's not fair, some people are more talented than others so you're going to penalize somebody for being less talented? That makes no sense to me. If they don't do the work? Well, that's their choice. I want people to have the free choice. If they understand what I'm sharing with them, and it's valuable, then they use it. If they don't, or they'd rather work on some other stuff, I'm not gonna penalize anybody for that. Everybody got an A all the time. No variations on that, but what they didn't know was that my grading system was kind of reversed. F was for phenomenal, E was for excellent, C was for scintillating, B was for bullshit, and A was for asshole. [Laughs] The worst grade you could get was A-, that meant that with some improvement you might make it up to asshole level.

Cadence: *I caught your July 2024 performance at Brooklyn's ShapeShifter Lab along with Tisziji Muñoz, John Medeski, Don Pate and Matthew Garrison. It was spectacular. Would you talk about that?*

Moses: Thank you, that was very special. Every time I get to play with Tisziji is special. There's no music that destroys me and heals me like Tisziji's music, and it's always been like that since the first we played. All those cats were great at that gig. That came about because of these people who are doing a documentary about me. It was their idea to go to New York and shoot me in front of some of the buildings I grew up around. To be in Brooklyn again and to perform, that was very special. I lived in that neighborhood, close by there, so that brought back a lot of memories, and I saw friends that I hadn't seen in years. The music was great. Tisziji's from Brooklyn too so it was kind of like returning home in a way to do that concert.

Cadence: *The group played two sets and I don't believe anyone took a solo.*

Moses: You might be right, it was a collective thing. I don't have to solo to

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be creative. The idea is when I'm playing an accompaniment role, I'm just as creative. I make a joke about that and say, "The only reason we need a drum solo is that I'm getting tired of them saxophones all the time. So much of the free playing is with saxophone, which I love, but after you hear it [non-stop]...

Cadence: *Drum Wisdom is your drum method book that has drawn accolades from many drummers. What specific knowledge were you most looking to disseminate with that book?*

Moses: The main thing is what I call Resolution Point Meditations which I mentioned earlier. It is a way that you can play dance music without it being 100% repetition. You can improvise without losing the groove. The groove is still there but you're being creative with it.

Cadence: *You've only done a handful of solo drum gigs during your career which is surprising since you have such a strong concept of drumming.*

Moses: I like to play with people - people inspire me to play. I don't know, man, an hour of just me on drums? I get kind of bored. I don't know if I have enough to say to cover a concert, but I did a few in 2022 when I was in Portugal playing with a percussion trio we formed called Alma Tree with Vasco Trilla and Pedro Melo Alves. Pedro is good at organizing gigs and he set me up with 3 solo concerts and I was like, 'Whoa, really?' I wasn't comfortable doing it but I wasn't going to say no. If people want to hear it, I'll do my best, and by the third one, I was feeling more comfortable. I think I will do a solo record but I will do overdubs so it won't just be one me, it'll be like a tribe of me. I already have a bunch of stuff that I call sonic beds. I'm up to 11 CDs worth of sonic beds which are me overdubbed on myself as a sort of percussion zone. They're really meant for people to play over but some of them are interesting enough in themselves. I play solo all the time when I'm alone at home. I'm happy to play by myself, to God, to Spirit. I always feel like the spirits are listening when I'm playing - the spirits in the sky are hearing it. I've been recording some of it and I've been sharing some of it on Instagram and Facebook and getting comments that people dig it.

Cadence: *You mentioned that you play a lot of congas these days. What do you play?*

Moses: I use the Giovanni Hidalgo model Galaxy drums. For me, he's like the Coltrane of the congas

Cadence: *You're also a very talented visual artist and you've done the artwork for a number of your releases. Your artwork is filled with bright colors, often with a psychedelic flair and a sense of swirling movement. Talk about your interest in painting and how much time you devote to that field?*

Moses: Since Elma's been in my life I've been doing more painting. I'm working on the Book of Circles, which is a lifetime kind of work. It'll never be finished and I've had her collaborate on a couple of them with me. I've been working on this book of art for years. We work great together because her style is completely different and when you put them together it has [a different look]. I'm working on this almost every day. I've noticed that she works 5

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hours straight whereas I'll walk by the book and I'll put a little blue over here and then I go on to something else. I've been adding giraffes because she loves giraffes. I wouldn't mind selling some work but right now they're mostly in a big shopping bag. I have used them on many of the album covers because otherwise nobody would know or see them so when I make a record it's my chance to show my art. Since Elma is in my life I'm back at it more because before her, months would go by before I would do anything with the visual art. When I look at that book [I see that] in the course of my life, I've done a lot. There's almost 300 images in that book alone. She's been an inspiration. I'm even playing drums more than I would because she wants to hear my drumming all the time, whether she's here in the house or whether she's in Norway, so I'm drumming almost every day, which I wasn't before. So, she's been a great kick in the ass. I tell her, in a good way, that, 'A day with you feels like a week' [Laughs] because we do so much.

Cadence: Why do you call it the Book of Circles?

Moses: Because they're all based on circles. For me, circles are the key shape, but I'm free to go outside the circles. Like I said earlier about my music, I don't think there's anything special about my ideas but I don't hear anybody else doing it. I feel the same way with my art - it doesn't look like anybody else's art and I do think, especially after being at MOMA and seeing just how much pain [other artists put into their work]. I saw all these great artists and hardly any of them seemed happy. Their work was very dark - I can feel it because I get a psychic reaction to music and art, and I could tell these were not happy people. They had very tragic lives. My art is happy art. That's my choice to be happy and joyous. People are surprised sometimes like - "You have stage 4 cancer, you have no money, you're living in the hood," but I'm happy. It's your choice, no matter what your external circumstances may be.

Cadence: You talked about selling your art. Have you done much of that?

Moses: Yeah, a couple [pieces] I have, and I've also done some on the barter system with bassist Damon Smith who put my records up on Bandcamp for a painting he liked. Since he's done that over the past 2 years I think I've made about 1200 dollars so that was a good deal for one painting. Jeff Coffin has also been a big help to me. He's a great cat in addition to being a great musician. He helped me set up a website for the first time. I don't even know how to get there but it exists [Laughs] and I list some art on it. I sold one at an exhibit I had in Cologne at an art gallery where I was playing and they asked me to bring some of my art.

Cadence: What was your reaction upon learning of the popular Canadian electronics music duo that calls themselves Bob Moses?

Moses: [Laughs] Yeah, why? [Laughs]

Cadence: One of the two is Tom Howie who trained at Berklee in Boston but he's said that he didn't know of you.

Moses: I believe him because I've heard a little bit of their music and there's not any similarity. I was Bob Moses for 50 years before them and I will be Bob

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Moses after they break up - maybe not in body but at least my music will still be here. It's good that I'm Ra Kalam now because that does set me apart. Every once in a while there's [a mix-up]. There's a company that does internet sales and I got a check a few years back for 6000 dollars for one song and I knew right away it wasn't me - it was them. And I have to say I was tempted for about an hour to put it in the bank. It was addressed to me but I thought no, karmically, I can't do that. I'm with another company that [sends me checks for views] and my engineer tracks which records get more views and sales, and one of them, Nishoma, I worked on and added some drums to the original recording. We repackaged it as Nishoma Drumcentirc Remix, and that got way more views than usual. I think I made 500 dollars, where I usually make like 12 to 20 dollars. I realized it was because people probably thought it was those guys because the term remix sounds like what they do. If people were dumb enough to do that, [Laughs] that money I'll keep! But they were probably really disappointed when they heard the music. What I heard about that duo was that although they are from Canada they were recording in New York and one of the techno producers said, "Wow, you guys got the New York sound!" and they were very happy about that. They thought that was a good thing and they wanted to have a connection to New York in their name. There was a guy named Robert Moses who was the park commissioner in New York. When I was a kid I heard his name all the time. He was a prick, he was the reason why the Bronx became a slum and why the Dodgers and the Giants left New York. The Dodgers needed a new stadium which Frank Lloyd Wright was going to design but this guy squashed it. That's how people get history wrong. Robert Moses took all the money and put it into the suburbs where all the rich people lived. Anyway, he was famous, and I believe that's where they got the name for the duo. Cecil McBee has a clothing chain in Japan named after him and he choose to sue them but I'm not gonna sue them - fuck it.

Cadence: How do you view money?

Moses: I'd have to have some before I could view it. [Laughs] You know, every choice I've made has been anti-money, anti-hustle. So, I'm poor, I take full responsibility for that. I don't blame anybody about that except myself. My girlfriend is much more worried about that now than I am. She says, "Ra Kalam, you can't keep playing for free, you have to get paid." And that's a good thing because on my own, I've never made that the thing. Even the way I teach. People come to take a lesson, I give 5 hours, all day lessons, for 100 dollars. It used to be 50 dollars. And it's stuff they can use for their whole life, they don't have to come back next week. A lot of teachers give you a book and you play page one for a week and come back to play page two, and that goes on for years. That's giving that teacher money and you still don't know how to play a gig. There's a price for creative freedom but I realize that someone with my resume, I should be a lot richer than I am but I didn't try. I never called anybody to get a gig or a teaching position. Money? I could use it, especially now because I've got big medical bills and also Elma has to keep coming back

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and forth. I refuse to worry about it, I've felt that Spirit will always take care of me somehow. I don't take it for granted, and I know I have to stay on course on the spiritual trip and stay true to all the ideals, but if I do that, I feel pretty confident that I'll always have enough. Poverty is relative.

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

Moses: I used to be quite good at sports for a small white guy who can't jump. I had the moves and I was tenacious when I was playing sports. I was way better than you'd think I would be. For someone who is non-competitive at this point, when I was playing sports, I was very competitive. You could beat me but you'd have to kill me. It was like that, I gave it everything. I do enjoy watching sports now although I don't have a TV but I can watch highlights on the computer.

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

Moses: I guess this is still music but one of my guilty pleasures that may surprise people is that I go on YouTube to collect great singers from all those really stupid shows like America's Got Talent. Every country's got their own shows like that. I don't watch the shows but I find the clips and I enjoy them very much. I have a collection of 50-60 singers that I go back and listen to, and I'm always finding new ones that bring me to tears when I hear them. I love the great singers because I want to be moved, that's all I care about from music. I don't care what style, I don't care about being impressed, and I think a lot of Jazz is egocentric because it's almost like the main goal is to impress people. I respect the work they've put in but I don't want to hear ego, I want to hear heart. I also enjoy movies and some of the TV shows now because some of the best actors and directors are putting their energy into TV more than into movies because they can do a whole season so the story can go beyond 2 hours. I do appreciate great movies such as Joker: Folie a Deux which I just saw. I also enjoy watching the martial arts. I'm amazed at what they do and how brave and fearless they are to put their body on the line like that.

Cadence: *The last questions have been given to me by other artists to ask you. Hermeto Pascoal (multi-instruments) – Gave a spoken message in Portuguese that was played for Moses without him being told who was speaking.*

Moses: Wow! That was a Brazilian talking. Was that Hermeto?

Cadence: *Yes, that was Hermeto Pascoal. Instead of a question he gave me a statement from his home in São Paulo, Brazil for you. What he said translates to, "Hello, this is Hermeto Pascoal speaking. Bob Moses is one of the greatest drummers in the world. Many hugs to you! Tchau."*

Moses: Oh, that's beautiful. That really raises my spirit. You know, I am coming to terms with my own greatness because it's very hard to feel that because [Laughs] I grew up in the same building as Max Roach and Art Blakey and Elvin so I never felt that I was particularly great, but as I get older, I think maybe it's true. At least about playing different, for sure. The way I play I don't hear anyone else play like that so it's nice to hear from these great people that

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they think that about me. That made my day, thank you, he's the living God of music.

Pheeroan akLaff (drums) asked: *"How can we speed up the healing?"*

Moses: He's a great drummer. Well, love is the best healing, man, and that's really it. Just love, other than that, vitamin C is probably good. [Laughs] I don't know. Doing some stretching is very good, exercise and eating correctly, if we're talking physical healing. Spiritual healing? Drumming, drumming from the heart is very good healing. There's a tradition of that - joyous drumming from the heart is very good healing, and creativity is very good healing.

Whatever form it takes, whether it's painting, dancing or poetry. You know, I am working on a book of poetry too. It's of what I call Mind Free poetry and Jeff Coffin is gonna help me make physical copies of it through his tech guy. I'm finished with the poems. The first one goes like this - porcupine humps a cactus / just to keep in practice. [Laughs] The name of the book is gonna be called High Koo.

Sheila Jordan (vocal) said: *"I love Moses and please tell him that for me. We were in Steve Kuhn's band and worked many gigs together and recorded with Steve's group. He is a great musician and human being and I love him dearly."*

Moses: That's beautiful. When I met Elma, I was in Norway playing with Steve Kuhn and Sheila Jordan in 1980 at the Molde Jazz Festival. Please give me Sheila's contact information because I really want to talk to her and say to her - 'Sheila, remember that young girl?' Elma's job in Norway was to meet the bands and help them with where the hotel was or where to eat and help with any problems. At the time, Sheila got the vibe immediately, because she's very intuitive, she's nothing but love that woman. She saw there was something going on between

"Elma, you should go talk to Moses, I think he really likes you." So, I have to tell Sheila about [our reconnection] and also just to talk to her.

Cadence: *Sheila Jordan didn't have a question for you but I wanted to include her because I see a similarity between you and her. She's a survivor and remains fearless as an artist while maintaining kindheartedness. You were the first to get her and Jeanne Lee together. I asked Sheila what it was like to sing with Jeanne Lee and she said, "Singing with Jeanne Lee was like singing with an angel. She was so beautiful." Would you talk about Sheila Jordan?*

Moses: Thank you, anything I have in common with Sheila is a blessing because she's a wonderful person and she's wide open. She loves the Jazz and the Bebop, but if we go into the Free zone, she's right there. She was great with Jeanne Lee, they were fantastic together on Vintage Visionary Vignettes. I wish I had more of them together than just a few tracks on that. Sheila is a deep person. Her energy is great and positive, and she's a beautiful singer. She's as sweet as can be and has had a very hard life, as I have had in my very own way. She's come out of it extremely positive. The last time I saw her, I gave her a ride in my car and I played her some Tisziji music and she got it immediately. She understood why I'm Ra Kalam now. She was almost crying she was so moved

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by it. Not everybody gets Tisziji but she got it. I'd love to see her again and do something with her. [Sadly, Sheila Jordan passed on 8/11/25 but Moses did get to speak with her]

Billy Martin (drums/percussion) asked about your John Coltrane experience which you answered already. His question was - "Where and when was the first time you saw John Coltrane play and was that a formative experience?" I'll expand his question to ask if you feel you've attained the level of spirituality that Coltrane reached during his career?

Moses: That's a really good question. I'm on the path but I think I could always do better so I don't want to assume that I've reached anything yet. As far as the lineage of drummers, I feel like I'm another fruit on that tree. Coltrane changed my life. Without hearing Trane I would not have been ready for Tisziji. Yeah, definitely, hearing Trane changed my life. I heard him as separate, different from the other musicians who seemed to be just about music - great music but just music. He was about something beyond music to me. It was super musical, musical genius, but the spiritual was first and the music was secondary. In that sense, I think I am following in his footsteps, whether I've reached that level, I don't know, but I've been living pretty much like a monk for 30 years. A little less so since Elma came on the scene. [Laughs] I feel like I'm at the bottom of the mountain looking up and I don't know where Coltrane was on that mountain but he was definitely a serious practitioner. Tisziji, on the other hand, I would say is fully realized. He is at the top of the mountain, there's nothing more for him to do to be there. Trane was moving in that direction and I could hear that and it affected me deeply.

Barry Altschul (drums) asked: "Growing up in the same building as Max Roach, Art Blakey and Elvin Jones, did they ever impart any playing secrets to you, and if so, what?"

Moses: Barry's a great drummer. I'd say I learned two things from that experience. I learned what great is. You hear one bar of Max Roach [Laughs], it's great, there's no question. You hear one press roll of Art Blakey and you know he's great, and the same with Elvin. I learned what's great, and that's very important because when I or anybody else sits at the drums, I can say, 'Not great, keep working at it.' The other thing, which a lot of the new generation doesn't get because they're taught just the opposite, is that I also learned where I couldn't go. Many don't agree with me but I say you honor the people who inspired you by not stealing their stuff. The truth is, I love Max but I never wanted to play like that. I loved Art Blakey but I never wanted to play like that. But Elvin? I kind of did. [Laughs] When I heard Elvin, I said, 'That's how drums should sound!' But if you listen to my playing, you don't hear any Elvin. I'm not saying that what I'm doing is as good as Elvin, it will never be, but at least I can look in the mirror and know I'm standing on my own two feet. I'm not taking anything from these guys, because that's what they did. They went inward, nobody played the drums before like they did.

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Vinny Golia (multi-instruments) said: *“Bob is an amazing energy on the planet, a unique musical force. I remember him explaining his concept of large ensemble music where he had improvisers, spirit voices and readers [spirit-workers?] coexisting in his world of composition. It was a brilliant way to incorporate all the people he knew and played with into a cohesive ensemble to perform the sounds he heard in his head. Not enough is discussed about Bob’s compositions, which are extremely wide-ranging. When I was subletting his loft, which was a great place to paint, I did a lot of work there. I remember him dropping by, he had just spent a lot of time listening to the sounds of the subway, getting new textures and rhythms to work out. I saw Bob a lot when I was a painter in NY and we were also part of Free Life Communication, a group of NY-based musicians banding together to try to unify the scene at the time. His insights in the music were always amazingly insightful. Like I said, Bob is a musical force on the planet and he sees his music as a unifying force.”*

Moses: I knew Vinny before he was a musician, when he was just a visual artist. That was a beautiful statement he gave. Thank you Vinny. I was in a group with Vinny and my friend Damon Smith called Astral Plane Crash with Weasel Walter and Henry Kaiser. That was a wild group. That was a few years back and the last time I’ve seen him. He’s become a full-fledged master on all his horns. It’s nice to hear from him, he’s living in LA for a long time now but that guy still sounds like Brooklyn all the way, man. [Laughs] He doesn’t have any of the LA vibe and I appreciate that about him.

Cadence: *Would you expound on utilizing the sounds of the New York subway as inspiration for composition?*

Moses: I don’t remember doing that for composition but maybe for the drumming. I get inspired by all kinds of things. There was the tree outside where I used to live in Quincy that made sounds that made me want to sound like it. Skipped records were a great inspiration to me, instead of fixing it, I would let it go. Inspiration for rhythms, for melodies, could come from anywhere, even non-music. I look at the sky and I hear rhythms. I look at the water and the rivers. The rain has fantastic rhythms. So, yeah, the subway, definitely. And people’s voices, the rhythm of speech. There’s rhythms everywhere so why not use them? I like to create in any way possible. Lately, I’ve been writing poetry and sometimes it comes from my phone as a collaboration with the new technology. I found that by [dictating] I can sing [drum beats] into the phone and whatever intelligence is in this phone, it does its best to translate it into English. And, oh man, I’ve got some of the best abstract poetry. Everything can be a source of creativity. I used to hang with Jimmy Slyde, the great tap dancer. Man, just to see that cat walk across the room was art, it was just the most beautiful thing. He would get up out of a chair and turn and walk out of a room and I felt like I was watching some of the greatest art in terms of movement.

Vinny Golia also asked: *“Talk about auditioning for Mingus. It’s a great story.”*

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Moses: I think he got that mixed up. I was there when Rahsaan auditioned for Mingus. My dad drove Rahsaan across the park because with Rahsaan being blind he couldn't drive himself, although he wanted to! [Laughs] Nobody would let him do it. I was there for that meeting of the titans. I didn't audition for Mingus, I got to sit in with him when he had a year-long gig at a club on West 4th Street called the Jazz Workshop. I used to go to the Sunday matinee because they didn't serve alcohol so I could get in. I went every Sunday for a year and almost every Sunday I got to play. The core group was Eric Dolphy, Ted Curson, Mingus and Dannie Richmond. He'd give me a chance to play on the second set, so I was playing with Eric Dolphy and Mingus when I was 13 years old.

Cadence: Would you talk about the Rahsaan Roland Kirk audition for Mingus?

Moses: Yeah, that's quite a story. First, Rahsaan whipped out two horns and played them at once to make that sound of his. Mingus was sitting on the piano bench and he got so excited when he heard that he fell off the bench. He weighed close to 300 pounds at that time, and I remember that the paintings shook on the wall. So, that was good that he heard the sound of the two horns at once but then he had to challenge him. That's what they did in those days. People think I'm tough, I'm a marshmallow compared to those guys. So then Mingus picked up the bass and played the fastest walking bass I've ever heard in my life. I think the tune was "Get Happy" and Rahsaan was right there in tempo with him, and that was it, he passed the test and he got the gig. At that point, he wasn't Rahsaan yet, he was just Roland. Those two were meant to be - two titans of the music and I was so blessed to be there.

Hamid Drake (percussion) said: "First of all, I want to thank you for what you've done for and contributed to the music and the art of drumming/ percussion. I love your videos and how you speak about language/pulse, etc. It's brilliant. You not only speak it but you show it in detail and let us know there is no separation. Unfortunately, a lot of folks, musicians included, don't see or understand that. I am truly grateful. The question that I would like to ask is: "How do you convey to students the importance of finding their own voice and how they can get there? I remember hearing the great Yusef Lateef once saying, "One of the beautiful things about 'The Great Tradition' is that it can help and enable us to find our own voice," and he was referring to the totality - all the great traditions in music/art/East/West/the world."

Moses: Wow, that's deep, I always encourage people not to imitate. Use the people's music that you love as inspiration, not imitation. Going back to Barry Altschul's question about what did I get from being in the same building with these great drummers? I learned what great is, but also where I couldn't go because they already did it. You honor the people that inspire you by not stealing their stuff. This is maybe an old school concept that a lot of the new generation in school doesn't get. All they do is steal from their several heroes so they may become a pastiche of their favorite players. I've never recommended

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that but most of the people are not ready for that message. We're talking about Max Roach, Art Blakey, Elvin. Well, I love Max Roach, I love Blakey's music, but I never wanted to play like them, but Elvin? I kind of did. When I heard Elvin, I said, 'Damn, that's how drums should sound.' But you've heard my recent stuff. Do I sound like Elvin? No. I'm sure I'm not nearly as great but at least I can look in the mirror and know I went inward. See, that's the key, you have to go inward, not always outward. Everybody's going outward to see what everybody else is doing. The truth is, with most of the students, I just tried to get them to sound good. They weren't even at the point where they'd find their own voice. A lot of them couldn't even clap a half note in time yet. They couldn't improvise to 1 in the first bar of a 2-bar phrase. This is simple shit, and they couldn't do it, so to talk about finding your own voice at that point... And the ones who were ready for it were already doing it and playing like themselves because the great ones already know that. That was part of the Jazz ethos which has not been carried on into the present years. Sonny Stitt didn't get the props that he deserved, because he was great. Sonny Stitt was killer, but people said he sounded too much like Charlie Parker. I encourage people not to transcribe - it's not yours. This is people's lives, you can't take somebody else's life. My dear friend Abbey Lincoln, she gave me one of her records one time and there was a beautiful ballad on there "Midnight Sun." There's a beautiful trumpet solo on there that's creamy, buttery, and when I talked to her, I said, 'Boy, that young trumpet player, he really sounds good.' And these were her words, "Yeah, but Bobby, it's too close to Clifford Brown. You don't take somebody's sound like that, that's not right. If I'd have known that I never would have used him on my record." I won't mention his name, but the same guy I heard on another record and he sounded like Miles. People get rewarded for sounding like other people these days and I think I'm one of the few that speaks out against that.

Hamid Drake also asked: "How do you see spirituality or universal consciousness in the framework of your music, and music and art in general? I'm sending my warmest greetings of love and light to you Baba Ra Kalam. You are a torch bearer and carrier of light and sound."

Moses: Wow, this is so beautiful, Hamid. Well, he's a great drummer, he knows the answer, he's doing it. Again, at the music school, the NEC, their slogan at one time, because they change, was "Come to NEC, it's all about the music," and of course, that was a very accurate statement. And they were saying it with a lot of pride, but I saw that and said, 'Yeah, that's the problem.' It shouldn't be about the music, it should be about the spirit. And if it's about the spirit first, then I might be interested in hearing some of the music that you play. But none of the schools teach that, the spiritual part is not dealt with. It shouldn't be just about the music, if you're spiritual it should be about how you cook, how you walk, how you dance, and how you talk. If you're a musical person, it should show up in the music. A lot of people talk the talk but when I hear the music, I don't hear it. There are people that do it like Coltrane and Pharoah Sanders,

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obviously. Hamid Drake and Tisziji, obviously.

Tisziji Muñoz (guitar) said: "Ra Kalam and I talk regularly, so I have no questions for him. Nevertheless, I suggest that basic questions be posed for the sake of others. When, why and how does a Jazz or musical student obstruct their own potential for liberated/creative playing?"

Moses: By concentrating on the material as opposed to the psychic reality of music. Students tend to want to focus on the material – "What notes did you play? What chords did you play?," not where it's coming from. Very few of them have an awareness or recognition of that and how important that is – where it's coming from and what's the purpose of your music. Is your music about healing or is your music about becoming famous or being appreciated and getting applause. Again, these are material concerns, not spiritual concerns. They obstruct it in many different ways but they don't even realize they're doing it or even know that that dimension even exists. And you try to be an example for them but even Tisziji's music, I didn't play that for most of the students, I knew they weren't ready for it.

Tisziji Muñoz also asked: "What role does a spiritual approach to music play in clearing family inherited obstructions or fear of creativity and/or heart-choking self-consciousness?"

Moses: Ooh! Wow! [Laughs] You saved the hardest questions for last, oh man. Well, we're all a product of our karmic programing and karmic inheritance, and many of these programs shut us down and keep us from true freedom and true creativity. They are inherited in a way, from the family, from the blood, from what Tisziji calls "the river of blood." So, playing music from a spiritual place, which means zero and absolute freedom, not partial freedom, not partial creativity but absolute freedom, absolute creativity - that frees you from all of those bondages. If you're sincere about it then you become a new person in a way. You become empty, or what Tisziji might call "empty fullness." In order to receive spirit, you have to empty out. It's the opposite of the material approach which is so much of what's happening in schools and in the world in general – "The more material I get, the better off I am." The spiritual approach is emptying, it's of letting go of everything. One of the things Tisziji said to me was, "Always remember to forget. Forget everything, come zero." It's not easy to do. I'm still working on it but I'm getting better at it. And that's also a way of letting go of any neurotic programs that show up in the music or show up in your life. When you play spiritual music it is a healing. It's like a benediction from the divine, and there's nothing better. You feel nothing but joy and gratitude. You stop complaining and bitching about stuff and you just appreciate the wonder of it. That's what I think playing the spiritual music does – it helps you to break through your programs. We all have a lot of programs that are just in our history and DNA – family stuff, back to our ancestors, what community you're part of, what race, what tribe, what country. You go to Italy and everybody talks with their hands, it's kind of charming until you see everybody's doing the same movements and then it's not so charming

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because you realize that these are programs and where's the freedom? Where's the creativity? To make progress, you need to have access to a spiritual master which I've been very lucky to do, who's also the greatest musician I've ever played with. That's a perfect combination. Also, he's a Puerto Rican guy that grew up on the street, so he's had all the experiences that us street people might have had. He's had them and he's yet reached this perfect yogi thing, so for that reason – he's the perfect guru for me and for other musicians who might be open to it. He was a gang leader, he was in a Doo-wop group, in the military. I've let go of my anger. Donald Trump? I don't get angry about that. He is what he is. I wish him well. I wish he'd get a spiritual awakening and grow some more compassion. That's what I wish for everybody and good health and more love.

Cadence: Any closing comments?

Moses: Onward and upward in life and music, whatever your pursuits are. And love is the answer, love is the dancer. Thank you for being interested enough to spend all this time with me and also thank you to the great spirits who had these great comments and questions. Thanks for the love, man, I'm appreciating it and I'm really enjoying life more than ever. I think it's easily the best time of my life, even as my body is kind of falling apart. That's inevitable, but I feel really good in spirit, and I'm not done yet. I've got a lot more projects coming, a lot more playing to do, and a lot more loving to do. So we're finally done? [Laughs]

Interview Ra Kalam Bob Moses



John Medeski, Tisziji Munoz, Don Pate, Moses, Matt Garrison

Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Interview Ra Kalam Bob Moses



Tisziji Munoz with Moses - Photo credit © Ken Weiss



Photo credit © Ken Weiss

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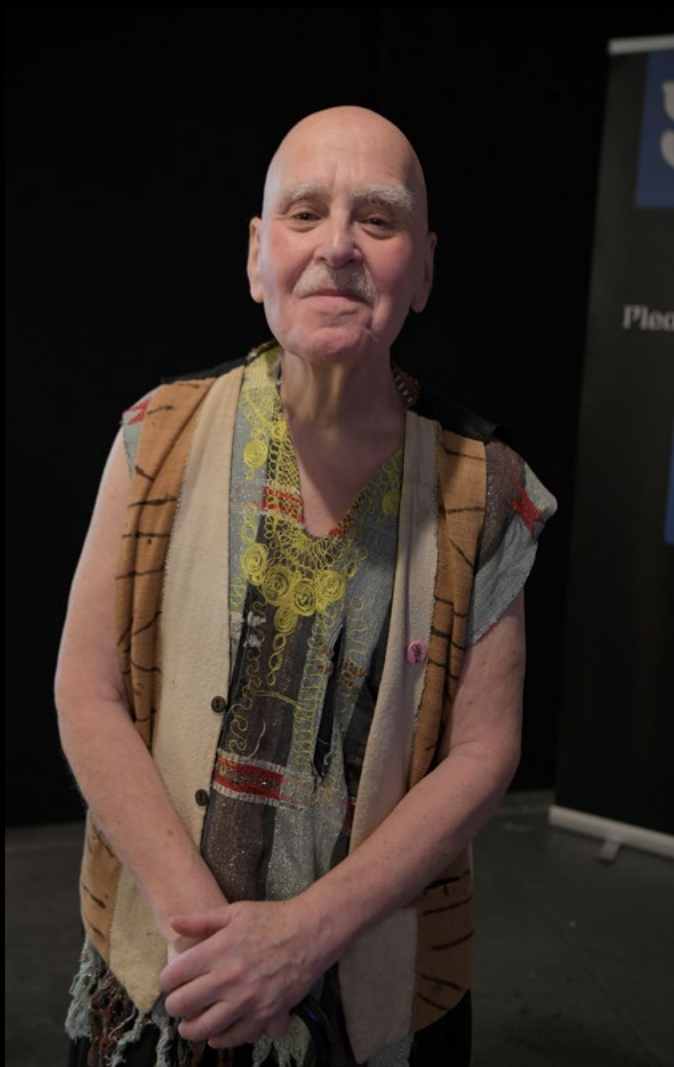


Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Feature Review

TALL TREES JUSTIN CHART

Justin Chart's latest release, *Tall Trees*, is the art of a jazz trio, where the barebones configuration of alto saxophone, bass, and drums demands both profound lyricism and relentless invention. Joined by the formidable rhythm section of Max Gerl on bass and Kendall Kay on drums, Chart delivers a dynamic and powerful performance that is instantly arresting. His alto playing is characterized by a soulful urgency, effortlessly shifting between blues-drenched melodic statements and bursts of hard-bop fire. Unlike ensembles where the rhythm section merely provides a backing track, Gerl and Kay act as equal conversationalists, creating a constantly shifting rhythmic and harmonic landscape that pushes Chart to new expressive heights. The result is an album that feels spontaneous, raw, and deeply communicative, showcasing Chart's renowned ability to generate sophisticated, yet intense improvisations that show what Justin does best, be in the moment.

This album is a complete, unified artistic statement. You could appreciate a single chapter, I feel that *Tall Trees* is a novel. I truly enjoyed *Tall Trees* as a singular comprehensive experience. The decision to feature the saxophone in a piano-less trio format immediately invites comparison to the giants who mastered this sparse, exposed setting, most notably the legendary Sonny Rollins. Like Rollins on classics such as *Way Out West* or *A Night at the Village Vanguard*, Chart revels in the creative freedom that the absence of a chordal instrument provides. This "strolling" approach allows his alto saxophone to outline the harmonies with total authority, resulting in solos that are structurally robust and intellectually compelling, all while maintaining a strong emotional core. Where Rollins often used the trio to explore thematic development with wry humor, Chart uses it to reveal a powerful, bluesy undercurrent, injecting his alto with a palpable sense of passion and narrative depth that is both technically dazzling and profoundly moving.

What truly elevates *Tall Trees* is the symbiotic relationship within the trio. Bassist Max Gerl steps into the harmonic space left open by the piano, not just walking the line but engaging in call-and-response with Chart's alto, anchoring the music while simultaneously launching it into unexpected territories. Drummer Kendall Kay provides a foundation of rhythmic complexity and drive, constantly modulating the energy and texture of the pieces. This highly intuitive and interactive relationship echoes the chemistry of the greatest small ensembles, establishing the Justin Chart Trio as a contemporary powerhouse. *Tall Trees* is a vital addition to the modern jazz catalog, solidifying Justin Chart's reputation as a masterful storyteller whose dynamic and soulful playing honors the rich tradition of the saxophone trio while forging a distinctly modern sound.

You can listen to *Tall Trees* and feel the power that is evident. As a tree sustains life by providing oxygen. These three gentlemen are doing the same for modern day jazz by communication through their deep roots. I recommend *Tall Trees* to experience the thrill of spontaneous creation and to hear and feel virtuosity with heart. In the forest of jazz, Chart, Gerl and Kay are *Tall Trees*.

Dan Kaplan

Reissues

ROY BROOKS THE FREE SLAVE TIME TRAVELER-ATTM-001.

THE FREE SLAVE / UNDERSTANDING / WILL PAN'S WALK / FIVE FOR MAX.75:01.

Brooks, d; Woody Shaw, tpt; George Coleman, ts, Hugh Lawson, p; Cecil McBee, b. 4/26/1970.
Baltimore,MD.

There seems to be a slight upsurge of interest of late in the jazz drummer Roy Brooks. Like-minded trapsters such as the late Jack DeJohnette, Billy Hart, Frank Butler and others were aware of his exemplary work but the general jazz public was not. Yet Brooks was able to sporadically record for small indie labels like the two he cut for I'm HoTep. His various groups waxed under the Artistic Truth moniker but the one constant in these combos was trumpeter Woody Shaw long before a semblance of stardom when he signed with Sony/ Columbia. This pairing with tenorist Coleman is something of a rarity since another instance of it was unfound Pianist Hugh Lawson should be familiar to most readers. From gigs as a sideman with Yusef Lateef and four albums under his leadership, he was often under-appreciated. Anchoring it all is Tulsa's own Cecil McBee on the big bull. He's like a good calculator, one can count on him. This is the all-star gathering Brooks had chosen to propel and motivate them he does with inventive and sterling stickwork amid well-placed accents. A glance at the total time will tell you that none of the material could be considered short cameos these dudes came to play. All selections are by the drummer except for the mysteriously entitled "Will Pan's Walk" credited to McBee. Brooks famed musical saw is absent but there are plenty of percussive fireworks on the fourth track dedicated to Max Roach. Baltimore's Left Bank Jazz Society has been a goldmine for previous concert reissues. Let's hope the tradition continues.

Larry Hollis



New Issues

TODD HERBERT

CAPTAIN HUBS

TH PRODUCTIONS 2000

CAPTAIN HUBS / PROPHET'S ORACLE / LOU'S IDEA / LOOK INTO THE ABYSS / YOU GO TO MY HEAD / IN THE MOMENT / TEMPLE OF SILENCE / THE MIND'S EYE / FEE-FI-FO-FUM / STRAIGHT STREET. 61:05.

Herbert,ts; David Hazeltine, p;John Webber, b; Louis Hayes, d. 6/25/2024. Queens, NYC.

Although he has a pair of previous releases under his name tenor saxman Todd Herbert was a new name to me. He's certainly no rookie with past duties as a member of units commanded by Charles "The Mighty Burner" Earland and Freddie Hubbard's Quintet. In fact, the opening title tune was penned for the latter and it would be insightful to speculate as to what the dedicatee of this disc would have done with it had he lived to record it. One of five original charts heard herein it is followed by the almost hypnotic Prophet's Oracle" and on down the line to "Look Into The Abyss" with it's effective punches under the tenor stretch, "Temple Of Silence" & "The Mind's Eye" both with explosive saxophone forays. The last mentioned features the great Louis Hayes kicking some heavy tubs. Hayes is one third of the top-flight rhythm section of David Hazeltine and John Webber who need no introduction. Hayes contributes a stair-stepped stroll while the pianist's catchy lined "In The Moment" sizzles nicely. Elsewhere the setlist holds scripts from fellow reedmasters Wayne and Trane. It's been said that the slow numbers are what separates the men from the boys and a good example of that supposition is the dusty diamond from 1934 "You Go To My Head" a brushed deep ballad with an extended horn coda. It is apparent that I need to go back and investigate the discography of this seasoned vet more thoroughly.

Larry Hollis



New Issues

DAVID HANEY AND Yael "KAT MODIANO" ACHER IMPROVISED MUSIC FROM LURAY CAVERNS

CADENCE MEDIA RECORDS

TRACK ONE/ TRACK TWO/ TRACK THREE/ TRACK FOUR/ TRACK FIVE/ TRACK SIX/ TRACK SEVEN/ TRACK EIGHT 48:35

David Haney, Great Stalacpipe Organ/ Yael "KAT Modiano" Acher flt July 12, 2025

First let me say how much I love the titles. As an improviser I am also wary of titles even though I am guilty of making up titles after the fact.

The record opens with some very open sounds from the flute with organ accompaniment. I am assuming that the cavern adds to the open ambient sound, which I really like. On track two there is more organ and the interplay between the two is very interesting.

On different tracks the flute sounds different, sometimes mellow, sometimes piercing. Some of the difference is due to the player but some is due to the ambience of the cavern, which really enhances the over all sound. And of course, how the player takes advantage of that space. Some of the low notes on the flute blend so well with the organ and at times the organ is used in a percussive manner creating some very interesting contrasts with the flute. The interplay on track four is a real standout, using low organ notes to contrast with the high flute notes. The swirling melodies on track five are fascinating. And the organ accompaniment on track six is interesting.

Over all this is a fascinating recording. Anyone who loves ambient music will love this, as will flute players. The organ is used in interesting ways. I assume it is not a proper organ but somehow created in the cavern. Then organ uses electronics to connect to the stalagtites in the cavern and the metal mallets hitting the limestone creates the sound which is enhanced by the electronics. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjXZzB5bUAo> for details.

Bernie Koenig



Papatamus Redux

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

TED BROWN
JUST YOU, JUST ME
NEW ARTISTS 1079

Bassist Don Messina was lucky enough to play with tenor sax legend Ted Brown in the mid 1990s. He was even luckier when he began to play regularly with Brown in groups that included drummer Bill Chattin, saxophonist Jimmy Halperin or pianist Jon Easton. Luck struck again in 2013 when that group recorded their one and only release (Live at Trumpets) for the Cadence label. With the release of Just You, Just Me, fans of the Lennies Tristano-inspired music of Brown are the lucky ones. Messina and New Artists unearthed seven tracks recorded during 2013 at various venues in New York and New Jersey that capture the clarity and precision of Brown's melodic inventions. Steeped in the lessons he learned from Tristano, Brown and the trio of Messina, Chattin and Easton delight in exploring up tempo swingers such as "After You've Gone" and "I Can't Believe That You're in Love with Me" as well as evocative ballads such as "Everything Happens to Me" and "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You." Brown's light and airy tone and his flowing lines are perfectly suited for this set of standards that also includes the title track, "Gone with the Wind" and "It's You or No One." The trio of Easton, Messina and Chattin are perfect bandmates for Brown's understated, yet expressive approach. Having studied with both Tristano and pianist Sal Mosca, Easton's solos are full of finesse and percussive accents. Chattin, who also studied with Tristano, drives the group with his soft touch and his keen understanding of the tunes. Messina's solid timekeeping and sensitive and storytelling solos are inspired by his association with Tristano that began in 1973. Since his first recording in 1956 (Freewheeling), Brown's output has been sparse with only a dozen or more releases to his name, not to mention his sessions with Konitz, Marsh and Tristano. Having recently celebrated his 98th birthday, Just You, Just Me is a reminder of the beauty, creativity and passion Ted Brown brought to the music. Like Messina, we are lucky to be recipients of his gifts.

BOTTOM LINE: Saxophonist Ted Brown turned 98 in early December. What better way to celebrate this milestone than with Just You, Just Me, a collection of tunes recorded in 2013. Rooted in the teachings of Lennie Tristano, Brown and the trio of Jon Easton on piano, Don Messina on bass and Bill Chattin on drums deliver a session of laid back swing and understated inventiveness.

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CHRISTIAN MARIEN
BEYOND THE FINGERTIPS
MARMADE RECORDS

Imagine listening to a kaleidoscope? It might very well sound like the second release from the Christian Marien Quartet. Shards of melodies, rhythms and harmonies are constantly in flux as drummer Marien, saxophonist/clarinetist Tobias Delius, guitarist Jasper Stadhouders and bassist Antonio Borghini let things take their shape on *Beyond the Fingertips*. Perhaps it's the presence of Delius or Marien's Han Bennink-influenced drumming that gives this recording an ICP Orchestra feel as the quartet seamlessly transitions between various moods — serene to frenetic, joyful to meditative, swing to abstract and various shapes — the full quartet, trios and duos. To be as authentic and close to the concert experience as possible, *Beyond the Fingertips* was recorded direct-to-disc which meant a maximum of 18 minutes of recording time per track with no post-production possible. Thanks to their kaleidoscopic way of blending moods and instrumentation, the quartet packs a lot of musical patterns into each track which flows from one tune to the next — Track 1: "Love All. Play!," "Martha," "Blues in AspiK" and "Cordiale"; and track 2: "Nantucket Nostalgia," "For Toby," "Look Left, Look Right" and "No Place for Illusions." Like spinning the particles in a kaleidoscope, when the band lands on a particularly vibrant combination they explore it fully before they spin again to investigate another combination. On "Blues in AspiK," they delve into the blues with Delius' vocal style of tenor playing. On "Look Left, Look Right," they revel in the fragmented pattern of free improvisation. There is a hint of Mingus style swing in "For Toby." It is a joy to hear how four musicians can create such an array of colors and patterns as they explore an ever-changing combination of melodies, rhythms and harmonies to create a mesmerizing music that will keep you listening with every twist and turn along the way.

BOTTOM LINE: The Christian Marien Quartet's first recording (*How Long Is Now*, 2023), was one of the first recordings I reviewed on *Papatamusredux*. It was also among my top ten picks in *Cadence Magazine* for that year. I am happy to say, their second release, *Beyond the Fingertips*, will be among my top ten for 2026 (only because I have already submitted my top ten for 2025.)

Papatamus Redux

THINGS OF THIS NATURE MAHAKALA RECORDS

The pianoless quartet of sax, trumpet, bass and drums might have you thinking you are listening to the Ornette Coleman Quartet, but you are not. The intensity of some of the solos might have you thinking you are listening to Albert and Donald Ayler, but you are not. The seamless flow between rhythm and blues grooves and free jazz might have you thinking you are listening to the Art Ensemble of Chicago, but you are not. What you are listening to is a group of musicians who are putting a modern spin on the jazz adventures of the late 1960s. Known as Things of This Nature, trumpeter Caylie Davis, reed player Chris Ferrari, bassist Shogo Yamagishi and drummer J.J. Mazza, is a powerhouse of free improvisation, rhythmic energy and intuitive musical interaction. Tunes such as "Shortstop Right Wing Chicken Parm" and "Nettles" have the quality of Coleman's pianoless quartet but are played with a more aggressive rhythm. Other tunes such as "How Does It Sound Now" and "Tough Situation" demonstrate the band's ability to shift between rhythm and blues riffs and free jazz, reminiscent of the Great Black Music of the Art Ensemble of Chicago. The simple an evocative "Tony in the Chat Room" and the mournful mood of "Waxy Yellow Buildup" capture the feel of Albert Ayler. But these tunes and others are not mere copies of earlier styles. Things of This Nature are expanding upon these groundbreaking sounds in unique and innovative ways. For example, "How It Is," combines Ferrari's flute with Davis' muted trumpet, Yamagishi's arco bass and Mazza's funk drumming as they transition from a modern march beat to open improvisation. Driven by Mazza's reactive and proactive rhythm hits, the modern bop sound of "E=MOC" concludes with Davis and Ferrari trading fours. Thanks to Mahakala Records' Chad Flower for continuing his search for the best of today's adventuresome players, and the members of Things of This Nature as well as the group itself should be added to that list!

BOTTOM LINE: Whether in person or on their debut recording, Things of This Nature deserves to be heard. On Things of This Nature they bring a deep respect for the pioneers of free jazz while adding their own modern sensibilities to a music that continues to evolve, expand and explore the possibilities of jazz.

Papatamus Redux

VANCOUVER JAZZ ORCHESTRA MEETS BRIAN CHARETTE CELLAR MUSIC

There are some outstanding soloists on this debut recording from the newly formed Vancouver Jazz Orchestra (VJO). Organist Brian Charette is just one of them. VJO artistic director James Dandefor has fully integrated Charette into the band while showcasing the music written and arranged entirely by Canadian jazz artists and performed by some of Vancouver's most accomplished and emerging jazz musicians. As the featured artist, Charette plays a major role on tunes such as the up-tempo bop opener "Equestrian Interlude" (written by Steve Kaldestad and arranged by Chris Berner), Brad Turner's arrangement of Herbie Hancock's "Sorcerer" and the boogaloo groove of "Don't Call Before 10" (written by Ross Taggart and arranged by Jill Townsend). On other tracks such as the Brazilian flavored "Lado a Lado" (written and arranged by Fred Stride), the jazz waltz "Shimmy" (written by Steve Kaldestad and arranged by Bill Coon) and the soulful march beat of "As Luck Would Have It," Charette skillfully adds the color of the Hammond B3 to the rhythm section. In addition to Charette, there are outstanding solo contributions from tenor players Steve Kaldestad and Cory Weeds, trombonists Andy Hunter and Nedyu Yoannes, trumpeters Julian Borkowski and Deery Byrne and alto player James Danderfer. Vancouver Jazz Orchestra Meets Brian Charette is truly a team effort with swinging charts, classic big band arrangements, strong solos and the bonus of Brian Charette's Hammond artistry. Fans of big band jazz will not be disappointed, and fans of jazz organ will be delighted as well. With its debut recording, the newly established VJO shows great promise and could easily succeed on its own merit on future recordings.

BOTTOM LINE: Organist Brian Charette follows in the footsteps of Jimmy Smith, Jack McDuff and Jimmy McGriff by recording an organ/big band session. Vancouver Jazz Orchestra Meets Brian Charette checks all the boxes — swinging charts, inspired playing from all and the added presence of Charette's soulful organ in the rhythm section and as a featured soloist.

Papatamus Redux

JOE FONDA

MY LIFE IN THE WORLD OF MUSIC

SELF PUBLISHED BOOK

Much like his bass playing and compositions, Joe Fonda's recent autobiography, *My Life in the World of Music*, is straight-forward and compelling. It chronicles the journey of a young electric bassist infatuated with the rock, R&B and blues of the late 1960s and early 1970s to a mature acoustic bassist being named one of the five "Musicians of the Year 2022" by the New York City Jazz Record. Fonda admits in the opening sentence of his story that at a very young age he had a passion and longing to be part of this thing called music. Although the genre of music he gravitated to in his early years emulating the sound of Gerry and the Pacemakers may have changed, Fonda's passion for the music has remained steady and strong throughout more than five decades of performing and recording. That passion was there in 1973 when he entered Berklee College of Music not knowing where the journey might take him. It was there when he was totally transfixed and transformed after hearing Deodada's 2001; *Space Odyssey* as well as his first exposure to the music of Ornette Coleman's *Free Jazz* in 1974. The passion for modern jazz became stronger as he experienced the music of Pharoah Sanders, McCoy Tyner, Sam Rivers, Charles Mingus and others firsthand in Boston clubs. Meeting folks such as Wadada Leo Smith and Bobby Naughton at the Creative Musicians Improvisers Forum only intensified his curiosity and interest in the art of free improvisation. He refined that passion in rehearsal spaces, stages and recording studios with musical partners such as Michael Jefry Stevens, Harvey Sorgen, Mark Whitecage, Herb Robertson and a long list of other modern jazz artists. More recently, Fonda's passion led him to be a member of some of today's more forward-thinking and playing ensembles including Barry Altschul's 3Dom Factor, Remedy (with Thomas Heberer and Joe Hertenstein), Origin (with Christophe Rocher and Harvey Sorgen) and Bass of Operation (with Michael Rabinowitz, Jeff Lederer and Harvey Sorgen). *Joe Fonda: My Life in the World of Music* shares these stories and more about a musician who longed to be part of this thing called music and will continue to be a definitive voice in it. That passion is best expressed in the closing line of his book — stay tuned.

Joe Fonda My Life in the World of Music is available on Amazon at <https://www.amazon.com/Life-World-Music-Mr-Fonda/dp/B0FSGJZTWY>

BOTTOM LINE: Congratulations to bassist Joe Fonda for sharing his life and career in *Joe Fonda: My Life in the World of Music*. Like his playing and compositions, his autobiography is straight-forward and compelling. Readers will enjoy learning about his journey "to be part of this thing called music."

Papatamus Redux

KEITH OXMAN
HOME
CAPRI RECORDS

On some of his earlier recordings, Denver-based saxophonist Keith Oxman was inspired by bandmates such as Curtis Fuller (*Dues in Progress*, 2006), Dave Liebman (*Glimpses*, 2008) and Houston Person (*Two Cigarettes in the Dark*, 2020). On *Home*, Oxman's inspiration comes from those who made a lasting impression on his life. The up-tempo "True Lou," that kicks off the session, was inspired by his father who passed away in 2023 at the age of 101. The Latin groove of "Hardenesque" was composed for a friend and colleague from Denver's East High School, a school where Oxman spent 24 years as a music educator prior to his retirement in 2024. The bop flavored "Don't Throw in the Towel" was written for Terry Powell, a friend he first met in the late 1980s at a chess tournament. There are compositions inspired by mentors ("Pam"), cousins ("Cousin Steve") and professors ("Stray Killers"). The set concludes with "An Extraordinary Rose," a tender ballad written for his mother Fannie-Rose Oxman. In addition to the 11 originals, *Home* features Oxman's arrangements on Cannonball Adderley's soulful "Serenata" and a relatively unknown ballad "Home," written by Geoffrey and Harry Clarkson and Peter Van Steeden. For *Home*, Oxman surrounded himself with more than capable sidemen from the Denver area — Derek Banach on trumpet, Clint Dadian on guitar, Bill McCrossen on bass and Todd Reid (who has appeared on several of Oxman's earlier recordings) on drums. The ensemble performs several of the tunes with the cool restraint and close-knit interaction of Miles Davis' *Birth of the Cool*. Other tunes such as "The Jazz Brothers Visit Curtis Street" and "Opus for Wherda" are pure hard bop whereas "Owen's Defense" adds a touch of Latin funk to the session. Whatever style they tackle, they do so with a sense of swinging restraint. *Home* demonstrates that you don't need inspiration from legendary jazz artists to produce an outstanding recording. This time around, inspiration for Oxman came from family members, friends, colleagues and mentors as well as the support of local players/friends who revel in the opportunity to join Oxman for this homage to the people who shaped his life. As a listener, you will revel in the music as well.

BOTTOM LINE: "When it comes to the people in my life, I've been truly blessed," notes saxophonist Keith Oxman. *Home* is his way of saying thank you in music dedicated to family, friends and mentors. These musical thank you notes run the gamut from ballads to bossas and blues to bop. The original compositions, arrangements and soloing of Oxman's quintet on *Home* will have you saying thanks as well.

Papatamus Redux

FRANTISEK UHLIR
COMING HOME
SELF PRODUCED

Like the bass players he heard in his youth on Voice of America (i.e., Ray Brown, Paul Chambers, Ron Carter and Sam Jones) and the Czech bassists of his generation (i.e., George Mraz and Miroslav Vitous), Frantisek Uhlir is a master of all things bass. He demonstrates that on *Coming Home*, a recording he released in honor of his 75th birthday. He demonstrates his powerful and steady presence as he sets the tone for the soulful groove of the title track. On the Monkish “Big Mouth,” he demonstrates his walking bass skills as well as his lyrical solo bowing. He showcases his resonant high register pizzicato playing on the classically influenced “Vida je tu Ida.” His blues’ sensibilities are on full display on “I Remember Karel,” a tune dedicated to Czech vibist Karel Velebny. He adds just the right flavor to “The Untitled,” a tune that has a sense of rhythmic joy and charm much like Keith Jarrett’s “Lucky Southern.” He weaves in and out of a horn section on the angular “I’m Not Finished Yet” and floats over a string ensemble on “Children’s Dreams and Games.” Most of all, Uhlir demonstrates his proficiency as a composer and arranger for a variety of configurations including The Frantisek Uhlir Team (Andy Schofield on sax and flute, Standa Macha on piano and Martin Sulc on drums, a group he founded in 1987; integrating that group with a string quartet on two cuts and three horn players on another; and performing “Trialogue for Solo Violin, Jazz Quartet and Strings” an extended piece that blends classical and jazz. From high notes to low notes, blues to romanticism, Latin to modal grooves, lyrical to angular tones, Uhlir demonstrates what has made him a vital part of international jazz scene for more than five decades — creativity, a mastery of his instrument and a contagious sense of swing. Celebrate the music of Frantisek Uhlir as well as his 75th birthday with *Coming Home*, a recording that demonstrates his vitality in advancing the music of the great bassists who inspired him.

BOTTOM LINE: Czech bassist Frantisek Uhlir celebrates his 75th birthday with the release of *Coming Home*, and it is truly a gift for jazz fans. Uhlir composed and arranged the ten originals that feature him in a combination of settings — with his quartet (The Frantisek Uhlir Team), a string ensemble and a horn section. Whatever the format, Uhlir’s strong and passionate playing sets the tone for an enjoyable listening experience.

Papatamus Redux

SEAN FYFE
FOLLOW-UP
CELLAR MUSIC

Follow-Up, the newest recording from Canadian pianist Sean Fyfe and his quartet lives up to its name. This collection of ten tunes is indeed a wonderful follow-up to their 2024 *Stepping Stones* release. There are more tunes inspired by some of Fyfe's favorite piano players from the hard bop era. There are more well-played standards from the Great American Songbook. Best of all, they are all delivered with a sense of swinging honesty and passion by Fyfe and the same British musicians that accompanied him on *Stepping Stones* — Dave O'Higgins on sax, Luke Fowler on bass and Matt Fishwick on drums. The group is in the groove as they navigate Fyfe originals including the intricate rhythm changes of "Monkey Man," a tune inspired by Cedar Walton's "Promised Land" and Bobby Timmon's "Turn Left;" "Focaccia, a tip of the hat to the Latin-infused sound of the hard bop era; the classic boogaloo vibe of "Follow-Up" and the melodic intervals of the blues "Brown Eyes." O'Higgins and Fyfe burn through the changes on the up-tempo bop riff of "Double Trouble," which also features some powerful drumming from Fishwick. The trio of Fyfe, Fowler and Fishwick show their tender side on Jimmy Van Heusen's "Darn That Dream;" their sense of swing on Johnny Green's "I Cover the Waterfront," their ability to shift between swing and Latin on a refreshing arrangement of Cole Porter's "You'd Be So Nice To Come To;" their sense of humor on a joyful and wonderfully arranged rendition of Irving Berlin's "Blue Skies" and their adventuresome side on "Reliance," a Fyfe contrafact based on Burton Lane's "How About You." Rather than simply replaying the songs written by musicians from the hard bop era, Fyfe has absorbed that style and written six originals that capture the blues, grooves and soul of their music and added his own take on four standards. Hoping the follow-up to *Follow-Up* brings us more of his compositions, his interpretations of standards and the exceptional playing of his quartet.

BOTTOM LINE: With the release of *Follow-Up*, *Cellar Music* continues its tradition of keeping the spirit of hard bop jazz alive and well. Canadian pianist Sean Fyfe and his quartet work through six originals and four standards in a recording that captures the grooves, blues, energy and passion that was a hallmark of classic hard bop sessions without merely copying them.

Papatamus Redux

GREG BURROWS

LET'S NOT WAIT – THE MUSIC OF ED BONOFF

GREBU RECORDS 1002

Trombonist Eddie Bert introduced jazz fans to the music of composer / arranger Ed Bonoff on his 1997 recording *The Human Factor*. Twenty-eight years later, drummer Greg Burrows brings more of Bonoff's music to life on *Let's Not Wait*. Burrows, a longtime friend and musical partner of Bonoff, realized that very few artists have recorded Bonoff's original music and arrangements. *Let's Not Wait* changes all that! With the exception of "Ellington/Strayhorn Medley," an arrangement that weaves "Daydream," "Don't You Know I Care," and "After All" into a flowing medium-slow ballad, Burrows and his sextet of Tim Armacost on tenor and soprano sax, Gary Smulyan on baritone sax, John Fumasoli on trombone, Hiroshi Yamazaki on piano and Rich Zurkowski on bass present nine Bonoff compositions and arrangements that did not appear on Bert's 1997 date. Bonoff spent his younger years absorbing the bebop sounds at the original Birdland while building his drumming skills in a variety of bands. So, it is no surprise that his music is reminiscent of bop arrangers such as Tadd Dameron and Gil Fuller. The opening track, "Pizza Navona," is a good example. This up-tempo minor key swinger is an ideal launching pad for solos from band members. But rather than a series of solos, Bonoff's arrangements make good use of horn vamps as solos transition from one player to the next. The same is true of the spirited "Meatloaf and Margaux," the tender ballad "It Just Gets Better" and the bossa "Let's Not Wait." Bonoff gives Duke Ellington's "Shout 'Em, Aunt Tillie" a second line beat and adds guitarist Al Orlo to the mix. Bonoff's arrangement of "Spruce Alley" has Armacost's soprano blending well with Smulyan and Fumasoli while the up tempo swing of "Mitosis" showcases Burrow's drumming. What makes *Let's Not Wait* a memorable recording is more than the compositions and arrangements of Bonoff. It is the passion and energy Burrows and his sextet bring to this music as well as the support of Bonoff throughout the process. To quote the title, *Let's Not Wait* for another 28 years to hear more of Bonoff's music!

BOTTOM LINE: Ed Bonoff is an unsung hero of the New York jazz scene. He experienced the bebop revolution at the original Birdland. He played drums with a variety of groups between the 1940s and 1960s. But he is more remembered for his compositions and arrangements. Drummer Greg Burrows, with the support of Bonoff, assembled a group of New York's best working musicians to bring Bonoff's music to life on *Let's Not Wait*.

Papatamus Redux

MARK SHERMAN
BOP CONTEST
MILE HIGH RECORDS 8638

After a series of recordings showcasing his piano playing, Mark Sherman returns to the vibraphone for a very special session titled Bop Contest. One reason why it is special is the appearance of the most recorded bassist in the history of jazz — Ron Carter. According to Sherman, the two sat on music juries together at Juilliard and one day Carter asked, “How come you never use me on bass?” Bop Contest is the answer! The session is also special because it was recorded in the hallowed space of the Rudy Van Gelder Studio. The result is a recording that demonstrate the individual mastery of band members as well as their congenial musical interplay on seven titles. Joining Sherman and Carter on Bop Contest are pianist Donald Vega, a longtime member of Carter’s Golden Striker Trio; and Carl Allen, who has frequently performed with Sherman over the years. Trumpeter Joe Magnarelli is added on two Sherman originals — the lyrical “Love Always Always Love” and the boppish title track. Things start off with the bop-infused melody, rhythm and solos on Oliver Nelson’s “111-44” and end with a stunning piano/vibe duet of “Skylark,” on which Sherman plays both! Sandwiched between those extremes are two classic Cedar Walton tunes — “Bremond’s Blues” and “Martha’s Prize” as well as a bossa version of “My One and Only Love” and the two Sherman compositions with Magnarelli’s crisp sound paired well with the lyrical resonance of Sherman’s vibes. Although the release is titled Bop Contest, Sherman, Carter, Magnarelli, Vega and Allen are more concerned about complementing one another rather than battling it out, and that makes you the winner!

BOTTOM LINE: According to Mark Sherman, recording Bop Contest with jazz icon Ron Carter in the historic setting of the Rudy Van Gelder Studio made for one of the most memorable experiences of his life. It also marks Sherman’s return to the vibraphone. The winner of this Bop Contest are fans of straight-ahead jazz performed by Sherman, Carter, pianist Donald Vega, drummer Carl Allen and trumpeter Joe Magnarelli (featured on two Sherman originals).

Papatamus Redux

ARETHA TILLOTSON
KINDA OUT WEST
BENT RIVER RECORDS

Inspired by the geography of her native Western Canada, bassist Aretha Tillotson explores the wide-open spaces and rugged terrain of a pianoless quartet on *Kinda Out West*. Joined by a group of Canadian musicians — saxophonist Christine Jensen, trumpeter Ingrid Jensen and drummer Dave Laing — the quartet explores the musical territory outlined on eight originals. Although the cover might remind you of Sonny Rollins' *Way Out West* and the instrumentation might bring the groundbreaking Ornette Coleman Quartet to mind, the music is more like a Canadian version of John Zorn's original *Masada* Quartet. Rather than basing tunes on Jewish and Middle Eastern influences, however, Tillotson creates a variety of musical sketches reflective of her personal experiences. The similarity to *Masada* is most evident on "Cricklewood Lane," a tune inspired by the often-chaotic neighborhood Tillotson stayed in during a residency in London. Like Zorn and Dave Douglas from those original *Masada* sessions, Ingrid Jensen's clarion trumpet and Christine Jensen's languid alto sax contrast and complement each other as they weave in and out of a range of tunes from free sounding bebop-based tunes such as "Sphere of Influence" and "Sad Junie," with Tillotson shifting from a strong timekeeper to a front line soloist, to the tender "Lullaby to Those Before," with its plaintive opening from saxophonist Jensen balanced by trumpeter Jensen, to more Coleman-sounding compositions such as "Jill of All" and "Gaucho Caviar." The band strikes a more Western Canadian feel on the loping title track and the spacious sounding "35." Drummer Dave Laing demonstrates the versatility and sensitivity to create the rhythmic momentum ideal for this diversity of musical moods. *Kinda Out West* is Tillotson's second release, further demonstrating her exceptional abilities as a inventive bassist, interesting composer and inspiring leader. *Kinda Out West* proves that great jazz can come from anywhere including the wide-open spaces and rugged terrain of Western Canada. Fans of pianoless quartets ranging from Gerry Mulligan and Chet Baker to Ornette Coleman to *Masada* will want to explore this territory!

BOTTOM LINE: The cover might remind you of Sonny Rollins' *Way Out West*. The instrumentation might conjure up memories of Ornette Coleman's groundbreaking pianoless quartet. But bassist Aretha Tillotson brings her own spin to this format in a set of eight tunes inspired by her experiences in the wide-open spaces and rugged terrain of Western Canada. She's in good company with fellow Canadians who understand the territory geographically and musically — Ingrid Jensen, (trumpet), Christine Jensen (alto saxophone) and Dave Laing (drums).

Passing Glances

PASSING GLANCES: JACK DeJOHNETTE

by Patrick Hinely

Jack DeJohnette, Jr.

August 9, 1942 - October 26, 2025

He did pretty much everything with everybody who was anybody, and then some. Any jazz pantheon without him is incomplete. Whoever attempts a complete discography will have his or her hands full for quite a while.

His life, career and oeuvre have been encyclopedically-documented and celebrated across the spectrum, most succinctly in his obituary in the New York Times, written by Hank Shteamer: <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/10/27/arts/music/jack-dejohnette-dead.html>

Many fellow musicians weighed in on Facebook, among them: Jon Medeski, his bandmate in the Hudson quartet: "His unparalleled creativity, free spirit, and penetrating musicality elevated every situation he played in."

Antonio Sanchez: "He was always the creative eye of the hurricane, no matter the context. He effortlessly opened magical avenues for countless musicians to glide through, while simultaneously challenging and pushing them to reach higher."

My distinguished fellow jazz writer Willard Jenkins made an interesting observation, that DeJohnette had been a first-call house drummer for two very different and spectrum-spanning labels, CTI and ECM. I'd call that a testament to DeJohnette's versatility, his ability to work - and excel - in both of those contexts.

While DeJohnette's recordings as a sideman are estimable, his collection of recordings as a bandleader or co-leader - on piano and keyboards as well as drums - is even more impressive, with a wide stylistic range, consistently adventurous, and in good company with first-class players, some of whom he introduced to larger audiences.

Besides his late-70s quartet New Directions, addressed in the photo captions, I can't not mention a couple of my other favorite DeJohnette projects:

COMPOST

He would have still been working with Miles Davis when the quintet Compost was gestating, and Miles' coattails undoubtedly helped get Columbia interested in recording this new band. DeJohnette wasn't the group's primary drummer - that was Bob Moses, while DeJohnette's main feature was keyboards, especially clavinet. Harold Vick, a notable player too often not noted at all, played saxophones and flute with an infectiously celebratory enthusiasm, and seldom sounded better in his all-too-short career. Bassist Jack Gregg and percussionist Jumma Santos rounded out the personnel. Compost made two albums: 1972's *Take Off Your Body* (CBS

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31176) and 1973's *Life is Round* (CBS 32031), the latter of which brought on board guest appearances from guitarists Roland Prince and Ed Finney and vocalists Jeanne Lee and Lou Courtney. Compost infused soul and funk without sacrificing their jazz origins, but what little critical attention the band received in its day was hardly enthusiastic. I'd say their music has aged well, better than a lot of what was getting more ink because it was more 'important'.

GATEWAY

This trio with DeJohnette, Dave Holland and John Abercrombie can be seen as Manfred Eicher's first American ensemble creation. They recorded a total of 4 albums over two decades. Fearless explorers all, aiding and abetting one another in constantly expanding a collective vocabulary which equally valued composition and improvisation in a way that one couldn't always tell where one ended and the other began. The sessions for their first album, recorded in early 1975 (ECM 1061) were contemporaneous to those for Oregon co-founder sitarist and percussionist Collin Walcott's *Cloud Dance* (ECM 1062), an even wider-ranging and, to this day, unique quartet outing. *Gateway 2* (ECM 1105) followed in 1977. It would be 17 years before the group reconvened to record again, and that same set of 1994 sessions produced *Homecoming* (ECM 1562), which, as had the earlier albums, featured compositions by all members, and last but not least, *In the Moment* (ECM 1574) which was all collective improvisations. The music is gloriously unfettered, as consistently rewarding as it is challenging. Not for the faint of ear.

DEJOHNETTE CAPTIONS

Intro:

My first meeting with DeJohnette was in November, 1978, at the New York City recording sessions for what turned out to be Polish violinist-extraordinaire Zbigniew Seifert's final album, *Passion* (Capitol 11923). DeJohnette and bassist Eddie Gomez provided a solid yet fluid foundation while Nana added accents, Richie Beirach played piano, and a young John Scofield was on guitar. Working the room as a break was ending, I had just turned my camera toward the drummer when he asked me not to shoot him wearing headphones, which, in that situation, was virtually all the time. Sensing my disappointment, on the next break he called me over and said it was nothing personal, that he asked the same of all photographers in studio situations, though most ignored his request. He thanked me for respecting his wishes. And I did. A couple of weeks later, downtown, at the Public Theater, then in its days of adventurous jazz programming, DeJohnette was performing with Lester Bowie and I don't recall who all else, but when he spotted me at the soundcheck, he grinned and said "Go for it!" Which I did. While I got nothing memorable of him that evening, I hope these few of my efforts from the following decades will prove interesting as glimpses of an illustrious career in progress.

All photographs ©Patrick Hinely, Work/Play®

Passing Glances

Jack DeJohnette with Jackie McLean, listening to student players during critique session at University of Virginia, Old Cabell Hall, Charlottesville VA, fall 1992. At the time, I didn't yet know that DeJohnette's first recording session, in 1965, had been for McLean's album *Jacknife* (Blue Note 40535), or that it included his recorded debut as a composer, side one's closer, "Climax". DeJohnette was not the only drummer McLean introduced to a larger audience: he also provided Tony Williams with his recording debut, in 1963, on *Vertigo* (Blue Note 1085 or 22269).



Passing Glances



New Directions, reunited: (l-r) Eddie Gomez, John Abercrombie, Jack DeJohnette and Lester Bowie, en route to soundcheck at Old Cabell Hall, University of Virginia, Charlottesville VA, fall 1992. On the gig, they were visibly having fun, pushing and pulling one another in inspired abandon, reunited after more than a decade since recording their debut album in 1978 (ECM 1128) and a cooking live one at Willisau in 1979 (ECM 1157). Their gleeful explorations repeatedly set Old Cabell's stage ablaze, even though the fire alarms never went off. They took us with them and brought us home. When it was all over, I felt like I'd had the crap beaten out of me - and that it felt good...

Passing Glances



Standards Trio, 2/3 thereof - Jack DeJohnette and Gary Peacock - setting up for soundcheck at Symphony Hall, Boston, September 20, 2000. This was the scene I encountered as soon as I walked in the door, and I will always be glad I didn't arrive even a moment later. (Keith Jarrett was just out of the frame to the right). This unusually long-standing trio made 19 live albums (for ECM) and performed together for more than 30 years. Their first work as a trio was actually under Gary Peacock's name, for his 1977 studio album *Tales of Another* (ECM 1101). Six years would pass before Manfred Eicher again assembled them, in a New York City studio, resulting in 3 albums, now assembled as the box set *Setting Standards* (ECM 2030-2032).

- Previous publication: 2008 *Jazz Calendary*, Jazzprezzo imprint of Nieswand Verlag, Germany

Passing Glances



Jack DeJohnette with John Surman, backstage before their duo performance, JazzFest Berlin, November 4, 2000, House of the Cultures of the World. Their concert was recorded by Radio SFB (Sender Freies Berlin) and parts of it were issued on their album *Invisible Nature* (ECM 1796). The last time I caught DeJohnette in performance was also with Surman, in 2009, at NYC's Birdland, as part of Surman's quartet, along with John Abercrombie and Drew Gress, celebrating the release of Surman's album *Brewster's Rooster* (ECM 2046). Come to think of it, that was also the last time I heard Abercrombie play. The best ones always leave too soon...